

Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



Truth matters
See [page 4](#).



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Tens of thousands of teachers and supporters gathered in front of the Alberta legislature building on Oct. 23, the first day of the fall sitting of the legislature. See the story on [page 5](#).



Spreading joy

Former student shines a light on teachers who inspire

See [page 4](#).



After the strike

When all is said and done, where will we be?

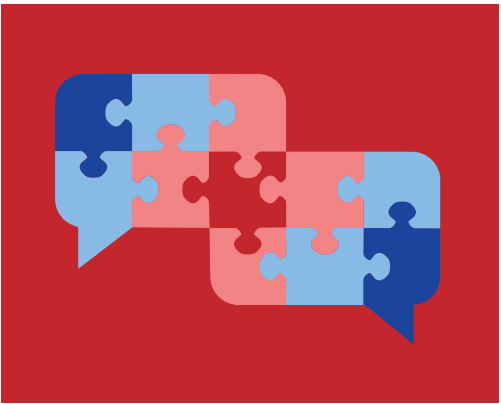
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Pitfalls and Precautions

Teachers have a duty to report alleged harm, abuse

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Bargaining update

ATA rejects government's "enhanced mediation" proposal

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When all is said and done, where will we be?



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
 ATA News
 Editor-in-Chief

Let's fast forward to when schools reopen. The return to classrooms in Alberta will be unlike any other in the province's history. After weeks of impasse, speculation and uncertainty, teachers will step back into their schools as professionals dedicated to their craft. There will be a mix of relief and exhaustion, the joy of reconnecting with students, and the daunting task of assessing learning gaps and rebuilding classroom routines. The days ahead will demand incredible resilience from teachers and school leaders as they navigate

the emotional aftermath of a deeply divisive labour dispute, all while demonstrating the unwavering care their students need.

The path forward will require a focused commitment to what teachers can control: the classroom. Re-establishing the normalcy and stability students have missed will be essential. Teachers will lean on their professionalism and on one another to support students, some of whom may be struggling with anxiety or have fallen behind academically. The long-term effects of this disruption—particularly on vulnerable students—will call for sustained, compassionate effort from every teacher, and, as always, teachers will rise to the challenge. Teachers and school leaders have always known this job action would not be without sacrifice, but they also

knew that classrooms remaining “as is” was not sustainable.

The advocacy and public support generated by teachers during this period have been incredible. Throughout the strike, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) has put a spotlight on critical issues affecting both student learning and teachers' working conditions, including class size and the need for more classroom supports. This public campaign, amplified by teachers' voices, has shifted the narrative, forcing a broader conversation about the future of the public education system. It has clearly signalled to the government, and the public, what teachers consider to be nonnegotiable for a quality education.

As teachers know, the ATA's function extends beyond the bargaining table. The ATA is a powerful voice for the profession, and will continue to

provide guidance and support for teachers navigating a post-strike world. The unity forged during this difficult time will endure; it will strengthen the teaching community and its resolve to advocate for the profession. Teachers' collective action has reminded everyone that teachers are not simply employees—they are professionals whose working conditions are inseparable from their students' learning conditions.

When all is said and done, teachers will know they fought for a more supportive educational environment for all students. Their collective action was a testament to that belief, which will remain a source of strength long after classes resume and a final agreement is signed. ■

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

A strike with no strike pay—why?



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
 ATA Executive
 Secretary

Question: Why isn't the Association paying its members strike pay?

Answer: There are several layers to this question, depending on who is asking it. There are bad actors in social media who are raising the issue with the malicious intent of driving a wedge between teachers and their association. Often, they will provide inaccurate information about Association finances to further their mischief. So, let's start from the beginning and that means a trip into history, my favourite sort of trip!

The Special Emergency Fund (SEF) was established in 1952, long before the passage of the *Public Education Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA)*, which established bilevel bargaining and made provision for a central table agreement that would cover teachers across the province. At the time, the SEF, which functioned as the Association's strike fund, was designed to support labour action that involved a few locals at a time. Furthermore, the locals were much smaller and there were many more of them prior to the great amalgamation of school boards in 1995. That meant that the fund needed only to provide a buffer to support a relatively small number of striking teachers at any one time, while the vast majority of their colleagues remained on the

job, paying their dues. Strike pay could then be offered and funded on an as-needed basis even as strikes occurred on a more frequent basis. Still, an extended strike by a large local could effectively deplete the fund, as happened when Calgary Public teachers went on strike in 1980 for 44 school days, or when an escalating series of coordinated local strikes in 2002 culminated with approximately two-thirds of the province's teachers being off the job.

