

ATA NEWS

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■ News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



OUR **UNITY** IS OUR **POWER.**

OUR **SOLIDARITY** IS OUR **SHIELD.**



A slippery slope

Why protecting students' right to read matters

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Two paths to settlement

What happens after the strike vote

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The return of Pitfalls and Precautions

Now with a Regulatory Affairs lens

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Strong signal

Alberta teachers overwhelmingly support authorizing strike vote

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Scrap the screeners?

Mandatory tests are harming students, study shows

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The learning journey

ATA resources to support National Indigenous History Month and Pride Season

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Are we on a slippery slope toward book bans?



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
ATA News
Editor-in-Chief

As a Canadian, I used to feel a bit smug when I heard about book bans. That was an American problem, right? Surely not something we'd see in our corner of the world. Yet here we are.

Recently, Alberta's education minister, Demetrios Nicolaides, announced that new standards would be implemented to ensure only "age-appropriate" books are available in school libraries. This announcement was met with some questions and concerns about what prompted this move and where this could lead.

Should the books in schools be developmentally and age appropriate? Absolutely. But the Alberta government's own *Senior*

High School English Language Arts: Guide to Implementation hits the nail on the head: "[A]lmost all texts have the potential to be controversial... To [avoid them] would undermine one of the central purposes of education." So, what's a teacher to do?

We know the first step to fostering a love of reading is simple: let kids read. Not just textbooks or assigned novels, but books they actually want to read. Choice is powerful. It's the difference between a lifelong reader and someone who sees reading as a chore.

Sure, we can't let students read *anything* they want in class. But giving them a voice—offering some options, letting them explore different genres—can be transformative. When students feel their voices matter, they engage more deeply.

Personally, if I'd only been allowed to read fantasy, I wouldn't be the reader I am today. (My brother, on the other hand, would've been thrilled.) I lived in the library as a kid, devouring

everything from classics to graphic novels. I still remember discovering *Moby Dick*—not the original, but a graphic novel version. It was the only way I made it through that whale of a tale.

Graphic novels often get a bad rap—and it was graphic novels/memoirs that were cited as the reason for the government's review—but they were my gateway to literature. Notably, it's not the violence or gore that raised red flags (Minister Nicolaides indicated that graphic violence is "probably not" an issue). Rather, it's books that explore identity, culture and, yes, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Some groups have launched coordinated efforts to challenge such books, labelling them as inappropriate or even pornographic. While some books may not have a place in a school library, it's a slippery slope to navigate.

Take *The Kite Runner*—graphic, heartbreaking and eye-opening. Or *Captain Underpants*, a perennial

favourite in middle school libraries. Both have made it onto lists of challenged books. So have *Harry Potter*, *Bone* and *Bad Kitty*. The reasons vary, but the result is the same: fewer stories, fewer perspectives, fewer chances for students to see themselves—or others—in the pages they turn.

And let's not forget the elephant in the room: Alberta schools can't even staff librarians anymore. Chronic underfunding has left many schools without the very people trained to guide students through the literary landscape. That's the real crisis the government should be addressing.

Books open minds. They spark empathy. They challenge us. As teachers, we must protect that. Let's keep our shelves diverse, our minds open and our students reading—not just what's uncontroversial, but what's meaningful.■

I welcome your comments. Contact me at kristine.wilkinson@ata.ab.ca.

After the strike vote, two paths lead to the same place



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive
Secretary

Question: Once the strike vote is done, what happens then?

Answer: I'm writing this column just before teachers begin voting on taking strike action and so this response is, by necessity, somewhat speculative and conditional. Once the result of the strike vote has been confirmed, there may be additional clarity, at least around the process ahead.

Let me start at the end. At some point, regardless of the route taken, this round of bargaining will conclude with a settlement. That settlement might be negotiated or it might be imposed. It might occur before, during or after a strike or related labour action has taken place.

In labour relations, a negotiated settlement between the parties, in our case the Association and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA), is much to be preferred. A negotiated settlement permits the parties to better represent their interests and arrive at solutions that, although not ideal for either, at least represent the best obtainable outcome. A negotiated agreement would have to be put before the Association members and TEBA members for ratification and approved before it would come into effect.

