

Take it outside!

Teachers embrace outdoor learning.

See page 12.

Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



Beyond COVID

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# ATA NEWS

October 27, 2020 | Volume 55, Number 4

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



CORY HARE

Edmonton high school principal outlines the challenges and stresses involved in dealing with a large number of COVID-19 cases.

See story on page 5.

## RELATED...



### Crisis level

Stress and exhaustion due to COVID are unsustainable.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on page 2.



### Taking the pulse

COVID continues to place untenable strain on teachers.

See story on page 5.

### Public schools can succeed

Rural principal shares perspective on school choice.

Read Viewpoints on page 3.

### Fit for the shredder

ATA calls on education minister to reject curriculum advice.

See story on page 4.

### Under attack

Unions feel the chill of government delays and layoffs.

See story on page 4.



## Crisis levels of stress and exhaustion are not sustainable



### EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Obviously, teachers are dealing with a lot this year: administering and enforcing new protocols for every aspect of student interaction — new recess routines, new lunch routines, new end-of-day routines; planning a bunch of new lessons because previous activities are no longer COVID friendly; finding new resources, manipulatives and handouts because old ones don't work anymore.

Some teachers are preparing for livestreaming of classes or online delivery as well as in-person delivery. Many teachers have to learn new technologies being implemented by school divisions. Some teachers had to completely revise course sequencing and timings to adjust for new synchronized delivery plans and quartermester systems.

Not to mention larger classes, more supervision, in-classroom lunches and more internal coverage when substitute teachers are not available.

Then there's the cleaning. Eighty-six per cent of all teachers and school leaders are taking on cleaning and/or sanitization tasks in their school, and six in 10 teachers are spending between

20 minutes and one hour each day on it.

This is all before any positive COVID cases show up. There is definitely workload associated with that, as isolation protocols have to be implemented, extra cleaning needs to happen and plans need to be enacted to enable measures of at-home teaching and/or learning. Recently, we learned that principals are even being asked by Alberta Health Services to do contact tracing.

These problems were predictable. The Association brought these concerns to government, but government did not listen.

What the province refused to acknowledge — apparently with school board and superintendent complicity — is that schools would not be able to shoulder these burdens without additional support.

The government refused to put forward any money for schools to hire staff to manage the unending issues created by trying to operate schools during a pandemic.

The premier's glib quip that teachers will just need to "tidy up" echoes in our ears.

Imagine how the burden could be

better managed if we hired more janitors, more educational assistants, more office staff and more administrators. Imagine how teachers could focus on teaching, learning and supporting student well-being if the teachers themselves were better supported.

And, to speak in language the government might understand, imagine how the economy could be buoyed by putting more unemployed Albertans to work in a constructive and needed way to support Alberta's students and to help ensure that schools stay open so parents can keep working.

As teachers, we often do what needs to be done and we take on what is needed without making ourselves a priority. That cannot happen this year.

COVID-19 is here to stay for awhile, but this workload on school staff is just not sustainable.

School divisions and the government must step up and work to add in supports for school staff, because "June tired" can't last for eight months.

To put it in your words, from the survey: "I try to be positive as much as possible and to be my best, but I can't keep this up." ■

## New UCP policies are out of touch



### Q & A

Dennis Theobald  
ATA Executive Secretary

under the jurisdiction of the Labour Relations Board," effectively splitting the Association into a union and a separate professional body.

Policy 28, approved by 77 per cent, would "create a self-governing professional regulatory association for Alberta Teachers [*sic*] that is responsible for Teacher/ Principal: i. certification, ii. professional conduct and practice, iii. professional qualifications, and iv. continuing teacher competency." This would download to a new professional body duties currently performed by the ATA (policing of conduct and practice) and the Government of Alberta (certification), while providing a structure for compulsory, government-directed assessment of competency, all to be paid for out of the pockets of working teachers.

A third policy, (No. 3, conveniently), was not specifically targeted at teachers but would sweep up all organized labour. Passed by 81 per cent of voting delegates, the policy would "make Alberta a right-to-work jurisdiction." As defined in the accompanying rationale, this would entail legislation "such that no worker can be required to join a collective bargaining unit to be awarded or hired in any role. Further, no employer [could] be compelled to deduct union dues with out [*sic*] the prior written confidential consent of the employee."