Everything changed, though, with the passage of *PECBA* in 2015. That amalgamation of boards in 1995 also stripped their capacity to levy taxes and control their revenues, making them entirely dependent upon the provincial government for funding. Come time for negotiating, however, the province was not at the table and teachers were left to converse with proxies, not power. The great advantage of central table bargaining was that the central table negotiation, which included all the significant cost items, would involve the provincial government directly and force it to fund the commitments made in the central table agreement.

However, the other consequence of having a provincial table and provincial agreement was that a failure to reach a bargained agreement could and did lead to a strike involving all the province's teachers. While there might be the option of running rotating or escalating strike action, these approaches could be thwarted by the government and school boards by going immediately to a lockout. For this, and for other tactical considerations, once strike action became inevitable, Provincial Executive Council (PEC) ruled out

anything other than a strike of all teachers, all at once.

So, back to the issue of strike pay. Standing at \$25 million, the SEF is insufficient to fund strike pay for all teachers for any length of time in any meaningful amount. The rough math is simple: with 51,000 full-time, part-time and substitute teachers on strike, per-teacher strike pay would total about \$490, which, coincidentally, is equivalent to one day's pay for the average teacher. Administrative and distribution costs would also be substantial. So instead of paying strike pay, PEC committed the entirety of the SEF to cover the cost of maintaining health benefits, with the exception of health and wellness spending accounts, for members throughout the duration of the strike by paying both the member and employer contributions to the benefits providers. This ensured that members would not have to pick up the costs themselves and risk, in the event of nonpayment, a lapse of their benefits coverage. The \$25 million in the SEF was sufficient to cover just over two weeks of member benefits, after which the Association has drawn upon its limited cash reserves to maintain these payments on behalf of members.

The short answer, then, to the question “why didn't the Association provide strike pay?” is that it chose instead to maintain benefits for members. The decision that strike pay would not be available was communicated to members at the multiple member information meetings that have taken place in person and online since May.

By the time this strike is over, the SEF will be fully depleted. If teachers

want the fund to be sufficient to provide general strike pay in the future, it would require building an SEF that would be many times larger than has ever existed in the past, paid for by substantially increased fees. While Association staff and PEC will continue to seek whatever operational economies we can over the months ahead, discretionary programing expenditures amount to less than a quarter of the Association's \$50 million annual budget, the remainder being committed to staff salaries, operations and other fixed and inelastic expenditures. It would be practically impossible, and I would argue unwise, to attempt to recoup the funds expended during this strike by slashing Association programming and the discretionary member supports that provide ongoing value to teachers.

Ultimately, teachers will have to determine through the Association's budget process if the SEF will be replenished, in what amount, for what purpose and over what time period. These complex and important decisions will ultimately be made by over 400 elected teacher representatives meeting at the 2026 Annual Representative Assembly. Detailed information about the Association's proposed budget and opportunities for input are provided to local representatives beginning in February, and to the general membership in the *ATA News* in the months preceding ARA, which will take place on the May long weekend. ■

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



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Member of Canadian Educational Press Association
 Association canadienne de la presse éducationnelle

Canadian Publication Mail Agreement No. 40065477 ISSN 0001-267X
 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to the following address:
 Editorial Office, Barnett House, 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5N 2R1
 Telephone: 780-447-9400 in Edmonton; 1-800-232-7208 toll free in Alberta



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What it means to be a certificated teacher in Alberta



VIEWPOINTS

Phil McRae
ATA Associate coordinator
of research



Audrey McRae
Retired teacher and
teacher-librarian

In 1950, a young woman from the ranching country of Pincher Creek packed her suitcase and journeyed north to Edmonton. She was determined to become one of Alberta's first four-year, university-educated teachers. That woman is my mother, Audrey McRae. Now 93—sharp, spirited and full of life—she remains one of only a few Albertans who earned that first full bachelor of education (BEd) degree from the University of Alberta. She believed teaching was not a pastime or a convenience but a profession worthy of deep study and lifelong commitment. Decades later, I continued the journey she began, earning a PhD from the same faculty, teaching in the Master of Education program and serving as an adjunct professor.

Before I tell her story, let me be unequivocal: reducing the academic, practicum and professional standards for teacher certification in Alberta, as outlined in the minister of education's recent mandate letter from Premier Danielle Smith, diminishes the dignity of the profession and betrays the spirit of those pioneering Albertans who built this province by striving for more, not settling for less. It disregards generations of teachers who sacrificed, along with their families, to earn their degrees and uphold the profession with a body of knowledge that has advanced each new generation

of students with intellect, conscience and care.

When I asked my mom what it meant to pursue a university degree in education in the early 1950s, she spoke of a transitional time following World War II. It was soon after Alberta's normal schools had closed their brief training programs of limited depth, and right before anyone had yet set out on the new path toward a four-year BEd.