The imposition of a settlement can occur by a variety of different means. Terms of settlement could be imposed directly in legislation or be the outcome of a binding arbitration process. In 2002, the last time the Association undertook labour action affecting multiple bargaining units and employers, the imposed settlements were the result of a hybrid approach—while binding arbitrations took place for each bargaining unit and employer board, their scope and potential outcomes were constrained by a piece of legislation, the *Education Services Settlement Act*.

and boards across the province, even though some of its content might be differentiated, affecting teachers in different bargaining units differently.

(For the sake of completeness, I should note that there are other "nuclear" alternatives to what I have laid out above, but in my estimation, these would be without historical precedent in this province and are highly unlikely.)

So if settlement is the ultimate end, how do we get to that point?

Regardless of the outcome of the strike vote, with the rejection of the mediator's recommended terms for

Because teachers rejected the mediator's recommendation, the two parties would technically be returned to their opening position on all unresolved matters. That said, future bargaining would continue to involve members of the Association's Central Table Bargaining Committee and TEBA bargainers; both are well aware of discussions that informed the mediator's recommendations and would likely take those into consideration in their discussions.

Should bargaining break down with no possibility of an acceptable outcome, Provincial Executive Council (PEC) could, within 120 days of a successful strike vote, issue 72 hours' notice and then commence a strike. The actual conduct and mechanics of a strike would be informed by a central strike action committee, which would be established by and be advisory to PEC. Again, there is a similar process for the employer to proceed to lockout.

The parties now have two parallel paths down which they will proceed: the path of continued negotiation leading to agreement and the path of labour action. Both paths ultimately lead to a settlement. The path we and our government and school board counterparts choose to take will affect the nature of that settlement and the climate in the public education sector for the foreseeable future.

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

“The parties now have ... the path of continued negotiation leading to agreement and the path of labour action. Both paths ultimately lead to a settlement.”

As settlements were released by David Jones, KC, who was appointed to undertake the arbitration, some districts were able to see the writing on the wall and concluded individual agreements that were in line with the general outcomes of the arbitrated settlements. Of course, with provincial bargaining now taking place under the *Public Education Collective Bargaining Act*, this is not a possibility; any central table settlement would govern teachers

settlement, the first step will be for the Association to seek a return to the bargaining table. A decisive strike vote would be presented as proof to TEBA of teachers' collective commitment and of their expectation that the TEBA should do better. On the other side, it is likely that TEBA would consult with employers as they prepare to hold a lockout vote, both as an expression of its determination, but also to protect employer interests in the event of labour action.



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Bold leadership in uncertain times: 2SLGBTQI inclusion



VIEWPOINTS

Mackenzie Kolton
Director of Learning at Egale

With anti-2SLGBTQI rhetoric on the rise, creating safe, inclusive learning environments for 2SLGBTQI students is more urgent than ever. Egale’s national report *Still in Every Class in Every School*, conducted with researchers from the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba, surveyed over 3,500 middle and high school students across Canada. The findings reveal ongoing discrimination: 64 per cent of students hear homophobic and transphobic comments regularly. These experiences lead to increased emotional distress, lower academic performance, and diminished feelings of safety and belonging in school. Outside of the classroom, anti-2SLGBTQI hate is escalating with Pride events being cancelled, anti-trans policies and legislation gaining traction and harmful rhetoric becoming normalized. The message is clear: 2SLGBTQI communities are under threat. These trends are evident in Alberta: last fall, a suite of anti-trans legislation was passed by the legislature, limiting the ability of gender diverse youth to access medical care, participate in sport and be themselves at school. This has the potential to create a climate of fear where students are scared to be themselves and adults are unsure how to respond. So, what do we do?

