

ATA NEWS

May 6, 2025 ■ Volume 59, Number 13

■ News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association

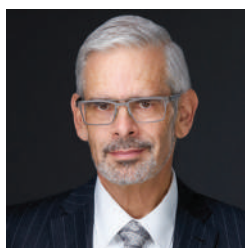


“ When we see what others can become, we give them permission to rise. ”



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Inclusion advocate Bean Gill presented on disability, identity and creating spaces where everyone belongs at the 2025 Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Conference. See [page 4](#) for more on the conference.



Liberals win minority

What the federal election results mean for Alberta teachers

See Q&A, [page 2.](#)



Honorary membership

Legal counsel to receive top honour

See [page 4.](#)



This is for everyone

Reflecting on the legacy Pope Francis leaves behind

See Viewpoints, [page 3.](#)



New bursary launched

Mental health and well-being bursary for teachers

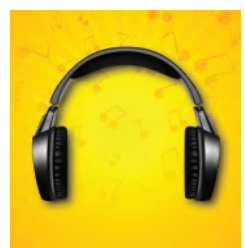
See [page 11.](#)



Certain uncertainties

Unity matters even more in times like these

See Off Script, [page 11.](#)



Power playlist

Teachers' Monday-morning jams

See Tale End, [page 16.](#)

Recognizing when social media is impacting mental health



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
ATA News
Editor-in-Chief

Social media has become part of our lives. It can connect and inform. Over the past 15 years, social media platforms have become powerful — so much so that they can even influence elections. However, it's important to remember that what we see online is not always real or the full story. And sometimes it's just not good for us. As teachers, we know there is growing concern about and awareness of social media's impact on mental health. The new cell phone policy in Alberta is a direct result of a concern for mental health in our children and youth. Even as we try to help our students navigate the tricky world of

social media, we can also reflect on the impact of social media on our own well-being. I love Facebook (so I fit the norms of my age group). I love sharing content on various topics with family and friends, and I try to limit my political content. My algorithm has kept the content I see fairly positive, and I haven't noticed a negative effect on myself, though I am aware that scrolling social media takes away from social interactions and time outside. Facebook remains a preferred social media platform for many teachers, but its relevance among younger generations, particularly Gen Z, has decreased. My 20-something-year-old children like Facebook for Marketplace, and that's about it (they too fit the profile). Gen Z'ers tend to use Instagram, a platform that makes filtering photos so easy. Regardless of the platform, though, we see that social media users often post the

best, most aesthetically pleasing images they can, whether or not they reflect real life. These superficial, filtered posts can affect the mental health issues of users, who might not understand that the posts they see aren't always reality. Communication via social media can also create issues when it comes to our mental health. On the one hand, social media platforms can facilitate quick and easy communication and information sharing, which is great. However, we also need to be mindful of the impact online conversations can have. On social media, we see great divisiveness on a range of topics, whether it be on the use of electric cars or on our own voting on the mediator's recommendations. There is a fine line between sharing thoughts, opinions and questions, and engaging in harsh online discourse. As people become more anxious about global

and local events, it seems to be more difficult to avoid becoming pulled into such discourse. I have colleagues who identified a demise in their own mental health and so chose to remove themselves from groups and chats. It is an easy way to help yourself if the negativity starts to feel like too much. In those times, you might consider taking some days off social media or using timers on apps to reduce your time on your device. Social media can be a source of important information and connection, and it is not going away any time soon. Being mindful of how we use these platforms and recognizing their potential effects — on others and ourselves — needs to remain a priority to ensure we are taking care of ourselves. ■
I welcome your comments. Contact me at kristine.wilkinson@ata.ab.ca.

How the federal election results will affect the profession



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive
Secretary

Question: What do the results of the federal election mean for Alberta teachers?
Answer: As I am writing this, ballots in some very tight races are still being counted, but it appears that the Liberal party under the leadership of my fellow St. Francis Xavier High School alumnus Mark Carney will fall a few seats short of forming a majority government. This is a remarkable turn of fortunes for a party that was well on its way to electoral oblivion only four months ago. The outcome of the federal election should have little direct impact on public education or teachers. The main reason for this is that, for a variety of historical reasons, the *Constitution Act* (previously the *British North America Act*) assigns responsibility for education to the provinces. As a result, Canada has been unique among the leading industrialized nations in not having a national education ministry or strategy. The Trump administration, though, seems determined to gut and eventually eliminate the United States Department of Education, so I expect our American friends will be joining us as an international outlier in this respect. That said, the federal government still makes its presence felt in very specific ways in education. For example, the federal government has constitutional responsibility for Indigenous peoples and so funds

education of schools operating under First Nations' jurisdiction and will fund the education of students who have status under the *Indian Act* but who are attending schools under provincial jurisdiction. In some Alberta communities, the population of Indigenous students is significant and growing, and some of the issues the Association has raised about the adequacy of education funding in the provincial context are relevant to the federal government's role and responsibilities. Though not strictly speaking education related, the federal government is also supporting Indigenous children with health, social and enhanced education services in fulfilment of its obligations as established by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in its "Jordan's Principle" ruling. Recently some school authorities that were accessing these funds have found that they are no longer deemed eligible to receive these funds and are now scrambling to maintain services for Indigenous students. Another example of federal involvement of particular significance to Francophone school authorities is the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP) which, in Alberta, funds French minority-language and second-language programs at the grade-school and post-secondary levels. The terms of OLEP funding are periodically negotiated between each of the provinces and the federal government. In the current school year, about \$18.5 million in OLEP funds have been transferred to Alberta Education to support a variety of programs, including individual teacher bursaries and school authority programs. Finally, there are smaller, boutique programs supported by the federal

