

SPRING 2025

THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

# ATA Magazine

The  
**ATA**  
IS  
**You!**

**The strength of the  
teaching profession is  
its members**

## UNSUNG HERO

Indigenous champion  
Valerie McDougall

PAGE 10

## WELLNESS

Take steps to recharge  
this summer.

PAGE 12

## MOST MEMORABLE LESSON

Baby strollers provide message  
on perspective

PAGE 56





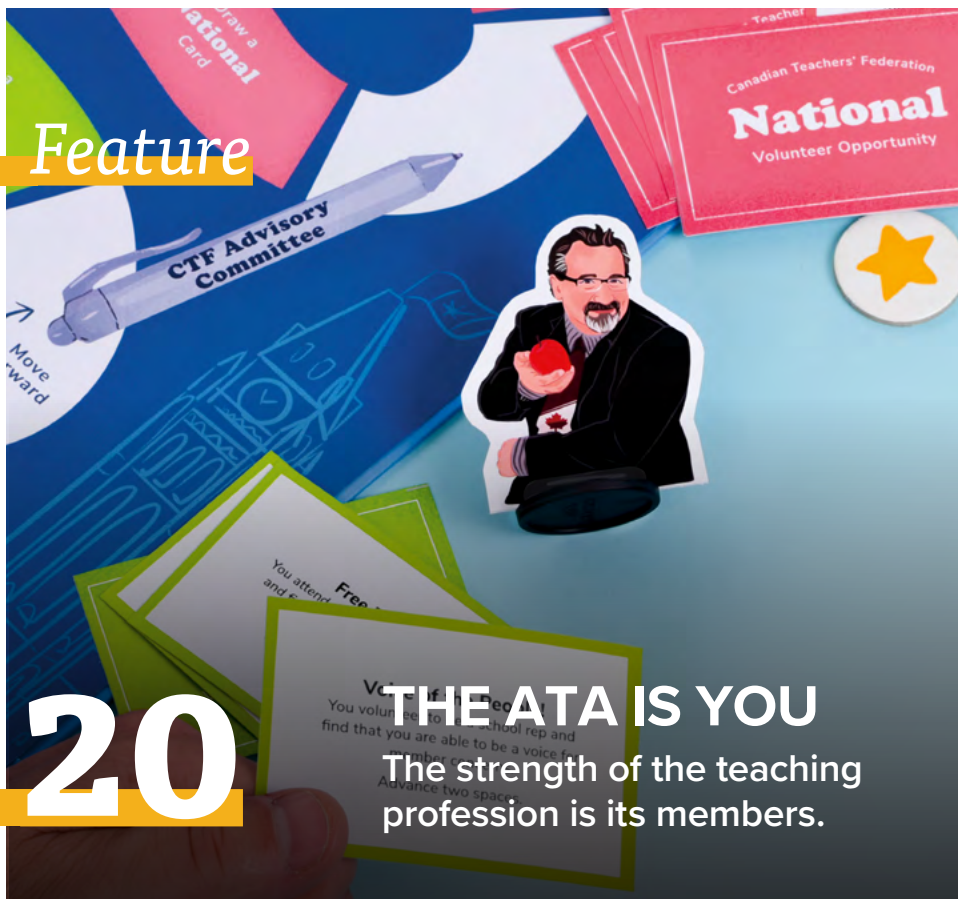


**AT A TIME LIKE THIS,  
WE KNOW YOU'RE  
WONDERING:  
SHOULD  
I BOOK A  
MASSAGE?**

Get the benefits you  
need for your retirement

**Learn more at [MyRetireePlan.ca](https://MyRetireePlan.ca)**

## Feature



Spring 2025 / Vol. 105 / No.3

## Feature

20 The ATA is You

## Outlook

- 4 Letters
- 5 From the President  
Mot du président
- 7 Then and Now
- 8 Looking Abroad
- 10 Unsung Hero

## Bulletin Board

- 3 Editor's Notebook  
Note de la rédactrice
- 12 Wellness
- 14 Technology
- 16 Diversity
- 34 Research Insights
- 48 In Profile

## Learning Commons

- 40 From the Bookshelves
- 42 Kid Lit
- 44 In Focus  
En point de mire

## Teacher to Teacher

- 47 Who's Out There
- 52 In My Humble Opinion
- 53 View Out Your Window
- 55 Teacher Hacks
- 56 Most Memorable Lesson



## RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Alberta teachers sound alarm on explosion in elementary tests.



## KID LIT

Teachers provide recommendations for reluctant student readers.



## IN PROFILE

Alberta a land of opportunity for Pakistani teacher.



# ATA Magazine

SPRING 2025

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Elissa Corsi | [elissa.corsi@ata.ab.ca](mailto:elissa.corsi@ata.ab.ca)

## MANAGING EDITOR

Cory Hare | [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca)

## CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Erin Solano | [erin.solano@ata.ab.ca](mailto:erin.solano@ata.ab.ca)

## ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Lindsay Yakimyshyn

## ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN

Alexa Guse

Bianca Ho

Michael Parillas

## COPY EDITOR

Sandra Bit

## SECTION EDITOR

Shelley Svidal

## FRENCH EDITORS

David Martin, Régine Toal

## ADVERTISING

Trevor Battye Advertising Sales  
[trevor@tbasales.ca](mailto:trevor@tbasales.ca)

The *ATA Magazine* is published three times a year and is distributed to more than 35,000 members. Articles, commentary and editorial material represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect ATA policy.

Acceptance of an advertisement does not imply ATA endorsement.

© 2025 by The Alberta Teachers' Association. Unauthorized use or duplication without prior approval is strictly prohibited.

The Alberta Teachers' Association  
11010 142 Street Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1  
Telephone: 780-447-9400  
Toll Free in Alberta: 1-800-232-7208  
Website: [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)

## TABLE OFFICERS

### President

Jason Schilling

### Vice-President

Greg Carabine

### Vice-President

Peter MacKay

### Past President

Greg Jeffery

### Executive Secretary

Dennis Theobald

### Associate Executive

Secretaries

Elissa Corsi

Robert Mazzotta

## DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

**Calgary City** Allison Scott Davies,  
Kevin Kempt, Darren Moroz

**Calgary District** Karen Nakaska  
**Central** Brenton Baum

**Central East** Murray Lalonde

**Central North** Rick Kremp

**Central South** Brice Unland

**Edmonton District** Deneen Zielke

**Edmonton McMurray** Carmen

Glossop, Greg Meeker, Jay Procktor


**North West** Rhonda Kelly

**South East** Heather McCall

**South West** Katherine Pritchard

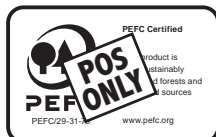
 The Alberta Teachers' Association

 Alberta Magazine  
Publishers Association

 The *ATA Magazine* is a member of the Canadian  
Educational Press Association.

Canadian Publication Mail Agreement No. 40065477  
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to the Alberta  
Teachers' Association.

ISSN 0380-9102



# Contributors



WRITER



ARTIST



PHOTOGRAPHER



## ADANNA ONUEKWUSI | pp. 10 and 11



Adanna Onuekwusi is an illustrator and product designer based in Toronto. She is an industrial design graduate (BDes) from the University of Alberta. Her illustration work explores colour, texture, and cinematic storytelling, and is often shaped by her culture and background. She also loves painting portraits and food. Find more of her work at [www.adxnna.design](http://www.adxnna.design) or @adxnart on Instagram.



## DR. DAVID CHORNEY | p. 14



Dr. David Chorney is a professor in the Faculty of Education, Department of Secondary Education, at the University of Alberta. He has been working in post-secondary education for more than 20 years. Prior to becoming a professor, he worked as a high school teacher for seven years, teaching exclusively physical and health education and outdoor education.



## JENNY REGAL | p. 26



Jenny Regal realized she wanted to be a teacher when she was in high school and, after two gap years, got her B.Ed. at the University of Calgary. The longer she taught, the more she knew that she was where she was meant to be. Getting involved in her professional association gave her even more, and now, decades later, she knows that working to strengthen students' learning conditions and teachers' working conditions has been in her DNA all along.



## H. MARK RAMSANKAR | pp. 28 and 29



H. Mark Ramsankar is retired from teaching after a 35-year career. Mark was president of both the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Canadian Teachers' Federation.



## BROOKE FONTANET | pp. 48 and 50



Based in Slave Lake, Brooke Fontanet is a mother of three, a coffee lover and wild at heart. She specializes in portraits set against the stunning Albertan terrain. From golden hills to quiet lakeshores, nature fuels her creativity and brings her to life. Her approach is emotive and real — capturing beauty, connection and the kind of memories that live not just on your walls, but deep in your heart.



## SHARI NARINE | pp. 49 and 50



Shari Narine is an award-winning journalist. She is the author of a fiction novel and short stories as well as book reviews. She edits nonfiction for Harbour Publishing/Douglas & McIntyre. She resides in Edmonton, although life last year took her to Kenya for six months as a volunteer.



## KRISTA SHEEN | p. 55



Krista Sheen is a dedicated educator with over two decades of teaching experience. Currently teaching Grade 1/2 French immersion, Krista has been shaping young minds since 2001. She spent 15 years teaching in Asia before returning to Edmonton, where she continues to bring her passion for language learning and global perspectives into the classroom.

The Alberta Teachers' Association respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 territories—the travelling route, gathering place and meeting grounds for Indigenous Peoples, whose histories, languages, cultures and traditions continue to influence our vibrant community. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We recognize the land as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.





PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

**Elissa Corsi**

Editor-in-Chief, ATA Magazine  
Rédactrice en chef de l'ATA Magazine


## United we are stronger

**AS THE FINAL BELL RINGS** and the hallways fall silent, summer becomes a well-earned pause for teachers across the province. After months of pouring energy and heart into your students, it's time to rest and recharge. The summer isn't just a break; it's a necessary space to reflect, to breathe and to renew.

This summer, give yourself permission to truly rest. Let go of the lesson plans, the marking, the endless to-do lists. Take long walks, dive into good books, spend time with loved ones or simply be still. When we care for ourselves, we return stronger.

The months ahead are, as always, unpredictable. We don't yet know what challenges the next school year will bring, but one truth remains unwavering: as teachers, we face the future not alone, but together, united in the belief that we can bring change to the lives of our students.

The strength of public education lies in our unity. Across classrooms, across school divisions and across the province, teachers consistently rise to meet the needs of their students. We share resources, encourage one another and show up, day after day, because we believe in the power of learning and in the potential of every child. We believe a strong, fully funded public education system is possible for all students.

Together, we are stronger. Together, we shape the future. And together, we will continue to build the best possible public education system. 


## Nous sommes plus forts unis

**ALORS QUE SONNE LA DERNIÈRE CLOCHE** et que le silence s'installe dans les couloirs, l'été offre l'occasion d'une pause bien méritée pour les enseignants de la province. Après des mois passés à vous investir corps et âme pour le bien de vos élèves, le moment est venu de vous reposer et de vous ressourcer. L'été ne représente pas qu'une pause; il s'agit d'un espace indispensable où l'on peut réfléchir, respirer et reprendre des forces.

Cet été, accordez-vous un vrai repos. Mettez de côté les plans de cours, les corrections, les listes de tâches interminables. Faites de longues promenades, plongez dans de bons livres, passez du temps avec vos proches ou retrouvez simplement la tranquillité. Lorsque nous prenons soin de nous-mêmes, nous revenons plus forts.

Comme toujours, il est difficile de prévoir ce que nous réserveront les prochains mois. Les défis de la prochaine année scolaire restent inconnus, mais une vérité inébranlable demeure : en tant qu'enseignants, nous n'affrontons pas l'avenir seuls, mais ensemble, unis par la conviction que nous pouvons contribuer à changer la vie de nos élèves.

La force de l'éducation publique vient de notre unité. Dans toutes les salles de classe, dans tous les conseils scolaires et aux quatre coins de la province, les enseignants s'appliquent constamment à répondre aux besoins de leurs élèves. Nous partageons des ressources, nous nous encourageons les uns les autres et nous répondons présent, jour après jour, parce que nous croyons au pouvoir de l'apprentissage et au potentiel de chaque enfant. Nous croyons qu'il est possible d'offrir à tous les élèves un système d'éducation publique fort qui reçoit la totalité du financement requis.

Ensemble, nous sommes plus forts. Ensemble, nous dessinons l'avenir. Et ensemble, nous continuerons à bâtir le meilleur système d'éducation publique possible. 

## Letters

### We want your feedback

We'd like to hear from you! One of the ways we'd like to engage with teachers is by hearing from you regularly. In several locations throughout this magazine are sections calling for ideas and submissions from teachers. Please watch for these and send us your ideas.

### Also please send us

- general feedback,
- your thoughts on items that you particularly liked (or didn't),
- suggestions for future content
- letters to the editor for possible publication.

We really do want to hear from you. After all, this is your magazine.

Email your feedback to Elissa Corsi, editor-in-chief, [elissa.corsi@ata.ab.ca](mailto:elissa.corsi@ata.ab.ca) or Cory Hare, managing editor, [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR — GUIDELINES

#### Word limit: 300

Please include

- your first and last name,
- basic information about your teaching assignment (i.e. school, grade, subject).

*All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar.*

PHOTO BY CORY HARE, ADAPTED



## Write for us and win a prize!

The ATA Magazine is seeking submissions from teachers and school leaders for upcoming instalments of our Teacher Hacks feature.

In this section (see page 55), Alberta teachers share their favourite “teacher hack” that they’ve incorporated into their practice that has made life easier for them and/or their students. It could be a learning project that they implement every year, a certain way of organizing their classroom, tips for running efficient field trips, their preferred way to combine nature and art — it’s pretty wide open.

It’s our steadfast belief that every teacher in the province has something of value they can share with their colleagues.

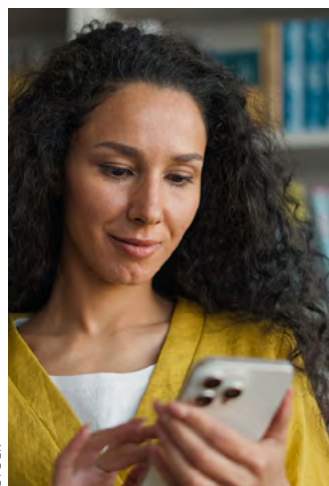
We’re looking for teacher hack summaries of up to 300 words. We will select three submissions for publication in an upcoming issue of the magazine, with the authors each receiving an ATA prize pack (pictured) and a \$50 gift card of their choice.

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Send your submissions to managing editor Cory Hare: [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

### DEADLINE

June 23, 2025



ISTOCK



### Read this issue online

The ATA Magazine is available online! Access the digital version of this issue by visiting [abteach.cc/ATAMagazineSpring2025](http://abteach.cc/ATAMagazineSpring2025)

Share your favourite articles with colleagues through email and social media.