We step up in allyship and action as courageous leaders. No matter the position you hold in the education system, we are all 2SLGBTQI inclusion leaders. Bold and courageous leadership is about showing up with integrity, vision and the courage to do what’s right, even when it’s difficult. It’s not about being perfect; it’s about being deeply principled and willing to lead through discomfort and resistance in pursuit of justice and equity. Courage to act: Courageous leaders step up when it matters most—they don’t wait for the perfect conditions. They step forward even when it’s unpopular, uncertain or uncomfortable, especially when protecting or uplifting equity-deserving voices. For teachers, this looks like interrupting casual discrimination in the classroom, questioning harmful pronoun policies and advocating for inclusive curriculum that reflects 2SLGBTQI identities. Vision with purpose: Bold leaders think beyond quick fixes or crisis management. They are proactive and intentional, and dismantle systems that reinforce harm or exclusion. Their values and mission aren’t just stated, they’re lived, even under pressure. In practice, this could look like sending back-to-school communications to families that are grounded in human rights-based language, with an emphasis on representing all identities and families, year-round. Another example is collaborating with the school community in creating a 2SLGBTQI inclusion strategy that is aligned with the school board mission and values. Accountability and humility: Leaders own their impact, including when they get it wrong. Courageous leadership includes the willingness to

learn, grow and repair when necessary. To support this, continued learning must be at the forefront. This means actively seeking out professional development focused on 2SLGBTQI inclusion. It also means building relationships with 2SLGBTQI community organizations to learn from those with lived experience, and to create stronger, trust-based partnerships that extend beyond the classroom. Together, these qualities form a foundation of courageous leadership when leading through uncertain times, one that is proactive, values-driven and committed to continuous growth. As the leading national organization for 2SLGBTQI people and issues, Egale has a comprehensive suite of inclusive schools resources specifically tailored for all members of school communities. Our resources include curriculum-aligned classroom materials, educational webinars, whole-school resources and more. For those in leadership positions, our senior leadership summits have proven to be insightful, collaborative and skill building. Teachers are the champions of inclusion, and Egale has the resources to help you. For more information on our resources, please visit <https://egale.ca/inclusive-schools/> or email schools@egale.ca. Mackenzie Kolton is the Director of Learning at Egale and oversees the development of inclusive school initiatives, inclusive workplace trainings and educational resources. With experience working with over 100 school boards, she coaches and supports senior leaders in education. Previous roles include serving as the manager of program innovation at Big Brothers Big Sisters and working with The Get REAL Movement.

RED FOR ED

Un vent de solidarité francophone

À l'automne 2024, face aux ravages causés par les feux de forêt qui avaient frappé Jasper durant l'été, l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones de l'Alberta (AEEFA) a décidé de poser un geste concret et porteur de sens : elle a conçu un chandail unique d'un rouge éclatant, orné du message évocateur « L'école publique me tient à cœur ».

Ce chandail, mis en vente dans l'ensemble du réseau scolaire, n'était pas simplement un vêtement; il symbolisait l'appartenance, la résilience et l'entraide. Les enseignants et les membres de la communauté se sont mobilisés pour appuyer l'initiative. Grâce à cette campagne, des fonds ont pu être recueillis et remis directement au personnel de l'école Desrochers, à Jasper, dont plusieurs membres ont été profondément affectés par les incendies. Ce geste témoigne d'une volonté forte de la part des enseignants de soutenir leurs pairs. La popularité de ce chandail, dont l'image souligne habilement la diversité et la richesse de nos identités multiples, s'est étendue au-delà des écoles francophones, atteignant les membres d'autres sections locales et même notre cher président, Jason Schilling.

Aujourd'hui, les membres de l'AEEFA portent fièrement leur chandail rouge, symbole d'unité et de compassion qui rappelle que, même dans les épreuves, la francophonie albertaine sait se rassembler, s'entraider et bâtir un avenir plus solidaire.

—Annie Jacques, secrétaire de l'AEEFA

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.



ISTOCK

Mandatory tests are harming students, study shows

Cory Hare
ATA News Staff

Mandatory screening of elementary students holds no value for children and is actually harmful to them, suggests data from a recent ATA study.

In early 2025, the ATA surveyed more than 1,400 elementary teachers on a number of topics, including the mandatory numeracy and literacy screening that took place in the fall of 2024.

A large majority of study respondents, 73 per cent, reported that the testing had a negative impact on students' emotional well-being due to high levels of anxiety and stress their students experienced.

"Students crying, having panic attacks, hitting themselves—declaring that they are stupid," is how one respondent summarized their students' experiences with the screening tests.

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

In their own words

Comments submitted by study respondents.

"Students feel judged based on these scores and use them to rank themselves."

"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."

"Students who do poorly have poor self-worth when it is not their fault."

The full ATA pulse survey report is available online.