government. A recent example is the agreement between Alberta and the federal government announced on March 10 to enhance and expand school food programs in Alberta schools. The feds will provide \$42 million over the next three years as part of the National School Food Program, which currently is serving 58,000 Alberta students. There is nothing in the party platform that I could find that suggests that a Liberal government under Mark Carney (did I mention we went to the same high school?) will substantially change these programs, so I suspect the direct effect of the election will be to maintain the status quo. The outcome of this election has the potential, however, to have a dramatic but indirect impact on education. The defining question of the election centred on which party and leader would be best positioned to manage the unprecedented economic and security threat posed by the Trump administration. I cannot understate the extraordinary uncertainty Canada is facing in this historical moment or the magnitude of the stakes involved. The potential for a recession in Canada, the United States and worldwide, and the likely impact of such economic disruption on Alberta's capacity and political will to maintain public services, could be devastating for public education and for teachers. Prime Minister Carney, former governor of the Bank of Canada, former governor of the Bank of England, investment banker, United Nations special envoy for climate action and finance, and fellow St. FX grad, will be sorely challenged to meet this threat. It is in our collective interest that, now elected, he should succeed. I think too that this election could mark a watershed in Canadian

politics. Many would agree with me that the quality of political discourse and culture in this country has been greatly diminished, especially over the last decade. As schools mirror the societies in which they operate, teachers see and must deal with the consequences of this larger social and political dysfunction in their schools. I hope that as political parties embark on reconstruction, as each will be required to do as a result of the outcome of this vote, they will take a long, hard look at our poisoned political environment, recognize their own responsibility for creating it, and make conscious efforts to foster a more positive, constructive and inviting civic culture. Finally, the election results in Alberta will do nothing but embolden Danielle Smith's United Conservative government. Once again, Albertans have demonstrated an overwhelming level of support for conservative hegemony, and our provincial government will take that as an endorsement of the full scope of its policy and agenda. While teachers have diverse political beliefs, there are some things that unite us — particularly when it comes to protecting student safety and dignity. We will have to continue to advocate for our students and ensure that we stand up for kids when they are placed at risk or when our capacity to provide them with the education they deserve is compromised by lack of resources or misguided policy. Also, Go Rams! ■
Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca.

The legacy Pope Francis leaves behind for everyone



VIEWPOINTS

Stacey MacNeil-Ayeh
Catholic Education Curriculum
and Resources Coordinator,
Council of Catholic School
Superintendents of Alberta

“Tutti! Tutti!” — meaning “this is for everyone” — beautifully captures the spirit that marked Pope Francis’s papacy: a call to shared humanity, transcending divisions, and committing to the respect of human dignity and the common good.

I vividly remember the moment of his election. A colleague rushed up to me in the hallway during the papal conclave, eyes filled with tears, and said, “There’s white smoke — we have a new Holy Father!” We high-fived, overcome with joy, both of us moved to tears. Shortly after, we watched Pope Francis step onto the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica for the first time. From that very moment, I was drawn to his charismatic and humble spirit. From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis invited the world into deeper dialogue and a commitment to accompany the most vulnerable among us.

Pope Francis held profound respect and admiration for teachers. He believed that teaching was not merely the transmission of knowledge, but the formation of the whole person — helping students to discover their purpose, dignity and values. Pope Francis noted that good teachers work not only with their students’ minds, but also with their hearts. For Francis, teaching was a true mission, requiring patience, creativity and a deep love for young people. In a world often marked by division, he saw teachers as builders of peace and unity, regularly expressing gratitude for their unseen efforts and acknowledging the unique challenges they face.

I had the blessing of traveling to Kraków, Poland for World Youth Day 2016, where I witnessed Pope Francis speak directly to the youth. It was an unforgettable sight: 2.5 million children, teens and young adults gathered in complete, profound silence, hanging on his every word. Young people from every corner of the globe yearned for his message of hope and encouragement, and he met them with sincerity, wisdom and warmth.

Pope Francis’s influence on education, including in Alberta, has been profound.

1. Listening: The papal visit to Canada marked a significant milestone in the journey toward truth and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Pope Francis taught the world that true listening means opening the heart — setting aside distractions and truly hearing the voices of others, especially the wounded. During the Indigenous delegation to Rome and throughout his visit to Canada, Pope Francis did not merely hear testimonies; he listened deeply to understand the pain caused by residential schools and their lasting impact today.

“Pope Francis ... believed that teaching was not merely the transmission of knowledge, but the formation of the whole person — helping students to discover their purpose, dignity and values.”

“Listening is more than hearing. It is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur.” (Evangelii Gaudium, 171)

2. Caring for creation: In his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis called the world to environmental stewardship grounded in faith. He inspired young people everywhere to protect creation through eco-projects, sustainability efforts and renewed gratitude for the gifts of nature, reminding us that caring for the Earth is a sacred responsibility.

3. Dialogue and accompaniment: Pope Francis challenged the Church to “go out” — to meet people where they are, practice empathy and accompany others with solidarity, especially the forgotten and marginalized. *“Accompaniment teaches us to walk at the pace of the weakest, like good shepherds who smell like their sheep.” (Evangelii Gaudium, 169)*

4. Humility: In a world obsessed with wealth, fame and power, Pope Francis modelled a life of humility and simplicity. From his decision to ride the bus with fellow cardinals to the Vatican every day, to living in the Santa Marta guesthouse rather than the Apostolic Palace, to his request for a simple wooden casket and burial at St. Mary Major, Francis consistently lived out a powerful witness of humility, service and solidarity with the poor.

5. Joy and hope: Pope Francis taught young people — and all of us — that holiness is not about perfection, but about love, authenticity and joy. Through his declarations of the Jubilee of Mercy (2015) and the Jubilee of Hope (2025), he called the Church to live with renewed energy, trust in God’s mercy and courageous hope. *“Make a ruckus! Don’t settle for a mediocre life. Dream big!” (World Youth Day, 2016)*

Pope Francis’s legacy will be remembered for its heart: a heart that listens, a heart that serves, and a heart that embraces the whole world — tutti, tutti — as brothers and sisters. In a world that often feels fractured and weary, Pope Francis reminded us that true greatness is found in humility, in tenderness and in the relentless pursuit of love. ■

Stacey MacNeil-Ayeh holds a bachelor of arts in political science, a bachelor of education specializing in Indigenous Education and a master’s in religious education. She has worked in Catholic education in Alberta for two decades and currently serves as the director of the Religious Education Network and Catholic Resource Development with the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA). Prior to this, she was employed with Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools in Okotoks, where she primarily taught religious studies at the junior high level.