### Sign up for the ATA eMagazine

Featured content from the latest ATA Magazine delivered to your inbox. Sign up using the QR code.





PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

## FROM THE PRESIDENT MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

### Jason Schilling


President, ATA  
Président de l'ATA

## Tap into the power of giving

**IN MY JOB, I AM FORTUNATE** that I get to talk to many teachers, not just across the province but across the country. These conversations usually turn to the question of how I got involved in the Alberta Teachers' Association.

My story is not unique. It's a simple story, really. Someone tapped me on the shoulder and told me that I had a lot to offer my ATA local. I laughed it off, commenting that I had just graduated from university and did not even have a job yet, but this teacher said she was confident that I would soon be employed and, long story short, in my first year of teaching I found myself on the Negotiating Subcommittee. Now, here I am, 25-plus years into my career and president of an association for which I hold a deep admiration ... and it all started with a tap on the shoulder.

Many teachers give their valuable time back to their profession, and like all great protagonists, we all have origin stories of where we got started. One teacher recently told me they got involved in their specialist council because of my encouragement. It was a pretty proud moment for me to witness this teacher making a difference in the lives of their colleagues. It is important as volunteers to build capacity in others so that they too can see the value in giving back.


Volunteering my time to the Association has created great opportunities for me that I would have never imagined. Through these opportunities, I have grown considerably as a teacher, leader and person. I encourage you to find new opportunities or be that person who encourages someone else to get involved. Sometimes that tap on the shoulder can lead to some pretty special places. 

## Une tape (sur l'épaule) peut tout changer

**DANS MON TRAVAIL, J'AI LA CHANCE DE POUVOIR** m'entretenir avec un grand nombre d'enseignants aux quatre coins de la province et du pays. Il m'arrive souvent, durant ces conversations, de discuter de la façon dont j'en suis venu à m'impliquer auprès de l'Alberta Teachers' Association.

Mon histoire n'a rien d'unique. Il s'agit en fait d'une histoire toute simple : quelqu'un m'a tapé sur l'épaule et m'a dit que j'avais beaucoup à offrir à ma section locale de l'ATA. J'ai bien ri, pour ensuite répondre que je venais d'obtenir mon diplôme universitaire et que je n'avais même pas encore été embauché, mais cette enseignante s'est dite persuadée que je décrocherais bientôt un emploi. Bref, j'ai commencé à siéger au Sous-comité de négociation dès ma première année d'enseignement. Après plus de 25 ans de carrière, me voici maintenant président de l'ATA, une organisation à laquelle je voue une profonde admiration... et tout a commencé par une tape sur l'épaule.

De nombreux enseignants consacrent de leur précieux temps à la profession et, comme tous les grands protagonistes, chacun a une histoire à raconter concernant l'élément déclencheur à l'origine de son engagement. Récemment, un enseignant m'a confié qu'il s'était impliqué auprès de son conseil de spécialistes en raison de mes encouragements. J'ai ressenti une grande fierté devant l'influence exercée par cet enseignant sur la vie de ses collègues. En tant que bénévoles, il est important de renforcer les capacités des autres afin qu'ils puissent, eux aussi, comprendre l'intérêt de redonner à la profession.

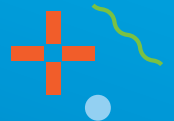
Donner de mon temps à l'ATA m'a procuré des occasions que je n'aurais autrement jamais pu imaginer. Ces occasions ont grandement contribué à mon perfectionnement comme enseignant, au développement de mes capacités de leadership et à ma croissance personnelle. Je vous encourage à chercher de nouvelles occasions de vous impliquer ou à être la personne qui encourage quelqu'un d'autre à le faire. Cette petite tape sur l'épaule ouvre parfois la porte à des possibilités extraordinaires. 



# MAKE YOUR TRAVEL DREAMS COME TRUE.

EXCLUSIVE  
DEALS FOR  
TEACHERS!

ATA members **save** on flights, hotels, vacation packages, and more.



## Scenic Scandinavia

From **\$6,798**



**14 days**

*Based on July 3, 2025 departure*

Reveal the storybook beauty and colourful history of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. Discover the truth behind the beloved fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen, hop aboard one of Europe's most exciting train journeys, and learn about farm life near Bergen.

Save \$100 when you book by June 30.

Plus, AMA members save an additional \$100 per person on trips seven days or longer and receive an \$80 CAD excursion voucher (per person) on select tours.

## Tuscan Escape

From **\$2,554**



**7 days**

*Based on July 27, 2025 departure*

Live la dolce vita for seven unforgettable days. Begin in historic Rome and travel through sun-soaked Tuscany. Enjoy mouthwatering cuisine, idyllic vineyards, beautiful Florence and Lucca, the medieval beauty of Siena, and more.

Includes 6 hotel nights, 8 meals, trip manager, local guides, and experiences.

Save \$50 when you book by June 30!

Plus, AMA members save an additional \$50 on trips seven days or longer.



SCAN HERE TO  
BOOK NOW!



**CAA** **AMA** Travel



Archival issues of the **ATA Magazine** can be just as relevant now as they were when originally published, or they can remind us how far we've come. You decide.

Check out these items from the May/June 1975 issue of the **ATA Magazine**, which applied critical thinking to the teacher's role and to education for the common good.

## Thinking it through 50 YEARS AGO

“

In my short career as a teacher, I have often heard the terms "traditional," "modern," "progressive," "old fashioned" and "out-of-date" being used in reference to particular teachers or schools. I have frequently tried to define these seemingly opposing labels, and to distinguish those characteristics of the traditional teacher or school from those of the modern teacher or school. Fortunately, perhaps, I have not yet succeeded in differentiating the "traditional" from the "modern." I have seen teachers with many years of experience conduct themselves according to the latest theories of "how one should teach," and I have seen young teachers using methods I remember from grade school. The age or experience of the teacher does not necessarily correlate with the labels "modern" or "traditional."

— Carol Ann Armstrong, "Letters to the editor: The labelling game"

“

It now becomes pragmatic that we develop organizations that are responsive to the ongoing well-being of people in general and satisfying to the people who work within them.

...

The answer lies in democratizing the dissemination of knowledge. We must move from a position of representative democracy where representatives are very often only responsive to the populace at election time, to a position where people in general may actively and systematically inform themselves on issues and problems, and on the basis of knowledge gained, take constructive action to solve problems in the common interest.

— Cy Groves, "Coping With The Children Of The Directionless 80s"



“

**What kind of image, then, does the public have of a teacher at work and as a member of society?**

The answer lies in democratizing the dissemination of knowledge. We must move from a position of representative democracy where representatives are very often only responsive to the populace at election time, to a position where people in general may actively and systematically inform themselves on issues and problems, and on the basis of knowledge gained, take constructive action to solve problems in the common interest.

— Brian Staples, "Reformation II"



# Leadership in education: A global perspective

**Lisa Everitt**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

**SINCE 2002, UNESCO HAS** published a global education monitoring report that tracks global progress toward the United Nations' sustainable development goals for education. Each year, the report focuses on a particular aspect of education. In 2024, UNESCO examined school leadership, including the role of principals. The report drew on "a review of legislation and policies on selection, preparation and working conditions from 211 education systems" (UNESCO 2024). This article examines selected findings on school leadership, focusing on the role and impact of principals, the development and training of aspiring school

leaders, selection and retention practices and models of shared leadership.

## ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL LEADERS

According to UNESCO, "a principal's impact on student success ranks just below teachers' influence among school-controlled factors" (2024), highlighting the need to understand and support principals in school communities. School leadership is recognized as complex and multidimensional. The report identifies four primary dimensions of effective school leadership.

The first dimension is establishing a clear vision for a learning community,

one aligned with both the needs of the school community and the directives of education departments. The second involves supporting teaching and learning, including providing instructional leadership and facilitating professional development for teachers. However, from 2015 to 2022, the proportion of principals observing lessons declined from 81 to 77 per cent (UNESCO 2024), possibly due to the intensification of their responsibilities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which added complex health regulations to already demanding roles (Hsieh et al. 2023; Wang, Pollock and Hauseman 2023).



The third dimension centres on fostering collaboration and teamwork among staff and with the wider school community. The fourth emphasizes principals as learners themselves, engaged in their own professional development and modelling a commitment to learning.

The report suggests that codifying standards and expectations for principals, including formal training, may support leadership development. However, it cautions that rigid standards can compromise autonomy and increase workloads. The report also highlights that countries vary widely in how they prepare and support school leaders, including disparities in access to professional resources.

### SCHOOL LEADER DEVELOPMENT, SELECTION AND CONDITIONS OF PRACTICE

The UNESCO report provides a detailed examination of how school leaders are selected and supported. While being a trained teacher remains an essential qualification, other specialized skills are increasingly required. Countries differ greatly in preservice and ongoing education for principals. For example, the report shares that the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey found that only 60 per cent of lower secondary school principals held a postgraduate degree (UNESCO 2024).

Selection and recruitment practices are similarly diverse. Globally, 63 per cent of countries use competitive, fair and transparent hiring processes, but methods vary from open competitions to internal appointments. In some countries, including Brazil, Chile and Georgia, principal appointments may be political (UNESCO 2024). As well, once principals are hired, uncertainty about their employment status can be a source of stress, particularly if they do not have job security with respect to their positions. Finally, career growth for principals is not always apparent. The ability to change schools, move into system leadership or rotate into ministry-level jobs varies globally. Creating pathways to access other opportunities can help develop the skill sets of principals, providing incentive to continue to grow in their careers.

Importantly, the report calls for more inclusive leadership programming and pathways, noting that women and

equity-deserving groups remain under-represented in school leadership roles. At the same time, there is growing global concern about the well-being of principals, citing heavy workloads, teacher shortages and the pressure of government reforms. While there is no definitive global data on principal shortages, there is a growing fear that an increasing number of retirements or resignations of school leaders may occur.

### SHARED LEADERSHIP

UNESCO advocates for leadership to be viewed as a shared endeavour distributed among assistant principals, teacher leaders, students and the broader school community. This approach not only provides mentorship opportunities and cultivates leadership skills but also strengthens collegiality and organizational culture.


Enhancing student leadership, in particular, promotes youth agency and strengthens students' sense of belonging and contribution to the school. Additionally, fostering relationships with parents and community members can help schools become more culturally responsive and act as community hubs where socioeconomic barriers do not interfere with the ability of parents to participate in their school communities.

While hierarchical education structures may pose barriers to more egalitarian leadership models, UNESCO offers practical strategies to overcome these challenges. These include creating psychologically safe environments where teachers and assistant principals feel empowered to innovate and providing targeted professional development for teacher leaders and assistant principals to cultivate collaborative cultures.

### CONCLUSION

The *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5: Leadership in Education — Lead for Learning* is a comprehensive and insightful resource. It outlines how systems

“Systems can strengthen school leadership at a structural level, ensuring that principals are equipped to foster inclusive, collaborative and responsive learning communities.”

can strengthen school leadership at a structural level, ensuring that principals are equipped to foster inclusive, collaborative and responsive learning communities. The report also provides valuable comparative insights into leadership practices around the world, along with thoughtful recommendations and recognition of persistent challenges including training, recruitment, retention and equity in leadership. 

### References

- Hsieh, Y. T., J. Wilkinson, F. Longmuir, A. Heffernan, V. Fernandes, G. Variyan, N. Sum, L. Bristol and I. Oplatka. 2023. “School Leadership during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Scoping Review.” *Leading & Managing* 29 (2): 93–113.
- UNESCO. 2024. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5: Leadership in Education — Lead for Learning*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000391406>.
- Wang, F., K. Pollock and C. Hauseman. 2023. “Time Demands and Emotionally Draining Situations Amid Work Intensification of School Principals.” *Educational Administration Quarterly* 59 (1): 112–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X221132837>.







# Valerie McDougall: Champion for Indigenous language, culture and identity

**Sandra Bit**

Staff Writer, ATA Magazine

## Valerie McDougall

Advisor to the following  
boards on building relationships  
with Indigenous communities:

Alberta School Boards  
Association, Indigenous  
Advisory Circle Board

CASS, First Nation,  
Métis Inuit Action Committee

Calgary Consortium Professional  
Development Board

Alberta Jubilee Auditoria  
Society Board

North American Indigenous  
Games, Mental Health  
Committee

ILLUSTRATION BY ADANNA ONUKOWSKI

## WHEN VALERIE MCDUGALL

started teaching, she didn't know it would lead to reconciling a part of her family's past.

She remembers with a laugh that as a child, she used to play teacher with her brothers in her parents' basement.

"I always knew I wanted to be a teacher," she says.

Many years and an education degree later, she taught in public schools from 2004 to 2014. She also took on school leadership roles and completed her master's degree in school administration.

In 2015, she moved back to the Tsuut'ina Nation, her home community, to work as a vice-principal and principal before becoming the director of education. For five years, she oversaw the Nation's three K-12 schools, post-secondary, training and skills, transportation and special education. She also had the opportunity to ground Tsuut'ina students in their language, culture and identity.

"Language and culture are important to me," McDougall says. "In our community, in a population of 2,600, there are only about 18 fluent speakers, so it was important to me to build up our language and culture programs."

Lost language and culture affected McDougall's own family. Her mother went to residential school until age 14, and her father attended day school. Both parents were able to retain their language, but it was not passed on to her or her brothers due to residential school.

"People need to know about and learn from [the past] to be able to move forward with reconciliation and build


relationships," McDougall observes.

To address these losses, she collaborated with the Tsuut'ina Gunaha Institute to create a team of Tsuut'ina educators and community members who developed and established cultural programs that integrated Elders, storytelling, hunting, fishing, cooking skills and teepee teachings into the curriculum, which gave students a foundation in Tsuut'ina knowledge, history, land-based traditions and language.

The program not only helped students learn their language, culture and the value of community, it improved their engagement, mental health and school attendance.

McDougall continues to work with University of Calgary Continuing Education, St. Mary's University and the Alberta Ministry of Education on the LQS and SLQS certification courses. She teaches competency 5 to teachers, principals, superintendents and education professionals aspiring to be superintendents, instructing them on how to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into their lesson and unit plans and their schools.

She is also pursuing her doctorate on the subject of competency 5 — Braiding Indigenous Leadership in Alberta Leadership and Superintendent Quality Standards. McDougall's goal is to teach Indigenous leadership to build connections between culture and education.

"Indigenous leadership is really about community and family...everyone working together to be successful." 



# Summer reset

## Steps to recharge and reignite

**Nancy Luyckfassel**

Coordinator, Professional Development, ATA

### **AS ANOTHER SCHOOL YEAR**

winds down, teachers are looking ahead to a well-deserved summer break. After months of lesson planning, assessments, meetings and supporting students, teachers finally have time to make themselves a priority.

Summer can be a time to rebuild in a way that feels right for everyone. It can be about small, meaningful actions that restore energy, curiosity and sense of self.