Taken together, these three policies

(and indeed many of the 27 others passed) reveal the United Conservative Party base to be a radical, ideologically-driven political clique that is deeply hostile to public services in general and to public education and the Association in particular. And this is why my concern is somewhat tempered—I believe that the several hundred delegates who voted on these misbegotten proposals are deeply out of touch with mainstream Alberta and entirely ignorant of the culture of the school and classroom that has, over the course of many decades, made Alberta a world leader in education.

As Premier Kenney has said previously, he "holds the pen" and will determine which of these bad ideas might metastasize into legislation. Whatever your personal beliefs about the premier, he is a shrewd politician with a shrewd politician's instinct for self-preservation, and so I expect that, discretion being the better part of valour, these bad ideas will be left to moulder on the shelf.

There are some important learnings to be had here. First of all, politics in Alberta are intensely local, and the importance of ongoing contact with individual MLAs cannot be underestimated. Teachers need to exercise the skills that they have honed in their classrooms and communicate directly to their MLAs, and particularly to UCP backbenchers, why the directions proposed by these

resolutions are bad for students, teachers, parents and the province. Our elected representatives need to know how having both professional and union functions united in the Association creates an organization that rises above the immediate interests of its members to consider and advance the greater public good.

Second, Albertans tend, at the end of the day, to be pragmatic and will reject politicians who advance "solutions" that are nothing more than an attack upon deeply beloved institutions, including public education, and respected individuals, including teachers. In the midst of a fundamental economic transition and a global pandemic, Albertans do not want their government to go to war with teachers. Your MLA may need you to remind them of this.

There are some who will regard my comments above as being anti-UCP and in contradiction to the Association's commitment to being nonpartisan. This is mistaken. The ATA, as provided for in its legislated objects, will always take a position on education policy; what we won't do is support for election any given candidate or party. In my 20 years on Association staff, we have taken on various Progressive Conservative governments and even the New Democratic government. I assure you, we are equal-opportunity irritants. ■



# Rural schools could teach Kenney about choice in education



## VIEWPOINTS

**Kevin Van Lagen**  
Principal  
Altario School and Consort School

Kevin Van Lagen administers a Facebook page entitled *Prairie Principal*, which originally published this piece on Oct. 12.

As is the case with all my articles, the following is my personal opinion. It does not represent the views of my employer. I normally do not comment on anything political, but as a voice for rural education, I have a few things to say.

Premier Kenney took time on Thanksgiving weekend to release a somewhat confusing answer about choice in education. So while I wait for my turkey to cook, I thought I would respond from a rural, public school principal perspective.

First, in our riding of Drumheller-Stettler, we elected a UCP MLA with almost 77 per cent of the vote in the 2019 election. Nate Horner is a hardworking MLA who consistently advocates for rural issues and does an excellent job representing his constituents. He also has a strong understanding of rural education and emphatically supports local schools. Many, many of the citizens (including teachers) that voted for Nate share his support for local rural schools. One doesn't have to be a left-wing ideologue to support public schools. As much as the premier tried to insinuate this in his video clip, the fact is rural, conservative citizens do support public education.

Second, rural citizens do want a choice when it comes to education. They want to have the choice to send their children to their local community school. Unfortunately,

in the past year, several rural schools have closed in Alberta. The premier and the education minister did nothing to protect this choice for local citizens and just referred to it as a local school board decision.

Third, rural citizens also want the opportunity to send their children to a public school down the road, but if they are just across an arbitrary divisional line, that choice is taken away. The premier has done nothing to allow parents to choose schools for their children that are a better fit. For example, we are regularly contacted by parents who want to send their

“Rural communities understand that we are more sustainable with strong rural schools.”

children to Altario School because of our agriculture program. Parents realize that some children may be better served with this non-traditional school program. If they are not in our catchment area, it is up to the neighbouring division to release them. Failure to do so means that if these students do end up coming to our school, the provincial government keeps the transportation funding and thereby limits parent choice.

Fourth, rural parents in Alberta want local public schools that are robust, vibrant and centres of innovation. Look at the amount of financial donations that rural schools receive from their local

communities. I have posted this before, but I will say it again, both of my schools receive donations in the tens of thousands of dollars each year. It's not because our communities are fabulously wealthy. It's because they value the local school. I have never heard parents say that the best thing we could do for our local rural school is to have a private school open up down the road, or to encourage parents to homeschool. Rural communities understand that we are more sustainable with strong rural schools.

