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ATA NEWS

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election

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for office?

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October 6, 2020 | Volume 55, Number 3

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



COVID places June-level strain on teachers, survey finds.

See story on page 5.



Wearing hypocrisy like an orange shirt

Government curriculum appointment shows lack of commitment to truth and reconciliation.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on page 2.

Expanded role eyed for superintendents' college

Changes under consideration a threat, says ATA president

See story on page 4.

All teachers' conventions will be virtual

COVID prompts change to annual PD events.

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Pronoun power

Storyteller Ivan Coyote shares the pain of misidentification.

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Thanks giving

ATA staff show their appreciation for teachers.

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DIGITAL NEWS

The ATA News is available in a digital format. Visit <http://bit.ly/ATAeNews> and sign up for the ATA eNews to receive an email when a new issue is available. The most recent issue is always available at teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > ATA News.

Commit to truth and reconciliation or take off the orange shirt



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
(he/him)
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Phyllis Webstad was six years old when her orange shirt was taken away from her. She never saw the shirt again. She had just bought it with her grandmother for her first day of school at the Mission residential school. She picked out the shiny orange shirt herself.

"It had string laced up in front, and was so bright and exciting — just like I felt to be going to school," Webstad says in her story published at orangeshirtday.com

When she got to Mission, they stripped her and took away her clothes.

Webstad's story is not unique. But because she has shared it and because she has reclaimed the colour as a way to help ensure that her story and the tens of thousands like it are never forgotten, we recognize Orange Shirt Day annually on Sept. 30. We wear orange to honour the victims and survivors of the cultural genocide that plagued our nation for more than a century.

Orange Shirt Day is just one of an

increasing number of initiatives that will allow us as a nation to respond to the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Call to Action 62 calls upon federal, provincial and territorial governments in collaboration with educators, survivors and Aboriginal peoples to make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools and Indigenous history a mandatory part of K-12 education for all students.

The Government of Alberta, along with the Alberta Teachers' Association and other educational stakeholder organizations, signed the Joint Commitment to Action in response to this call to action. It reads, in part, "Through our collaborative efforts, and commitment to work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners, the true and complete shared history of Canada's First Peoples will be embedded within the educational experience of all students."

As I reflected on Orange Shirt Day this year, I couldn't help but think of another person's words.

"Here in Canada the preoccupation with victimhood has mostly centred on Japanese Canadians and residential school 'survivors.'"

"The ongoing fad (in social studies curriculum) is that we need 'more' First Nations 'perspectives'... The

plug must be pulled on the deplorable agitprop of the 'KAIROS Blanket,' which brainwashes children into thinking of themselves as 'settlers' stealing the land — the kind of 'truth and reconciliation' that is not evidence-based but relies on 'knowledge keepers' to 'foster truth.'"

These are words published by Chris Champion. Champion was named this summer to act as a key advisor on the development of Alberta's next social studies curriculum.

Champion's words, on their own, are hurtful and harmful. But beyond that, they are part of a deliberate argument made and repeated that the teaching of social studies in this manner needs to be abandoned and replaced with a history curriculum that doubles down on the Eurocentric perspective.

"Canadians especially need Classical, European, and US history because North American societies are offshoots of Europe's, particularly those of Britain and France," Champion writes. "Of course there is value in other cultures but we can never truly appreciate or evaluate foreign cultures without first knowing our own."

Champion is fundamentally wrong. And he should be nowhere near the levers of power that will develop Alberta's curriculum. He must be dismissed from this privileged role.

In lieu of firing Champion, the government must revoke its endorsement of the Joint Commitment to Action. The government is no longer committed to ensuring that the "true and complete" history of Canada's First Peoples is shared.

And furthermore, I don't want to hear any government minister or MLA talking about Orange Shirt Day. Anything they say on it, while keeping Champion in the role he has been given, is hollow, meaningless and insensitive.

Orange Shirt Day is about remembering and ensuring that the survivors and their stories are not erased, thanks to Phyllis Webstad.

"The colour orange has always reminded me of [having my shirt taken away] and how my feelings didn't matter, how no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing," she shares. "All of us little children were crying and no one cared." ■

Editor's note

In recognition of International Pronouns Day on Oct. 21, this issue of the *ATA News* lists the pronouns of each contributor as part of their byline. See page 8 for more information about this important issue.

Association must model what it advocates for



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
(he/him)
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: I have just been told that the Association staff officer who works with my specialist council won't be attending our usual dinner meeting in person. What's up with that?

Answer: The COVID-19 pandemic has created some unique circumstances and risks around the participation of Association staff and members of Provincial Executive Council at various congregated events, including those arranged by Association subgroups. In normal times, staff and members of Council have maintained a strong in-person presence in the field, travelling to meet with large numbers of teachers in diverse locations and settings. Committees of Council have typically been convened at Barnett House, with Council and field members travelling from around the province to attend. With the return to school and the anticipated resurgence of the pandemic in the autumn and winter,

this approach is now problematic and increasingly risky.

Here are some factors to consider.

- While teachers working in their schools are cohorted to a degree, convening groups of teachers from different schools or locals/districts at a single physical location potentially facilitates transmission of the virus, and may be contrary to the direction provided by Alberta Health Services officials.
- While social distancing, masking and other measures may reduce the risk of contagion associated with an event or activities around an event, they do not eliminate the risk. Evidence suggests that dinner meetings and other events where participants may be in relatively close proximity and unmasked pose a greatly heightened possibility of transmission.
- The movement of ATA staff or Council members between events in the field risks personal exposure to infection while also raising the potential of their becoming vectors of transmission to members. Even if actual transmission does not take place, the fact that individuals have been exposed to others who might be COVID-19 positive may result in them

being forced to self-isolate, which has particularly serious consequences for teachers, their students and their schools.

- Although provisions are in place to return rapidly to working from home, an active outbreak at Barnett House or SARO originating with Council or staff, coupled with requirements to isolate, would compromise the Association's capacity to deliver necessary service to members and maintain good governance.
- A considerable reputational risk attends the potential for an outbreak in a school to be traced to the attendance of a Council or staff member or teacher at an Association or Association subgroup event.

Some members have expressed the opinion that if schools are conducting "business as usual" so too should the ATA. I understand the sentiment underlying this belief, but believe it to be mistaken. The Association has expressed its concern about the failure of government and school authorities to take critical measures to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus. In particular, we have consistently highlighted the impossibility of maintaining mandated social distancing

in overcrowded classrooms and schools. It would be hypocritical of the Association to maintain this position while failing to take all reasonable steps ourselves to protect our employees, volunteers, members, students and the public. The Association's practices should model its expectations for employers and for government policy.

At its last meeting, Council confirmed restrictions on the activities of staff and imposed parallel limits on travel and the activities of its own members. Similar direction has been communicated to Association subgroups.

The fact is that teachers, whether they be in the classroom, working as Association staff, or serving in elected office, did not join the profession because they looked forward to spending long hours on Zoom. I myself hate it. But we are committed to using technology to maintain an active presence among members, and your staff liaison will be attending your meeting, albeit virtually. Some discipline now will hopefully help to bring forward the day when we can again sit down face to face to enjoy each others' company and advance together the important work and objectives of the profession. ■

YOUR VIEWS

How are you teaching for a better world?

Some responses to the ATA's World Teachers' Day social media contest.

ON TWITTER

Averie Meisner @averiemeisner

I am teaching my students about being kind to one another and showing bravery when faced with challenges.