**Here are five ways to recharge, reconnect and quietly prepare for the next school year — on your own terms.**

#### **1. TAKE A PAUSE.**

Before jumping into anything, give yourself permission to pause. Let go of the pressure to be productive, to plan, to constantly be in motion, not just physically but also mentally and emotionally. Get more sleep. Take a slow walk. Drink the coffee while it's still hot. Do nothing for a while and see what happens.



## 2. RECONNECT WITH THE PEOPLE WHO MATTER.

When teaching takes over, it's common to not have enough time for family, friends and even yourself. This summer, spend time with the people who know you and who bring you joy. Place a call, host a get-together or simply make time for unhurried conversations. These moments don't just fill your calendar, they fill your heart.

## 3. FOLLOW YOUR OWN CURIOSITY.


Many teachers came to their role because of a passion for learning, which can often be found in unexpected places. Follow your curiosity in ways that excite you. Read a book that has nothing to do with teaching. Listen to a podcast that makes you laugh. Take a pottery class, learn to cook something new, or just spend an afternoon exploring a new hiking trail. Summer travel, outdoor adventures, or even exploring local museums and cultural sites can provide fresh perspectives.

## 4. LET NATURE DO ITS WORK.

Summer is a chance to step outside and let nature reset you. Whether it's sitting by a lake, walking through a park or simply breathing fresh air on your front porch, these small moments outdoors can ground you and are a quiet but powerful way to decompress.

## 5. GIVE "FUTURE YOU" A HELPING HAND.

At some point, back-to-school thoughts will creep in. When they do, be kind to yourself. If a small idea for next year sparks excitement, jot it down. If you feel the urge to organize something, go for it — but only if it feels good, not because you feel obligated. Future You will appreciate anything you do, but only if Present You is okay first.

Summertime isn't about productivity, it's about recovery. Whether that means rest, adventure, deep conversations or quiet moments, the goal is simple: come back to yourself. 

# Five things to try this summer

Meaghan Archer

AMA Insider

**TEACHERS** work hard throughout the year, so when summer break rolls around, Alberta educators are ready to maximize their well-deserved time off.

Here are five ways to fully enjoy and recharge this summer.



Escape to the mountains for a stay at the Kananaskis Nordic Spa. Bask in the pleasure of being the centre of attention — without clapping your hands first.



You spend all year educating others; now it's time to read a book for pleasure. Visit your local bookstore and pick up a juicy read.



Partake in offerings from Indigenous Tourism Alberta for authentic and immersive experiences unique to these prairie regions.

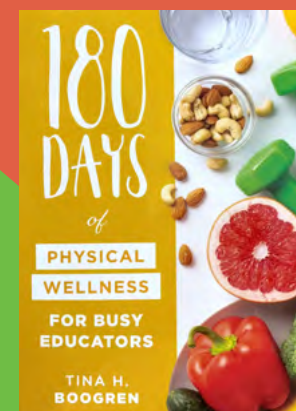


Check out comedy shows, theatrical performances and other artistic offerings at Edmonton's Fringe Festival.



Immerse yourself in modern and traditional Métis cultural activities at the Historic Village at Métis Crossing.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



### 180 Days of Physical Wellness for Busy Educators

Tina Boogren

This useful book combines mindful practices with research-backed nutrition and sleep routines to give teachers a practical roadmap for maintaining their health throughout the school year.

Available through the ATA library



## Travelling this summer?

ATA members can access special rates for select hotels in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Olds, Sherwood Park and St. Albert.

ATA members are also eligible for discounted parking at several airports.



► Visit [ABteach.cc/SpecialRates](https://abteach.cc/SpecialRates), for details.

ISTOCK ADAPTED

## Let's get technical

Phys-ed and technology can be effective workout partners

**David Chorney**

Professor, Physical Education Curriculum and Instruction, University of Alberta

**TODAY'S PHYSICAL EDUCATORS** should be open to integrating technology into their teaching practice. Physical education (PE) may not often be the first subject area that comes to mind when considering technology integration. However, it is a discipline that lends itself very easily to incorporating a vast array of technological devices, including gaming consoles, audio and video hardware, a plethora of web-based tools and an ever-increasing number of applications.

ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL PARILLAS





## Five tech ideas to easily integrate into any PE program



### JUST DANCE

Play the world's favourite dance video game without a video game console.

Just Dance can be used in a group setting where all students participate at the same time. You just need an internet-connected screen and a smartphone as a controller — a perfect teaching tool that focuses on rhythm and musicality and addresses one of the curricular areas of the provincial PE curriculum.



### KINOVEA

This video analysis app is designed for physical education teachers, coaches and athletes to review and analyze sport-specific techniques and movement patterns. The app offers tools to capture, slow down, compare, annotate and measure motion in videos. It's a wonderful tech integration into any PE class as it allows students to personally engage in their own learning by viewing themselves performing skills and then self-correcting and critiquing their performance.



### QR CODES FOR THE PE CLASSROOM

Using one of many online QR code-generating apps, any PE teacher can create a QR code that links to any physical activity content, sport-specific movement or health topic online, or one personally developed by the teacher. These codes can be placed on poster boards around the gym, which will allow students to scan the codes and then directly link to websites or other externally linked content. A fun and creative way to share PE-specific knowledge with students of all ages.



### GEOCACHING

A fun and simple way to make treasure-hunting, physical fitness, teamwork and cooperation come alive in any PE class. Create a free account via [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com) and open up the world

of geocaching for your students. You can have your class search for caches already hidden in your community or have your class create their own PE-focused caches and have them place them around the school or community at large. This is a wonderful way to teach students about the environment, increase their time outdoors, and appreciate movement and logic in a quality PE program.




### SWORKIT

A digital fitness experience that students can access at any time, this youth-focused movement and fitness application caters to all age groups of children from kindergarten to high school. All teachers of physical education can use this program to help motivate their students to be more active and to enjoy purposeful movement. This app includes a variety of student-led workouts designed to appeal to any student regardless of their current fitness or activity level.

## Final thoughts

Technology is here to stay and will only continue to grow and evolve at dizzying speeds. All teachers need to become familiar with their students' technological capabilities and make them feel as though they are an integral part of the teaching-learning process.

Digital and technological literacy is not about technical proficiency, but about developing the critical thinking skills that are central to lifelong learning and, in the case of physical education, developing students' love of movement and appreciation of a healthy lifestyle beyond Grade 12. If technology can be one of the factors that causes some students to be more intrinsically motivated in physical education, then we as teachers need to consider all of the possibilities that technology can have in our classroom and become a more integral part of a well-planned, quality physical education program. 

## Is that true?

You've found a curious bit of information online. Here are four ways to tell if it's actually true.

1. Use fact-checking tools.
  - » See if a fact-checker like Snopes.com has debunked the story.
2. Find the source.
  - » Click on the link in a social media post to take you to the original story, so you can see if it comes from a trusted source.
3. Verify the source.
  - » Check Google or Wikipedia to see if the source is real and whether they have a good track record.
4. Check other sources.
  - » Do a search to see if other news outlets are reporting the same story.

Source: MediaSmarts

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



**Tech like a Pirate: Using Classroom Technology to Create an Experience and Make Learning Memorable**

Matt Miller

Available through the ATA library.



## No teachers' pet

Service animal helps model inclusion in the classroom

**Lindsay Yakiymyshyn**

Associate Editor, ATA Magazine

**DELORES TATLOW HAD BEEN TEACHING** for two decades. She loved working with the little ones — it was her calling — and then one spring day she couldn't make it into school. She was struggling to leave her house, let alone be around groups of people. The sensory overload was too much.

Tatlow returned to her classroom the next fall, but by November she realized teaching was not sustainable given her health. Soon after, she was diagnosed with a nonvisible disability and wondered if she would be able to return to the profession she loved. At the same time, she knew that she wasn't done yet.

Now, she wants to share her story with the teaching community to let others living with disabilities know that their diagnosis doesn't dictate their future.

**Can you speak on how you learned about your nonvisible disability and its impact on you?**

When something like this hits, it's so unexpected. I was dealing with everything happening with my health, but also dealing with guilt about if the school was going to be okay, if my students were going to be okay. I was also navigating disability benefits. I had a lot of support and was blessed to have great administrators, but there was still a lot of stress.

I was also grateful I had a full-time, continuing contract because I was able to access benefits to help me improve. For teachers in a temporary or probationary position, you might worry about pay and benefits — can I afford to take time for my health? We plan for the best, but we need support for when it's the worst.





ILLUSTRATION BY ALEXA GUSE

“We’re focused on inclusivity for our children, and we need to model that in our profession.”

### What challenges have you experienced since begin diagnosed?

Being diagnosed with a disability or health issue was a lonely journey for me. And there were no quick fixes, no answers to make everything better right away. That was the hardest part. It’s been a learning curve, and I have had to accept that I will never be back to where I was before.

### You decided to return to teaching. What prompted your return to the classroom?

I had adopted a standard poodle, Duchess, and was thinking about training her to be a therapy dog to bring her into seniors’ homes and schools. Then I saw how she was improving my own health and thought maybe she could become a certified service dog for me. I knew I wanted to continue teaching and thought Duchess could help me.

### Were there any barriers to introducing a service dog into the school?


This accommodation triggered a policy review, as the board didn’t have a policy on service animals for staff at the time.

The school, school board and the service dog training school worked together to bring Duchess into the school. She’s not a class pet or a therapy dog. She is a service animal for me.

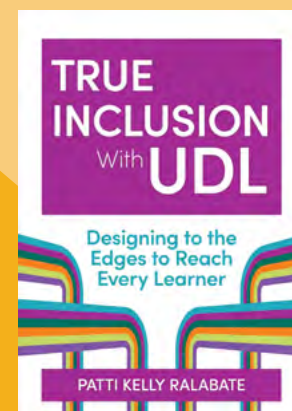
### What has been the effect of having Duchess with you in school?

The benefits have been so immense because I’ve gotten my independence back. By not staying home like my disability wants me to, I have been able to educate others and have helped create community around and for people with nonvisible disabilities, making it okay for people to talk about their experiences.

### What would you say to a colleague living with a disability?

We’re focused on inclusivity for our children, and we need to model that in our profession. When something goes wrong in our own lives, it can be hard to seek out and to accept the accommodations we need. I want teachers to know that you don’t have to quit because of this. There is still space for me and for you in our schools. 

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



### True Inclusion with UDL: Designing to the Edges to Reach Every Learner

Patti Kelly Ralabate

Available through the ATA library.

## Did you know?

**July is Disability Pride Month**, an opportunity to honour the experiences and the diversity of the disability community.

**August is Intersectionality Awareness Month**, a time to reflect on and enhance understanding of intersectionality, a concept introduced by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989.

## LIVE WELL

All plans include access to our online wellness program, Balance®, as well as personal, nutritional and financial counselling sessions through our Individual Assistance Program.


Wendy  
Edmonton, AB



# Courage to move

Our coverage helps you imagine a retirement that's rich with the things that matter most to you.





**Build a plan just for you**—Choose from four levels for extended health, prescription drug and optional dental so you can mix and match to get the exact coverage you need.

### **BLUE ASSURED® PLAN**

**An affordable plan that's perfect alone or paired with government benefits.**

- ✓ Guaranteed coverage and no medical questions
- ✓ Optional dental and prescription drug
- ✓ Emergency Medical Travel insurance up to 30 days until age 65

### **RETIREE PLAN**

**High maximum options for extended health, prescription drug and dental.**

- ✓ Guaranteed coverage and no medical questions
- ✓ Optional dental
- ✓ Emergency Medical Travel insurance for up to 120 days per trip including Flight Delay Service

**Enjoy your retirement with peace of mind from a brand you know and trust.** We're ready to support you and provide recommendations. Contact us today!

**1-800-394-1965**

**[ab.bluecross.ca/retirement](https://ab.bluecross.ca/retirement)**



®\*The Blue Cross symbol and name are registered marks of the Canadian Association of Blue Cross Plans, an association of independent Blue Cross plans. Licensed to ABC Benefits Corporation for use in operating the Alberta Blue Cross Plan.  
©†Blue Shield is a registered trade-mark of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. MCX004-01-24 2024/12 v5





# Maximum impact

## Volunteering is a contact sport for early-career teacher

**Cory Hare**

Managing Editor, ATA Magazine

Get off the bench and get into the game. That sports analogy summarizes Sheldon D'Souza's mindset when he decided to volunteer to be a school representative.

The decision came after an email from a learning leader explaining a bit about the workings of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and what it means to be involved. The message resonated with D'Souza, who is passionate about making a difference for students and teachers.

"I strongly believe that, if I want to see change, I cannot sit on the sideline; I need to get off the bench and get into the game," D'Souza says.

As one of three school reps at Crescent Heights High School in Calgary, D'Souza acts as a conduit between teachers and the local and/or provincial Association. Part of the role is to provide information to members about ATA services and channel requests for these services to the appropriate ATA officials.

"The rewarding part of it is to communicate effectively what our local meetings are about to our teachers, making sure there's clear communication," D'Souza says. "The second piece is to advocate for those teachers that don't normally get a voice."

A third-year teacher, D'Souza comes to the profession after a 15-year career as an automotive service technician, a career that saw him rise to the top of the trade as a Toyota master technician. Now, as a mechanics teacher, D'Souza is passionate about being a voice for his Career and Technology Foundations (CTF) and Career and Technology Studies (CTS) colleagues, who sometimes feel like forgotten members of a school staff.

D'Souza's drive to represent his colleagues led him to join his division's health and safety committee, primarily to bring a trades perspective to advocate for proper personal protective equipment for CTS teachers. He also recently stepped into the role of vice-president of the ATA's Career and Technology Education Council (CTEC).


*"It's wild to think a new teacher such as myself can make a change."*

Among the issues that are top of mind for D'Souza are safety for CTF and CTS teachers and advocating for meaningful professional development for them and early-career teachers who are burning out and leaving the profession within the first three to five years.

"It's wild to think a new teacher such as myself can make a change," D'Souza says.

D'Souza sees himself continuing on his current path of taking on volunteer roles as they present themselves. He says he'll take on anything that aligns with his two main passions: making his classroom more engaging for students and advocating for teachers.

At this point, volunteering isn't just about getting in the game, it's about being an impact player. Overall, D'Souza's approach to volunteering comes down to a fundamental question.

"How are you going to leave the profession," he says, "worse or better?" 