"Money was short for everyone," she told me, "but my parents always stressed how important it would be to have the benefits of a university degree." That conviction carried her through long nights of study far from home, with the weight of expectation on her shoulders. She was the first person from Pincher Creek to earn a BEd. Others soon followed, with her courage laying a path for them.

For my mother, a four-year degree meant that she was making teaching a career of importance. She told me, "It was not a moment's-passing-by kind of job. Sure as heck not very many of us in Alberta then were going to leave our communities to get a four-year degree, but many came along quickly after me because they could see it had real value ... it gave us much deeper knowledge and the confidence that we were entering a true profession, one that mattered."

With that sense of purpose, my mother became a high school English teacher at Matthew Halton Community School and, in doing so, taught the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin—later Chief Justice of Canada—the first woman to hold that position and the longest serving in our nation's history. That quiet fact alone reflects how Alberta's teachers shape lives not only in their communities but across Canada and the world.

When I hear proposals to reduce certification requirements for teachers, I think of my mom and of the thousands who worked and struggled to earn their degrees. To lower qualifications not only diminishes what it means to be a certificated teacher but also disregards the foundation upon which our public education system rests. It sends a message that preparation, practicums, reflection

and scholarship are secondary to shortcuts and expediency.

Teaching is complex, intellectual work that demands professional judgment, ethical discernment and the ability to respond to the evolving needs of students and society. These capacities are cultivated through rigorous preparation in education degree programs and strengthened through practicum experiences that merge theory and practice. This foundation is anchored in Alberta's Teaching Quality Standard. To erode standards built over generations would compromise both the public's trust in our schools and the pride teachers take in their vocation.

My mother's generation understood that education was both a privilege and a duty. They fought to raise standards and move teacher preparation into universities. After retiring, she became a senator at the University of Lethbridge and devoted her time to supporting literacy projects in her community. She has never stopped believing that knowledge could lift lives, just as it had lifted her own.

I stand today proud to be part of a legacy of Alberta teachers who have made (and continue to make) the province stronger through a shared commitment to high entry standards and lifelong learning. We must honour their legacy, not by lowering the bar for certification, but by raising our respect for what it means to be a certificated teacher in Alberta.

To become a teacher in our province is to accept a profound responsibility and become part of public assurance in our education system. It must remain a profession of learning, leadership and service. It has never been one of convenience. ■

Phil McRae, PhD, is the associate coordinator of research at the Alberta Teachers' Association and adjunct professor at the University of Alberta.

Audrey McRae is a retired teacher and teacher-librarian, who began her journey in Alberta's public schools more than three-quarters of a century ago.

RED FOR ED

Teachers and supporters across Alberta have been showing up for public education throughout the strike.



Show us your Red for Ed

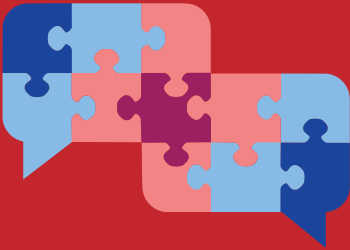
Want to share how you or your team is supporting public education in Alberta? Let your colleagues know why you wear Red for Ed or how you create moments of engagement or advocacy. Email managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

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.



BARGAINING

Central Table 2024



We are ATA.

ATA rejects government’s “enhanced mediation” proposal

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

After three weeks of strike action, Alberta teachers are still standing together for smaller class sizes, manageable workloads and fair compensation. The Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) continues to press for real solutions to the issues that have created this crisis in Alberta’s classrooms, rejecting the government’s “enhanced mediation” proposal—brought forward on October 16—as inadequate and one-sided.

Following the Association’s rejection of the government’s proposal, Premier Danielle Smith said on October 17 that Albertans should “fully expect” legislation forcing teachers back to work during the week of October 27 if the parties fail to reach a deal by the time the legislative session begins.

On October 14, the ATA presented the Teachers’ Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) with a proposal aimed at reaching a fair agreement that would end the disruption to schools. The proposal reflected the

priorities identified by teachers across the province and included a phased-in plan to achieve manageable student-teacher ratios, with language to address growing classroom complexity, as well as a counter to the government’s salary position of three per cent per year.

“Teachers have taken historic and extraordinary action because they know students deserve better,” said ATA president Jason Schilling. “Our proposal provides a balanced path forward, one that addresses the realities teachers face every day in their classrooms and restores stability for students and families.”

TEBA did not provide a counter proposal and instead, on October 16, the Government of Alberta sent a letter to the Association requesting that teachers return to classrooms on October 20 under an “enhanced mediation” process. However, the government stated that student-teacher ratios would not be included in the scope of that process. The ATA’s Provincial Executive Council met in an emergent session to consider the offer and, on October 17, issued a written response rejecting it.