RED FOR ED

Teachers showed off their Red for Ed at the Collective Bargaining Conference, held April 25–26 in Calgary.

Show us your Red for Ed

Want to share how you or your team is supporting public education in Alberta? Let your colleagues know why you wear Red for Ed or how you create moments of engagement or advocacy. Email managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

Create your own “Red for Ed” wear. Visit albertateachersassociation.entripyshops.com to customize and order “Red for Ed” branded apparel — hats, hoodies and more! The online shop rotates graphics every few months, so check out the current styles now.



Teachers vote on mediator’s recommended settlement

ATA News Staff

Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) members cast their vote on a proposed central table settlement for the 2024 round of bargaining. From May 2–5, members voted on the mediator’s report that included all previously agreed-upon items between the Teachers’ Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) and the ATA Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC). The vote followed a month’s worth of member information meetings and communications aimed at ensuring members had the information they required to make an informed choice. Central table bargaining began in early 2024, guided by feedback from teachers collected through a provincewide survey. That input helped shape the initial proposal that served as the starting point for negotiations with TEBA. In fall 2024, after it became apparent that the two sides would need support to address those issues with significant cost and complexity from the initial proposal, both parties agreed to bring in a mediator for assistance on these crucial items. After the mediator’s recommendation received support from CTBC and Provincial Executive Council, it was shared with members on March 31. The decision to accept or reject the proposed terms of settlement then rested with the ATA’s membership. The results of the vote, as well as other information related to central table bargaining, are available on the ATA website. ■

Members of Bargaining Unit Teacher Welfare committees gathered on April 25–26 in Calgary for the Collective Bargaining Conference. The conference included a presentation on the status of collective bargaining from Sean Brown, the ATA’s chief negotiator. Highlights from his presentation are below.

On the importance of solidarity
“There’s a sharpness to the conversation right now that is cutting deep — not just into issues, but into people. ... but aiming that anger at each other will not make us stronger ... it will not fix what’s broken.”
“Our strength isn’t in individual wins — it’s in collective resolve.”

On why the mediator’s recommendations and Budget 2025 matter
“For the first time in a generation, there is a real opportunity to start addressing these issues at the systemic level.”

On the responsibility of leadership during the ratification process (quoting economist Thomas Sowell)
“When you want to help people, you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear.”

On setting boundaries and practices for self-care
“You cannot give what you no longer have.”

Long-time ATA legal counsel to receive honorary membership

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

A long-time legal advocate for public education will be honored for his work for teachers and the teaching profession. The Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) has selected Jim Casey, K.C., who acted as the ATA’s legal counsel with Field Law for two decades, to be the recipient of the 2025 Honorary Membership Award. “Jim is an incredibly approachable person who can really grasp the underlying issues facing both the Association and the profession,” said Tim Jeffares, ATA Associate Coordinator of Regulatory Affairs. “He has an uncanny ability to see what our needs are and what paths we might have to pursue in the legal arena.” Casey has a decades-long relationship with the ATA, providing legal advice at many discipline hearings. He also played a pivotal role in resolving the province’s unfunded pension liability issue — securing a \$25 million education funding award through arbitration — and more recently worked on the legal challenge arising from the transfer of pension funds to AIMCO. His work culminated in helping the ATA navigate the legislation that transitioned teacher discipline to the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission. “When you have that sort of wisdom on your side, coupled with his appreciation for public education and teachers in Alberta, he was the perfect guy to help us transition from investigating and prosecuting our members to ultimately representing them,” said Jeffares. Casey’s legal journey began in 1987 when he graduated with distinction from the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Law. He articulated at Field



Honorary membership recipient Jim Casey, K.C.

Law and remained with the firm throughout his career, building a reputation as a leading expert in labour law and professional regulation. He was instrumental in founding Field Law’s Professional Regulatory Group, which has grown into one of Canada’s largest legal teams representing professional regulators. Over his career, Casey’s work evolved from representing employers, unions and employees to becoming one of Canada’s foremost adjudicators and mediators. He served for 14 years as a part-time vice-chair of the Alberta Labour Relations Board and has been active in arbitration and mediation for more than 25 years. In addition to practicing law, he has taught labour law as a sessional lecturer at the University of Alberta and has spoken at numerous legal conferences, including co-chairing the Labour Arbitration and Policy Conference hosted by Lancaster House Publishing. Throughout the years, the ATA has benefitted greatly from Casey’s extensive experience in professional regulation. “He put on professional development seminars for our staff to bring us all up to speed on what the new commission is, how it’s supposed to operate, and where the soft spots were that we needed to push back on,” said Jeffares. Beyond law, Casey has contributed to his community through board service with such organizations as the Edmonton Food Bank, MS Society of Canada, Citadel Theatre and Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. In 2023, he served on the Law Society of Alberta’s Strategic Planning Task Force. Retiring from Field Law at the end of 2023, Casey launched a new independent practice focused exclusively on labour arbitration and mediation. Casey will be presented the Honorary Membership Award at this year’s Annual Representative Assembly, to be held in Edmonton on May 17–19. ■

The Annual Representative Assembly is the ATA’s annual general meeting, where over 500 teacher delegates gather to discuss, debate and vote on the policies and direction of the ATA. It’s held on the May long weekend and alternates yearly between Calgary and Edmonton.