PHOTOGRAPHY AND ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO AND ALEXA GUSE

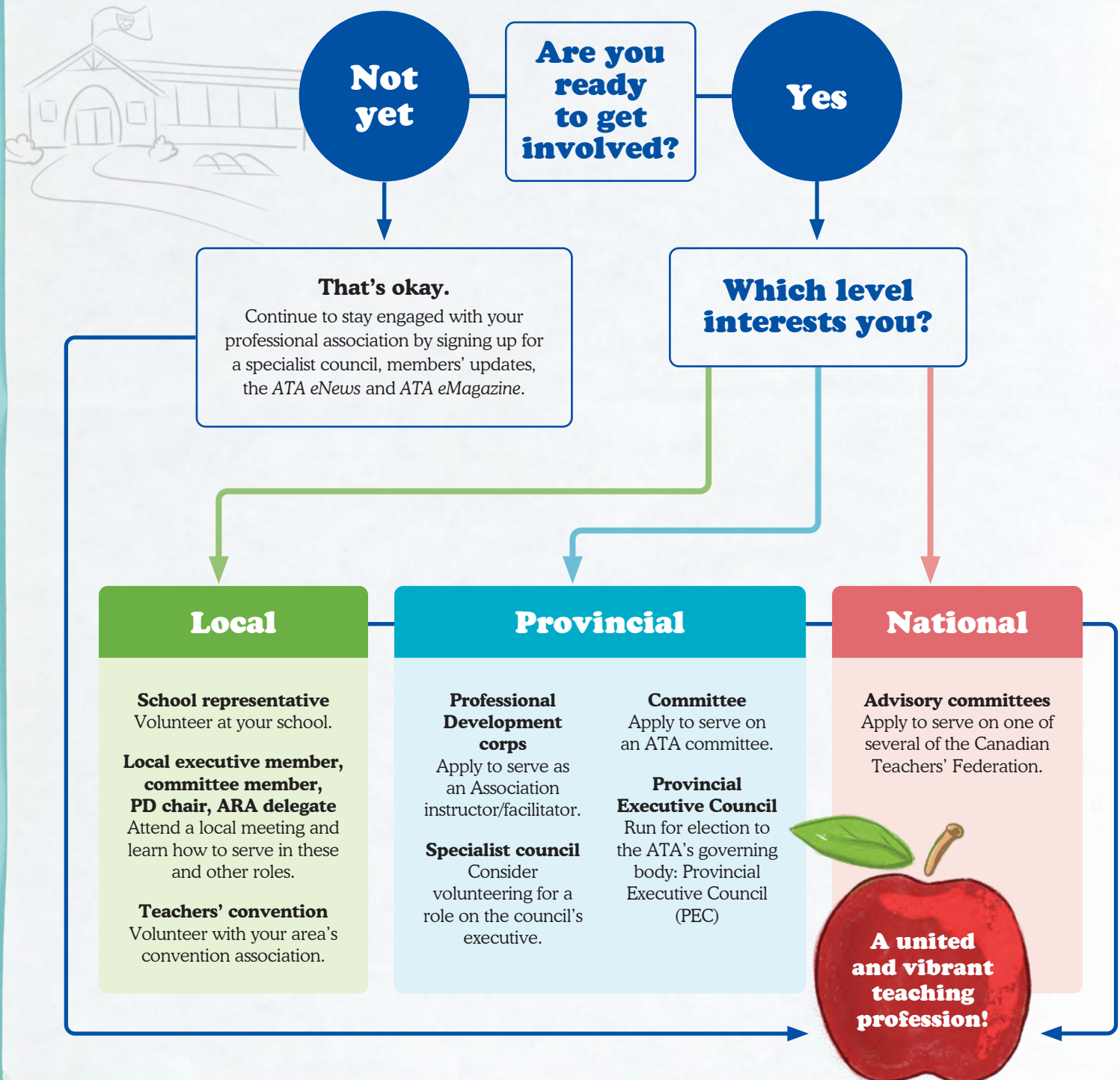
**Professionalism Perk!**  
You volunteer for the teachers' convention committee and feel you're advancing your profession.  
Advance two spaces.

The Alberta Teachers' Association  
**Local**  
Volunteer



## Pathways to involvement

There are many paths to involvement in the ATA, whether it be at the local, provincial or even national level. The entry point you choose may depend on your interests and time availability.





# VOLUNTEER LOCALLY

There are 55 locals in the province that offer a wealth of volunteer roles ranging from politically active to behind the scenes.

Many teachers who are involved in the Alberta Teachers' Association got their start by attending a meeting of their ATA local.

## School representative

► The school representative (school rep) acts as a conduit between teachers and the ATA. They receive and gather information from the ATA and their local and bring it to the attention of teachers in their school. When teachers approach them with questions or concerns, the school rep directs them to the appropriate expertise in the local or at Barnett House or SARO.

► School rep is a common entry role for teachers who are first volunteering in their local.

## Local communications officer

► Looks after the various communications functions that a local might undertake, such as a newsletter, website, social media, media relations, advertising and event management.

► This role is another common entry point for teachers new to ATA work.

► The ATA provides a significant amount of training for members in this role.

## Local political engagement officer

► Keeps local members engaged in political events and issues by staying aware of political goings on, communicating these with members, organizing ways to bring members together with

elected officials, engaging in campaigns to make members aware of candidates and issues, and encouraging members to participate in political activities and vote.

## Local executive

► ATA locals typically have the following positions:

- president
- vice-president
- past president
- secretary
- treasurer

► It's common for members to work up to executive positions by first serving in other roles, but some are elected directly to the executive as their first volunteer role.

► Most local council meetings are open and welcoming, allowing any member to observe and find out more about the local and its activities.

## Professional Development Committee

► Organizes professional development activities within the local.

► This is a good option for new teachers, as there is often room for new members.

► This committee is less political than some of the other positions.

## Teacher Board Advisory Committee

► Enables the local to have conversations with the school board about issues that are unrelated to bargaining.

► In some locals, this committee is populated only by members of the executive; others include members elected at large.

## Teacher Welfare Committee

► Oversees the negotiation of local collective agreements.

► Acts as liaison between the ATA's collective bargaining officials and local teachers.

## Political Engagement Committee

► Supports the activities of the political engagement officer

## Communications Committee

► Supports the activities of the local communications officer

## Other committees

- Diversity, Equity and Human Rights
- Women In Leadership
- Substitute Teachers
- Administration
- Service to Members
- Teachers Convention Committee

## Annual Representative Assembly delegate

► The Association holds its Annual Representative Assembly (equivalent to an annual general meeting) each May long weekend. The weekend's agenda includes debate and voting on the ATA's budget and policies.

► Each ATA local sends a specific number of delegates to ARA and has its own mechanism for choosing its delegation. If this opportunity is of interest to you, check with your local.



To explore local opportunities, find your local's website at [teachers.ab.ca](http://teachers.ab.ca)  
>About>ATALocals.



# VOLUNTEER PROVINCIAL

At the provincial ATA, there are many ways that teachers throughout the province can volunteer.

## Professional Development corps

- ▶ Association instructors facilitate a variety of workshops for school- and district-based professional development events, teachers' conventions and specialist council conferences.
- ▶ Each year, participants attend two training sessions and deliver 7 to 10 workshops.
- ▶ Applications are taken periodically throughout the year and are advertised in the *ATA News*.

## Indigenous facilitators

- ▶ Indigenous Education PD facilitators coach members on Indigenous-focused competencies and present Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation workshops. Facilitators also develop relationships with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors; honour cultural protocols; and share Indigenous expertise.

## Specialist councils

- ▶ The ATA has 20 specialist councils. Each focuses on a specific subject area and organizes annual conferences, workshops, webinars and other opportunities to help teachers and school leaders meet their professional development goals.



Your can find a guide to specialist councils at [teachers.ab.ca](http://teachers.ab.ca)>Professional Development>Specialist councils.

## Committees

- ▶ The ATA operates a variety of standing committees composed of volunteer field members that each advise Provincial Executive Council on a specific area of focus. Committee openings are posted on the ATA website each February and throughout the year on occasion.



To explore provincial opportunities, check out [teachers.ab.ca](http://teachers.ab.ca)>Advocacy>Volunteer.

## Provincial Executive Council

- ▶ Provincial Executive Council (PEC) is an executive committee that is responsible for directing the business of the Association. Included on council are 18 elected positions that are open to any ATA member in good standing:
  - ATA president (1)
  - ATA vice-president (2)
  - District representative (15)
- ▶ Rounding out Council are the past president and ATA executive secretary.
- ▶ PEC general elections take place every two years.

### PEC members

- are teachers;
- meet at least eight times each year;
- serve on internal and external committees and Association subgroups, like specialist councils;
- engage in professional development as part of their duties;
- make decisions affecting the ATA's budget, policies and strategic direction; and
- are accountable to the ATA membership.

# VOLUNTEER NATIONALLY

Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF)/  
Fédération canadienne des enseignants et des enseignants (FCE)  
advisory committees

- ▶ Advisory committees of the CTF/FCE are made up of teachers from across the country and provide an opportunity for Alberta teachers to represent the ATA at the national level. Each year, the Association is eligible to submit nominations for these committees.
- ▶ The CTF's advisory committees cover a variety of areas:
  - Diversity and human rights
  - French as a first language
  - Indigenous Education
  - The status of women
  - The teaching profession



## Did you know?

### FIRST COMMITTEES

Started in 1918, the ATA's first committees were the Curriculum Committee and the Legal Committee. The Curriculum Committee is still operating today.

### CONVENTION SEASON

Teachers' conventions are organized by volunteer teachers just like you. The ATA took over the delivery of teachers' conventions from the provincial department of education in 1942.

***“Start where you are. Use what you have.  
Do what you can.”***

– Arthur Ashe



# Sparkling someone else's journey

## Why one assistant principal became local PD chair

**Lindsay Yakimyshyn**

Associate Editor, ATA Magazine



Sandy Johnson has always revelled in his students' "aha" moments — those moments where a concept finally makes sense or where a new interest is sparked. Over the years, he has found the same joy in helping teachers experience their own moments of discovery. That joy led him down a path focused on the significance of professional development (PD) in the teaching profession.

Now an assistant principal, Johnson taught senior high math for 16 years. He realized early on that classrooms and students are dynamic, and that every class is different. Finding new and interesting ways to engage students was essential. As he began experimenting and figuring out what was landing (or not) in his classroom, he also leaned into PD for himself and his colleagues.

"In my role as mathematics teacher and department chair, it was important for me to be developing the best I could for my students and my department, for me to try new things and experiment," he says. "I found I love using board games to teach math, so I wanted to show other teachers some of those as options to try."

Johnson presented at teachers' convention to share his learnings on what worked for his students. His interest in ongoing PD soon turned academic, and Johnson

earned a master's degree in educational leadership, his capstone project focusing on the connection between PD and the professional identity of teachers.

"It's always been the field where I've found the most joy in the profession, that PD piece and connecting with colleagues, exploring new ways of doing things and collaborating."

*"There's something very cathartic and rewarding about connecting with other colleagues that are going through the same experiences."*

Along the way, Johnson also became more engaged with his professional association, including working with his teachers' convention association and serving as a school representative.

"Volunteering as a school rep gets your feet wet," Johnson says, "You start to meet people and find your way and see what area within your local you can take on that's meaningful to you."

In 2024, Johnson became his ATA local's PD chair, a natural fit for him.

Over the past year-and-a-half, Johnson has helped provide his


colleagues with resources, webinars and PD opportunities that help them grow as professionals and build connections with teachers beyond their school walls.

"There's something very cathartic and rewarding about connecting with other colleagues that are going through the same experiences," Johnson says. "We're all in this together. We're all going to grow together and learn from each other."

So far, Johnson is enjoying his work as PD chair. The commitment is manageable — he gets to pick when and where the PD events happen — and he loves helping spark someone else's journey within their profession.

"Being PD chair, it's a chance to support teachers in being their best selves," he says. "To me that's meaningful work."

While it was his passion for learning that drove Johnson to take on a role in his ATA local, collegial connections are what will keep him there.

"Getting involved in the local, volunteering your time gives you a better sense of the work that the ATA does," he says. "It allows you to be part of a professional community beyond your school ... and it lets you take ownership of yourself as a professional." 



## First step leads to 30-year involvement

Former ATA VP looks back on decades of service

**Cory Hare**

Managing Editor, ATA Magazine

Jenny Regal served as vice-president of the ATA from 2017 to 2023. She came to the role after three years in the role of district representative for Calgary City and five years as local president for Calgary Public Local No. 38.

Now retired, Regal is still substitute teaching and volunteering in various capacities. She reflected on her decades of experience as an ATA volunteer.

*“ I quickly realized that I’d found a new passion! ”*

**Q. What was your first ATA volunteer role and how did it come about?**

**A.** I became the school rep for my small elementary school in southwest Calgary in the early 90s. The previous rep needed a break, so I agreed to take that role on for the staff. I quickly realized that I’d found a new passion!

**Q. What volunteer roles did you hold over the course of your career?**

**A.** So many: Communications Committee; chair, Subcommittee for External Communications; elementary rep, Calgary Public Local’s executive committee; delegate, ARA; ARA Committee; member, chair and vice-chair, Economic Policy Committee; five strike committees; local vice-president, president and past president; district representative, Calgary City; vice-president, ATA; delegate and vice-president, Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF); delegate, Education International.

**Q. What did you find rewarding about being an ATA volunteer?**

**A.** Number one, serving my colleagues by using my experience, knowledge and skills in so many different capacities ... learning more and more about my Association and seeing how all the CTF’s member organizations work together.


**Q. How did your volunteer experience inform your work as ATA vice-president?**

**A.** My decades of experience gave me confidence to do that work. Without it, I wouldn’t have been as grounded in the Association’s work and aware of how I could continue to serve in increasingly responsible positions.

**Q. What have you been up to since leaving the ATA vice-presidency?**

**A.** I’m enjoying some travelling “off season” and hope to do more in the future. I am reading more; curling up on the couch in the middle of a weekday with a good book is incredibly satisfying! I am subbing, I still sit as CTF vice-president until mid-July and the end of their 2025 AGM, sub rep on Local 38’s Teacher Welfare Committee, and I applied to be a local ARA delegate.

**Q. How does your experience as an ATA volunteer and vice-president inform what you do now?**

**A.** I thought I would be able to leave that work behind. I couldn’t have been more wrong! Once I was involved over 30 years ago, little did I know that my path was set. While I don’t pay day-to-day attention to the issues anymore, I’m still informed about what’s happening and doing my part to advocate for publicly delivered, publicly funded public education. Who knows where my career-long passion will take me next? 



# Advocacy and service

Communication committee provides a broad perspective on education issues

**Cory Hare**

Managing Editor, ATA Magazine

The allure of free supper was too much to resist. As an early-career teacher, before the added demands of children and family life had fully kicked in, Melanie Buckley was open to trying new things and stepping up to help her colleagues, so when her ATA local was looking for a backup school rep, she volunteered.

"I thought, oh, I get a free supper out of it," Buckley says. "I didn't mind doing it."

*"I chose this committee because I feel very strongly about advocating for public education."*

That was decades ago. In the intervening years, Buckley has enjoyed a variety of ATA volunteer roles. One of the most satisfying was a six-year stint as an Association instructor, which involved travelling the province delivering a variety of ATA courses and workshops to fellow members.