Study participants felt that negative impacts were most pronounced among vulnerable students, such as those who were English-language learners (ELLs) and those exhibiting other exceptionalities.

"ELL learners that are benchmark 1–3 often get emotional because they do not understand English and feel lost," wrote one study participant.

"For students with complexities, these assessments are stressful and disheartening. It feels impossible and unfair," wrote another.

Developmentally inappropriate

Another common complaint, expressed by 71 per cent of respondents, was that the screeners were developmentally inappropriate because they tested students on concepts that they hadn't yet learned or were too young to comprehend.

"Some of the questions are asking about the number 205. [Students] barely know the number 10. Not fair," noted one respondent.

"The numeracy test especially is absolutely ridiculous and age-inappropriate," reported another teacher. "I had seven Grade 1 students crying because they were 'not smart' and couldn't do it."

The study included a random sample of 1,400 teachers, a robust sample size that suggests the results are representative of elementary teachers provincially, said study author Phil McRae, the ATA's associate coordinator of research.

"When I hear a teacher say my students are crying, having panic attacks, hitting themselves, declaring that they're stupid, who wants a mandatory test to do that? Nobody," McRae said.

Low value

Furthermore, 75 per cent of study participants reported that repeating the tests throughout the year has no value for student learning.

"I find that the mark the students go in with for testing is exactly the same coming out. It's a waste of time," wrote one respondent.

"The tests do not accurately assess most students," wrote another.

McRae said results of the study have been shared with Alberta Education in the hope of prompting significant change going forward. ■

New K–6 Social Studies curriculum now available

ATA News Staff

On May 30, the new kindergarten to Grade 6 social studies curriculum went live on the new LearnAlberta website, marking a significant step in the ministry's curriculum overhaul. Starting in September, this curriculum will be mandatory in kindergarten to Grade 3 classrooms. It will become mandatory for Grades 4 to 6 in September 2026.

Teachers continue to remain concerned about the pace of new curriculum implementation, particularly given the sweeping scope of the changes. Further, questions linger about the extent of supports for implementation.

"K-6 teachers have navigated a continuous onslaught of new curriculum since September 2022. With very few days left in the school year to plan for the new social studies curriculum, teachers are feeling pressure," said Terra Kaliszuk, ATA executive staff officer. "Curriculum implementation pacing needs to include time for teachers to review new curriculum and resources, collaborate with each other and create engaging plans for complex classrooms."

Though concerns remain, the ATA is prepared to work constructively with the government to ensure that curriculum implementation is

successful for teachers and students. Further, the ATA is encouraged by the government's move to incorporate field testing into curriculum development timelines.

For 2025/26, teachers will have the option to field test the curriculum for Grades 7 to 9 mathematics, social studies, physical education and wellness, and career education and financial literacy. Piloting will then be optional in the 2026/27 school year, followed by mandatory implementation in 2027/28.

The ATA perceives the ability to field test and provide feedback on the upcoming Grades 7 to 9 mathematics, social studies, physical education and wellness, and career education and financial literacy curriculum as a welcome change.

"It is vital that teachers inform and guide curriculum development work," said Kaliszuk. "Teachers understand what it takes to bring curriculum to life, and they need to be at the curriculum development table." ■

Alberta's K–6 curriculum is available at curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en.

A summary of changes made to Alberta's K–6 social studies curriculum is available at alberta.ca/curriculum-social-studies.



Standing together with determination and resolve

Another school year comes to an end. Another year of accomplishments, trials, joys and struggles. In many ways, this year was the same as any other. For better or worse, though, it also stands out from the rest given where we are in bargaining.

Back in fall 2024, I wrote on how much stronger we are together. I spoke on the challenges that lay in front of us and the crucial need for us as a profession to harness the power of unity. Well, here we are. Unity is truly vital right now.

Over the past six weeks or so, teachers have made their voices heard by rejecting the mediator's recommended terms of settlement and by endorsing strike action, with 99 per cent voting "yes" in the strike authorization vote. This marks the first time since moving to central table bargaining that teachers are considering provincially strike action.

A strike is never the first choice. In an ideal world, both sides at the bargaining table will reach an agreement that is reasonable, fair and mutually favorable. When that ideal isn't attained, however, unified action is necessary. And now, we must stand together in our call for respect. We must demand respect not only for ourselves as teaching professionals,

but also for our students and for public education.