In his letter to government, ATA Executive Secretary Dennis Theobald called the government’s proposal “biased” and said it would “severely restrict the scope of the solutions” that could be considered, particularly around class size and complexity.

“It is engineered to produce a biased and predetermined outcome that entirely favours the government’s objectives,” wrote Theobald. “It is entirely unacceptable to teachers.”

Theobald added that TEBA’s continued unwillingness to meaningfully engage on these core issues left teachers with no choice but to continue strike action.

Schilling said the government’s refusal to discuss student-teacher ratios showed a lack of willingness to confront the real issues in education.

“Teachers are committed to reaching a negotiated settlement that strengthens public education,” he said. “But we cannot accept a process that denies the very issues at the heart of this dispute. Alberta now has the largest class sizes in Canada and the lowest per-student funding. Pretending that class size doesn’t matter

will not make the crisis disappear.”

Schilling emphasized that the ATA remained fully committed to bargaining, adding that teachers are eager to return to their classrooms but will not accept a deal that fails students and ignores the reality in Alberta’s schools.

“This situation is difficult, and teachers are bearing the financial impact of this decision,” Schilling said. “But we are standing together for the future of public education.”

On October 20, government house leader Joseph Schow said that all means available to the government for getting kids back in the classroom would be explored. At the time of going to press, back-to-work legislation, Bill 2, the *Back to School Act*, was expected to be tabled on October 27. If legislation is tabled and subsequently passed, the ATA will carefully review the text with the support of its legal counsel. Similar to the government, the ATA will carefully review all its options in response to the legislation.

The latest updates on bargaining and strike action are available on the ATA website. ■



Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling

Truth over clicks

Teachers stand for what’s right

The truth matters. You’d think that would be obvious, but lately, the truth hasn’t been getting the top spot it deserves. About three weeks into this strike, Alberta’s teachers are standing together with integrity and purpose, while some corners of the internet are standing on, well, much shakier ground.

Every day brings a new “breaking revelation” from someone who seems more interested in advancing—or even monetizing—misinformation than understanding what’s actually happening in relation to the teachers’ strike. There’s no shortage of self-appointed experts out there, armed with grainy screenshots, wild theories and a YouTube channel to promote. Apparently, facts don’t pay as well as outrage.

Let’s be clear: the Alberta Teachers’ Association isn’t a branch office of any political party. We are nonpartisan, and we don’t take orders from anyone but our members. Our direction comes from teachers themselves, elected leaders who debate and decide on behalf of their colleagues. That’s called democracy. It may not trend online, but it’s how our Association and our profession work.

Teachers aren’t on strike because of politics. They’re on strike because their classrooms are overcrowded, their students need more support, and their profession has been disrespected and stretched beyond reason. Every teacher I’ve spoken with would rather be teaching, but they also know that if nothing changes, their students’ learning conditions will keep getting worse.

The truth is simple: teachers are standing up for what’s right. They’re standing up for the future of public education. Those who twist that truth to self-promote or score political points aren’t protecting students—they’re protecting their algorithms.

So, when you see another viral post claiming to “expose the ATA,” take a breath. Ask who benefits from the lies and confusion they create. And remember that the people who actually live the truth—Alberta’s 51,000 teachers—aren’t hiding anything. They’re out in the open, rain or shine, holding signs that say exactly what they stand for.

The truth may take longer to travel, but it is our richest legacy. Lies burn fast; truth endures. ■

Former student shines a light on teachers who inspire

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

Teachers made a lasting impact on Carly Miller. So, when Alberta teachers began strike action on Oct. 6, Miller—who graduated from St. Albert Catholic High School in 2015—decided to act to show her support.

“I feel that sometimes social media is used in negative ways,” Miller said. “I wanted to use it in a positive way, to spread joy!”

She promised herself she would post on Instagram every day of the strike, highlighting teachers she knows and celebrating the important work they do and the difference they make to their students.

“I have global developmental delays, and support from teachers and educational assistants helped me to be the happy, involved, independent person I am today,” she said. “Teachers make a big difference every day, and I wanted to shine a light on that.”

One post features an interview with

one of Miller’s former teachers, Jody Sekundiak. The write-up not only gave Sekundiak a chance to share why she loves teaching, it also became a place of connection, as others joined in to post their own kind comments and stories about the teacher.

The experience has been meaningful for both teacher and former student. Sekundiak said she has been touched by the messages of appreciation, encouragement and support for Alberta teachers that Miller’s posts have inspired.

“It is so inspiring how Carly always finds a way to engage with her community and bring connection and joy to those around her,” Sekundiak said. “Carly’s campaign has truly uplifted teachers and brought awareness during this challenging time.”