Fifth, some rural schools are demonstrating the ability to be entrepreneurial. The premier and education minister would do well to have a look at what is happening in these rural public schools. With the support of the community, rural education has the ability to transform the way public schools operate. We have made and are

making choices in public education that are for the betterment of education and rural Alberta. We are creating a blueprint to help rural schools and communities thrive.

Personally, I don't believe it is about choice for the premier. Rather, it is about devaluing public education. It's about driving a wedge between educators and their communities. It's not even about the bottom line. I believe it's just an inherent belief that all teachers are left wing, and that conservative supporters will enjoy these types of messages. So, to the premier: come to rural Alberta. We will show you what choice in education really looks like. ■

## YOUR VIEWS

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Indigenous perspectives needed in modern curriculum

Thank you for your editorial in issue 55-3 of the *ATA News* (“Commit to truth and reconciliation or take off the orange shirt.”)

As a masters student in Indigenous education through the University of Saskatchewan, I continue to make room in my mind and heart for Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. The best way to understand the difference between the two is that knowledge is learning *about*, and perspective is learning *from*. Our curriculum must continue to work at understanding Indigenous perspectives.

Chris Champion's comments are not only hurtful, they are short-sighted. The promotion of classical Eurocentric perspectives is a promotion of inequality and inequity.

In Social Studies 10, we encourage students to see, listen and consider multiple perspectives. Indigenous perspectives reiterate these same sentiments.

Champion's comments, at their crux, are racist. I appreciate your use of your platform, and I hope your words are well-received across the province. They certainly are with me.

**Conor Pilz**  
Social studies, Jasper Place School, Edmonton

### FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

#### On leaked curriculum documents and the *ATA News* release “Teachers have lost trust in curriculum redesign efforts”

**Rhonda Brunken**  
Absolutely crazy that this government appoints a committee that is so out of touch with education and student learning.

**Anna Nowakowski Hayes**  
Wow...no words. Let's go back to the 50s and make kids memorize facts. So much teaching talent in Alberta. Why won't this government listen?

**Shala Vollman**  
Disgusting and shameful to be living in 2020 and have a committee that is this oblivious or “privileged” making decisions for our Alberta students. This is how the cycle continues.

**Laura Myers**  
Thank you. Keep at them please. It's a disaster waiting to happen.

**Adam Jay**  
It doesn't matter what we as ATA members call for, what we ask for, what we demand etc. etc. The UCP has an agenda, and they have their ear plugs firmly installed. They aren't listening; they never had any intention of listening. It's time for action.

**Cassandra Kostuk**  
It seems completely logical that teachers teaching the curriculum should be integrally involved in creating it!

### FOR THE RECORD

“As an administrator and teacher, I feel that schools are being used as babysitters in order to stimulate the economy.”

– Written response to the ATA's third pulse survey on COVID-19 in schools.





# Unions feeling the chill of government delays and layoffs

Cory Hare  
ATA News Managing Editor

Delay tactics on the part of government agencies are frustrating several of Alberta's public sector unions that are attempting to negotiate new collective agreements with the province.

The Alberta Union of Public Employees (AUPE), United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) and Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA) have all been asked to delay their negotiations with government departments until March 31, 2021, when it's hoped that the long-term implications of the coronavirus pandemic will be more clear.

While the HSAA has agreed to delay its negotiations, the AUPE and UNA have not. In fact, the UNA is considering whether or not to file a complaint with the Alberta Labour Relations Board over a lack of available negotiation dates offered by Alberta Health Services (AHS). Both the UNA and AUPE have been grappling with government moves to reduce staffing levels and push for more privatization.

News surfaced on Oct. 13 that AHS will be outsourcing to private companies more than 9,000 general service jobs, such as linen, cleaning,

laboratory and in-patient food services. On Oct. 21, the AUPE also learned of an additional 930 job cuts that were largely concentrated in rural areas and affected various areas in the agriculture and forestry departments.