Inclusion advocate inspires at ATA diversity conference

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

Attendees at the 2025 Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) Conference, held May 1–2 in Edmonton, were challenged to rethink their understanding of inclusion, identity and resilience by keynote speaker Bean Gill. At the conference, Gill, co-founder of the ReYu Paralysis Recovery Centre and a self-described “inclusion warrior,” shared her personal journey of becoming suddenly paralyzed from the waist down and the transformative path that followed. She encouraged delegates to confront their unconscious biases around disability and explore identity, saying that awareness of our own biases helps us to dismantle our ways of thinking and create new ideas about others. “We need to switch from limiting moves to empowering moves and then watch how people blossom and grow, including ourselves,” Bean said. “When we see what others can become, we give them permission to rise.” Gill’s inspirational presentation kicked off the 2025 DEHR Conference, which focused on empowering teachers identifying as living with a disability. The conference also included an art gallery walk with the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, breakout sessions on such topics as confronting ableism and

embracing intersectional identities, and a listening circle for teachers living with disabilities. Held annually, the DEHR Conference brings together local representatives from across the province to deepen understanding of topics related to diversity and to share ways to support local DEHR committees. More information on the ATA’s DEHR work is available on the ATA’s website under Advocacy > Diversity, Equity and Human Rights. ■



Teacher and listening circle lead Christina Ainsworth introduces keynote Bean Gill at the DEHR conference.



Opposition challenges minister on low education funding

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

The spring session of the 31st legislature began on February 25. Highlights from question period during the week of April 7-10 included the following topics related to teachers and education:

Education Funding, April 7

Amanda Chapman, NDP MLA for Calgary-Beddington, pressed Education Minister Nicolaides on Alberta’s status as the province with the lowest per-student education funding in Canada. She referred to a decade-long decline in investment, rapid population growth from immigration and the need for adequate supports in inclusive classrooms. Framing education as a pillar of democracy and equality, Chapman challenged the minister to align Alberta’s funding with Canadian values.

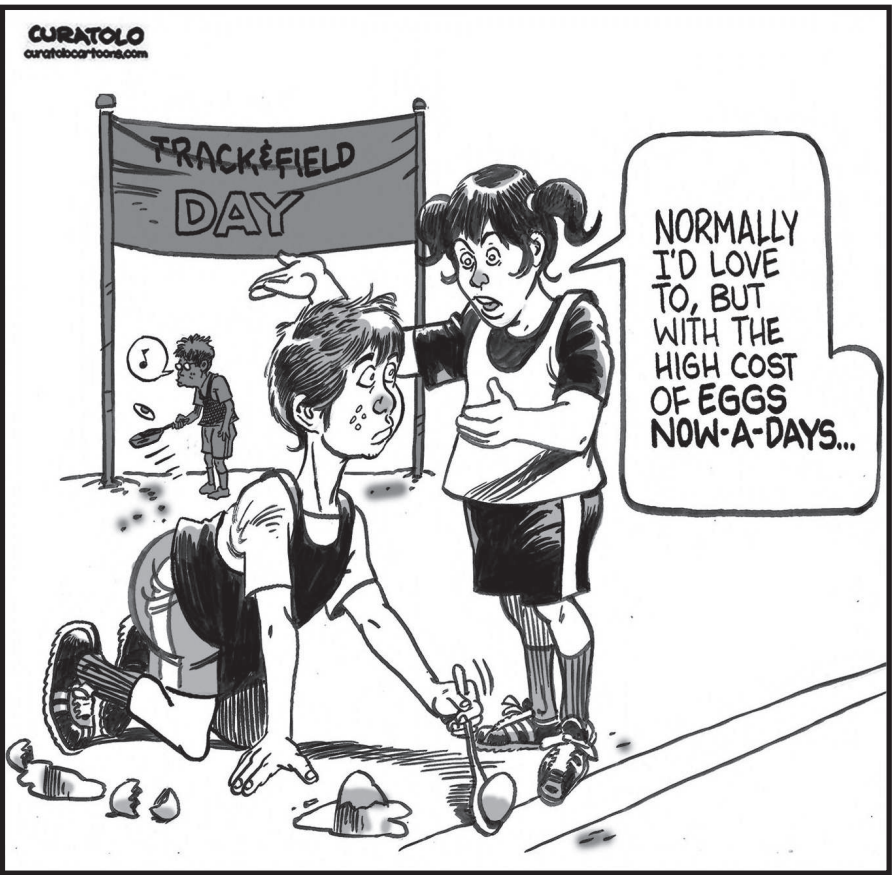
Nicolaides, in response, emphasized record investments in Budget 2025, including over \$1 billion in new funding over three years and plans to build 100 new schools. He highlighted Alberta’s top national rankings in reading and math and framed the province as a global

leader in education. However, he did not directly address Chapman’s point about Alberta’s bottom-ranked funding level.

Camrose School Construction, April 8

Amanda Chapman, NDP MLA for Calgary-Beddington, questioned Infrastructure Minister Martin Long over delays in opening a newly built high school in Camrose, criticizing the government for proceeding with construction without securing road access or utility servicing. She pointed to parental frustration and asked who is responsible for the oversight, noting that the fix is expected to cost at least \$1 million.

Long said the school was completed eight months ahead of schedule but cannot open due to a dispute between the city of Camrose and a developer over site servicing. He stated the province had offered solutions but had not received a firm commitment from the city. Transportation Minister Ric McIver later added that Camrose had committed to providing road and utility access but failed to follow through, placing the responsibility on the municipality. Neither minister explained why the project was approved without confirming the land was ready. ■



YOUR VIEWS

We asked teachers how they keep students engaged as the school year winds down.

- **Andrea Mishio**
Always change it up. Sprinkle in surprises and have fun!
- **Dani Williams**
Keep teaching like I did in September, October, November...
- **Kristen Straiton**
Take learning outside as much as possible!
- **Megan Gibson**
Keep the regular routine of the day to day as much as possible.
- **Jodi Desjardins**
Harry Potter House points!
- **Brianna Robinson LeMesurier**
Lots of project-based learning! Let them demonstrate their learning in creative ways
- **Kelley Quast**
Keep the focus on learning as long as possible, but include fun opportunities regularly.
- **Catherine Cross**
Grade-wide challenges
- **Kendall Mills**
Getting outside as much as possible.

ATA award to be presented to two equity-focused groups

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers’ Association will grant a 2025 Public Education Award to two organizations that are focused on equity and equality for marginalized people.

The award, which is offered occasionally to an individual or a group that has given outstanding support to public education in Alberta other than through teaching, will be granted to Egale Canada and Skipping Stone. Both organizations are involved in a lawsuit challenging the provincial government’s legislation restricting gender-affirming care.