For Miller, the response has been just as rewarding. She has received encouraging feedback on her posts and is grateful to see them bringing positive attention to teachers when they need it most.

“Teachers don’t think about themselves. They think about their students and their families,” she said. “I think that the teachers’ strike is really about making things better for students.”

Ultimately, Miller believes the strike reflects teachers’ deep and ongoing commitment to their students and their profession.

“Day to day, year to year, teachers see what’s happening in their classrooms,” she said. “That’s what is important; teachers are standing up to make things better for kids.” ■



Carly Miller (left) shone the spotlight on her former teacher, Jody Sekundiak (right), on social media.



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Rally sends a clear message as legislature resumes

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

Tens of thousands of Alberta teachers, parents and community members from across the province gathered at the Alberta legislature grounds in Edmonton on Oct. 23 to send a clear message: public education matters and teachers’ voices cannot be ignored.

This rally—organized by Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic ATA locals—took place during the third week of the provincewide teachers’ strike, just as the government was opening the fall sitting of the legislature.

The event featured powerful speeches, signs and chants that emphasized the urgent need to support Alberta’s public education system, teachers and students. During the rally, ATA president Jason Schilling said that teachers care too deeply about what is happening to public education to stay silent any longer.

“What we’re doing here isn’t easy. Speaking truth to power rarely is,” he

said. “But sometimes you must stand up for what you believe in and for what’s right. And that moment is now.”

Since the strike action began, teachers have continued to demonstrate solidarity, stay connected and remain visible by gathering in locations across the province for rallies, wellness walks and other events.

With the government signalling back-to-work legislation was forthcoming, the rally highlighted teachers’ determination to be heard and their commitment to ensuring that Alberta students have the resources and support they need to thrive.

“That is what we are doing here today,” said Schilling. “We are reminding government and every school board that Alberta’s teachers will not be silenced, ignored or divided.”

For Schilling—and many others participating—the event was both a statement of solidarity and a call for lasting change in the education system.

“Alberta’s teachers and school leaders are standing up. We’re fighting for our students, for our classrooms and for one another,” he said. ■



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

FOR THE RECORD

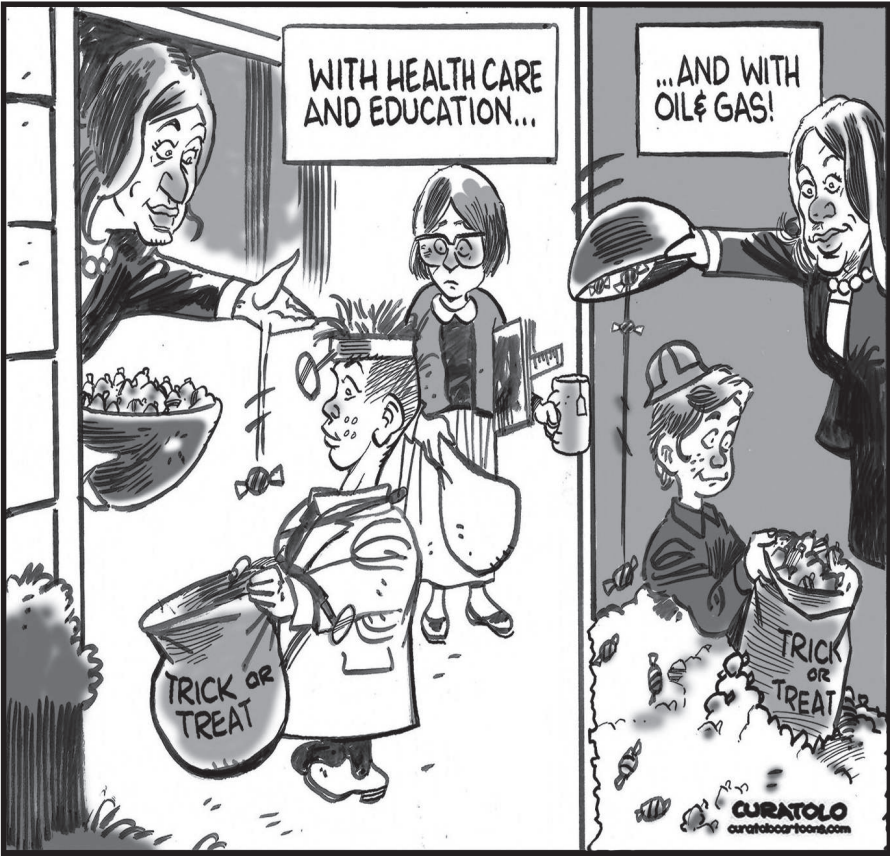
“Premier Smith seems to be negotiating out of the ‘how-not-to-negotiate’ handbook.”