"I really enjoyed going to see different schools and presenting information," Buckley says. "It was a really collegial group of educators from all over the province. It was one of my favourite groups to work with."

After the COVID lockdown took some of the joy out of instructing, Buckley took a break from volunteering, but she soon felt like she should still be doing something with the ATA, so she applied for an opening on the Communication, Advocacy and Public Education Committee (CAPEC).



One of the ATA's 11 standing committees that include field members, CAPEC advises Provincial Executive Council on matters related to public education, public relations and communications. Among the committee's duties is to provide feedback on the ATA's public relations campaigns and recommend recipients for the ATA's Public Education Award.

"I chose this committee because I feel very strongly about advocating for public education," says Buckley.

Now in her third year, Buckley is one of two field members on the committee, which also includes three members of PEC and three members of executive staff.


Buckley, who is principal of Bruderheim School, says that field members provide the invaluable perspective of a teacher who is in a school full time.

"In the end, we all have the same concerns about the erosion of public education," she says.

In serving on CAPEC, Buckley finds it interesting to witness and have input into the creation of the ATA's advertising campaigns and convention swag. It's also interesting to talk about the influence of politics on Alberta classrooms and see how the different facets of the ATA support teachers in ways that aren't always readily apparent.

"I would strongly recommend it. I think it helps broaden your understanding of some of the bigger issues," Buckley says.

Overall, Buckley feels that volunteering for ATA roles is a way to support the profession and her colleagues.

"I often think of it as teachers helping fellow teachers." 









I was asked by one of our colleagues who rotated in as one of our school representatives if I would also like to go to a monthly local meeting of school representatives. I was told this was where the action of the local happens.

I remember being struck by the poise and knowledge shared by the members at the front of the room, the issues presented and the comradery of the other school representatives. I liked the myriad topics and the way they were debated. I remember listening to conversations at the end of the meeting while other school representatives socialized. It was a side of education I had not experienced since the start of my very young career, and I wanted more of it. I went back to school the next day and promptly volunteered to attend the local school representatives meetings for the rest of the school year.

**Q. What volunteer roles did you hold over the course of your career?**

**A.** My experience includes the following: participating in Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention Association (GETCA) conference finance, program and communication subcommittees; local PD, Finance and Negotiating committees; volunteering at strike headquarters during the big strike; Division 2, 3 and 4 representative; local vice-president and president; many local and district joint committees; chair, local ARA Committee; all local standing committees; vice-president, president and past president, ATA; vice-president, CTF.

**Q. What did you find rewarding about being an ATA volunteer?**

**A.** Through my various roles within the Association, I always felt like I was more in touch with our profession. Being able

to support colleagues and serve others was and still is important to me. I also felt more professional being actively involved in the ATA.

I always have loved teaching. Over the course of my career; however, my classroom became more complex. The pressure to teach more with less and the expectations placed on teachers continued to grow — full inclusion, class sizes and complexity, administrative tracking and chronic underfunding are only a few examples. Getting involved with the Association through volunteering in different capacities was a way to get directly into the fight. I wanted to fight for my colleagues' rights, our students, learning conditions and my profession. Volunteering afforded me this opportunity. Working alongside so many like-minded teachers always filled me with a sense of pride.

There were so many challenges, yet so

*“ I wanted to fight for my colleagues' rights, our students learning conditions and my profession. ”*

many of us continued to show up. Some of the toughest times we faced represent some of the most fulfilling moments in my teaching career.

**Q. How did your volunteer experience inform your work as ATA president?**

**A.** Volunteering in so many capacities in the Association gave me a solid understanding of how the Association functioned and, more importantly, who was making it work. Being directly involved with problem solving at the committee level allowed me to prioritize issues as they arose. Dealing with the broad picture provincially made it difficult at times to organize challenges when they arrived at the same time. Knowing where to direct energy and who to ask for advice to resolve these challenges,

however, came from the experience of being in the trenches and doing the work side by side with other volunteers. This in turn allowed me to confidently make decisions impacting teachers.

The variety of experiences I had granted me a greater understanding of the pressure committee members were under and when their peak times would be. This, I believe, gave me a sense of empathy for the teachers I represented and served. When discussing issues pertinent to our members, I could focus on what was and not rely only on reports to guide some of my decision making.

**Q. What have you been up to since leaving the ATA presidency?**

**A.** When I left the ATA presidency I went on to the position of president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. I did not remain as past-president with the Federation when I completed my term as president as I opted to return to Alberta and finish my career in education in an Alberta school. It was, interestingly enough, the first school I taught in when I first came into the profession back in 1986.


I retired from active teaching in the K-12 system five years ago. I remain active by substitute teaching and teaching sessional classes at Concordia University of Edmonton in the faculty of education.

**Q. How does your experience as an ATA volunteer and president inform what you do now?**

**A.** My experiences as an ATA volunteer and the experience of leading the ATA taught me my three Cs, which continue to guide me when I am faced with challenges.

First, be confident in everything you do. Make informed decisions and own the consequences of those decisions.

Second, communicate clearly. Say what you mean and confirm the context in which you are speaking. It makes working toward resolution easier if the people we work with understand the issues at hand and we are all on the same page.

Finally, be creative in your approach to resolving issues. Look for solutions in the uncharted deep waters, not by just wading around in the shallows. 



# The ATA IS You!



## Objective

Strengthen the teaching profession, one move at a time.



## Skill level

For teachers of all ages and experience.



## Time commitment

Flexible ... every bit counts!

## Thank you, volunteers!

*The ATA is as strong and resilient as the members it serves. My sincere thanks to the hundreds of teachers who, each year, volunteer their time, expertise, energy and resolve. The ATA would be nothing without you.*

— Jason Schilling, President, ATA

## Grassroots volunteers are the engine that drives the teaching profession forward

**Maggie Shane**

Archivist, ATA



On the cold morning of Dec. 22, 1917, three teachers — George Misener, C.E. Leppard and John Barnett — met in downtown Edmonton and established the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, which would later transform into the Alberta Teachers' Association.

A particularly remarkable aspect of that first meeting was the absolute confidence the three founders exhibited in teachers' readiness to volunteer their time and effort in the pursuit of professional status for teachers. The work would be daunting. Local alliances needed organizing, executives elected, committees struck, members recruited, services established, and negotiations and legal cases undertaken. Success would only come through the deep and abiding commitment by Alliance members in every Alberta community.

The dedication of Alliance volunteers led to the professional status of Alberta teachers being enshrined in legislation in 1935. To this day, more than 100 years after that inaugural meeting, volunteerism remains the engine of the ATA's capacity to advocate for members and for public education, bargain for teachers, provide professional development, conduct research, develop policy and render services to 46,000 active members.

Volunteers are people of vision seeking the common good. They are, and have always been, the custodians of the teaching profession in Alberta. ATA



## Contents include

Meaningful moments, fresh ideas, leadership skills, new friendships and serendipitous discoveries!!!





# SPENDING ACCOUNT ALLOCATION

**! ALLOCATION DEADLINE: AUGUST 31, 2025 \***

If you have both a Health Spending Account (HSA) and a Wellness Spending Account (WSA), you will need to allocate your credits before the **August 31, 2025** deadline.

More information on 'how', 'what', and 'where' coming to your email\*\* or mail box (if you don't have a My ASEBP account) in June!

*\* Mid-year hires will receive separate instruction on allocation and deadlines from ASEBP.*

*\*\* To the email listed in your My ASEBP account profile.*

## CONTACT US

✉ [benefits@asebp.ca](mailto:benefits@asebp.ca)

☎ Toll Free 1-877-431-4786

Learn more  
at [asebp.ca](http://asebp.ca)





## Your Lesson in Retirement Planning Starts Here

**Choose an ARTA Benefit Plan to dream big and worry less – because your peace of mind matters.**

ARTA is a financially sustainable, non-profit association. ARTA puts members first, meaning all premiums paid into the Health Benefit Plans stay within the plan. This policy keeps rates low and allows us to make plan improvements, ensuring members always get the most out of their coverage.



## Emergency Travel Insurance Coverage

ARTA travel coverage is unique and does not include a termination age or a stability clause for pre-existing conditions.

Trip Cancellation and Interruption Insurance with \$10,000 per covered person per trip.

## Plan Diversity

Choose the level and style of coverage that best suits your unique retirement goals, including options for single, couple, and family coverage.

## Flexibility

Members get a combined annual maximum for paramedical coverage. You can use the services that fit your needs! Allocate it entirely to massages or spread it across different services, the choice is yours!

## Three Stand-Alone Dental Care Options

with preventative, minor, and major services coverage available.

## Additional Resources

- ARTA Perks discount program
- scholarships for family members
- social connectedness programs
- virtual telemedicine and counselling services

Visit

[artabenefits.net](https://artabenefits.net)



to learn more and enrol in the plan that is best for your lifestyle.

# Assessing the assessments

Alberta teachers sound alarm on explosion in elementary tests

**Phil McRae**

Associate Coordinator, Research, ATA

“What teachers need is the discretion to decide when diagnostic testing can be useful and the ability to provide timely, impactful support for all students. Given our research, I encourage the government to assess the value of their own assessments”

—Jason Schilling, President, ATA



"Timed tests have brought my Grade 1 and 2 classes to tears. They are stressed and crack under pressure."

—Respondant

**ALBERTA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM IS CONTENDING** with an explosion of testing, especially elementary literacy and numeracy screening tests. These assessments have added roughly four days of work to elementary teachers' responsibilities this year, with no corresponding reduction in other demands. Coupled with the introduction of a new curriculum, the increased testing is adding to teachers' workloads without alleviating any existing responsibilities.

This emphasis on standardized assessments for our youngest learners in Alberta is also interrupting and displacing the very heart of teaching and learning practice: relationships. The time teachers once devoted to getting to know students at the beginning of the year — observing their individual needs, strengths, talents and learning styles — is being displaced by these mandatory tests and the time it takes to enter the associated data.

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) recently conducted a comprehensive study of standardized diagnostic assessment tools (SDATs), in the form of the mandatory literacy and numeracy testing, with Richelle Marynowski of the University of Lethbridge. Alberta Education has stated that "These screening assessments will help teachers identify students in the critical early years who are most in need of additional support and provide a means to monitor growth over time." However, the ATA's research findings reveal that the reality in classrooms does not align with these aspirations.

What follows is a summary of six critical issues brought forward in this ATA research study. These six findings underscore the urgent need for the government to reconsider its approach to SDATs.



## 1. NEGATIVE IMPACT ON STUDENTS

The ATA study revealed that SDATs — and the mandatory literacy and numeracy screeners in particular — are contributing to significant stress and anxiety among Alberta students, particularly young learners in Division 1, English language learners (ELL) and students with exceptionalities. One respondent shared, “The timed aspect creates undue pressure and stress. Children are coming to school and all they want to do is perform well and please their teachers. For many students, they develop a sense of failure when these tests are designed to be nearly impossible to finish.”

Furthermore, inappropriate and developmentally misaligned content, such as asking Grade 1 students to work with a number line spanning 0 to 100, intensifies students’ feelings of frustration and failure. These experiences not only undermine children’s confidence but also impact their long-term perceptions of what it means to learn when they begin the year with nothing but a battery of stressful tests.

## 2. LIMITED USEFULNESS OF SDAT RESULTS

Teachers report that SDAT results are often delayed and lack actionable insights, rendering them ineffective for timely intervention. One teacher expressed frustration: “We won’t get the results for this year probably until end of April. . . . It makes no sense.” Stated another, “Not provided with norms (as initially promised), nor with any direction on how to interpret the results OR how the data should drive instruction.”

It is clear that Alberta teachers struggle to translate these results into meaningful supports for students. This disconnect highlights a systemic gap between data collection and actionable classroom strategies. In actuality, most teachers can sense, based on their professional judgment and wisdom, which students are struggling within the first two weeks of regular instruction. The testing appears to be more of an accountability mechanism as opposed to a diagnostic tool of inherent value.

continued on page 36

## Further evidence

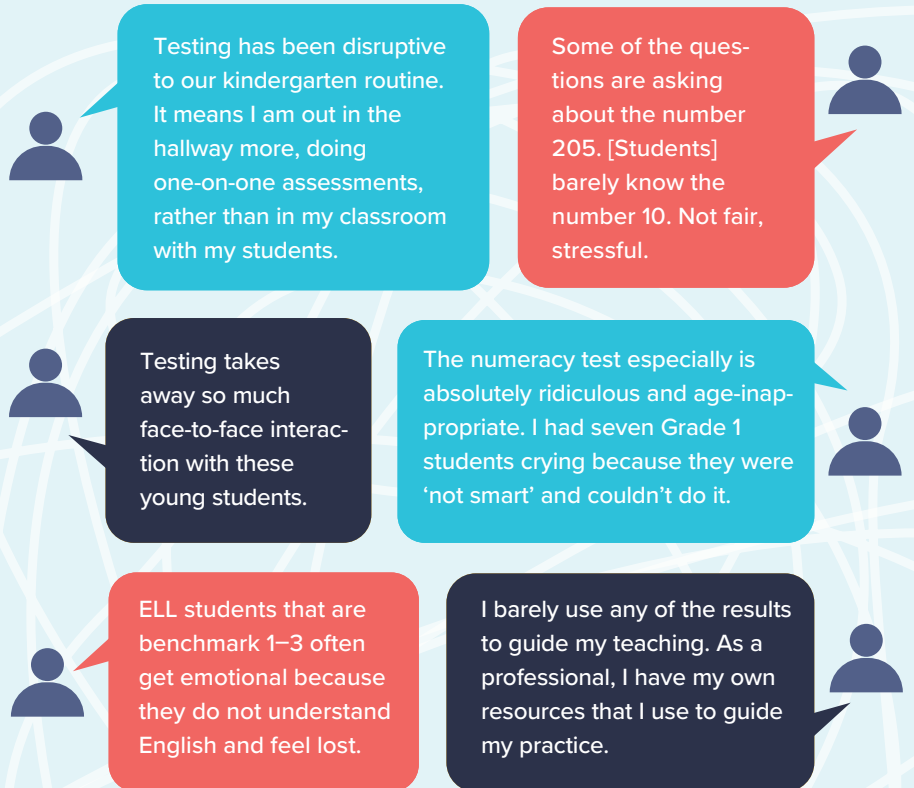
In January 2025, the ATA conducted further research into the impact of increased screening tests by conducting a pulse research study of more than 1,400 Alberta elementary teachers.

# 73%

of teachers perceived that increased screening had a negative or somewhat negative impact on student well-being.



Here are some of the teacher comments from that study.