Egale Canada

Founded in 1986 as Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere, Egale Canada believes in a world where every person, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, can achieve their full potential, free from hatred and bias. Over the years, Egale Canada has been active in advocacy, research and legal challenges relating

to the rights and perspectives of 2SLGBTQI people.

Skipping Stone

Skipping Stone is a Calgary-based not-for-profit organization and registered charity whose mission is to support and empower trans and gender diverse youth and their families in the province of Alberta. They offer a wide range of community, educational and medical supports for the trans community.

Services include group support, gender affirming gear, community events, medical and mental health services, system navigation, training and education. Since 2017, the organization has connected with more than 10,000 youth, adults and families across the province. ■



FOR THE RECORD



We become just
by doing just acts,
brave by doing brave acts.
When we are kind,
kindness grows.
When we seek unity,
unity grows. When we are
Canadian,
Canada grows.



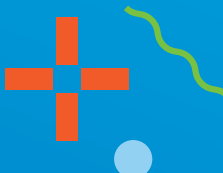
– Mark Carney’s victory speech on April 28

Opinions expressed on this page represent the views of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Alberta Teachers’ Association.



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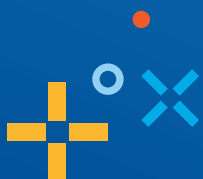
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The Alberta Teachers' Association

2025–26

PROPOSED BUDGET



The 2025–26 proposed budget developed by Provincial Executive Council (PEC) is now finalized for presentation to the teacher delegates gathering in Edmonton over the Victoria Day long weekend (May 17–19) at the 108th Annual Representative Assembly (ARA). Overall, the budget is balanced, proposes no change to the current annual fee of \$1,422, and, while ensuring key programs and services are maintained, also makes strategic long-term investments.

In developing the budget, PEC discussed numerous initiatives and proposals, engaged in thoughtful discussions, and made key decisions by carefully weighing financial realities alongside input from members. We anticipate that delegates will bring forward insightful questions during ARA, and both your elected leaders and staff are prepared to respond.

New or expanded initiatives are aimed at strengthening the teaching profession in Alberta

First, having launched the Beginning Teachers’ Network this past year, the Association is now looking to broaden and expand the work done to date. The proposed budget designates funds to establish a French Beginning Teachers’ Network cohort group in 2025–26. In addition, resources are allocated to enhance supports and services for Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs) by exploring issues related to certification, recruitment and communication obstacles. Also, funds are earmarked to undertake a comprehensive study aimed at improving workforce stability by analyzing key factors affecting retention and recruitment in Alberta’s teaching profession.

A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) audit focused on the internal operations and policies of the Association is currently under way and it is anticipated that a series of recommendations for consideration will

arise from this audit. As such, proposed budget 2025–26 designates resources to facilitate the implementation of specific recommendations that move the Association forward in terms of its DEI priorities.

In addition to continuing to offer the programs and services most valued by members, the Association is also making critical investments in its information technology infrastructure. For example, work continues moving to a centralized cloud-based platform (Microsoft Dynamics 365 Customer Relationship Management) to better manage member interactions, improve communication history tracking and automate workflows. All this work is focused on enhancing services for members.

While examples of budgeted items were included above, the following pages provide additional highlights of the proposed 2025–26 budget.

Completed/discontinued initiatives

The following have been deleted and will no longer be budgeted:

- Political Engagement Committee and Communications, Advocacy, and Public Education Committee: In looking to enhance coordination of communication and advocacy functions, these two committees will be amalgamated into the newly formed Communications, Advocacy and Political Engagement Committee as of September 1, 2025.
- CTF Women’s Symposium Reception: This expenditure was specifically designated for 2024–25 and therefore will no longer be budgeted for in 2025–26.

Proposed annual fee for 2025–26

Provincial Executive Council is proposing no change to the Association member fee.

	2024–25 proposed fee	2025–26 proposed fee
Total Fee	\$1,422.00	\$1,422.00
Funding for programs for which the local rebate does not apply	\$204.00	\$210.00
Net fee to distribute	\$1,218.00	\$1,212.00
Local rebate at 20 per cent	\$243.60	\$242.40
Balance of net fee (80 per cent)	\$974.40	\$969.60



Budget by program area

There are two parts to the Association’s budget. The nonrebatable section of the budget is funded in part by allocating a portion of the annual fee paid by members. As shown in the chart on [page 8](#), this amount is expected to be \$210 in 2025–26. This then results in a net fee to distribute, of which 20 percent is rebated to local associations to fund their operations. The remaining portion of the fee is used to help fund activities and/or programs on the rebatable side of the budget.

Part 1: Budget subject to local rebate

The table below compares program area expenditures for the 2024–25 approved budget and the 2025–26 proposed budget. It also provides a general description of the mandate of each program area.

Program area	Mandate	2024–25 approved budget	2025–26 proposed budget
Teacher Employment Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To improve the economic well-being of teachers through work in collective bargaining, pension and insuranceTo effect increases in the funding for educationTo provide services to individual members on matters requiring discipline, legal assistance and professional relationsTo provide general service to and consultation with locals, sublocals and staff as requestedTo enhance awareness of the Association’s services	\$9,284,200	\$9,517,000
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To provide for the improvement of teaching practice through specialist councils, conventions, curriculum work, current issues, local leadership development, assistance to local PD committees, field service and representation to other subgroupsTo prepare a corps of instructors and facilitatorsTo improve the preservice education of teachers and liaise with other agencies in these fields and extended field experiences	\$5,690,500	\$6,384,800
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To govern the Association and provide for its obligations beyond Alberta’s bordersTo liaise with other organizations within AlbertaTo maintain communications internally with the membership and externally with the public directly and through mediaTo improve conditions for education through the political involvement of membersTo support and represent teachers who are subject to the disciplinary proceedings and processes of the Alberta Teaching Profession Commissioner	\$10,278,100	\$10,309,500
Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To provide and maintain physical facilities for Association offices in Edmonton and Calgary	\$3,351,700	\$3,350,700
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To provide for the financial and business operation of the Association, including business management, finance, general administration, human resources and publishing servicesTo provide services to other program areas and subgroups	\$6,150,500	\$5,951,200
Nondepartmental Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To provide for items that are not directly a part of any other department and for items affecting all or most other departments, but which cannot be reasonably provided for within the department	\$1,777,300	\$1,817,900
Food Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To provide a catering service for participants at various meetings and other functions held at Barnett HouseTo operate a cafeteria service for staff, tenants and the public	\$824,400	\$864,900
Information and Technology Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To maintain and safeguard the Association’s information technology systems and equipment and to develop and maintain electronic capabilities and processes required by other program areasTo drive the Association’s IT related projects and oversee all matters related to cybersecurity	\$3,088,100	\$3,192,800