"Jason Kenney promised us jobs, but all he's brought is pain, with layoffs, abolishments, cutbacks, cuts to public services, and tax holidays for billionaires that hurt everyone," said AUPE president Guy Smith. "He's not the premier of Albertans, but the premier of betrayals."

UNA president Heather Smith said the Kenney government's approach to lay off workers and outsource to private companies is a "venomous attack on workers."

"This is an unprecedented attack on public services that are provided by public servants that I've never seen before, with no rationale other than ideology, because it's not going to save money," she said.

"This is just such a nightmare in terms of where this government wants to take health care, against all evidence that suggests it is bad for our province."

Smith is concerned that AHS will push for legislation to achieve some of its bargaining goals. By the UNA's count, AHS's proposed package includes 250

proposals that constitute a rollback (a desire to take away a benefit that exists in a collective agreement).

"When we went into bargaining this time we were faced with the most massive rollbacks that have ever been proposed in the history of our bargaining," she said. "This is unique in terms of the ideology and approach to the public sector."

The public sector needs to mobilize the public to push back against government, she said, suggesting that teachers and nurses could be natural allies in this effort.

"I do believe that teachers and nurses share a common vision for a better Alberta, not a worse Alberta."

The Alberta Teachers' Association is set to commence the first phase of negotiations, list bargaining, with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association in early November.

"While we fully expect to be at the bargaining table throughout the coming months, as there are important issues that need addressing, once list bargaining completes we will re-evaluate the political climate before making a final decision on matters to do with bargaining," said Peter MacKay, chair of the ATA's Central Table Bargaining Committee. ■



Heather Smith, president, United Nurses of Alberta

“This is an unprecedented attack on public services ... with no rationale other than ideology.”

## ATA calls on minister to reject curriculum advice

*Leaked proposals suggest removing study of residential schools in early grades*

Jonathan Teghtmeyer  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Proposed curriculum revisions contained in leaked documents are regressive and inappropriate, and highlight the critical problem of cutting teachers out of the curriculum process, says the Alberta Teachers' Association.

On Oct. 21, *CBC News* reported on leaked documents that outline recommendations on the draft K-4 social studies and arts education curriculum. Among other recommendations, the documents call for eliminating all references to residential schools and equity, and advocate for more memorization of facts related to ancient history.

ATA president Jason Schilling said teachers have lost trust in the current government's curriculum redesign efforts.

"It is much more clear now why the government ended the agreement with the ATA last summer to work together on curriculum: teachers would not support this direction for curriculum," he said. "Minister, put these recommendations through the shredder."

The prior drafts of curriculum, developed by hundreds of teachers with input from thousands of Albertans, focused on understanding multiple perspectives and included age-appropriate understandings of the history of colonization in Canada, including residential schools.

In 2016, 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." The Joint Commitment to Action responded to call to action 62 from the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

ATA executive staff officer Melissa Purcell is the Association's expert on Indigenous education. She says the recommendations cannot be taken seriously and agrees they should be rejected.

"The Indian Residential School system was created to erase the cultures, histories, languages and perspectives of Indigenous peoples within Canada, and these recommendations perpetuate that erasure," Purcell said. "The recommendations in these documents perpetuate systemic racism through whitewashing of the draft curriculum."

The recommendations were made in part by UCP government appointee Chris Champion. The ATA has previously called for Champion's dismissal from this work based on his controversial views about curriculum and residential schools.

### Recommendations to be reviewed

Education Minister Adriana LaGrange said the inclusion of teaching about residential schools is nonnegotiable.

"We are absolutely committed to facing reconciliation and to ensuring that the truth about residential schools, about that content, is in our K-6 curriculum," she told reporters in the legislature on the day the leak was reported.

A statement from LaGrange's press secretary, Colin Aitchison, says the

recommendations will be reviewed by curriculum working groups.

"They are not the final curriculum," says Aitchison's statement. "The new curriculum will teach our students a full history of Canada, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit history, including residential schools."

"No final decisions have been made, and a draft version will be available to the public in the new year."

Schilling says curriculum work needs to be led by teachers and that neither Champion nor another advisor, William French, are experts in curriculum, and their backgrounds don't make them suitable for this work.

"Teachers are experts in curriculum; they understand the readiness of young students for different pieces of content, and they understand what it means to bring curriculum to life in the classroom," said Schilling.