FACEBOOK

Kimberly Collins

Kindness, empathy and helping others. Show it, do it, support it, honour it — it is one thing to speak about those concepts and show examples. That's great, but live it too. Let students see teachers and all school staff supporting each other, helping one another and being there with resources, support and appreciation. Be vulnerable, show grace, accept help and pull from your hard-earned grit. We — students and all school staff — are stronger together than divided.

Jennifer Black

We are planning together and covering classes when we need to. I pep talk the kids daily about kindness and patience. We really are making it through this school year together.

Hannah L Stephenson

Focusing more on building connections with each student! Emphasizing kindness more than ever this year.

Donna Knopper-Singleton

Every day I remind my students of the golden rule. I ask my kindergarten children about empathy and read them books everyday that model and project this. I talk about tolerance and how we should accept others for who they are and not judge or have expectations that everyone will see, do and understand things the same as ourselves.

They tell me how they should treat each other and talk about mistakes that we all make and how we can make our class a safe and caring place. I ask them to take action when they see a classmate or a friend in need of support and stand up and use their voices when things are not as they should be inside and outside the classroom. And most of all, I use Harvard's Visible Thinking Routines to foster their critical thinking skills, which they can transfer to their own lives and use every day.

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

FOR THE RECORD

“Currently, I'm a public health advisor, not an educator.”

— Alberta school leader in response to an ATA survey on COVID-19 in schools



Take a pass on 'the pass'



VIEWPOINTS

Gail-Ann Wilson (she/her)
Black Teachers Association
of Alberta

I'm looking in the eyes of a teenage boy who has just called my daughter the N-word. He's not Black, but I am. Neither of us look away.

We're behind the closed doors of a small office in our school, in the midst of an enormous conversation about racism. I'm speaking as a social studies and anti-racism teacher, not as a mom. I'm focused on explaining the history of racial degradation against Black people. Apathetic, he leans back.

"My Black friends gave me the pass," he says. "We call each other by that name all of the time. You can't stop me. I have a right to free speech."

His racism isn't hidden like it is with most because he's rationalized his racist behaviour in the form of "the pass." I lean in and respond.

"Your words are free, but your hate is not."

The pass is a hidden social norm, one that you're not likely to hear about unless you have some familiarity with Black urban culture. Considering that teenagers have never been shy about adopting Black culture, many junior and senior high students are familiar with this racist act.

Black students who use the pass are actually making themselves the target of racism which, unfortunately, displays a high degree of racial ignorance. When Black people willingly transfer power as the oppressed to the privileged, they disconnect from the historical legacies that have been central to understanding the powerlessness of racism.

The idea likely evolved from the classic American practice of racial passing. To reduce the harms of discrimination, Black people who could conceal their

racial identity passed themselves off as members of other ethnic groups. Historically, the idea was to gain the benefits afforded to White people, but today the pass is commonly reversed, with others attempting to appropriate elements of Black culture.

Understand that this is a subtle and even passive act within a social group. A Black person offers it to members outside of the race by granting them a verbal pass, a permission to speak freely. Generally,

“On the surface, the pass may appear to be an example of agreement with the group. Don't be misguided. It's closer to a state of submission to the conditions of racism.”

the idea is that a non-Black person uses the pass only when they're with the Black group that provides it, but this is difficult to contain. Racism can't be borrowed or returned to the sender.

On the surface, the pass may appear to be an example of agreement with the group. Don't be misguided. It's closer to a state of submission to the conditions of racism.

Humour creates a broader social acceptance of racism, and Black humour is well-consumed by audiences of all races. Dave Chappelle and Kevin Hart have large followings centralized on racial comedy. It's about subtly leveraging their power as entertainers. The Black comedian invites or grants

a pass to the audience to laugh at Black issues, even racist Black issues, but the understanding is that you don't do this outside of that forum. If a non-Black person repeats a Black comedian's joke, they are given a pass. But if a non-Black member makes their own culturally degrading joke, there is no pass, and they are being racist. As we live in acceptance of the pass in comedy, we will struggle to shift thinking on all forms of racism.

Now consider whether you have ever used the pass. It's easy to assume you haven't if you don't use the N-word. But we've all heard of teachers and administrators that appropriate the N-word at school under the guise of learning. Think of the undesirable stress that climate creates for Black students. That word is not relatable to students when spoken by any teacher. Let's be clear: it's never appropriate to use the N-word in education. Make a point to end that practice.

Also, consider not acting as an expert on racial oppression if you don't have authentic knowledge of Black communities. This is a play on the pass too. If your expertise on anti-Black racism is sourced from having a Black friend, a Black co-worker or a Black student, you are using the pass as a form of credibility to speak on issues that are not a part of your own experience. This does not complement anti-racism behaviour. Racism does not allow for people to choose their own experience.

Taking on anti-Black racism at school is going to be hard for us all. We have to consciously accept responsibility for our own actions while we navigate hidden forms of racism. Being culturally responsive in education may feel like we're going backwards at times. But this change will not come from intention; it will only come from socially informed action. ■

Gail-Ann Wilson is a teacher with Edmonton Public Schools and an active member of the Black Teachers Association of Alberta.

It's PEC election time – get ready to run!

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers' Association is calling for nominations to its Provincial Executive Council (PEC).

Teachers interested in running for a position on PEC can find information on eligibility, the nomination process, responsibilities, remuneration and more, in the *Candidates' Handbook* which is available on the ATA website for viewing or downloading.

This PEC election will be a bit different as last school year the Association struck a committee to review election processes. Two of the more significant changes made as the result of committee recommendations include the introduction of a nomination day and the requirement of candidate registration.

Nomination day

Nomination day is Jan. 21, 2021 and is the single day on which all candidates must submit their completed nomination forms to the

Association. Candidates can deliver their nomination forms in person, by email, even by fax, but the forms must be received within the 24-hour period of that one day.

The introduction of nomination day gives all candidates the same time period for campaigning, as the publication and distribution of candidate campaign materials is not allowed until after the official announcement of candidates.

Candidate registration

Candidates must now register to run in PEC elections. The purpose of candidate registration is to allow the Association to directly communicate updates and instructions to candidates throughout the election cycle. This is very important during any election but will be even more important this year as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to change plans on a regular basis.

Registration also confirms eligibility for the official assistance the Association provides to candidates. This year, that assistance includes the option of posting fillable PDF nomination

forms on behalf of any registered candidate if the traditional method of gathering signatures on paper forms is not possible or not desirable due to the pandemic.

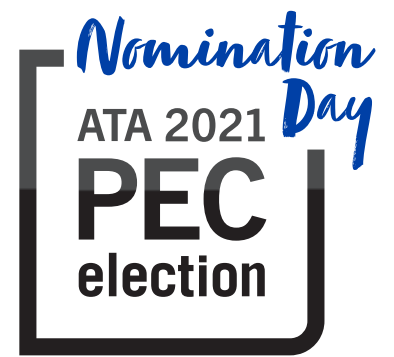
Candidates may register at any time between now and nomination day on Jan. 21, 2021.

Get ready to run!

"There is a lot that candidates need to do in order to be ready by nomination day," says Robert Mazzotta, who serves as the returning officer for PEC elections in addition to his role as co-ordinator of the Teacher Employment Services program area.

Reading over the *Candidates' Handbook* is the best thing anyone can do to learn about the nomination process, the rules around campaigning and the responsibilities of being a member of PEC, Mazzotta says.

If you are interested in representing your colleagues and your profession, go to the ATA website and find out more about what it takes to be a candidate in the 2021 PEC election. ■



NOMINATION DAY
JANUARY 21, 2021

The Alberta Teachers' Association is calling for nominations to its Provincial Executive Council (PEC).