Part 2: Budget not subject to local rebate

Member fees required to fund the second part of the budget are not subject to the local rebate, and 100 per cent of these fees are available to fund provincial Association programs. The table below compares expenditures and allocations for the 2024–25 approved budget and the 2025–26 proposed budget and provides a brief description of the nature of the expenditures.

Expenditure and allocation	Description	2024–25 approved budget	2025–26 proposed budget
Canadian Teachers’ Federation	Provides support for the Canadian Teachers’ Federation based on a per capita fee	\$1,007,500	\$1,125,000
Capital fund	Provides an annual allocation to the fund, which is used to purchase any capital assets and to fund capital projects	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Special emergency fund	Provides an annual allocation to the fund, which is used to fund emergent actions as approved by Provincial Executive Council	\$500,000	\$500,000
Technology services project development	Provides annual funding for projects related to membership application services; online services; unified communications; strategic technology management; and reporting, workflow and form services	\$1,365,500	\$1,365,500
Specialist council membership grants	Provides the annual operating grants to the Association’s 20 specialist councils	\$870,000	\$850,000
Accountability Action Plan	Provides funding to support international partnerships focused on advancing system reform, as well as collaboration with subgroups and like-minded teachers’ organizations that advance the profession’s views	\$105,000	\$105,000
Mortgage	Provides for principal and interest payments on the mortgages in place for construction and renovations that were completed	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000
Public relations campaign	Provides funding for a multidimensional public relations campaign to highlight the work of the Association and teachers to increase public awareness about the importance of public education and the need for appropriate funding for education	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000



In times like these, unity is our greatest asset

Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



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

Uncertainty. As I am writing this column, there are many unknowns and uncertainties for myself and for Alberta teachers. And this uncertainty can cause anxiety.

Like many of you, I like to know what the future holds so I can make plans. I like plans. I am an avid list maker and note taker. I thrive on knowing what comes next. I am the guy who Googles TV shows and movies while I watch them so I know what to expect, and I will admit to skipping to the last page of a few books in my time. At the same time, I fully recognize there are things we can control and things we cannot. The lack of control can also cause some anxious feelings.

Nice companions, uncertainty and lack of control; two fine friends to keep us up at night.

I tend to look at things on three horizons: the immediate, the midterm and the long term. On the immediate horizon, we have had

two very important votes that have implications for us all, the federal election and the vote on the mediator's recommendations for terms of settlement. I write this knowing the outcome of the former, but not the latter. However, regardless of the outcome of either of these votes, we always need to be prepared for advocacy and action, and we are.

When we look at the midterm horizon, we see the potential for economic and political instability. The tariff threat and 51st state drama from President Trump show no signs of levelling out. Upcoming trustee elections, the cost of living, the ongoing scandal of Alberta Health Services procurements — there are many issues causing stress for many people in Alberta. Long term, the outcome of the federal election could impact our relationships within and outside of Canada.

There are lots of things that can keep

a person up at night. When it all seems too much, what can we do?

In times of uncertainty, we need to remain true to our values and our beliefs, and surround ourselves with good people who have our best interests at heart. Through all the uncertainties I face, whether personal or professional, I've always found comfort in the fact that I am not alone. I am part of the teaching profession.

Each member of our profession brings unique skills, experiences and insights to the table. We can lean into the uncertainty and together we can plan, prepare and take action. Unity is our greatest asset, and it is what will enable us to navigate whatever comes next. By working together, we can achieve the improvements we seek for our lives and for public education in Alberta.

Knowing that we, as teaching colleagues, have each other's back definitely helps me sleep at night. ■

Alberta student robotics team competes in worlds

Heather Grant
ATA News Staff

A student robotics team from Raymond, Alberta is buzzing after competing on the world stage in Houston, Texas from April 16 to 19. Team ASAP Robotics, made up of eight Westwind School Division students from grades 7 to 12, earned their spot at the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, or FIRST, Championship by winning the FIRST Tech Challenge Alberta championship.

The teens were among 50,000 people who flocked to the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston for the world competition. The main matches took place on an elevated stage, as fans cheered on participants.

"It was really inspiring to meet teams from around the world," said Seth Larson, student and founding member of Team ASAP Robotics. "It was a great opportunity for me to see the different designs that some of the best teams had come up with."

In these competitions, teams are paired with another team — called an alliance partner — to take on other competitors. Preparations for competitions begin well ahead of time, with students taking part in every aspect of the process, including

designing, building, programming and then operating the robots.

Over the four-day competition, Team ASAP Robotics played 10 different matches with a new alliance partner each time. Two of those alliance partners ended matches with zero points after a robot malfunctioned and then when a game piece became lodged in a robot.

On day three, Team ASAP Robotics encountered an obstacle of their own. A screw loosened on the team's robot, wedging into one of its linear slides. This left the robot unable to move.

"With only 30 minutes before our next match, we thought we might have to forfeit," coach Michael Larson said. That's when the team jumped into action, successfully taking the slide apart and replacing it moments before heading onto the playing field.

Team ASAP Robotics placed 34th out of 64 teams in its division, and 150th out of a total 256 teams.

"At the beginning of this season, it was my goal to make it to worlds," Seth Larson recounted. "Our team really leveled up as a result of this exposure to a world stage. We've set some high goals for ourselves for next season."