— Alberta NDP leader Naheed Nenshi in a livestream on Oct. 22 during which he and his caucus outlined NDP priorities for the fall sitting

YOUR VIEWS

Teachers shared what has been the most meaningful way someone has shown up for them during the strike.

- f Alison Veldkamp**
A stranger asked if they could give me a hug in the grocery store because I was wearing my Red for Ed sweatshirt. 😊
- f Lee Bannister**
The most meaningful thing someone has done is my wife has let me game for hours without giving me a to-do list. 😊
- f Odessa Nguyen**
My neighbour and friends checking in on me and asking what they can do to help. Also, seeing parents and nonteachers at walks and rallies is really heartwarming.
- f Jennifer Chow**
Friends checking in on me and the family. When I told someone I missed the students and missed work, a random stranger in the store, in conversation, replied “they miss you too. Just don’t give in and settle.” Public support is amazing. 🥰
- f Katrina Elizabeth**
Community support has been incredible. Shoutout and thank you to all businesses, from gyms to restaurants to therapists, who have provided free or discounted items or sessions.
- f Tanis Veronica**
My mom braved the crowds to join me at the McDougall Centre Rally in Calgary! ❤️
- f Quinn Shelton**
A retired teacher in her 80s stopped me at advanced polls because she saw my ATA pin and gave me some money for groceries next month. Also told me to not back down and that we need to keep fighting until we get everything we’re asking for. To put it politely, she said that TEBA and our government need to get their eyes and ears checked because they have no clue what the reality is when it comes to our classrooms.
- f Nicole Frances**
Seeing our support staff all wearing red last week in solidarity.
- f Julie Haynes-Kawchuk**
Our school’s parent community organized a teacher gathering at a park last week. They served us refreshments and sent us all home with lots of homemade meals and treats! ❤️
- 📷 Caleb Koning**
Parents of students I taught in the past who said, “you’re a good teacher, my kids loved you.”
- 📷 Katieeshay**
A grocery gift card from a family I taught 5 years ago.
- 📷 Teresaricc25**
For me, it has been being able to pray together and attend mass with my fellow Catholic educators.
- 📷 Penny.like.the.coin**
My assistant principal texted to check in.
- 📷 Karli.n.bc**
Seeing support for us visibly has made such a huge difference for mental health. ❤️
- 📷 Lexigross**
Colleagues from other provinces showing support.
- 📷 Brianne Messing**
My neighbour who messaged me and asked me how she, as a parent, could support teachers. We are still getting to know one another, but it meant so much that she was willing to put in the work to support the strike too. It’s been a tough fight, but I’m grateful to have so many people coming together for me, and fight alongside all of us. ❤️
- 📷 Nina_divina**
Friends going for dinner and buying me dinner...and free movement classes at the gym!
- 📷 Kennfletcher**
Parents, without a doubt.



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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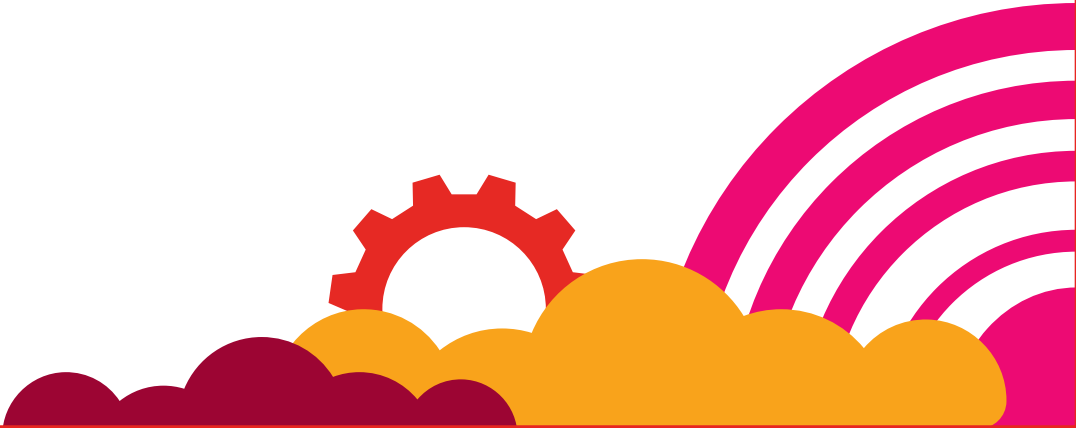
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TALIS results reveal a profession under pressure



EXECUTIVE REPORT

Phil McRae
ATA Associate coordinator of research



Lisa Everitt
ATA Executive Staff Officer

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) examines the demographics, workloads, resources and working conditions of educators around the world. As the largest international educator survey, TALIS gathers insights from more than 280,000 teachers and school leaders across 55 education systems.