Offices up for election are

- ATA president,
- ATA vice-president (2 positions) and
- district representative (15 positions representing 11 geographic districts).

WANT TO RUN?

Check out the *Candidates' Handbook* on the ATA website.

Nomination Day is coming.
Get ready to run.

www.teachers.ab.ca

TES-AMB-18-25a-2020-08

The Alberta Teachers' Association



What is PEC?

PEC is the 20-member executive committee which directs the business of the Association. It comprises the ATA president, two vice-presidents, the past president, 15 district representatives and the executive secretary. With the exception of the past president and executive secretary, all positions are elected once every two years by the ATA membership.

Expanded role eyed for superintendents' college

Changes being considered are a threat to the teaching profession and public education, says ATA president

Jonathan Teghtmeyer (he/him)
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Creating a professional college for superintendents would divide the teaching profession and pose a threat to public education.

That's the assessment of Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling in the wake of news that the provincial government is exploring new roles and responsibilities for the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS).

"Teachers, school leaders and system leaders have all been part of a unified teaching profession for over 100 years," Schilling said. "Superintendents are teachers and it should remain that way. We don't need to define a new profession for superintendents."

The government initiated consultations on CASS's role during the summer. A July 31 email invited school boards and education stakeholder organizations to arrange for "in-depth discussions of the opportunities and challenges associated with expanding the role of CASS," to be held before the end of August. The email said the discussions were being held in preparation for the fall legislative session, which begins Oct. 20.

There are a number of changes being considered that represent a

significant threat to public education, Schilling said, such as the removal of a requirement that superintendents have teaching certificates.

"We don't have a professional college for chief medical officers of health," Schilling said. "It would make no sense to have a chief medical officer of health who is not a doctor, and because they are doctors, they are members of the college of physicians and surgeons."

A discussion guide used in consultations around CASS's role states that if CASS were made a legislated professional organization, this would usually mean that membership would be made mandatory for some categories of individuals and that CASS would be responsible for investigating, adjudicating and resolving complaints of alleged unprofessional conduct or professional competence filed against its members.

Currently, the registrar at Alberta Education oversees complaints about unprofessional conduct and professional competence filed against superintendents and deputy superintendents.

Expanded membership for CASS

The discussion guide asks to whom mandatory membership should apply and who should be eligible for associate membership.

Schilling is concerned that principals could get swept up in the redefining of teachers and leaders within the education system.

"The premier stated in advance of the 2019 election that he viewed principals as managers, so I do worry the government could lump them in with system leaders instead of with teachers," Schilling said.

For its part, CASS says changes to its role would advance the work done in creating the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS).

"We believe that regulatory status being granted to CASS would optimize the success of all students through common standards of leadership practice and conduct being made applicable to all out-of-scope system leaders across the province," said CASS executive director David Keohane in a written statement.

"Further to the intent of the (SLQS), superintendents and system education leaders dedicated to supporting their work play an important role in establishing conditions under which effective governance, quality school leadership, excellence in teaching, and the provision of inclusive specialized services and supports can thrive."

Schilling disagrees that the professionalization of superintendents would provide benefits for student success.

"Albertans should be concerned," he said. "We have one of the world's best performing public education systems, and elevating the role of superintendents would alter the culture of collegiality and collaboration that has led to much of our success."

Schilling also expressed concern about the timing of the August consultations, which were announced a little over a week after CASS's former executive director appeared with the premier and education minister at a government news conference supporting plans for the relaunch of schools.

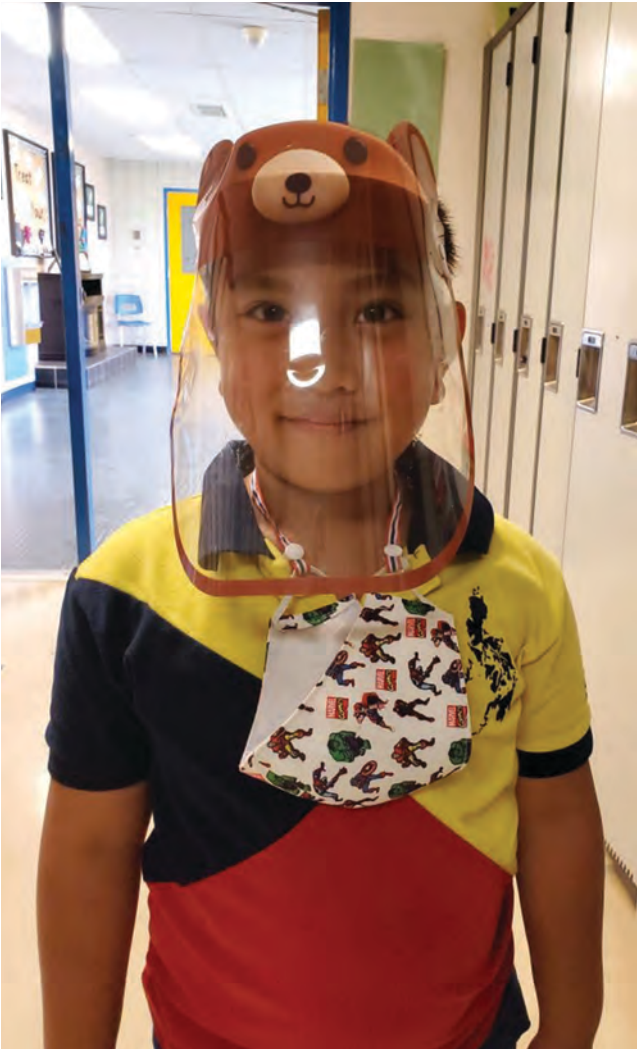
"It doesn't make a lot of sense that the government and superintendents would be sneaking this through at a time when everyone in the education sector should have been focused on ensuring the safety of students and staff during a pandemic," Schilling said.

The government has not yet committed to making the changes. In a statement sent to the *ATA News*, education ministry press secretary Colin Aitchison stated, "We are consulting broadly on this matter, and we will inform Albertans if we intend to make any changes. It should be noted that the Alberta School Boards Association has a resolution that supports the provincial government developing legislation to make CASS a professional regulatory body." ■



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.



Grade 1 student Clarence Prado shows off his COVID protection at H.A. Kostash School in Smoky Lake.

DICK RICHARDS

Stressed out

Survey reveals high levels of stress, fatigue and anxiety among teachers

Jen Janzen (she/her)
ATA News Staff

June-level stress in the first week of September. That's one of the findings from the ATA's second pulse survey, a five-minute feedback tool that seeks to understand what Alberta teachers and school leaders are facing as they navigate classroom life during the pandemic.

The latest survey, conducted from Sept. 10 to 14, revealed that 95 per cent of respondents reported stress, 94 per cent reported fatigue and 81 per cent reported anxiety.

"As a school leader I am beyond exhausted. I see my [teacher] colleagues are stressed, anxious and already close to burning out," states one survey respondent.

Half of respondents stated that they "never, rarely and occasionally" observe physical distancing taking place in classrooms, hallways and school grounds. And just 18 per cent believe that current efforts to cohort students will prevent COVID-19 infections, as they are observing students intermixing with others outside their cohort at lunchtime, on buses and at bus stops, at recess or breaks, and before and after school.

"As hard as we try, we cannot keep them two metres apart," reported a survey respondent.

The reports of stress, fatigue and anxiety are concerning, but students and teachers are doing the best job that they can," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

"In most cases, students are working really hard with teachers to meet the guidelines," he said. "Everyone wants schools to stay open, but we need them to be safe and supported."