Schilling has written to the minister asking for a meeting to specifically discuss the curriculum work, but that request has been rebuffed. Instead the minister says the Association will be invited to attend an upcoming meeting with "all of the education partners" to discuss curriculum progress. ■

# SHRED IT

[www.thelearningteam.ca/shred\\_it](http://www.thelearningteam.ca/shred_it)

**Sign our petition calling on Minister LaGrange to reject her advisors' curriculum proposals.**





# Teachers continue to express concern about workload and safety

ATA News Staff

Teacher stress and exhaustion are continuing at an unsustainable level, according to the ATA's latest pulse survey.

Measuring the time period between Oct. 2 and 5, when nine percent of schools in Alberta reported a COVID-19 case, the survey confirms that well-being, health and safety, pandemic information and decision making, and workload concerns are lingering. These findings on stress and exhaustion have remained at extreme levels since the first pulse survey on Aug. 28.

"This is my 25th year of teaching. I have less preps, more classes, more supervision and dealing with COVID cleaning. I love teaching; however, I am deeply disappointed in the lack of concern for our well-being," said a survey respondent.

The survey's questions around teacher and school leader mental well-being were created using a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) scale measuring anxiety and depression. Using the CDC scale, this survey found that 45 per cent of respondents are feeling nervous, anxious or on edge more than half the days a week and/or nearly every day. Twenty-nine per cent are feeling depressed or hopeless more than half the days a week and/or nearly every day.

"I have never in my 16 years of teaching seen so many staff members breaking down to the point of tears," said a teacher respondent.

Occupational health and safety was a new focus in the third pulse survey. Sixty-eight per cent of all teachers and school leaders are being directed to clean and/or sanitize their school or classrooms by their school boards. Of this group, less than half (44 per cent) know what chemicals are being used when they are cleaning and sanitizing.

"What chemical is being fogged in our schools? Health effects? Long and short term?" wrote a teacher respondent.

Meanwhile, the need to protect students and staff from COVID-19 transmission has added a layer of complexity to the working conditions of teachers and principals. For example, six in 10 teachers are spending between 20 minutes and one hour each day cleaning and/or sanitizing their classroom(s)/school.

"Work load has increased. Cleaning that I should not be doing has increased. Teaching multiple grades, programming for more needs with NO support. Assignable [time has] increased — physical distancing is not happening," wrote another respondent.

Concerns with large class sizes continue to be reported, with one in four Alberta teachers having more than 30 students in their largest class. This has become a source of moderate to extreme concern for teachers and is contributing to anxiety and stress across grade levels.

"I think it's a problem that I got excited when my Math 30-1 class went down to 38 students," wrote one survey participant. "The class sizes are absolutely ridiculous and there is no way to physically distance."

The following actions (among others) were repeatedly noted as considerations by respondents to reduce the stress on teachers and school leaders:

- Reduce class sizes to allow one to two meters of physical distancing.
- Reduce the cleaning and sanitization tasks taken on by teachers and school leaders.
- Reduce teachers' supervision duties.
- Reduce the burden of bureaucratic tasks hindering school leaders from being effective instructional leaders.
- Cancel high-stakes and standardized testing during the pandemic.

For detailed results from this survey, please visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca).



Head custodian Andrey Iwaszko sanitizes a common area at Edmonton's Archbishop O'Leary High School, which is among the Alberta schools that's been hit hardest with COVID-19.

CORY HARE

# Behind the mask

## Edmonton high school principal outlines the daily stresses of dealing with COVID-19

Cailynn Klingbeil  
Special to the ATA News

On the same day that Alberta's chief medical officer warned the province had entered a COVID-19 "danger zone," a high school principal in Edmonton learned three students at his school had tested positive for the virus.

The news that morning at Archbishop O'Leary High School set off a complicated yet practiced reaction, as assistant principals and front office staff dropped everything to focus on contact tracing and informing parents.

"We know what we need to do, and we just get it done," said Todd Eistetter, the school's principal.

Eistetter said the school has unfortunately had a lot of practice: since the start of the school year, 12 positive cases have been recorded at Archbishop O'Leary, including the three cases identified Oct. 20. All have involved students and community transmission, not in-school spread.