### ► Standardized Diagnostic Assessment Tools.

The full report can be found on the ATA website under Professional development > Education Research, at [teachers.ab.ca](https://teachers.ab.ca)





**"The ATA's research makes it clear: Alberta's students and teachers deserve a system that values meaningful support over metrics and empowers educators to truly respond to their students' needs."**

### 1. MISALIGNMENT WITH CURRICULUM AND DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

A critical issue identified in the report is the misalignment of SDAT content with curricular goals and students' developmental stages. For instance, teachers highlighted that numeracy assessments often require advanced skills that students have not yet been taught. One teacher stated, "The tests assume that the teacher has taught all the outcomes of the Grade 1 program by the end of December and all students are capable of demonstrating this understanding regardless of ELL [English language learner] level, communication delays, prior exposure, etc." Another similarly explained, "Some of the questions are asking about the number 205. They barely know the number 10. Not fair, stressful," underscoring how much of the tested material is developmentally out of reach for early learners. This misalignment not only renders the assessments ineffective but also undermines their fundamental validity as tools for measuring student progress.

### 2. LACK OF SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Alberta teachers reported a critical lack of support in administering SDATs, including insufficient training and inadequate access to substitute teachers. One respondent lamented, "No sub time provided to administer or input data into Power School [software]. We rely on each other in the school to cover for us when administering the [test], for example." This situation exemplifies what others have also described as "relying on each other ... to cover for us," with teachers

having little formal guidance on the process.

Teachers are often forced to use personal time to manage the technical and logistical demands of these assessments, further intensifying their already heavy workloads. The lack of systemic support underscores the need for better resource allocation to ease the burden on Alberta's teachers.

### 3. EXCESSIVE TIME DEMANDS

SDATs are consuming valuable instructional time, disrupting the classroom environment and straining teachers' ability to focus on building relationships and fostering learning. The timing of assessments, particularly at the start of the school year, compounds these challenges. As one teacher explained, "September and October are busy months trying to get to know students and establish routines and expectations. Adding additional expectations was exhausting and challenging." Another respondent emphasized, "We work hard to build up student confidence, then we force them to write tests on outcomes they haven't fully covered, and any confidence we have built is destroyed."

The cumulative effect of lost teaching days, estimated to be four full days (and more for some classes), raises questions about the efficacy and priorities of these assessments.

### 4. INADEQUATE INSERVICING FOR TEACHERS


The Marynowski study found that most teachers received little to no training on administering or interpreting SDATs. Teachers reported a specific lack of

information about the scores, noting that the provided data offers minimal or no actionable insights. As one educator put it, "Not provided with norms ... nor with any direction on how to interpret the results OR how the data should drive instruction."

This lack of preparedness not only undermines the validity of the assessments but also places undue stress on teachers and school leaders, who are left to navigate these tools without adequate supports and resources.

### A CALL TO ACTION

As the profession faces unsustainable work intensification, declining job satisfaction and a system that prioritizes data over meaningful learning, the findings from this study demand urgent action. Rather than empowering teachers to respond to students' unique struggles and real-time needs, the current mandatory screeners appear to be reducing teaching to data collection for those far away from classrooms in the name of "accountability," feeding the seemingly ever-expanding bureaucratic demands on Alberta teachers and school leaders at the expense of genuine learning.

This misplaced focus risks reducing education to numbers while neglecting the human connections and professional judgment that are at the heart of teaching. The ATA's research makes it clear: Alberta's students and teachers deserve a system that values meaningful support over metrics and empowers educators to truly respond to their students' needs. 



# ARTA 101

## FREE Membership for Active Teachers

Whether your retirement is just around the corner or years away, you can join ARTA 101 for **FREE** and start accessing the advantages of membership today!

### APPLY NOW

Scan this QR code  
and fill out the  
application form or visit  
[arta.net/arta-101](https://arta.net/arta-101)  
to apply online.



## ARTA 101 Membership Advantages



### Scholarships

Scholarships for you and your family — two **\$2,500 scholarships** are awarded each year.



### Contests

ARTA's year-round contests keep members engaged and in touch with their creative spirits.



### Discount Program

Gain access to discounts from a large variety of businesses and services throughout Alberta, including Broadway Across Canada, Magic Bus, The Canadian Brewhouse, Goodlife Fitness, and many more.



### Resources

Access to retirement planning, financial wellness, and mental health resources.



### Education Advocacy

Add your voice to the **30,000** members who support education in Alberta.





# A return to the art of conversation

## Year one of Alberta’s school cellphone ban

**Phil McRae**

Associate Coordinator, Research, ATA

**AT THE ALBERTA TEACHERS’**

Association’s Annual Representative Assembly in May 2024, 450 delegates voted for a resolution placing clear boundaries around the use of cellphones in their classrooms, which were experiencing persistent and problematic pocket-sized interruptions. Policy 4.4.0.1 imagined more focused learning environments free from distractions. Alberta’s government then followed up with a provincewide ministerial order limiting the use of cellphones in schools, with implementation starting immediately in September 2024.

To understand the impact of Alberta’s cellphone rules better, we surveyed more than 2,800 teachers and school leaders across the province to capture early classroom and schoolwide data resulting from this new provincial order.

**DISRUPTIONS DOWN—DIALOGUE UP**

The clearest early signal that emerged from the research was the decline of classroom disruptions. Before September 2024, 72 per cent of teachers in Alberta judged smartphones “extremely or very detrimental” to student learning; after the cellphone ban, 74 per cent of respondents reported that the ban was shrinking classroom disturbances, and nearly two in five were witnessing more face-to-face chats among their students during breaks.

*“Students are more focused in class. Actual reading has greatly increased.”*  
— Grade 8 teacher

**MENTAL WELL-BEING**

Two-thirds (66 per cent) of respondents reported a genuine improvement in student mental health and well-being in their classrooms and schools. The relational frictions — real-time comparison, muted snubs, midnight group-chat dramas — that follow and accompany students

through their devices were alleviated for a good portion of their day.

*“I am no longer constantly mediating drama from group chats.”*  
— High school counsellor

**ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

A slim but significant majority (57 per cent) of respondents reported perceived gains in student academic performance and achievement, while a large neutral middle was waiting for end-of-year evidence. Early narratives from this research match the data: richer student discussions, deeper reading with greater retention, fuller class participation — signs that engaged learning is starting to reclaim cognitive bandwidth once consumed by instant notifications.

*“Participation, engagement, and academic performance have all improved.”*  
— High school teacher.

**SOME ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED**


Even as digital distractions fall and concentration rises, issues associated with bullying remain a challenge. Only 39 per cent of respondents reported a decline in bullying, with many noting that hostile interactions have merely slipped beyond direct adult supervision into after-school group chats and social-media feeds, hallways and washrooms. Student attendance has also not necessarily improved due to the cellphone restrictions.

*“We’re seeing fewer incidents during class, but the mean messages pop up the minute the last bell rings.”*  
— Middle school administrator

**WHY THESE FINDINGS FEEL HOPEFUL**

The cellphone restrictions seem to be offering a rare chord of consensus between

Alberta’s government and public school teachers, all supported by this compelling and clear first-year data.

The initiative began inside the teaching profession; provincial backing through a ministerial order simply amplified teachers’ professional judgment and collective wisdom. Such alignment matters and allows for a more unified front against larger societal problems, such as social-media addiction, unbounded screen time and even parent education. 

**REPORT AVAILABLE**

Results of this study are summarized in a new report entitled *Literacy and Numeracy Screeners, Classroom Conditions, Cellphone Bans and AI in Alberta’s K–12 Schools*, available on the ATA website.



**Note of thanks.** A special thank you to Dr. Mitch Prinstein, chief of psychology at the American Psychological Association and codirector of the Winston Center for Technology and the Developing Mind at the University of North Carolina. Dr. Prinstein’s team codeveloped the survey instrument that measured the impact of Alberta’s school cellphone restrictions.  
- Phil McRae





UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
CONTINUING EDUCATION

# Shape the **future** of Alberta education

Learn the skills to be a principal or superintendent

Are you ready to move into a leadership role? University of Calgary Continuing Education offers two online programs for Alberta certified teachers or education professionals who want to work in the Alberta education system:

- **School Leadership Quality Standard Program**, for aspiring principals
- **Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard Program**, for aspiring superintendents

Register now at [conted.ucalgary.ca/abed](https://conted.ucalgary.ca/abed) and begin your leadership journey today to unlock new career opportunities.



## LD and ADHD Different on the Inside

Boost your capacity to engage students with **Learning Disabilities/ADHD**.

Our **For Educators** webpage is a one-stop shop for online certificated courses to transform your understanding and teaching practice.

Be sure to explore the Alberta-made courses, aligned with curriculum, such as:

- **Target ADHD**
- **Inside Learning Disabilities**
- **Teaching Foundational Literacy Skills**
- **and more!**

Subscribe to our monthly newsletter for **PD updates** and resources.



Learning Disabilities  
& ADHD Network  
CALGARY REGION

403-630-1616



[LDADHDNetwork.ca](https://LDADHDNetwork.ca)

# Check it out!

These resources are now available through the ATA library.

Have you ever used your ATA library? If not, you should give it a try. Books, DVDs, robots and more delivered right to your doorstep with return postage paid by us. Great teaching resources are waiting for you. Contact us at [library@ata.ab.ca](mailto:library@ata.ab.ca).

## 1. **VEVOR Mini Pottery Wheel**

A miniature pottery wheel with lower torque than a full-sized wheel. Excellent for making miniature thrown items like bowls and vases.

## 2. **Using Graphic Novels in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Classroom**

Graphic novels are excellent tools to engage students and enrich learning. They can also explain difficult concepts more easily. This book demonstrates how teachers in the areas of science and math can use these texts effectively with students.

## 3. **Make: Mechanical Engineering for Makers — A Hands-On Guide to Designing and Making Physical Things**

This gentle introduction to mechanical engineering principles will assist teachers in getting students to design and build better and stronger solutions in their making projects.

## 4. **Designing Authentic Performance Tasks and Projects: Tools for Meaningful Learning and Assessment**

This well-written book offers teachers great advice about designing projects and assessments to use in their classes. It is particularly useful that the authors provide examples from real classrooms at all grade levels.

## 5. **Une année pour grandir...**

Les autrices offrent un itinéraire structuré sur les dix mois de l'année scolaire, chacun consacré à une thématique particulière, pour favoriser le bien-être, les relations interpersonnelles et l'épanouissement des élèves du primaire.



Information provided by ATA librarian  
Sandra Anderson.

## Your colleagues recommend

### Joan Baker Jeffery

*The Unmaking of June Farrow* by Adrienne Young.

### Janel Winslow-Sherwin

Completed *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. There is some very profound data in this book. Should be required reading for all teachers and parents alike. We will be discussing it at our local book club next week! Am now reading his prior book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*.



6. *Quand  $7 \times 6 = 37$* 

Ce livre présente une séquence d'enseignement composée de six situations à caractère ludique qui permettent de partir des connaissances des élèves pour les amener à acquérir les savoirs mathématiques visés.

7. *Big Words for Young Readers: Teaching Kids in Grades K to 5 to Decode — and Understand — Words with Multiple Syllables and Morphemes*

Stating that phonics shouldn't end with decoding short words, author Heidi Mesmer argues that phonics instructions should continue into Grade 5 and shows teachers what phonics work in upper elementary can look like in their classrooms.

8. *Hacking School Leadership: What Makes Teachers Happy and Why It Matters to Students*

One of most important factors in a teacher's job satisfaction is having a supportive administrator. Author Erika Garcia-Niles offers school principals step-by-step processes to build trust and empower their teachers.

9. *Teachers Speak Up!: Stories of Courage, Resilience, and Hope in Difficult Times*

Each chapter is written by a classroom teacher and addresses specific issues for teachers. These diverse voices inspire, commiserate and consider the future of what education might be.

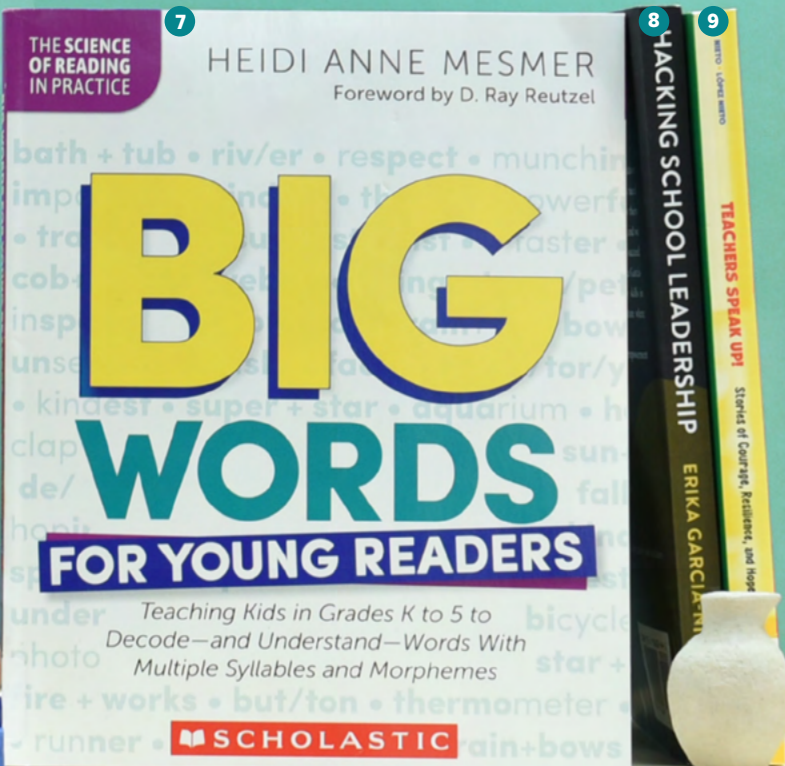


PHOTO BY BIANCA HO

## Chris Grzanich Campbell

*A Study in Charlotte* by Brittany Cavallaro ★★☆☆. (If you like Sherlock Holmes, this is a nice bonus book.)

## Christy Haggarty

*Wayi wah! Indigenous Pedagogies: An Act For Reconciliation and Anti-Racist Education* by Jo Chrona. A practical and thoughtful guide for education for reconciliation. Wonderful questions for reflection!

## Lori Karoly Szmul

I have fallen in love with Louise Penney. She's Canadian, brilliant, and I love the fact her books are unapologetically Canadian — right down to Tim Hortons coffee.



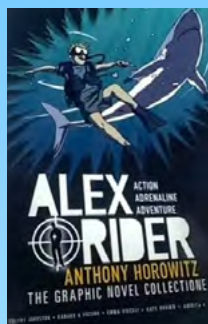
# What book would you recommend for reluctant readers?



## **The Shadow of the Wind**

This book by Carlos Ruiz Zafon and Lucia Graves is lovely and charming.