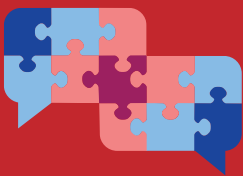
Public education in Alberta has been chronically underfunded. Class size and complexity have increased. New curriculum and assessments have been pressed into schools. Collectively, these have slowly but surely eroded our working conditions, which are our students' learning conditions. We will stand together, and we will speak with one voice against the erosion of the public education system.

What we do next matters, and I encourage you to stay informed on where we are in the bargaining process by signing up for members' updates and checking out the ATA's website for the latest information. We are always hopeful that a fair agreement can be reached—that is always the ideal. Know that whatever next steps we take, though, we take them side by side.

My colleagues, let us move forward—not with fear, but with determination. Not with doubt, but with resolve. Always remember that all of us are in this together—standing together for respect, standing together for our students, standing together for a vibrant future for public education in Alberta.

Even as another school year ends, another one lies on the horizon. Let us look forward with hope, strength and solidarity. ■

BARGAINING
Central Table 2024



Alberta teachers send clear message with strike-authorization vote

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

In a powerful show of unity, Alberta teachers voted overwhelmingly in favour of authorizing a strike vote, with 99 per cent of ballots cast supporting the move. Nearly 38,000 teachers participated in the online vote conducted by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) from May 22 to 26.

The vote followed teachers' rejection of a mediator's report, marking a critical turning point in an ongoing central table bargaining round that began earlier this year. The result sends an unmistakable signal to the provincial government and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA).

"With 99 per cent support to take a strike vote, Alberta teachers are speaking with one voice," said Sean Brown, the ATA's chief negotiator. "This is not just about wages—it's about respect, resources and the future of public education. Teachers have been carrying the load for a system that's been neglected for too long, and they're saying clearly: enough is enough. It's time for real action and real support."

The bargaining process, which started in early 2024, was shaped by extensive teacher input collected through a provincewide survey. When discussions stalled in the fall over high-impact issues involving salaries and classroom complexity, both parties agreed to bring in a mediator, whose recommended terms of settlement were brought forward to members this spring.

Teachers voted down the mediator's recommendation, as it failed to produce a resolution that addressed teachers' core concerns: increasingly crowded and complex classrooms, lack of meaningful wage increases, and the need to attract and retain teachers over the long term.

"Teachers are standing united in demanding respect and recognition for the challenges they experience in today's classrooms," said ATA president Jason Schilling. "Settling for anything less than tangible solutions will not be tolerated."

The next step is a strike vote supervised by the Alberta Labour Relations Board. Teachers were set to cast their ballots online or in person from June 5 to 8, with results expected to be posted on the ATA website on June 11 (unless an objection is filed, which would lead to a delay).

Find the latest news on bargaining here:



Sign up to receive members' updates straight to your inbox:



YOUR VIEWS

How teachers are marking Indigenous History Month

- Amanda Marcy**
My students and I painted rocks with Métis dot art!
- Caleb Koning**
My art class started an Indigenous-inspired watercolour painting project. It's amazing so far!
- Meaghan Boutillier**
Planning an outdoor learning day with the school next to us. An opportunity to connect, explore and acknowledge the land we are on.

- Nicole Gatner**
An old-school field day with our Grade 2 students. Sack races, egg and spoon races, bubbles and hopscotch. They have a blast!
- Jenn Taggart**
I get a beach ball for each student in my class. We take bright sharpies and sign our names on each ball. Then everyone brings their ball home for summer with memories of their classmates! (Grade 2)
- Shannon Ossinger**
When I taught French as a second language, I brought my crêpe maker and made my classes crêpes.

Some favourite ways to mark the end of the school year

- Jeanne Lawrence**
On my son's first day of school, my husband and I pick him up from school and we get ice cream. We do the exact same thing on the last day of school. Sometimes friends join us, but we always go for ice cream and get an end-of-the-year selfie.
- Erin McBean**
Resting until I feel like myself again
- Susan Gosselin**
Running a 50km Ultra Marathon
- Nic Prefontaine**
Sleeping!
- Anna Scharfenberger**
Department backyard BBQ

THIS ISN'T JUST ABOUT TEACHERS.
IT'S ABOUT EVERY STUDENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

StopTheExcuses.ca

FOR THE RECORD

“ We remain committed to ensuring students have access to library resources that support their learning and development, while upholding community values and established protocols. ”

– From a statement issued on May 26 by the boards of trustees from the Calgary Board of Education and Edmonton Public School Board in response to the minister of education's announcement on introducing new rules to ensure only age-appropriate books are in school libraries.