With more than 360 schools reporting COVID-19 cases since Aug. 30, a similar response is underway at schools across the province. And as cases in Alberta continue to rise — a record number of 406 new COVID-19 cases were reported Oct. 21 — more schools, staff and students may face the same challenges as Eistetter and the staff of Archbishop O'Leary.

"I would say right now we are in a danger zone, where the coming weeks will really tell that story about whether we are able collectively to bend that curve downwards," said Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta's chief medical officer, at an afternoon update Oct. 20.

At O'Leary, where the cases keep coming, Eistetter said the situation is taking a significant toll on everyone.

"Our custodians, the work that they do to clean and sanitize, is outstanding. Our teachers and support staff, they're working their butts off," Eistetter said. "And I'm not sure how much longer that this can go on, because the stress, the anxiety, the workload for all my staff is nothing that I've ever, ever come across before."

### Logistical challenges

When a family member calls the school to let them know a student has tested positive, Eistetter said staff immediately start checking who shared classrooms with that student. They pore over log books to determine what washrooms the student may have used and where else in the building they may have been.

Next, Eistetter talks to affected teachers and students while assistant principals make phone calls to all parents of possible contacts. Data is shared with the school's central office and Alberta Health Services.

As affected students and staff self-isolate, substitute teachers are brought in. The logistics involved are incredible, Eistetter said.

Amid all this, staff also juggle teaching online classes for the 400 students who chose to learn online, as well as adhering to the many new protocols in place for the 1,500 students learning in person.

With more than a quarter of the student population having to self-isolate less than two months into the school year, Eistetter is worried about the impact on students' learning.

"They're going from in-person to now doing it online, when they had chosen to be in school. And my staff, they're having to turn on a dime from teaching in school to now they're doing it online. So it makes it very, very challenging," he said.

Staff morale is very low, Eistetter said, because everyone is exhausted. He worries about the mental health of his staff.

As COVID-19 cases continue to rise in Alberta, Eistetter isn't sure what more can be done to help schools, staff and students. He thinks the central office is doing a good job trying to address what's going on, and said the government making diploma exams optional this term is a big step.

In the meantime, he knows his staff will jump into action if there are more COVID-19 cases at the school. A strong sense of team prevails, Eistetter said.

"Our staff are doing an excellent job, they really are, but it's taking a significant toll on absolutely everybody."



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## 2020-21 a little...Overwhelming?



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# Diploma exams optional for November

ATA News Staff

The recent decision to make November diploma examinations optional as a result of COVID-19 should be extended for all provincial tests this school year, says ATA president Jason Schilling.

Education Minister Adriana LaGrange announced via Twitter on Oct. 13 that students and parents would be able to opt out of diploma exams in November. Students who opt out will have their school-awarded mark counted as their final mark.

A number of school divisions in the province moved to quarter-semester systems in order to enhance student cohorting efforts and to create more entry points into courses given the uncertainty COVID-19 presented for this school year. This meant that more students would have been participating in November writings than normal.

"The priority for this year must be on student wellness and well-being," Schilling said. "We would

have preferred a clear and definitive decision that took all provincial testing off the table this year, but this is an important first step."

A government release announcing the decision states that normal administration of diploma exams is expected for the balance of the school year and that decisions on future writings will be made one administration at a time.

This approach concerns Schilling, who says the pressure of diploma exams may induce some students to ignore or downplay COVID isolation requirements to avoid missing classes.

"COVID has created so much uncertainty and anxiety in schools, and many students and staff are missing large chunks of school time as a result of requirements to quarantine or self-isolate," he said. "Diploma exams would not be fair to students and, this year in particular, would not produce reliable results."

Schilling says the Association had advocated for a change to provincial testing regimes since the summer and appreciated the support shown by advocacy from school boards like Edmonton Public in recent weeks.

The University of Alberta reported on Twitter that it has decided to accept final, first-quarter grades from the 2020–21 school year as presented on the Alberta Education transcript, regardless of whether or not students have written their diploma exams.

## PAT administration left up to school divisions

The Calgary Board of Education and Edmonton Catholic School Division have added their names to a growing list of school boards that have decided to opt out of grade 6 and 9 provincial achievement tests.

The Government of Alberta's School Re-Entry Plan allowed participation in PATs to be optional at the school authority level for Scenario 1, although PATs will only be administered in English language arts, French language arts and mathematics.