The survey of more than 1,600 teachers and school leaders also measured COVID-19 prevention, infection and control:

- Student handwashing is rare, while disinfectant use is more common. Many teachers are concerned about adequate staffing for sanitizing and who is responsible for disinfecting classroom surfaces.
- Air flow anxiety with winter coming: 45 per cent of survey respondents are trying to create more ventilation for their students, either by opening windows, teaching outdoors or other solutions. But some classrooms don't have windows, some windows are locked shut, and outdoor classes will become difficult to accommodate when winter comes.
- Seventy-one per cent of teachers and school leaders believe that it will be a challenge to have parents or guardians pick up a student in a timely manner from school when their child/youth shows symptoms or has a presumptive case of COVID-19.
- Sixty-six per cent of respondents identified the challenge of cleaning and disinfecting all the items the presumptive COVID-19 student touched or used while isolated as soon as that student is picked up. Fifty per cent also noted the additional challenge of items being removed from the classroom and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 72 hours.

Administered regularly throughout fall 2020, the pulse surveys are following a group of teachers and school leaders. A second, randomly selected group of teachers and leaders will also be invited to participate each week as a comparison population.

Results from each survey are posted online within 48 hours. For more pulse survey results, visit the ATA website www.teachers.ab.ca

Conventions switch to virtual delivery

Cory Hare (he/him)
ATA News Managing Editor

All teachers' conventions in Alberta will take place online this school year.

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has created uncertainty around the viability of holding in-person gatherings during teachers' convention season, so Provincial Executive Council decided during its meeting of Sept. 25 that all conventions will be virtual this year.

"Teachers' convention is an integral part of our professional development and it's important that it continue, pandemic or no pandemic," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

ATA staff is taking steps to support convention associations to deliver live sessions online. Training and ongoing support are also available for organizers while staff and convention associations collaborate to create the best possible professional development experiences for teachers.

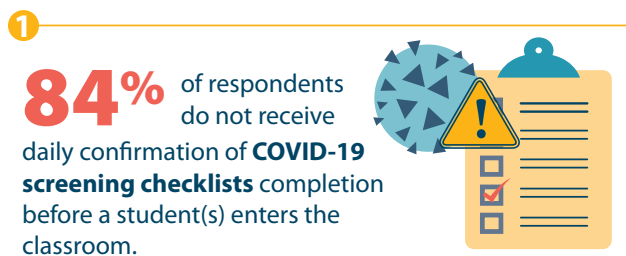
"I know that our volunteer associations, along with the Barnett House staff who provide support, will ensure that convention season remains a highlight of our school year," Schilling said.

Convention schedule

See page 11 for a 2020-21 convention schedule.



convention matters

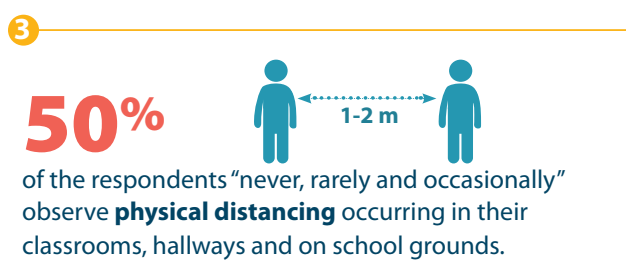


"I am spending most of my day isolating sick students, and following the sick student protocol. Contacting parents, re-explaining the COVID screening checklist and reassuring teachers." – Alberta school principal



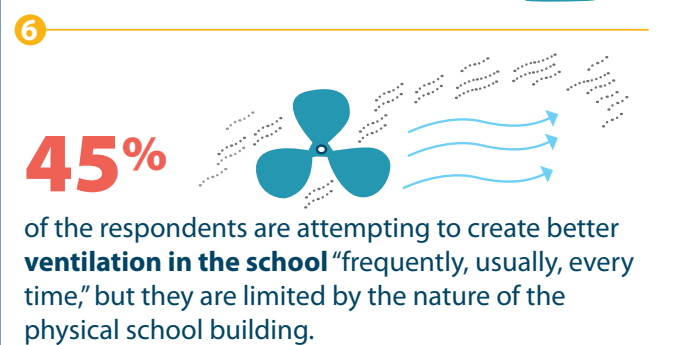
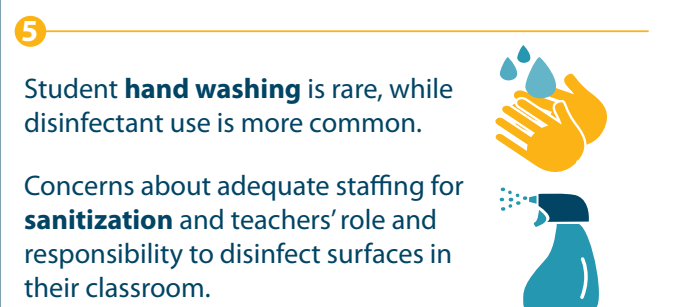
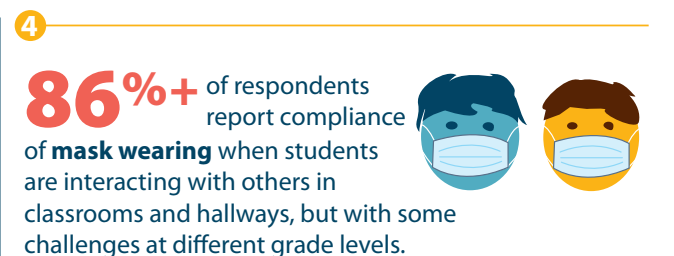
of respondents believe that the **cohorting of students** in place at their school will prevent or contain COVID-19 infection(s). Teachers and school leaders are observing students intermixing at lunchtime, during breaks, on buses, and before and after school.

"The kids all have active lives outside of the building. They do not adhere to cohorting when off campus. As hard as we try we cannot keep them 2 m apart." – Alberta classroom teacher



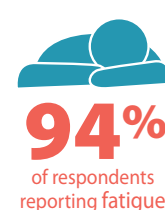
Large and growing class sizes are deemed a significant factor in limiting physical distancing as a preventative health measure.

1 in 4 teachers have over **30 students** in their **largest classes**. Over 9% have more than 35 students in their classroom.



7

Teacher and school leader well-being is of critical concern given the reporting of extreme and unsustainable levels of **fatigue, stress and anxiety** within the profession.



"As a school leader I am beyond exhausted. I see my [teacher] colleagues are stressed, anxious and already close to burning out." – Alberta school leader



Here for you.

We are active and on the job for you—our members. Please visit our website for the most up-to-date information about our office, and of course, the ways we're still here for you.



ATRF
Alberta Teachers'
Retirement Fund Board

Learn more at:
ATRF.com



Apply now
for an ATA Fellowship or Scholarship

Applications are now being accepted for the following:

ATA Doctoral Fellowships in Education

- Two awards of \$15,000
- For members entering or in first year of a doctoral program in education

Nadene M Thomas Graduate Research Bursary

- One award of \$5,000
- For a member enrolled in a graduate program in education
- A research focus on teacher health issues and/or teachers' working conditions

John Mazurek Memorial—Morgex Insurance Scholarship

- One award of \$2,500
- For members who pursue relevant professional development

For more information and to apply

- Visit www.teachers.ab.ca>MyATA> Grants, Awards and Scholarships
- Contact Jessica Grayson, jessica.grayson@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9499 (Edmonton area) or toll free 1-800-232-7208

Application deadline:
Monday, March 1, 2021



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

PD-3-9 2020 09



Like us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/ABteachers



The ATA Educational Trust

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

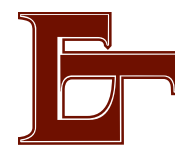
Apply for a **\$700 Dr B T Keeler Continuing Education Bursaries** for teachers wishing to advance their knowledge and teaching skills in a subject area through taking courses.