In 2024, Alberta was the only Canadian jurisdiction to participate in the survey, with responses from about 1,800 teachers and school leaders. While the province’s participation rate was lower than in previous years, which must be kept in mind when interpreting the results, the findings demonstrate how the profession is under pressure.

While a summary of TALIS results was shared previously, a more fulsome discussion of the findings and their implications is provided here.

Stress

In Alberta, 42 per cent of teachers report experiencing high levels of work-related stress, with the global average at just 19 per cent. This new data underscores a significant and escalating concern for Alberta teacher and school leader well-being under current classroom conditions.

The top stressors identified by Alberta teachers include:

- having too much marking (52%),
- being responsible for students’ social and emotional well-being (51%),
- maintaining classroom discipline (48%) and
- modifying lessons for students with special educational needs (47%).

With the exception of maintaining classroom discipline, Alberta teachers’ sources of stress are reported to be at least 10 per cent higher than the OECD averages.

Weekly workload

Alberta teachers also rank near the top in the world for highest weekly work hours. The data show that Alberta teachers work 47 hours per week, which is behind only Japan, New Zealand and Singapore and is, on average, 5 hours more per week than all other countries.

A typical workweek for an Alberta teacher involves not only teaching students but also planning lessons, marking student assignments, taking on administrative duties, conducting and reporting student assessments, documenting student progress, engaging in professional development, leading student extracurricular activities and communicating with parents.

Disrespect

Since the last TALIS report in 2018, Alberta’s teachers have experienced the sharpest decline in how valued they feel by policymakers. Only 13 per cent of teachers now believe their views are respected by government, a 25-point drop—the largest drop among all OECD jurisdictions.

Classroom disruptions

Alberta teachers report spending about 20 per cent of their overall instructional time addressing behavioural issues in the classroom, up from 13 per cent in 2018. TALIS 2024 data mirrors Alberta Teachers’ Association research that indicates that Alberta is now in the top three education systems (out of 50 countries) in terms of the proportion of teachers who report spending substantial time managing classroom disruptions. Teachers and school leaders in this report continue to raise alarms about rising incidents of aggression, verbal abuse and intimidation, all signs of worsening classroom climates.

New teachers

Early-career teachers (those within the first five years of professional practice) are feeling this pressure most acutely. More than 40 per cent of beginning teachers in Alberta report frequent classroom interruptions, mirroring recent ATA research showing a sharp decline in beginning teachers’ confidence and sense of competence.

Of note, one in five teachers under 30—half of young teachers—plan to leave the profession within the next five years. For education systems already concerned about teacher shortages, these findings should be of particular interest.

Percentage of teachers...

who experience stress “a lot” in their work

Alberta	42
OECD Average	19

whose job negatively impacts mental health “a lot”

Alberta	18
OECD Average	10

whose job negatively impacts physical health “a lot”

Alberta	12
OECD Average	8

Alberta
OECD Average

Second-career teachers

TALIS 2024 also sheds light on another concerning trend: the low job satisfaction of second-career teachers—those who entered the profession from other fields.

In Alberta, 11 per cent of teachers come from previous careers, including the trades or other professional backgrounds. These teachers report 20 per cent lower job satisfaction than their peers, suggesting that those who transitioned into teaching later in life are finding it especially challenging to thrive under current conditions.

A clear warning

This report reinforces the current state of public education in Alberta and the difficulties teachers are facing daily. Taken together, Alberta’s TALIS 2024 results reveal a profession under pressure, where mounting workloads, rising stress and declining respect are eroding morale.

For policymakers and the public alike, these findings are a reminder that teachers’ working conditions are students’ learning conditions—and both are showing serious cracks. ■

The detailed findings of the OECD’s 2024 TALIS are available here: www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/10/results-from-talis-2024_28fbde1d.html.



ISTOCK

Benefits of smaller class sizes are proven

ATA News Staff

With class size being a key issue during the current round of central table negotiations and subsequent strike, the Alberta Teachers’ Association has published a new research brief that summarizes the various proven benefits of smaller class sizes.

Titled *Class Size Matters*, the document draws on decades’ worth of research and groups the benefits of smaller class sizes in three categories.

- Benefits are greatest for disadvantaged learners.
- Long-term returns outweigh short-term cost savings.
- Key elements include certificated teachers and inclusion supports. ■



The research brief is available on the ATA website here:







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The Alberta Teachers' Association

wîcihtotân

Let's Help Each Other

wîcihtotân is an ATA program and network for Indigenous teachers and school leaders to listen and learn together. The program connects participants to offer support, guidance and mentorship with each other.