"We believe this is the right decision in a year where direction from Alberta Education and Alberta Health continues to evolve rapidly," reads a statement on the CBE website announcing the decision. "Teachers will remain focused on delivering the programs of study for all courses, and will continue to assess student achievement based on the grade level outcomes as determined by the Province of Alberta."

At least 16 school divisions have opted out of PATs this year. ■



ISTOCK

Diploma exams will be optional in November, but ATA president Jason Schilling hopes to see the decision extended to the entire school year.



## A quick look beyond COVID

Recently I have spent time providing verbal updates to teachers via Zoom at their local council meetings. When I address teachers in this setting, I like to spend part of my time looking back at what transpired over the summer, not only regarding the ATA's advocacy around school re-entry, but also about other concerns teachers have about curriculum and the proclamation of the *Choice in Education Act*.

Though COVID has been a huge focus of late (rightfully so), we must not lose sight of the other initiatives being put forth by the government that mean to undermine and erode public education in Alberta. Not only do we have concerns about the curriculum subject-matter experts being employed by Alberta Education, we also have concerns about the lack of transparency in curriculum development and its eventual field testing. We are also mindful of issues around Bill 32, the labour bill that was passed in the summer, and its potential implications for the ATA. Another concern of Provincial Executive Council are the upcoming deliberations of central table bargaining.

I also predict that we will see further efforts by those opposed to public education to drive a wedge between teachers and the public. We must not let them. Last fall, I published an open letter in several provincial newspapers about how teachers will defend public education in Alberta because it is something we believe in. This year will be one like we have never seen, but if we stay focused on what matters most, we will weather this storm together. As always, colleagues, stay safe. ■

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

# Association awards fellowships and scholarships

Provincial Executive Council has announced the winners of the 2020–21 ATA fellowships and scholarships.

ATA News Staff

## Doctoral Fellowship in Education

Each year, the Alberta Teachers' Association awards two fellowships, valued at \$15,000 each, to ATA members who have been accepted into or have already embarked upon full-time study in a doctoral program in education at a recognized Alberta public university. The fellowship program is intended to recognize academic excellence and to help defray the financial costs of university study.

Kim Edmondson



Kim Edmondson is a high school social studies and English language arts teacher with Black Gold School Division. She recently completed her masters of education at the University of Alberta, where she studied the educational implications of the #MeToo movement in high school social studies.

Her PhD research will further this work as she will explore male social studies teachers' experiences navigating issues related to the #MeToo movement, gender equality and feminism in their classrooms.

Her hope is that her research contributes to male teachers' empowerment as allies for gender equality in both the classroom and the profession.

Lisa Taylor



Lisa Taylor is a PhD student and sessional instructor at the University of Calgary and the Calgary Regional Representative for the Health and Physical Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Reflecting on nine years of experience teaching physical education with the Calgary Board of Education

and initiating and leading two school wellness teams, Taylor plans to study the impact of school wellness initiatives on staff and students' perceived wellness, using the Comprehensive School Health framework. Taylor has the long-term goal of applying her research in leadership positions within Alberta's K–12 education system.

For a list of Association grants, awards and scholarships that are available to subgroups and others, visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) > For Members > Grants, Awards and Scholarships.

Nadene M. Thomas

The \$5,000 Nadene M. Thomas bursary is offered annually to an ATA member who is enrolled in a graduate program in education at a recognized Canadian university. The area of research must focus on health issues affecting teachers and/or on teachers' working conditions.

Daniel Filiatreault



Daniel Filiatreault is a teacher for the Edmonton Catholic School Division at St. Nicholas junior high school. He has been teaching for eight years with experience in early learning kindergarten and secondary school programs. Filiatreault has been researching new teacher attrition at the University of Alberta in the

master of educational studies program. His research is exploring why new teachers are leaving the profession within their first five years. From year one of his career, Filiatreault has volunteered and has been elected to various positions within Edmonton Catholic Teacher Local No. 54. He enjoys serving, representing and advocating for teachers across Alberta. ■





# Ninth Annual Alberta GSA Conference

## Nov 11-15, 2020

This year's **FREE** conference for all junior and senior high school students and GSA teacher-advisors will be held **ONLINE** during non-school hours. Session info coming soon!