2025

gotcha!

PHOTO CONTEST

And the winners are ...

The 2025 Gotcha! Photo Contest drew dozens of submissions from Alberta teachers. Here are the judges' top three picks, along with some honourable mentions.



TREE-MENDOUS

Grade 1 students cheer to Arbor Day, a day during Forest Week that serves to promote tree planting, forest conservation and environmental awareness. Grade 1 students received either a lodgepole pine or white spruce seedling to plant at their homes.

Photographer: Ashley Sunde, Swanavon School, Grande Prairie
Date of photo: May 8, 2025
Judges' comments: The photographer has captured a fun, energetic classroom moment with impressive sharpness and framing, a testament to skilled timing and focus amid high energy. These elements are matched by the storytelling, making the image both visually engaging and technically strong.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS



PADDLE TIME

Grade 8 outdoor education students from West Ridge School learn the basics of kayaking on the Glenmore Reservoir.
Photographer: Tyler Dixon, West Ridge School, Calgary
Date of photo: Oct. 2024



GREEN THUMB

Grade 1 student Raphielle waters her classroom sunflower. All Grade 1 students planted a sunflower seed in January when they were learning about the needs of plants and animals in science class. Raphielle knows that her plant needs water, sunlight, soil and a warm environment to grow.
Photographer: Ashley Sunde, Swanavon School, Grande Prairie
Date of photo: Apr. 25, 2025



Prizes are awarded as follows:

1st place:
\$200

2nd place:
\$100

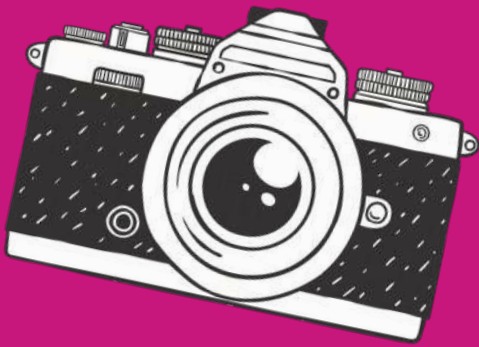
3rd place:
\$50

The contest judges were:

Michael Parillas
ATA graphic designer

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News managing editor

Kristine Wilkinson
ATA News editor-in-chief



2nd

HAPPY TRAILS

The best classrooms have no walls! Outdoor education students from West Ridge School out on the trail during a day hike in Kananaskis.
Photographer: Tyler Dixon, West Ridge School, Calgary
Date of photo: Sept. 2024
Judges' comments: A striking balance between the expansive landscape and the subjects draws you into the scene. The thoughtful composition, with the line of students curving around the corner, creates interest as well.



3rd

LAMB'S BEST FRIEND

Student Korver feeds his lamb during an outdoor loose parts lesson.
Photographer: Michelle Dickie, Varsity Acres School, Calgary
Date of photo: Mar. 12, 2025
Judges' comments: This photo captures meaningful student engagement and reflects authentic learning through play. Technically, the image is sharp with balanced lighting and natural composition that draws attention to the subject, enhancing both clarity and visual storytelling.



PIE FOR PI

Teacher Jamie Boyce getting a face full of pie during Pi Day at Eastglen High School.
Photographer: Mark Knoch, Eastglen High School, Edmonton
Date of photo: Mar. 14, 2025



TEAM SPIRIT

Senior Varsity slo-pitch, smiling after a win!
Photographer: Amanda Omilon, Catholic Central High School, Lethbridge
Date of photo: May 5, 2025



LAB LESSON

Grade 8 students were dissecting pig lungs. One student was trying to inflate the lungs.
Photographer: Kathryn Gauthier, St. Stephen's School, Valleyview
Date of photo: Dec. 16, 2024