As for what's next, ASAP Robotics isn't slowing down. The team has been invited to a robotics tournament in Romania in August and hopes to make that trip a reality. ■



ISTOCK

New bursary supports continued learning in mental health and well-being

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

In a timely move to address rising mental health needs in schools, Alberta Blue Cross and the ATA Educational Trust are launching a new bursary aimed at supporting Alberta teachers pursuing continued education in mental health and well-being.

Announced during Mental Health Week (May 5–9), the Alberta Blue Cross Mental Health and Well-being Bursary program will provide five bursaries of \$2,000 each to teachers enrolled in graduate-level coursework in this field. Eligible programs include counselling and other studies that enhance teachers' capacity to support student mental health.

This initiative comes at a crucial time, when schools across Alberta are seeing a rising need for mental health support, both for students and the teachers who serve them.

"There is growing awareness, from government, education partners and others, that good mental health and well-being is vital for student success," said Robert Mazzotta, ATA associate executive secretary.

Administered by the ATA Educational Trust, the bursary aims to increase access to professional learning for teachers, who are often

on the frontlines of student mental health support. Mazzotta stated that investing in teachers' ongoing education can promote wellness and healthier futures for students.

"Alberta Blue Cross really wanted to make a difference in addressing the mental health needs we are seeing in schools," said Mazzotta. "Supporting teachers' continuing education in this area is one way to support wellness and healthy futures for students."

To qualify for this bursary, applicants must

- hold a permanent Alberta teaching certificate;
- be enrolled in relevant graduate-level courses that will take place between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026; and
- not have received an ATA Educational Trust grant or bursary in the past three years (excluding the year it was granted).

Applications must be received by June 13, 2025 at 4 p.m., and recipients will be selected through a random draw from eligible applicants.

More information and application details are available on the ATA's website under Professional development > Grants, awards and scholarships. ■



SUPPLIED

Team ASAP Robotics competed on the world stage at a robotics championship.

Alberta Advisory Committee on Educational Studies

APPLICATION FOR GRANTS Descriptive or Experimental Studies

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

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

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

Online applications and the guidelines for grant applications are available at Alberta Teachers' Association > Professional Development > Grants, awards and scholarships > Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies Grant.

Applications are available online.

Questions regarding the application can be e-mailed to Molly.Garstad@ata.ab.ca OR submitted to

Administrator, Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies
c/o The Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 142 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1

587-686-7321 or 1-800-232-7208

Completed applications received by June 1, 2025, will be considered at the spring meeting of AACES.

Application
Deadline:
JUNE 1, 2025
4:30 PM



The Alberta Teachers' Association



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Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund

GOT THE INSIDE SCOOP?

We want to hear about it!

Whether it's a teacher success story, a school community achievement or a unique ATA local event, we want to hear about it. Send us your story ideas!

E-mail Managing Editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn your ideas at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.



COORD-209-2025-03

2025 gotcha! PHOTO CONTEST



The ATA News invites you to get your camera out and start shooting those award-winning photographs.

Cash prizes available!



1st place: \$200
2nd place: \$100
3rd place: \$50

GOTCHA! Contest rules

1. Photos taken by active, associate and student ATA members of education or school-related activities are eligible. (Hint: photos depicting action are best.)
2. Entries must be submitted by the member who took the photos.
3. Photos taken between Sept. 1, 2024 and May 15, 2025, are eligible.
4. Please email photos to lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca. Entries must be received by 5 p.m. on May 15, 2025.
5. Each entry must be accompanied by a description of the activity; the names (if possible) of the people in the photo; the date when the photo was taken; and the photographer's name, school and contact information.
6. Cash prizes will be awarded to entrants whose photos place in the top three, as follows. First place: \$200; second place: \$100 and third place: \$50
7. Each winner, as well as those receiving honourable mention, will receive a certificate of merit.
8. Up to 20 additional entries may be selected for an award of honourable mention.
9. Each entrant may submit up to five photos but no entrant can win more than one top-three prize.
10. A panel of individuals with photography, publishing and teaching experience will judge the entries. The decision of the judges is final.
11. Winning photographs will be published in the ATA News.
12. Photos submitted for the contest may be published in the ATA News, the ATA Magazine or other Association publications.
13. Please read carefully. Failure to comply with any of these rules may result in disqualification.

Get snapping and good luck!

COMM-65-12025 01

PEC amalgamates two standing committees into one

PEC POINTS

ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held April 10–11, 2025, at Barnett House, Edmonton.

- 1. Adopted the Alberta Teachers’ Association Human Rights Statement: Policy and Procedures for Interpretation and Response.
- 2. Approved minor adjustments to the 2025/26 proposed budget for presentation at the 2025 Annual Representative Assembly.
- 3. Authorized lawn signs and additional advertising, if needed, to support advocacy around teacher collective bargaining, with costs up to \$100,000 charged to the Special Emergency Fund.
- 4. Authorized staff to initiate discussions with Teacher Salary Qualifications Board partner organizations and other potentially interested parties concerning the structure and scope of a review of the Teacher Qualifications Service principles, governance and processes.
- 5. Authorized staff to develop a new resource to support students from Spanish-speaking Latin American countries.
- 6. Awarded the 2025 Alberta Teachers’ Association Doctoral Fellowships in Education, the 2025 Nadene M. Thomas Graduate Research Bursary and the 2025 Belairdirect Scholarship.
- 7. Directed Steering Committee to prepare, for presentation at the start of the business portion of the 2025 Annual Representative Assembly for immediate effect upon adoption, a resolution to amend the speaking time

- allotted to each delegate from five minutes to three minutes, excluding time allocated for responses to questions.
- 8. Approved for addition to prognosis in the next budget cycle in-person regional training to assist locals with communications planning.
 - 9. Authorized the use of personal member e-mails to communicate directly with members, provided they have given consent, and to include in the consent request all potential organizational communications to members so repeated permission is not required.
 - 10. Authorized staff to collect and share with locals all available detailed information on digital communication usage for follow-up purposes.
 - 11. Requested staff to create more intentional, concise and engaging messages from the Association and to improve the Association’s email strategy by using common subject lines, common headers and general email boxes when communicating with members.
 - 12. Amended the Association’s policy regarding representation in disciplinary regulatory matters before the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission and adopted a Disciplinary Regulatory Matters Representation Denial Appeal Process.
 - 13. Amalgamated the Political Engagement Committee and the Communications, Advocacy and Public Education Committee to form the Communications, Advocacy and Political Engagement Committee with new membership and frame of reference.
 - 14. Amended the Substitute Teachers Committee frame of reference and the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee frame of reference. ■



Teacher Anne Fierheller and student Red Gorrie at the blood donation clinic.