**For more information or to register, please email: [FYREFLYS@UALBERTA.CA](mailto:FYREFLYS@UALBERTA.CA)**



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

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**Application deadline:**  
**Monday, March 1, 2021**



PD-3-9 2020 09



## DIGITAL NEWS

**The ATA News is available in a digital format.**

For the latest issue, visit [teachers.ab.ca](http://teachers.ab.ca) > News and Info > ATA News.  
Subscribe to receive an email when a new issue is available.  
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PARKLAND INSTITUTE 24TH ANNUAL ONLINE CONFERENCE

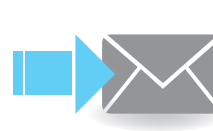
# AFTER the CONTAGIONS

November 16–21, 2020

After the Contagions will explore the complex environmental, medical, racial, economic, political and other contagions that challenge this moment - and, more importantly, what must be done to construct a future world that is more just, democratic and sustainable than the one being left behind.

 <p><b>Monday, Nov 16, 7-8:30 P.M.</b> <b>Kathryn Harrison</b> <i>Professor of political science, University of British Columbia</i></p>	 <p><b>Thursday, Nov 19, 7-8:30 P.M.</b> <b>Armine Yalnizyan</b> <i>President of the Canadian Association for Business Economics</i></p>
 <p><b>Tuesday, Nov 17, 7-8:30 P.M.</b> <b>Danielle Martin</b> <i>Executive vice-president and chief medical executive, Women's College Hospital, and founder of Doctors for Medicare</i></p>	 <p><b>Friday, Nov 20, 7-8:30 P.M.</b> <b>Thomas Homer-Dixon</b> <i>Director of the Cascade Institute, Royal Roads University; University Research Chair, Faculty of Environment, University of Waterloo</i></p>
 <p><b>Wednesday, Nov 18, 7-8:30 P.M.</b> <b>Justice Marion Buller</b> <i>Chief commissioner for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls</i></p>	<p><b>Saturday, Nov 21</b></p> <p><b>2 P.M.</b> Alberta Solutions - panel discussion</p> <p><b>7 P.M.</b> Parkland Party - join us online for a variety show and good conversation</p>

Full conference registration for non-members is \$50 and \$20 for students and people on low income. Individual keynote sessions are \$15.  
Thanks to our wonderful sponsors, the conference is free for current Parkland Institute supporters.



## SLIP US A TIP!

**We want to hear about news in your school, district or local.**  
Please email managing editor Cory Hare at [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER, VISIT  
[PARKLANDCONFERENCE.CA](http://PARKLANDCONFERENCE.CA)

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# Congratulations

to ATA Member **Dianna Jean Kroetch**, recipient of John Mazurek Memorial – Morgex Insurance Scholarship 2019/2020.



Randy Pearson of Morgex Insurance is proud to present Dianna Jean Kroetch, from Strome, Alberta with her cheque for \$2,500.

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The Alberta Teachers' Association





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# TALENT

October 27, 2020 | Volume 55, Number 4



Teachers embrace outdoor classrooms.

# Take it outside!

Our outdoor classroom. We interviewed a new friend!  
Leah Long, St. John Paul II Catholic School, Stony Plain

SUPPLIED



We went on walks around the pond and focused on journaling the weather we experienced!

Karlee Nerh, Ellerslie Campus, Edmonton

SUPPLIED

Task cards on pylons. Recording sheets on clip boards. Persevered through some rain and then this!

Carolyn La Bronca, Sam Livingston School, Calgary

SUPPLIED

Every chance we get before the endless winter hits!

DEHR =

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**Muna Saleh**

Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education  
at Concordia University of Edmonton

Interrupting, Disrupting and  
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Saturday, November 7, 11:00–12:00

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 The Alberta Teachers' Association

PD-80-55g1 2020-10-21



The fall issue of  
the ATA Magazine  
is about to land!



 The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

##### Our feature

A comprehensive look at trauma, including insight from expert Jody Carrington.

##### Wellness

Be involved ... but also take time for you.

##### Technology

Research delves into student attitudes toward tech in the classroom.

##### Diversity

It's important to address each other through the thoughtful use of pronouns.

Snag yourself a print copy in schools in early November.

Digital version at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) > News and Info > ATA Magazine.