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Walking Together

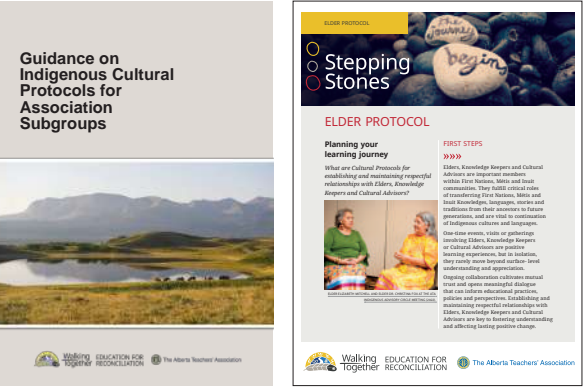
ATA resources and programs support learning in Indigenous education

ATA News Staff

June is National Indigenous History Month, with June 21 marking National Indigenous Peoples Day. This month offers a meaningful opportunity to honour the rich histories, vibrant cultures and enduring contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit across Canada. It also serves as a reminder that learning about Indigenous cultures, languages, stories and traditions is an ongoing journey for teachers, as well as for students.

Alberta teachers and school leaders continue to strengthen their knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, in alignment with Alberta’s Professional Practice Standards. To support members in their learning journey, the Alberta Teachers’ Association offers a wide range of learning opportunities, including online resources, workshops and in-person sessions, focused on Indigenous education. These tools help teachers deepen their understanding, create inclusive classrooms and renew respectful relations with Indigenous Peoples, cultures, languages, stories and traditions.

Check out the ATA’s offerings:



New or updated resources

- *Guidance on Indigenous Cultural Protocols for Association Subgroups* resource
- Being in Good Relations—An Introduction to Cultural Protocols workshop
- *The Stepping Stones* series—concise overviews of such topics as Elder protocol (recently revised), Numbered Treaties within Alberta, and the forced relocation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Other key resources

- Land acknowledgement resources, including a pronunciation guide video, posters and bookmarks
- *Honouring the Voices of Indigenous Teachers and School Leaders in Alberta School Communities*—a report on the experiences of Indigenous teachers, school leaders and central office leaders in Alberta’s public education system
- *Strengthening the Heartbeat of Reconciliation: Advancing Truth and Reconciliation in Classrooms and Schools*
- Engaging in Numeracy and Connections through First Nations, Métis and Inuit Traditional Games workshop
- *Truth & Reconciliation Books for the Classroom*—literature recommendations for kindergarten to Grade 12 (and beyond)
- *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada* (available to borrow from the Association at no cost) ■

Access online resources or book an Indigenous education workshop at teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/indigenous-education-and-walking-together.

Pitfalls and Precautions returning, with Regulatory Affairs lens



PITFALLS & PRECAUTIONS

Tim Jeffares
Associate Coordinator,
Regulatory Affairs

For years, Pitfalls and Precautions articles were a staple in the *ATA News*. These articles gave a glimpse into discipline cases that Alberta Teachers’ Association staff had investigated to help teachers be more aware of common pitfalls to avoid in their own practice. When the government passed Bill 15, the *Education (Reforming Teacher Profession Discipline) Amendment Act*, on May 31, 2022, the ATA was stripped of its regulatory function and the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC) was created to oversee teacher conduct and competency for all Alberta teaching certificate holders. One byproduct of adapting to the new legislative reality was that these articles stopped being produced for and shared with our members.

In response to the implementation of Bill 15, delegates at the 2023 Annual Representative Assembly passed a resolution that would see the ATA now represent members who faced allegations of unprofessional conduct and/or professional incompetence. A new subunit of the Government program area called Regulatory Affairs was then formed. While this subunit represents members, it is important to distinguish representation in regulatory matters (complaints filed with the ATPC) from the representation provided by our colleagues in Teaching Employment Services, whose representation efforts focus on teacher employment issues.

Since the subunit was formed, the Regulatory Affairs team has represented more than 450 teachers under investigation with the ATPC and has begun to recognize many common themes and learnings from these cases. We see how it would be beneficial to share these insights with our members across the province, so the decision was made to revive Pitfalls and Precautions.