Application deadline:
May 1, 2020 – 4:00 pm



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

AR-ETF 30a 2020-08



ATA EDUCATIONAL TRUST

DEADLINE EXTENDED

Due to COVID-19 and the cancellation of many classes and events, the Board has extended the deadline for 2019/20 program recipients by one year.

- If you received a B T Keeler Continuing Education Bursary with a claim deadline of August 31, 2020, you now have until **August 31, 2021**.
- If you received a Morgex/Johnson Insurance Centennial Fund for Professional Development or an award to attend an ATA specialist council conference with a claim deadline of December 31, 2020, you now have until **December 31, 2021**.

Please refer to the website for more information!

AR-ETF-20



DIGITAL NEWS

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<http://bit.ly/ATAeNews>

Walking Together project finds its stride

Mark Milne (he/him)
ATA News Staff

The ATA's Walking Together project is alive and well and has a few new wrinkles in the works for 2020–21.

After starting as a short-term initiative funded by the provincial government following the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Walking Together became a permanent part of the ATA last year thanks to funding approval by delegates at the 2019 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA). The Walking Together branding can be found on the majority of the ATA's Indigenous education platforms, such as workshops and teaching resources.

The program's work continues to be delivered primarily through facilitators in the ATA's Professional Development (PD) program area. There are currently 12 Indigenous education facilitators, but work is underway to add six more, as approved at the 2020 ARA.

The positions are assigned regionally, ensuring that facilitators are fanned out across the province rather than being clustered in urban areas.



Melissa Purcell, (she/her), executive staff officer, Indigenous education

Melissa Purcell, the staff officer who leads the ATA's Indigenous education programs, likes to refer to the ATA's continuing work on Indigenous education as the legacy of the Walking Together project.

"A huge part of that project were the Walking Together consultants, the numerous First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders and Knowledge Keepers we engaged — you know, lots of community involvement," Purcell said. "Part of our practice is to acknowledge where we received the teachings from, and it's important we continue to do that across the province."

Connecting cultures

Purcell said an important part of the Indigenous education facilitator's role is to help guide teachers to go deeper into Indigenous topics, to help teachers relate to Indigenous peoples, teachings, language and the land. Facilitators connect teachers with local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Elders,

Knowledge Keepers and people within their community.

"If a teacher says 'I want to foster a relationship with an Elder to learn more about smudge teachings,' that facilitator would help them get in touch with local Elders or Knowledge Keepers," said Purcell.

She points out that the job is much more than just providing a phone number or email. There is cultural protocol and etiquette that's involved whenever asking Elders for support with cultural teachings. Facilitators help teachers navigate the cultural complexities of situations like offering tobacco, honoraria or how to host an Elder.

New resources on the way

Under the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation umbrella, the ATA's Stepping Stones resource bank will continue to grow this year. Three new resources are expected within the next few weeks. One is on the Métis Nation of Alberta, a second is on policies of assimilation, while the third focuses on the forced relocation of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

In addition to the two new Stepping Stone resources, PD is hoping to field test two new workshops throughout

the upcoming year. One workshop will focus on anti-Indigenous racism while the other will include content related to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Purcell said she wants to connect the issue to education and how it can be applied within the classroom.

"I feel incredibly grateful we have support of the membership," she added, "that they want more support and more resources and more workshops on Indigenous education." ■



Walking Together

More information on the Walking Together project can be found via the ATA website at [teachers.ab.ca](https://www.ata.ab.ca) > My ATA > Professional Development > Indigenous Education and Walking Together.



We're teaching for a better world

Oct. 5 was World Teachers' Day, and this year Alberta teachers joined more than 32 million teachers globally to celebrate and reflect on the work we do. This year, more than ever, we know how important it is for teachers and school administrators to work together to create safe learning spaces for all students, especially given the lack of government support. The theme for this year's World Teachers' Day was "Teaching for a better world: together in strength and solidarity."

Teaching during a pandemic has not been easy. Well, frankly, nothing since the cancellation of classes in March has been easy for teachers in Alberta and across the world. Throughout the pandemic, I have been meeting regularly with my counterparts from across Canada to discuss how COVID-19 has impacted their province or

territory. The stories and concerns teachers have in Alberta are shared by their colleagues from coast to coast — we are not alone in these strange days. That's what made this year's World Teachers' Day theme so poignant. Since the stresses of returning to the classroom are universal, it is up to us, as teachers, to find ways to support each other in solidarity. We need to stick together now more than ever.

This year, I am honoured to honour you, the dedicated and committed teachers and administrators who show great resolve in showing up every day for your students. This year is nothing like we have ever seen. It will continue to test us as a profession. Together, in strength and solidarity, teachers in Alberta and across the globe will continue to teach for a better world. ■

ATA sends OHS inquiry to school divisions

Concerns about teacher well-being prompt probe of health and safety measures

Kim Clement (she/her)
ATA News Staff

School divisions have until Oct. 5 to respond to requests for information outlined in a letter from the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Sent to all school divisions on Sept. 17, the letter asks superintendents to provide specifics on the policies and procedures in place in schools to ensure the health and safety of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. If a division fails to outline these actions, the Association could pursue a grievance.

"The Association shares the concerns of our members and needs to be confident the measures taken by the division to provide a safe and healthy work environment meet [the division's] OHS obligations," the letter says.

It refers to Section 3 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, which states that employers must take reasonably practical steps to ensure the health and safety welfare of workers and others at or near work sites, to train workers and supply competent supervision, and to communicate

information about any health and safety risks at work sites.

"Along with the *OHS Act*, occupational health and safety language is embedded in the preamble of our central table collective agreement: 'therefore, school boards have an obligation to ensure the safety of their employees.' We want to ensure that boards are doing just exactly that. If there are areas that are of concern, we will expect boards to address them," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

Health and safety, as defined by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, includes physical, psychological and social well-being. For many teachers, school re-entry has placed strains on all three of these areas.

"School divisions said they were ready for near normal operations and the messaging from government, CASS and ASBA is that everything is calm. Our members tell us differently," said Sean Brown, the ATA's associate co-ordinator of collective bargaining.

"The Association has a responsibility to its members to ensure that the working conditions they have when delivering their service are safe and conducive to optimal teaching and learning conditions." ■

NOTICE

On April 8, 2020 a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee established under the *Teaching Profession Act* found that Cari Neudecker engaged in unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee ordered that Neudecker's membership in the Association be cancelled effective April 8, 2020.

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

Pronouns are part of every person's identity

International Pronouns Day seeks to make respecting, sharing and educating about personal pronouns commonplace. Referring to people by the pronouns they determine for

themselves is basic to human dignity. Being referred to by the wrong pronouns particularly affects transgender and gender nonconforming people. International Pronouns Day began

in 2018 and takes place on the third Wednesday of October each year – Oct. 21 this year. Individuals and groups will participate in grassroots activities that they determine at the local level.

For more information about International Pronouns Day, visit pronounsday.org.

PRONOUN PROTOCOL

English

- In English, non-binary students and colleagues may use any of the following singular third-person pronoun combinations (in alphabetical order): he/him, she/her, they/them, xe/xem, ze/zir and others.
- Some may ask that no pronouns be used and that they be referred to by their name only.
- Others may use different sets of pronouns in different settings (such as at work and social settings).