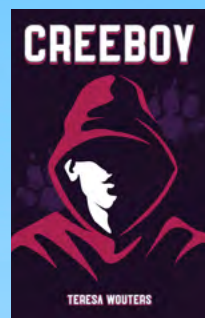
Jennifer Prestash



## **Alex Rider, The Graphic Novel Collection**

By Anthony Horowitz, these books are great for adventure lovers. The protagonist is an adolescent in an adult world and shows how he can navigate his own adventures.

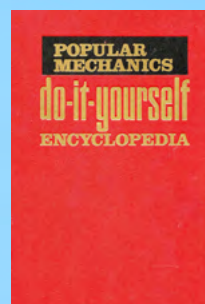
Sinead Dullaghan



## **Creeboy**

This low-vocabulary, high interest novel is an engaging read that captures a reluctant reader's attention and keeps it throughout. This presents a realistic story that allows a reader to understand the issues some of our Indigenous students face.

Mary Claire Belanger



## **Popular Mechanics Do-it-yourself Encyclopedia**

As a shop teacher, I encountered many students who were reluctant readers, but they love my collection of old Popular Mechanics red books.

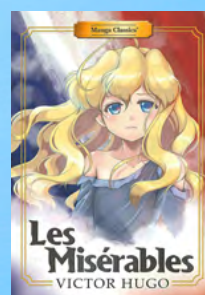
Robert McKague



## **Judy Moody & Stink in the School's Out Collection**

In grades 2–5, more than any other book, the ones in these series have turned my students from fake readers to voracious consumers. So many students tried one, then started reading two or three at a time, and once they've read the whole series, they move on to new books, transformed into readers.

Joshua Lafleur



## **Graphic novels**

Visuals take the stress off readers.

Courtney Albrecht





You support your students

# Field Law SUPPORTS YOU

Proud to serve as legal counsel to  
the Alberta Teachers' Association.

[fieldlaw.com](http://fieldlaw.com)

"Field Law" is a trademark and trade name of Field LLP.

## FIELD LAW

Because Clarity Matters®

## Maybe you were planning to do it "later". Well, now's the perfect time!

**School's out and the classroom is quiet, but ATRF is still open! The summer lull is a great opportunity to take care of your pension to-do list.**

Take a moment for future you and:

- ✓ Update your personal email
- ✓ Confirm your pension partner
- ✓ Review your beneficiary
- ✓ Book an appointment with a pension counsellor

**Log in to MyPension today.** It's fast. It's secure. It's important.



Visit:  
**ATRF.com**





## Supporting our newest members as they begin their teaching journey

### THE ATA WELCOMES NEW

members every year and offers tailored supports for these teachers in their first years of practice.

#### Beginning Teacher Network

The Beginning Teacher Network provides support and mentorship directly to teachers who are new to the teaching profession or new to the province.

#### OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW

- Attend virtual sessions focused on topics relevant to your beginning teacher context.
- Learn practical strategies and get advice from experienced teachers and ATA staff.
- Connect with colleagues to discuss issues and build your professional network.

#### HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Prefer to attend during the school day? Apply to join a Beginning Teacher Network cohort group. Cohort members receive release time to attend four virtual sessions during the school day over the course of the school year.

Prefer to attend after school? Choose after-school virtual sessions that are relevant to you — or attend them all!

#### Beginning Teachers Conference

Each fall, the ATA holds the Beginning Teachers Conference, which includes


professional learning and tips specifically for new teachers. Registration is open to teachers in their first two years of classroom teaching and to teachers new to teaching in Alberta.

#### Beginning Teachers Video Series

The Beginning Teachers Video Series provides information on key topics for new (and even not new) teachers. With topics ranging from types of teaching contracts, professional growth plans, health benefits, teacher supervision and evaluation, there is something for every member.

#### Welcome to the ATA

The ATA is here to help all its members. If you have questions or need support, contact the ATA anytime at 1-800-232-7208.

Learn more about your professional association, its structure and its supports for members. Check out *Welcome to the Profession: A Quick Guide to the Alberta Teachers' Association*, available online. 

Find more detailed information, resources, videos and FAQs for beginning teachers on the ATA's website under Teaching career > Beginning teachers.

### Connect and learn

Join one of the ATA's specialist councils to increase your knowledge and skills in defined specialty areas related to

- curriculum subjects (e.g., science, math, art);
- leadership or support roles (e.g., school leaders, counsellors);
- professional practice standard competencies (e.g., Indigenous education, inclusive education, the effective use of technology); or
- pedagogical contexts (e.g., grade groupings, modes of instruction, unique learning environments).

Active members can join one council at no cost.

► [Learn more on the ATA's website under Professional development > Specialist councils.](#)



## Soutien offert à nos nouveaux membres dès leur entrée dans la profession

**CHACQUE ANNÉE, L'ATA ACCUEILLE** de nouveaux membres et leur offre des mesures de soutien adaptées à leurs besoins pendant leurs premières années d'exercice.

### **Beginning Teacher Network (réseau des enseignants débutants)**

Le réseau des enseignants débutants est un programme de soutien et de mentorat qui s'adresse tout particulièrement aux enseignants nouveaux dans la profession ou récemment arrivés dans la province. Ce programme est offert uniquement en anglais.

#### **POSSIBILITÉS DE S'ÉPANOUIR**

- Participez à des séances virtuelles sur des sujets qui vous seront particulièrement utiles étant donné votre statut d'enseignant débutant.
- Apprenez des stratégies pratiques et profitez de conseils d'enseignants expérimentés et des membres du personnel de l'ATA.
- Tissez des liens avec des collègues, discutez des défis et construisez ainsi votre réseau professionnel.

#### **COMMENT PARTICIPER AUX SÉANCES VIRTUELLES?**

Vous préférez y participer pendant la journée scolaire? Faites une demande pour rejoindre une cohorte du réseau des enseignants débutants. À ce propos, tout membre d'une cohorte se voit accorder un congé pour activités professionnelles lui permettant de participer à quatre séances virtuelles par année scolaire si celles-ci sont prévues pendant la journée scolaire.

Vous préférez y participer après la journée scolaire? Choisissez les séances

virtuelles proposées après la journée scolaire qui vous intéressent OU n'en ratez aucune!

### **Congrès des enseignants débutants**

Chaque automne, l'ATA organise le congrès des enseignants débutants qui offre des séances de perfectionnement professionnel ainsi que des conseils particulièrement utiles aux nouveaux enseignants. Les enseignants invités à ce congrès sont ceux qui effectuent leur première ou deuxième année d'enseignement et qui n'ont jamais auparavant assisté à ce congrès, ou encore ceux qui enseignent en Alberta pour la première fois.


### **Série de vidéos « Enseignants débutants » (en anglais)**

Cette série de vidéos traite de sujets essentiels pour tout nouvel enseignant, mais aussi pour ceux qui ont déjà quelques années d'expérience. Les sujets abordés sont extrêmement variés : types de contrats d'enseignement, plans de croissance professionnelle, régimes de soins de santé, supervision et évaluation des enseignants, etc. Autant dire que tout membre y trouve son compte.

### **Bienvenue à l'ATA**

L'ATA est là pour aider tous ses membres. Si vous avez des questions ou besoin de soutien, contactez l'ATA à tout moment en composant le 1-800-232-7208.

Pour en savoir plus sur votre association professionnelle, sa structure et le soutien qu'elle apporte à ses membres,

consultez le guide de référence en ligne de l'Alberta Teachers' Association intitulé **Bienvenue dans la profession.** 

Pour plus de renseignements détaillés, de ressources, de vidéos et une FAQ pour les enseignants débutants, rendez-vous sur le site Web de l'ATA, sous la rubrique Teaching career > Beginning teachers.

### **Établissez des liens pour développer votre apprentissage**

Pour cela, adhérez à un des conseils de spécialistes de l'ATA et développez vos connaissances et compétences dans un domaine d'expertise apparenté

- aux matières du programme d'études (sciences, maths, art);
- au leadership ou au soutien (leaders scolaires, conseillers d'orientation);
- aux normes de pratique professionnelle (éducation autochtone, éducation inclusive, l'utilisation efficace de la technologie); ou
- aux contextes pédagogiques (regroupement par niveaux scolaires, modes d'enseignement, milieux d'apprentissage uniques).

Tout membre actif peut adhérer gratuitement à un conseil de spécialistes.

► Vous trouverez davantage de renseignements à ce sujet sur le site de l'ATA sous **Professional development > Specialist councils.**

# Alberta Blue Cross® Mental Health and Well-Being Bursary

Application Deadline: June 13, 2025, at 4 PM



<https://tinyurl.com/47f44um2>

Five \$2,000 bursaries are available to support Alberta teachers pursuing graduate-level courses in counselling or well-being.

We make wellness accessible for all Albertans, from young adults to retirees. Teachers help carry this forward, and we're proud to support their continued learning.



AR-ETR-43-3 2025

# 2025



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association



## BEGINNING TEACHERS CONFERENCE

# SAVE THE DATE

**Are you a teacher  
in your first two  
years of classroom  
teaching in Alberta?**

This once-in-a-career event  
is made for you! Contact  
your principal for release  
time arrangements. Space  
is limited—apply early.

**Edmonton**  
**September**  
**26-27**

**Calgary**  
**October**  
**3-4**



Registration opens online  
May 31, 2025. Details at **teachers.ab.ca**.



## Creative colleagues

Teachers have their own extracurricular activities. Some volunteer. Some write books. Others produce podcasts, create art or make music. Here are some endeavours undertaken by your colleagues “out there.”

### MUSIC

#### **Head of a Mouse**

When not in the classroom, music teacher Audrey Ochoa is busy playing trombone professionally. She has released several albums, including her most recent, *Head of a Mouse*. This album was released in September 2023 and was nominated for a 2025 Juno Award for Jazz Album of the Year (Solo). Other highlights of her career include playing with the Dave Matthews Band in Vancouver and touring the United States with the first national tour of the Tony Award-winning musical *Hadestown*.

AUDREY OCHOA

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Elementary/Junior High School, Edmonton  
audreychoa.ca  
Instagram @audreyochotron  
Chronograph Records

### BOOKS



#### **HANK and Other Mild Neighbours**

Substitute teacher Janet Hamilton recently published *HANK and Other Mild Neighbours*, a local publication of vignettes from a central community in Edmonton. The book, comprised of short chapters about neighbours, aims to bring awareness to Edmonton's 107 Avenue Revitalization Project. This central area is typically described as where the world meets in Edmonton. As a personal act of reconciliation, all author proceeds are being donated to

Aboriginal Head Start Edmonton sites.

JANET HAMILTON

Edmonton Public Schools  
Pagemaster Publishing  
pagemasterpublishing.ca/shop/hank



#### **Chaff on the Wind**

Fine arts teacher Brenda K. Savella recently published her first novel, *Chaff On The Wind*. The novel tells the story of Annabel who, unhappy, restless and searching for answers, sets out with her dog on a tenting trip to the Canadian Rockies. This story is about making choices, facing challenges and finding hope on a journey of faith. Savella's novel was named a finalist for the 2023 National Braun Book Award. For

Savella, being published is a dream come true, and she hopes to encourage other teachers to reach high for themselves and thereby be an inspiration to their students, colleagues and communities. *Chaff On The Wind* is now available around the world online and in local Alberta bookstores.

BRENDA SAVELLA

M. E. Lazerte School, Edmonton  
Word Alive Press



#### **Weaving Hope Through Our Education System**

How is hope fostered in our educational landscape? In an anthology entitled *Weaving Hope Through Our Education System*, 38 educational leaders from across Alberta, including 22 Alberta teachers, respond to this prompt through poetry, narratives, articles, interviews and plays. It invites emerging, novice and

experienced educators to reflect, reminds us to connect and calls us to action. As editor, teacher Derriquer DeGagné weaves together threads of courage, connection, compassion, community and creativity.

DERRIQUE DEGAGNÉ

Highlands School, Edmonton  
Instagram @derriqued  
Peter Lang Publishing

- **What's new with you?** If you'd like to make a submission for publication in *Who's Out There?*, email a summary (50–75 words) to section editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at [lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca](mailto:lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).







# Land of opportunity

Pakistani teacher builds a future for herself and her students

**Shari Narine**

Freelance Contributor

**HUMA KASHIF REMEMBERS** how difficult it was to be unable to teach when she moved to Canada with a teaching degree from her home country of Pakistan, so she's making it easier for those who follow in her footsteps.

She has set up a Facebook page aimed at internationally educated teachers wanting to teach in Alberta. She has a group of 1,100.

"I'm trying to help these teachers through the process, to make it easier for them, because when I would look online, there would be nothing," says Kashif.

## COMING TO A NEW COUNTRY

Kashif immigrated to Lac La Biche, in northern Alberta, eight years ago with her husband Kashif Shah and their three children. A year later, the family moved to Slave Lake, where their fourth child was born.

In Pakistan, Kashif had earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration. To support her studies, she took a job teaching in a private school. She fell in love with teaching.

"It's not just teaching," she says. "It's like learning, shaping futures and being the spark that lights someone's path."

She returned to university for two years earning her bachelor's degree in education. She never pursued a career in business administration, instead teaching seven years in Pakistan, ranging from elementary school to university.

When Kashif came to Alberta, her bachelor of education required upgrading to meet provincial teaching standards. In the meantime, she spent years gaining experience as a volunteer and educational assistant at Roland Michener Secondary School in Slave Lake.

"It was very frustrating," she says. "I wanted to be

what I was in Pakistan. I love teaching and I love being around kids and students and helping them. And often I would (have) kids telling me, 'Why don't you be the teacher?'"

## STEPPING UP TO THE CHALLENGE

Kashif found it difficult to find information about how to upgrade her teaching credentials. Then she met someone who guided her through the required steps. With support from her principal and vice-principal, she applied to Alberta Education and had her credentials assessed. She learned which courses she needed to take to teach in the province. She had to move to Edmonton to attend the University of Alberta.

"I had to leave my family behind. I had to rent a place. It was not easy at all. I've never lived alone by myself, ever in my life, and without my kids especially," she says.

In 2023, with the support of her husband and children, along with a scholarship from the university, Kashif completed her upgrading and earned her teaching credentials from Alberta Education, allowing her to officially teach in the province.

There was never a time in Edmonton, says Kashif, that she questioned her resolve to get her Alberta credentials.

Her university classes included language arts, Indigenous studies and ethics. It was all learning that Kashif found valuable, something she didn't expect.

"First, I thought that it would be a waste of my time going there, but when I learned everything, it was totally what I needed to know. (It was) necessary, especially if you are teaching in this country, you need to know specific things," she says.



Kashif went through the full hiring process before getting a job as a junior high math teacher at Roland Michener two years ago, where she also did her 10-week university practicum.


### BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Being new to Canada didn't stop Kashif from getting involved in her community. Among her greatest accomplishments is being an executive member of the Lesser Slave Lake Multicultural Association.

"(The association) is important because we need to have a voice now for people from different cultures. They feel left out. We are their voices," says Kashif.