Starting this fall, the Regulatory Affairs team will be writing a series of articles for the *ATA News*. The purpose of these articles is not to share salacious content or to expose colleagues for bad behaviour. Rather the intent is to provide insights into what type of conduct or action could lead to a complaint of unprofessional conduct and share some best practices to avoid receiving such complaints in the first place. Many of the articles will include elements of actual cases. However, as before, any anecdotes will be anonymized, and key details will be changed to protect the identity of the teacher involved.

As always, if you happen to receive a notice of complaint from the ATPC, please contact Regulatory Affairs at the ATA as soon as possible by calling 780-447-9460 or emailing professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca.

Should your school and/or division have any interest in learning more about the ATPC processes and Code of Conduct requirements, requests for presentations may also be directed to professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca. ■



Pride Season

ATA offers resources in support of sexual and gender minority students and teachers

ATA News Staff

Pride Season is celebrated across Canada every summer, with events and festivities happening from June through September. This vibrant season is more than just a celebration—it’s a powerful reminder of the ongoing need to create welcoming, inclusive and safe spaces for all students and colleagues, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

To support this important work, local groups, subgroups and individual ATA members can order bilingual Safe Space posters, pronoun stickers and a variety of Pride materials. These tools help visibly show support and foster environments where everyone feels respected and valued.

Beyond materials, the ATA offers a range of learning resources and workshops designed to help educators and school staff build and maintain safe, supportive spaces for sexual and gender minorities. These programs provide practical strategies and insights to promote understanding, respect and allyship throughout the school year.

Guides and resources

All are available online.

- *Breaking the Silence: A Guide for Sexual and Gender Minority Teachers in Alberta*
- *GSAs and QSAs in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers*
- *Establishing a Local Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee*

- *PRISM: Toolkit for Safe and Caring Discussions About Sexual and Gender Minorities*

Workshop

- PRISM—Professionals Respecting Individual Sexual and Gender Minorities

For information on booking this workshop, contact pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca.

Further, teachers and school leaders who are part of a sexual and gender diverse community, or who are allies of this community, can also connect with colleagues through their local gay-straight alliances (GSAs) where available, or through the provincial ATAGSA, which meets next on June 12 at 4:30 p.m. These groups aim to create a safe and welcoming space for members to build relationships, share their experiences and deepen their knowledge.

More information on supports offered by the ATA is available by emailing dehr@ata.ab.ca. ■

For more resources related to Indigenous education, sexual and gender minorities or other topics, check out the ATA Library’s web guides.

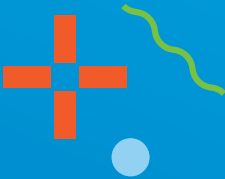
A QR code with the ATA logo in the center, used to link to more resources.

Learn more about the professional discipline process for teachers and schools leaders, as well as supports you can access, at teachers.ab.ca/advocacy/conduct-and-competence.

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TOGETHER WE STAND

Messages of support and solidarity from and for Alberta teachers

“ As I moved from a school where I was the only teacher to a school where I had teacher colleagues I could see and speak to each day, something huge struck my heart. That is that one of the best parts of being an educator is the support and fellowship of those who truly know what you are going through each day. They share ideas, share frustrations, share hopes for students, share heartbreaks and share joys. I am a better teacher for knowing them all.
– Terri Jo Harding

“ As a new teacher, I am proud to be part of this community that is united together. – Gillian Klassen

“ Kids deserve better.
– Sydney Peters

“ Today one of my students came in to write the PAT. This child has been learning at home since the fall because of an ongoing illness. They came specifically to visit me, gave me a huge hug and thanked me for being there, for teaching them and for changing their life. I just about cried. We are difference makers! – Tess O’Shaughnessy

“ I am so proud of how teachers have come together for the betterment of our careers. – Cheyenne Henderson

“ HELP. Listen to us!! – Cytrina Ogle

“ Teachers, keep up the good fight. All teachers and school staff are supporting you. – Charlene Daub

“ I spoke up at one of the MIMs and am so proud of us for standing together— 99.5 per cent is amazing! Let’s keep it up for our next vote! Feeling very Katniss lately. Our students deserve better; we deserve better. This is the consequence of the UCP cutting education funding for decades. It’s time for them to own up. We got this!
– Sarah Nimilowich

“ It’s time to fight back for the public education system Alberta needs and deserves! – Marlem711

“ I am a student counsellor in a rural community high school, and I stand with teachers. – Jperepelitza