French

- Because French adjectives, nouns and pronouns reflect the masculine or feminine nature of the objects to which they refer, attempts to make the language more gender inclusive are progressing slowly. That said, a number of gender neutral pronoun are starting to become more widely used.
- In addition to the standard elle and il, different types of gender-neutral pronouns are beginning to be used by our French-speaking students and colleagues: objective pronouns such as iel, im and ul, subjective pronouns like ael, ille and ol, and more!

They

- Do you think the singular use of “they” sounds wrong?
- According to the third edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (2005), the singular *they* emerged by the 14th century, about a century after the plural *they*. It has been commonly employed in everyday English ever since.
- The singular *they* was Merriam-Webster’s word of the year in 2019.

General tips

- Don’t assume. If you have any doubt about which pronouns to use, just ask.
- If you make a mistake
 - apologize privately as soon as you can;
 - don’t defend your intentions or justify your mistake;
 - simply commit to do better;
 - acknowledge the importance of getting their pronouns correct in the future.

ATA adopts pronouns policy

At the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly held virtually in August, delegates voted in favour of two resolutions concerning pronouns.

3-19/20

Be it resolved that the Association provide the means to identify preferred pronouns for all Association events for use on nametags.

3-20/20

Be it resolved that the Association’s online member database allow individuals to identify their preferred pronouns.

APOLOGY AND CLARIFICATION

The term “preferred pronouns” was used in the drafts of the resolutions above and this language was eventually presented to and approved by ARA. The Association recognizes that pronouns are a matter of identity, not of preference; the word “preferred” should never have been included in these resolutions. The Association apologizes to 2SLGBTQ+ members and allies for this error. The language of these resolutions will be corrected.

Following up

Although there are currently no face-to-face Association meetings or events planned in the near future (all are being held virtually for the time being), work is underway to develop stickers that can be used at future conferences to identify your pronouns on your event identification.

Work is also underway to enable members to update their pronouns, most likely through the profile management tool that’s available through the Association’s website. Stay tuned.

How should you identify your pronouns for online meetings and meetings?

While participating in online meetings and events, it’s recommended that you include your pronouns in your on-screen display and that you mention them if you’re given a chance to introduce yourself.

“To make our non-binary colleagues and students as comfortable as possible, it’s important that we practice and normalize sharing our own pronouns whenever we meet new people,” says Dan Grassick, secretary to the Association’s Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee.

PRISM goes digital

Are you looking for more information about pronouns or for other resources to support your 2SLGBTQ+ students? Check out the online version of the ATA’s PRISM toolkits, now available through LibGuides at <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/PRISM>.

Information on this page compiled by ATA Dan Grassick (they/them), secretary to the Association’s Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee.

I met a kid named James

Ivan Coyote (they/them)
Special to the ATA News

When I graduated from F.H. Collins Senior Secondary School in Whitehorse, Yukon in 1987, my plan was to never set foot in another high school again. I was going to put my hometown in the rear-view mirror, move to the big city, and be a writer and an artist.

It is 33 years later, and I just finished the first draft of my thirteenth book. I'm a full-time writer and performer. Before the pandemic, I spent an average of 220 days a year on the road, performing in theatres and festivals all over the world. My real life has exceeded every dream my teenage self ever dared to imagine.

I kept every promise I made to myself back then, except for the part where I never set foot in another high school again.

Eighteen years ago, a teacher friend of mine asked me to come to her school and read some of my work to her students, and talk to them about writing and the writing life. I still remember that day, how my heartbeat thrummed in my ears as I drove out to Burnaby, how my mouth went dry as I walked through those big glass doors and the smell of a high school hallway rattled all of my own ghosts loose in my chest.

My teacher friend met me in the office and walked me down to the library. A bell wheezed from a geriatric speaker somewhere and the kids started to file in. The jocks sat in the back, elbowing each other and snickering. The quiet girl sat in the front row, her nervous smile greeting mine. The librarian introduced me and a hush slowly rippled and settled over 100 teenagers. They listened. They laughed. They asked smart questions. *When did I first come out of the closet? What did my parents say? Did my grandmother still*

love me? How did I get to be so brave?

This is the power of stories. The power of speaking up. The learning that comes from listening.

In the car on the way home I rewound and replayed every moment. I thought about how different my deeply closeted high school years would have been if someone like me had stood up in the library back in 1985 and simply said, "I am queer and unashamed. I am trans and I am loved."

I did the math in my head. Ten per cent of 100 kids is 10 kids. *I might have made difference today for at least 10 kids, I thought. I told them they were loveable. I told them they were worthy. I might have showed them they were not alone.*

“That’s the thing about pronouns. They are short little words that can easily become weapons if wielded incorrectly.”

If I do the math again today, I have now performed for over half a million youth, in public and private schools on five different continents. I meet them, I tell them stories, and I listen to theirs. I also speak to teachers, and school staff and administrators, too. We talk about gender neutral bathrooms and change rooms. We talk about chosen names. We talk about respect. We talk a lot about pronouns.

Describing what it feels like when someone refers to me by the wrong pronoun is a difficult thing to do. It is not enough for me to just ask the men to imagine what it would feel like if a room full of strangers suddenly insisted on calling you a lady. It is not enough for me to ask the women what it would do to your spirit if you dressed up for a nice dinner and the waiter repeatedly called you sir. If you are a person who

has always (for the most part) fit into the gender box you were assigned at birth, then you will never truly be able to understand me, but I will attempt to tell you about it anyway. I'm going to try to explain it to you using the best tool this world has ever invented to help us understand each other. I'm going to tell you a story.

A few years ago, I was speaking at a conference for LGBTQ2S youth. Hundreds of kids from all over the province had travelled to be there, along with their ally teachers. There was a feeling of elation in the building. Queer and trans kids were gathering and talking. No one was going to call them a faggot in the hallways. No

told the name James was trying to get everyone he knew to forget, his well-meaning teacher had just outed James to three hundred other kids, most of whom, like me, had no idea James was trans until someone who probably cared about him very much had announced it to everyone. James didn't ever look up from the table he was sitting at for the rest of the day. I watched him board the school bus at three o'clock: silent and walking alone. He had arrived as himself, but left as someone else. Someone he used to be. Even in a room full of LGBTQ youth and their allies, James left feeling less seen, less welcomed and less safe than he was when he arrived.

That's the thing about pronouns. They are short little words that can easily become weapons if wielded incorrectly. I am a full-grown adult. I know who I am, and I have worked for decades to feel comfortable in this body, to carve out a space shaped exactly like me in this world that works so hard to force us all into one of two narrowly defined and binary boxes. I'm privileged enough to be able to be out about being a trans and non-binary person. Being referred to by the wrong pronoun rarely results in me being fired instead of hired, reviled instead of respected, or placed in danger instead of being safe. But even still, it stings. It feels like you are talking about me, but pointing to a place in the room where I am not standing. Like you don't really see me, or do not care enough about me to learn to correctly pronounce my name.

But please don't think about me as you decide whether or not to care about respecting your students' pronouns. Please think of kids like James, and promise me you will do better by him. ■



Ivan Coyote is an award-winning author, filmmaker and storyteller.



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READY... SET... GROW

This is the time of year when teachers turn their attention to (among dozens of other things) their professional growth plans.