The multicultural association also started a program called Hockey as a Second Language, in which Kashif is active. Since coming to Canada, she has learned to skate and play hockey. She also is an assistant coach on her eldest son's hockey team.

As for her future, Kashif says she wants to get her doctorate in education.

"I like this thing here in Canada that no matter what age you are, you still learn things," she says. "You can do anything. There's no end based on your gender, on your age or anything you want, as long as you're willing, as long as you have the courage." 

### STATUS UPDATE WITH *Huma Kashif*

#### How does teaching in Alberta compare to teaching in Pakistan?

Here, teachers have more autonomy, they must cover the required curriculum, but they have the flexibility to decide how to teach. Whether it's using manipulatives, outdoor activities or interactive lessons, there's freedom to make learning more engaging. In Pakistan, teaching is more traditional, with a focus on direct instruction and limited hands-on learning tools.

In Pakistan, teachers hold a highly respected place in society; students look up to them, follow their instructions without question and even make way for them when they walk. In Alberta, students have more voice in their learning, and while teachers may not hold the same societal status, I appreciate this shift. I believe in empowering students to express their thoughts, ask questions and take ownership of their education.

#### What do you like most about Alberta/Canada?

Alberta is a beautiful place, and even though it's cold, I don't mind the weather. It's truly a land of opportunities, where you can build a future for yourself and your family.

#### What do you miss most about Pakistan?

I miss my family and friends the most. I especially miss attending family weddings — big celebrations full of music, dancing and joy.

- **Got an idea?** In Profile features an interesting teacher in each issue of the *ATA Magazine*. If you know of a teacher who would be a good profile subject, please contact managing editor Cory Hare at [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).



## REDISCOVER THE SOUNDS YOU LOVE!



Alberta Teachers' Association members receive a **10% discount!**



**780-669-1528**

14127 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NW, Unit 200, Edmonton

[hearingcaredoctors.ca](http://hearingcaredoctors.ca)



## Transform your career with an exchange.

Various destinations available.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

Virtual and in-person short-term exchanges for teachers and school leaders.

*Alberta*

Visit [teachers.ab.ca](http://teachers.ab.ca), search "teacher exchange" for applications and details.

**BRING LIVE MUSIC TO YOUR SCHOOL!**

Concerts for all grades and ages, interactive programs with curriculum links and favourite songs

Classroom and residency activities for elementary and middle schools

Intensive workshops for beginning to advanced band students

Expand and advance your music programs at all levels

[www.foothillsbrass.ca](http://www.foothillsbrass.ca)

# A breath of fresh air

What is an outdoor activity that you're planning for your students this spring?



We will come together as a whole school to do mental health walks. This is an opportunity to enjoy nature and to socialize.

– Kristy Dunn

I'm taking my class of high school EAL learners, who are new to Canada, to Waterton!

– Yvette Lowen

Depending on funding, we're planning to visit Hideaway Adventure Grounds near the Kikino Métis Settlement, a rustic camping venue that immerses students in rich Indigenous culture and traditions.

– Lucie Theroux



Quinzhees, snowshoeing, skiing, slo-pitch, mantracker, Gaga ball, walking trails

– Malinka Kerr



With my Grade 4s:

- Weekly nature walks to connect kids with nature
- Unstructured play
- Sit spots

– Sarah Burge



- 5K nature walk
- Outdoor scavenger hunt
- Obstacle course (to prepare students for track and field)
- Outdoor soccer/basketball

– Bobby Li



Insect or rock hunt

– Adrienne Biever

- We have been practicing “snow ice cream” recipes!
- We are partnering with our local butcher shop to teach students how to prepare fish caught from the local trout pond.
- We are exploring the local Indigenous place names in our area. We will be visiting Sitting Stone Lake, which has Cree history.
- My social studies students do a community cleanup every April.

– Kyle McIntosh

- Outdoor waterpark, year-end fun activity
- Museum trip with outside activities, celebrating “Our Past” social studies unit (Grade 1)

– Angela Tilley



- Looking for insects in nature
- Grow/plant flowers

– Amanda Chornopyski



1. Overnight canoe trip on a local river
2. Two-day canoe and camping trip at Astotin Lake, in Elk Island National Park
3. Trip to local waste management facility
4. Track and field event

– Matthew Gelderman



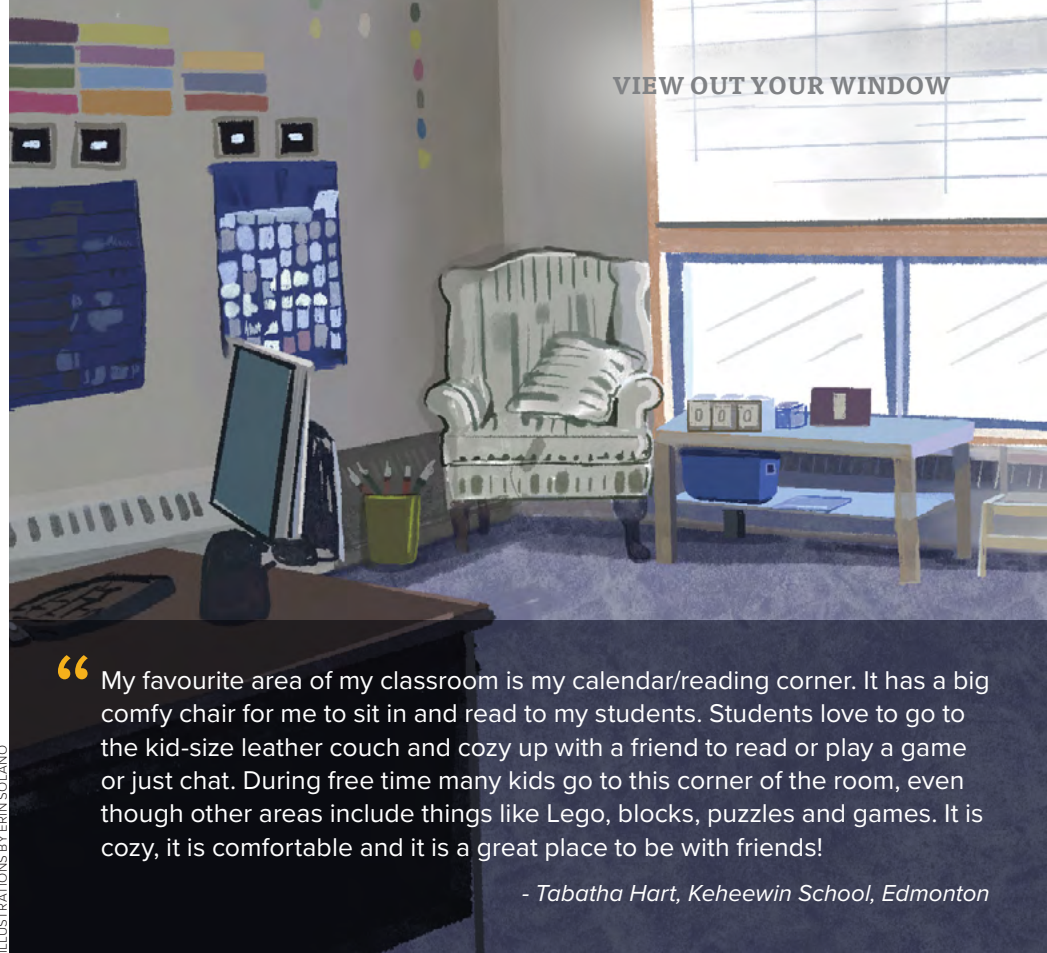
► See more at [facebook.com/ABteachers](https://facebook.com/ABteachers).



# The power of place

Sometimes a decorative touch can transform a classroom into a special place. Other times, it just takes a look out the window.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIN SOLANO



“ My favourite area of my classroom is my calendar/reading corner. It has a big comfy chair for me to sit in and read to my students. Students love to go to the kid-size leather couch and cozy up with a friend to read or play a game or just chat. During free time many kids go to this corner of the room, even though other areas include things like Lego, blocks, puzzles and games. It is cozy, it is comfortable and it is a great place to be with friends!

- Tabatha Hart, Keheewin School, Edmonton



“ My plants make me so happy in my classroom! Plus, I love decorating for the seasons. And don't worry, the candles are flameless!”

- Paula Balog, Brooks Junior High School, Brooks

“ The view from my desk is the best! I teach on a colony and get to see all the little ones out playing throughout the day. I also get to see amazing sunrises and sunsets!”

- Laurie Dirs, Breaking Point Colony School, Manning



# ALBERTA SPENDS THE LEAST ON EDUCATION IN CANADA

Want to make a difference for Albertans everywhere? Demand answers from your MLA about why Alberta spends the least on public education per student in all of Canada. Together, we can ensure a brighter future for our children and our province.



**StopTheExcuses.ca**



The Alberta Teachers' Association



Canada

Get funding to take your students on an **Exchange** anywhere in **Canada**!

Discover Canadian heritage, culture, histories, and new communities through a reciprocal Youth Exchange.

✓ Open to groups of youth aged 12-17 & their chaperones.



Apply by June 30th, 2025, for a chance to win 1 of 3 \$1000 WestJet travel vouchers!



[EXPERIENCESCANADA.CA/EXCHANGES](https://EXPERIENCESCANADA.CA/EXCHANGES)

## Join a Specialist Council!

*Connecting Minds Inspiring Innovation*

**Active members**  
can register for one council for no charge and may join additional councils for a small fee.

**Associate members**  
must pay an annual membership fee to join each council.

**Student members**  
may register in all councils for no charge.



To register, head to **www.teachers.ab.ca** and click the specialist councils link under the professional development menu.



The Alberta Teachers' Association





ISTOCK

# Un cent for your thoughts

Reward system gets students talking

**Krista Sheen**

Grade 1/2 French immersion, Greenview School, Edmonton

**IN MY GRADE 1-2 SPLIT FRENCH IMMERSION CLASS,** I use a reward system to encourage students to speak French. I have a set of pretend Canadian money and keep pennies with me at all times. Any time a student speaks French, I pay them a penny. When they get to five pennies, they can exchange it for a nickel, and so on.

At the end of the month, I set up a market where students can buy dollar-store items like mini squishmallows, rings, stickers, etc., all at different prices. The students walk around and pick up the things that they want and check if they have enough money or decide if they

want to save their money and get a bigger item next month.

Over the course of my career, I've tried different methods to encourage immersion students to speak French. This method has been the most effective. It keeps the kids engaged and now everybody wants to raise their hand and say something. It even works for the kids that are more introverted or afraid to speak. They're really trying more than with past methods.

It's not a perfect system, but it has improved my students' French a lot, with the side benefit of practicing math and learning about money without even

realizing it. I feel it's important to use replica money that represents real Canadian coins and notes to teach financial literacy, but it also helps students understand decimals, percentages, etc. in higher grades. ATA

“It keeps the kids engaged and now everybody wants to raise their hand and say something.”

# A matter of perspective

Is the stroller too large or the bus too small?

**Jeff Huculak**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA



ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

## THE CHALLENGE

Finding solutions when obstacles are all you can see.

### IN 2010, I WAS ASSISTANT

principal of an Edmonton school for pregnant and parenting teens. The school had a daycare that many students relied on. These students were juggling more responsibilities than most adults, and they inspired me daily with their determination.

Many students took transit buses to school, and during my first winter, I noticed that many were arriving late or not at all. Students told me that bus drivers were refusing to let them on because their strollers were too large.

After school, I went to the bus stop and took a ride to see what students were dealing with. For the girls, the main issue was space. There were eight girls, but the bus had space for only two or three because of their strollers. Some girls had to wait for another bus and would often miss their connection, causing a lot of stress. From the bus drivers' perspective, they felt they had to limit the number of strollers so there was space for other patrons.

After this exploratory ride, it took me a few attempts to reach


someone at Edmonton Transit by phone. As I explained the situation, it was clear they did not fully comprehend the issue, so I invited them to the school. The next day, the moment they walked into the school, their jaw dropped — they were shocked by the number of strollers lined up all the way down the hallway.

I brought out my trusty tape measure (yes, I had one in my office). Guess what? These strollers weren't oversized or extravagant; they were just regular strollers. The maximum size indicated on the transit website was for those fold-up strollers with tiny wheels, which none of the students used because they were impossible to push through the snow.

The transit representative realized that the stroller size

“I brought out my trusty tape measure (yes, I had one in my office).”

restrictions were unrealistic and that they needed to work with us to address the issue for the benefit of our students and other bus patrons. Within about three weeks of the visit, we'd had several conversations about the students' most common routes and Edmonton Transit had added “school specials” — dedicated buses for our students and their strollers. It was a pretty quick turnaround and it was great for our girls.

I recently checked in with school staff, and they informed me that the school specials are still running today. The moral of the story? Perspective matters. When we take the time to understand the challenges others face, we find better solutions. 





LIVE

PRESENTING SPONSOR



BOOK YOUR CLASS TODAY

**Teachers! Unlock your students' passion for learning through National Geographic Live**

**Jaime Rojo:  
Chasing Monarchs**

February 2 & 3, 2026 | 10:15am

An epic migration against all odds.

**Jess Cramp:  
The Untold Story of Sharks**

March 9, 2026 | 10:15am

A dive into the world of the graceful icons of the deep.

**Heather Lynch:  
Penguins of Antarctica**

April 20, 2026 | 10:15am

An exploration of the abundance of life at the bottom of the world.

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Werklund Centre

Each presentation includes a post-show Q&A.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

**National Geographic Society**

**WILD EYE: A Life in Photographs with Beverly and Dereck Joubert**

October 27, 2025 | 10:15am

Experience 40 years in the field from two of the world's most respected wildlife photographers as Beverly and Dereck Joubert share their powerful stories of the pursuit of big cats.



Presenting Sponsor



BluWater Partner



Student Engagement Sponsor



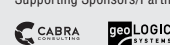
Innovation Sponsor



EXPLORE National Geographic Sponsor



EXPLORE National Geographic Supporting Sponsors/Partners



Public Sector Support



Explorers Circle & Hospitality Sponsor



**WE ARE SPARKING NEW POSSIBILITIES  
WITH A NEW NAME**

Arts Commons is becoming Werklund Centre  
Learn more at [werklundcentre.ca](http://werklundcentre.ca)



**Werklund  
Centre**



The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association | 11010-142 Street Edmonton  
Alberta, Canada, T5N 2R1 | [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)

Publication Agreement Number 40065477

# It pays to be a member!

**ATA members can  
receive exclusive home and  
car insurance savings and  
enhanced coverages.**



**belairdirect.**  
car and home insurance

Certain conditions, eligibility requirements, limitations and exclusions apply to all offers. Visit [belairdirect.com](http://belairdirect.com) for more details. Offers may change without notice. We offer car insurance and home insurance in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island and home insurance only in British Columbia. © 2025, Belair Insurance Company Inc. All rights reserved.