Donating blood a worthy cause for students

Cory Hare
ATA News Staff

The concept of giving back got real in a hurry for a group of Edmonton high school students when they donated blood for the first time earlier this year.

Teacher Anne Fierheller, a lifelong blood donor, sponsored the activity as a way to teach students to give back, part of the Social Studies 30 unit on citizenship.

“It makes me happy to see that kids are still willing to give their time and part of themselves to help others,” said Fierheller, who teaches at Louis St. Laurent Catholic High School.

Through the course of her 25-year teaching career, Fierheller has regularly organized student blood donations. Since donors must be at least 17, the activity is usually targeted at Grade 12 students. Donors must also weigh at least 120 to 130 pounds and have no new tattoos or

piercings for three months prior to donation.

“It’s a bit scary for these kids,” she said. “When they realize it’s really not that difficult, and then they get a little card that says they’re a blood donor ... it’s exciting for them too.”

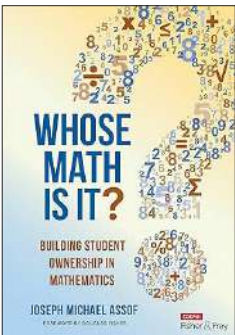
Fierheller has previously been involved in school-on-school donation competitions but says student blood donations aren’t that common partly because they require a teacher sponsor and are difficult to fit into busy schedules. Even so, she would like to see more teachers get involved.

“I think that this can be taken up a notch,” she said. ■

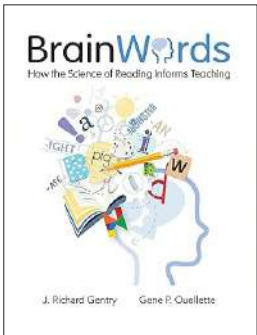
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
Success Stories is an ongoing feature that enables teachers to share their successes with their colleagues. To submit an idea or an article about a new program or approach that you’ve instituted, please contact managing editor [Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca](mailto:Lindsay.Yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).

CHECK ME OUT!

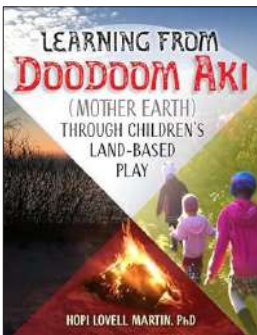
Some of the ATA Library’s newest reads:



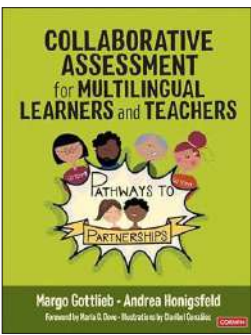
Whose Math is it? Building Student Ownership in Mathematics by Joseph Michael Assof



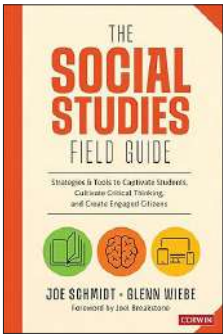
Brain Words: How the Science of Reading Informs Teaching by Richard Gentry and Gene Ouellette



Learning from Doodoom Aki (Mother Earth) through Children’s Land-based Play by Hopi Lovell Martin



Collaborative Assessment for Multilingual Learners and Teachers: Pathways to Partnerships by Margo Gottlieb and Andrea Honigsfeld



The Social Studies Field Guide: Strategies & Tools to Captivate Students, Cultivate Critical Thinking, and Create Engaged Citizens by Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiebe

WANT TO BORROW THESE?
(HINT: IT’S FREE FOR ATA MEMBERS!)

Head to the ATA Library’s webpage to find these books — and so much more!
library.teachers.ab.ca



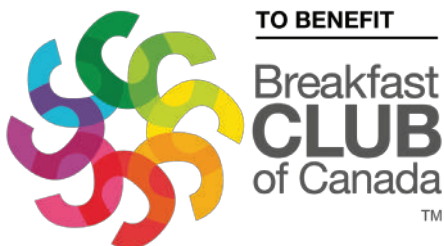
No student should go to school hungry

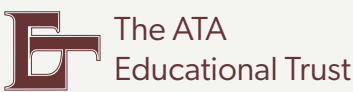
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Alberta Blue Cross® Mental Health and Well-Being Bursary

Application Deadline:
June 13, 2025, at 4 PM



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The Alberta Teachers' Association



The Alberta Teachers' Association

ATAGSA

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Please e-mail atagsa@ata.ab.ca to subscribe to our updates.

PD-80-61-1 2024-12

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Sudoku



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in a digital format.

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Circulation: 34,500 We accept Visa, Mastercard, cash or cheque.



Power Playlist

We asked teachers for their favourite Monday morning pump-up song.

Here's what they said:



"You're a Superstar"
Love Inc.
– Annie Carpenter



"The Lazy Song"
Bruno Mars
– Andrew Doyle



"Magic in the Air"
Magic System
– Eugénie McCallan



"Unstoppable"
Sia
– Izzy Cormier



I listen to
"Everything is Everything"
by **Lauryn Hill**
almost every morning!
– Jordana Kohn



My Monday pump-up song is either
"Northern Attitude" by
Noah Kahan and Hozier
or "C'est La Vie" by
Yung Gravy, bbno\$
and Rich Brian.
Depends on what I need
that Monday.
– Jensen Evtushevski



"Good Feeling"
Flo Rida
– Kendyl Carleton



"Walking on Sunshine"
Katrina and the Waves
– Joclyn Beliveau



"Permission to Dance"
BTS
– Rachelia Pawluk



"Are you gonna be
my girl?"
Jet
– Bailey Gardecki