TEACHERS' CONVENTIONS

North Central Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 4–5, 2021
 Contact: Carryl Bennett, president,
 president@nctca.ab.ca
 Website: www.mynctca.com

Calgary City Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 11–12, 2021
 Contact: Lisa Fulton and Shae Frisby, co-
 presidents, cctcapresident@gmail.com
 Website: www.cctca.com

Endless Skies Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 11–12, 2021
 Contact: Adrienne Peoples-Sprecker, president,
 adrienne.sprecker@icloud.com
 Website: http://estca.teachers.ab.ca

Teachers' conventions enhance professional practice by providing teachers and school leaders with opportunities to share innovative practices, discuss professional issues and meet the learning goals identified in their professional growth plans.

Central Alberta Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 18–19, 2021
 Contact: Brenda Lewis, president,
 brenda.lewis@wrsd.ca
 Website: www.mycatca.com

Palliser District Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 18–19, 2021
 Contact: Jennifer Munton, president,
 president@pdtdca.org
 Website: www.pdtdca.org

Southeastern Alberta Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 18–19, 2021
 Contact: Cam Bernhard, president,
 cam.bernhard@grasslands.ab.ca
 Website: https://seatca.atapd.ca/

South Western Alberta Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 18–19, 2021
 Contact: Kathy Thomas, president,
 kathyl.thomas@gmail.com
 Website: www.swatca.ca

Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 25–26, 2021
 Contact: Lloyd Bloomfield, president,
 president@getca.com
 Website: www.getca.com

Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention

Dates: March 4–5, 2021
 Contact: Jodie Dell, president,
 mptcpresident@gmail.com
 Website: mptca.teachers.ab.ca

Teachers' conventions will take place online during the 2020–21 school year. Teachers are advised to participate from home or other non-school locations.

If you have any questions, please contact executive staff officer Danny Maas at daniel.maas@ata.ab.ca.

SPECIALIST COUNCIL OPPORTUNITIES

The ATA's 21 specialist councils have begun planning collaboration opportunities for teachers across the province in the 2020–21 school year. While many in-person conferences are being postponed to alternate dates or future years, their work to provide meaningful, relevant, subject-specific professional development for Alberta teachers continues to be strong. Additionally, some councils have begun planning digital conferences and experiences for teachers.

Second Languages and Intercultural Council

The council is offering bursaries for members to attend the online conference of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers.
 Theme: Celebrating Languages Without Borders
 Date: Oct. 17, 2020

Mathematics Council

Event: Digital conference
 Date: Oct. 23–24, 2020

Fine Arts Council

Event: Virtual event
 Theme: Fine Arts Virtual Road Trip: Bridging Curricula
 Date: Oct. 24, 2020

Science Council

Event: Digital Connect
 Date: Nov. 7, 2020

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on future events and professional development opportunities provided by the specialist councils, please visit their respective websites listed on the right.



Please visit: <https://bit.ly/SpecialistCouncilJoin> to select your no-cost membership to any one of these councils.

Alberta School Learning Commons Council
 Career and Technology Education Council
 Conseil français
 Council for Inclusive Education
 Council for School Leadership
 Council of School Counsellors
 Early Childhood Education Council
 Educational Technology Council
 English as a Second Language Council
 English Language Arts Council
 Fine Arts Council
 First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council
 Global, Environmental and Outdoor Education Council
 Health and Physical Education Council
 Mathematics Council
 Middle Years Council
 Outreach Education Council
 Religious and Moral Education Council
 Science Council
 Second Languages and Intercultural Council
 Social Studies Council
<https://aslc.ca>
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<https://leconseilfrançais.com>
<https://cieducation.ca>
<https://csl.teachers.ab.ca>
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<https://ecec-ata.com>
<https://etcata.weebly.com>
<https://eslc.teachers.ab.ca>
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The Alberta Teachers' Association

Council establishes guidelines for meeting attendance

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka (she/her)
 ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meetings held July 8, Aug. 1-2, 4-6, and 20, 2020, via virtual platform

1. Approved the name of the unified Teacher Welfare and Member Services program areas. Commencing on Sept. 1, 2020, the new structure will be called Teacher Employment Services, with Robert Mazzotta serving as its co-ordinator.
2. Named Sean Brown to the position of associate co-ordinator, collective bargaining, and named Tim Jeffares to the position of associate co-ordinator, discipline, with both positions commencing on Sept. 1, 2020.
3. Approved in principle the Association's "Priority Areas for Successful and Safe Re-Entry to Alberta School Buildings" document.
4. Approved in principle 13 resolutions for submission to the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly.
5. Addressed emergent resolutions that remained on the order paper when the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly was adjourned. They were referred to Council for disposition.

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Sept. 24-25, 2020, via virtual platform

1. Approved the final form of two electoral ballots for distribution to the membership.
2. Approved a statement of Association program emphases for 2020/21.
3. Approved all 2021 teachers' conventions be held virtually on their assigned dates.
4. Declared an end to the governance emergency, which applied to all subgroups, to address governance issues created by the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Notwithstanding any other administrative guidelines, authorized the following directives be observed with respect to the activities of Council, Council committees and Council members until a future time determined by Table Officers Committee based on its ongoing review of the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - a. Meetings of Council and Council committees are to be conducted virtually;
 - b. Recognizing their potential to be in contact with multiple cohorts of teachers, Council members are expected to attend external congregated activities and events organized by the Association or Association subgroups virtually
 - c. Where their attendance in-person is necessary given the nature of an activity, a Council member may attend, observing all necessary precautions including, but not limited to, masking, social distancing, food and material hygiene and handwashing.
6. Notwithstanding any other administrative guidelines, policies, framework or constitutional provisions, authorized the following directions be provided to Association subgroups (locals, convention associations, specialist councils, committees other than committees of Council, etc) with respect to their meetings, activities and events until a future time determined by Table Officers Committee based upon its ongoing review of the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - a. Recognizing the potential of subgroup events to bring teachers from multiple cohorts together, the preferred and default option is for subgroup events to be conducted virtually
 - b. Subgroup activities that might, contrary to the direction provided, take place, partially or entirely, in congregated settings must comply with all orders, regulations and directives of the chief medical officer of health, regional medical officers of health, the province, the municipality or school authority in which they are occurring; furthermore, such activities must comply with the following conditions:
 - i. in-person attendance must be voluntary; and
 - ii. provision must be made for individuals who choose to do so to attend virtually (with the expectation that Council members and Association staff will attend virtually).
7. Authorized staff to develop for consideration by Resolutions Committee at its December meeting a draft report and potential

PEC POINTS continued on page 13

PEC POINTS

continued from page 12

recommendations concerning district boundaries and representation.

8. Authorized Resolutions Committee to present for Council's consideration at its February Council meeting a draft report on district boundaries and representation for submission to the 2021 Annual Representative Assembly.

9. Authorized disbursement of the 2020/21 budget for international co-operation for 12 international goals, including Project Overseas, ATA Dominica IT Project and Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan.

10. Approved an overexpenditure in the amount of \$2,500 from International Assistance Periodic for disbursement to the Education International Solidarity Fund, through the Canadian Teachers' Federation, in support of teachers, their families and school communities in Lebanon.

11. Authorized staff to engage Decide Campaigns on the development and implementation of a targeted advertising campaign to supplement the "Face of Education" campaign.

12. In accordance with 31(2) of the *Teaching Profession Act*, approved an extension to the 120-day hearing time period for one outstanding case of alleged unprofessional conduct.

13. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for making inappropriate comments containing sexual innuendo to a colleague in the presence of other colleagues. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of reprimand and a fine of \$750.

14. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for sending an email to a colleague that contained highly inflammatory, disparaging and denigrating comments about the teacher and included the threat of physical violence. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a severe letter of reprimand and a fine of \$1,500.

15. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for removing a student from the student's home without the permission of the student's parents and for not co-operating with the investigating officer. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of reprimand addressing charge one and a letter of severe reprimand and a fine of \$1,000 addressing charge two.

16. Received the report of the professional conduct appeal committee that reviewed the decision of a hearing committee of the professional conduct committee (PCC). The appeal committee found the decision made by the PCC hearing committee on guilt and penalty to be reasonable and, as a result, the appeal was denied.

17. Approved two resolutions for submission to the 2021 Annual Representative Assembly resolving that

a. optimal teaching and learning conditions include reasonable limits on class size and complexity, and

b. school and system leaders be members of the bargaining unit.

18. Approved the Fall Professional Development Area Conference and the Spring Professional Development Area Conference be held virtually.

19. Approved the Fall Planning meeting be conducted virtually.

20. Referred to staff for study and report to the October meeting of Council a recommendation that all members of Council be made whole to benefits of pensionable service, effective Jan. 1, 2020.

21. Named field members to field experiences committees; amended the Central Table Bargaining Committee frame of reference; renamed the Pension Committee to the Pension, Benefits and Insurance Committee and amended its frame of reference; established the Bargaining Advisory Committee and approved its membership and frame of reference; amended administrative guidelines pertaining to committee appointment processes; disbanded the Well-Being of Children and Youth Committee and the Teacher Welfare Services Committee, with thanks, retroactive to June 30, 2020; and named a field member to represent the Association on the Alberta Education French Language Arts 30 Diploma Examinations Committee. ■

ATA expands its online PD offerings

Mark Milne (he/him)

ATA News Staff

Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ATA's Professional Development (PD) program area now has 58 new virtual webinars that teachers can access online.

When the pandemic forced the government to abruptly shutter classrooms last spring, PD staff quickly responded by developing a variety of webinars to help teachers with some of the main challenges they were facing.



Mark Swanson (he/him), PD co-ordinator

"We had to evolve to meet the circumstances of the pandemic and yet still meet the demands of our membership," said PD co-ordinator Mark Swanson.

The result is a collection of sessions on subjects such as Google Classroom, presentation software and online quizzes. The recorded webinars can be found on the Professional Development page of the ATA website under the heading "Online Professional Development."

In addition to the webinars, PD staff officers also hosted half-hour live sessions called ConnectEd. These enabled teachers to connect with other teachers.

"It was support," said Swanson. "It wasn't about teaching some class or wanting help with content. It was more about teachers just supporting teachers."

Workshops re-imagined

PD staff also found that they had to re-imagine their existing workshops, many of which have now been modified for online delivery.

"Even though it may now be possible to present them in person, it's still very difficult because of the interactivity required between participants," said Swanson.

He said PD will do its best to accommodate any requests received from the field.

PD staff officer Danny Maas drew on his previous work experience as an educational technology consultant in order to develop tools that teachers need.

He believes that the experience that he and his PD colleagues have gained throughout the pandemic will have a lasting impact on how the program area delivers services.

"We're now developing shorter, on-demand, bite-sized modules for our teachers, so they can access them whenever they may need them." ■



Danny Maas (he/him), PD staff officer

Connect with PD

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U of C researcher receives Educational Research Award

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers' Association has named [Dr. Rahat Zaidi](#), from the University of Calgary, as the recipient of its 2020 ATA Educational Research Award.

Zaidi is an associate professor and chair of Language and Literacy at the U of C's Werklund School of Education. Her research study was conducted with an interdisciplinary team and in collaboration with the Calgary Board of Education, whose efforts were led by Christine Oliver, system principal with the district's ELL and Diversity Services.

Optimizing Parent-Teacher Collaboration in Refugee Children's Learning, completed in April 2020, examined the challenges and barriers for refugee families and their children's teachers in establishing the relationships critical for student learning and success.

"To build a strong, positive parent-teacher relationship requires time, trust and effective communication," said ATA president Jason Schilling. "Dr. Zaidi's research is important because it lays out what needs to happen when our students and their families are refugees. The challenges in those situations are very different and we need the resources to address them."

In her study, Zaidi cites the time obligation required to attend English language classes, lack of knowledge and experience with Alberta's education system, and lack of access to technology as a few of the challenges hindering the ability of parents who are refugees in forming relationships with their children's teachers.



SUPPLIED

Rahat Zaidi's research on collaboration between teachers and refugee parents has earned the ATA's 2020 Educational Research Award.

The [ATA Educational Research Award](#) is valued at \$5,000 and is presented annually to a faculty of education member or sessional lecturer at an Alberta university or university college who has undertaken high-quality research on classroom teaching and learning. ■



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"[AnimalTales] directly aligns with curriculum and has solid cross curricular activities to promote empathy, character building, and community awareness."
 -Grade 2 Teacher, Brooks, Alberta



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TALENT

October 6, 2020 | Volume 55, Number 3

ATA staff share their gratitude for teachers

Thanks giving

I am thankful for teachers because ...



For inspiring me to be the best that I can be, and for teaching me that character is my true destiny. This was true when I was in kindergarten, and it is true today.

Didi Heer (she/her)
Accountant, subgroup services



Of their ability to make a difference in the lives of children. I am thankful for the many hats that each teacher wears, their dedication to supporting students and how they take joy in the successes of their students. Teachers inspire us to dream, to open our minds,

to think for ourselves, to strive for more, to never give up. Their relentless efforts every day to ensure success and demonstrate caring create the fabric of our society.

Michelle Glavine (she/her)
Executive staff officer, Teacher Employment Services



For inspiring me through their passion for their work with students. Teachers will often go to school early to prep or mark, work all day and attend meetings that last late into the evening because they are alight with a fire for reaching all students. Their passion has inspired us to develop new collections and services in the library.

Sandra Anderson (she/her)
Librarian



Je suis reconnaissant envers les enseignants, car ils s'investissent corps et âme pour relever les nombreux et imposants défis que leur confie la société.

David Martin (il)
Administrative officer,
French services



They are a very resilient bunch who, although they work in an environment full of daily joys and opportunities for unique

interactions, also face challenges from so many directions. In the face of it all, teachers continue to humbly dedicate their time and energy to helping others, often putting others' needs in front of their own.

Keith Hadden (he/him)
Associate co-ordinator, Teacher Employment Services, SARO

- Experiencing their passion for teaching led me to mine.
- They never give up on students.
- They are flexible and resilient every day, besides having these qualities during a pandemic.
- They helped grow my children into adults who are confident in their ability to learn.

Joni Turville (she/her)
Associate executive secretary



Their gift of teaching and shared knowledge is one that keeps on giving during an individual's lifetime and many benefit from their learning. Society as a whole profits from the educational contribution of teachers. The evidence is all around us, and I believe no one

becomes who they are without having been inspired by a teacher.

Joan Steinbrenner (she/her)
Document Production manager



I am thankful for teachers because you are at the heart of democratic citizenship. You believe in equity, fairness and justness, and this guides your work every day. Your work makes all of us better.

Cory Schoffer (he/him)
Executive staff officer, non-departmental



They dive in heart first, making connections with their students, colleagues, families and communities.

Nancy Luyckfassel (she/her)
Executive staff officer,
Professional Development



So many have shaped and continue to shape my life in wonderful ways. This fall, I am particularly

thankful for my daughter's kindergarten teacher, who is bringing a little extra joy to my girl — and her classmates, I'm sure — during a pandemic. The joy translates to the parents, who can get a few precious hours of quiet time.

Lindsay Yakimyshyn (she/her)
Administrative officer,
Association administration
and research



They create the future by helping one generation flourish into the next.

Phil McRae (he/him)
Associate co-ordinator,
research