The Alberta Teachers' Association is seeking First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers and school leaders to **join wîcihtotân** and attend three gatherings throughout the school year:

December 11, 2025 1:00 – 3:30 pm, online via Zoom

January 29, 2026 1:00 – 3:30 pm, online via Zoom

May 1, 2026 9:00 am – 3:30 pm, Edmonton, location TBD

Release time will be provided by the Association.

To Register go to <https://surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/2025-2026-w-cihtot-n-Mentorship-Program-Registration>.



Registration Deadline: November 30, 2025

For More Information
E-mail: walkingtogether@ata.ab.ca
Phone: 780-447-9400 (in Edmonton), 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta)

PD-208-2025-07

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.



COOR-209 2025-03



The Alberta Teachers' Association

Indigenous Education Initiatives Grant

Locals can receive up to \$2,000 in ATA grant funding to support projects fostering reconciliation and community connections.

Apply by March 30 at teachers.ab.ca/scholarships





Teachers have a duty to report alleged harm, abuse



PITFALL AND PRECAUTIONS

Richard Svoboda
ATA Representation Officer
and Coordinator, Government

A typical lunch break in the staff room takes an unexpected turn when a student enters and says, “My teacher just hit me.” Fifteen staff members are present and hear this report.

Now, who is responsible for reporting this alleged action? Is every staff member in the room obligated to file a report, or will someone else take care of it?

Section 3 of the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers and Teacher Leaders* outlines teacher and school leader responsibilities in such situations:

3. In relation to colleagues, the teacher or teacher leader shall

d. in addition to other reporting required by law, report to the Commissioner the conduct of another

teacher or teacher leader who is alleged to cause or have caused psychological, emotional, physical or sexual harm or abuse to a student.

The phrasing of this element of the *Code* is problematic because, by the letter of the law, teachers must report to the Commissioner every allegation of potential harm or abuse of which they become aware. Whether it comes from first-hand experience or second- or third-hand accounts doesn’t matter. The requirement to report “who is alleged” leaves the individual teacher to use their own judgment in responding to the report, even when they have little or no evidence to substantiate the complaint. In theory, this could result in dozens, if not hundreds, of complaints being filed every day.

In the staff-room scenario, then, who is responsible for reporting? According to section 3(d), the answer is every teacher and teacher leader who heard the student’s claim.

But is that realistic? What would you write on the complaint form? What evidence could you provide? Do you have any first-hand knowledge of what

occurred? And if an investigation followed, what could you tell the investigator?

A practical starting point is the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission’s Making a Complaint page, which outlines two steps to take before filing a formal complaint:

1. Address the concern at the school or school division level if possible.
2. If it cannot be resolved locally, then contact the Office of the Registrar.

Teachers who have called the Registrar in similar situations report being advised not to file a complaint if the allegation lacks first-hand accounts or supporting evidence. By contacting the Registrar, you are meeting your obligations under section 3(d) and will not face repercussions for failing to comply with the *Code*.

Of course, every case is different, and this element of the *Code* can involve many variables. Teachers are encouraged to contact the ATA’s Regulatory Affairs team with any questions or concerns at 1-800-232-7208 or professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca. ■

Have you received a Notice of Complaint from the ATPC?

Steven Diachuk
ATA Regulatory Affairs Officer

Receiving a notice of complaint from the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC) can stop you in your tracks. Your heart races, questions swirl and it’s easy to feel overwhelmed. The most important thing to know is this: you don’t have to go through this alone.

Your first step? Call the Alberta Teachers’

Association. Ask for Regulatory Affairs and you’ll be connected to a regulatory affairs officer (RAO) who specializes in helping teachers respond to professional discipline complaints. This officer will explain the ATPC process, answer your questions and invite you to a confidential intake interview where you can share your side of the story.

From there, the RAO will help make sure you are paired with a representation officer, an experienced staff member who will support you

in each step of the process, including preparing for interviews, providing strategic responses and representing you if the matter proceeds to a hearing.

Remember that you’re not alone—you have expert support.

Call early. We’re here to help.

If you have received a notice of complaint from the ATPC, contact the ATA’s Regulatory Affairs team immediately. Call 1-800-232-7208 or email professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca for support. ■

Recovering from illness or injury can be overwhelming

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Public members share messages of encouragement

ATA News Staff

This fall, the ATA invited members of the public to share their personal stories about their experiences with education, particularly in the context of current classroom conditions. A number of parents and community members have created audio and video recordings to voice their support for public education and the teachers who make it possible. These recordings have been shared across the ATA's social media platforms, helping to amplify messages of encouragement and appreciation. ■

Want to share your own story?
Visit <https://vocalvideo.com/c/ATA> to record your message today.



Mikey Hamm



Gregg Oldring



Kerri Stennes



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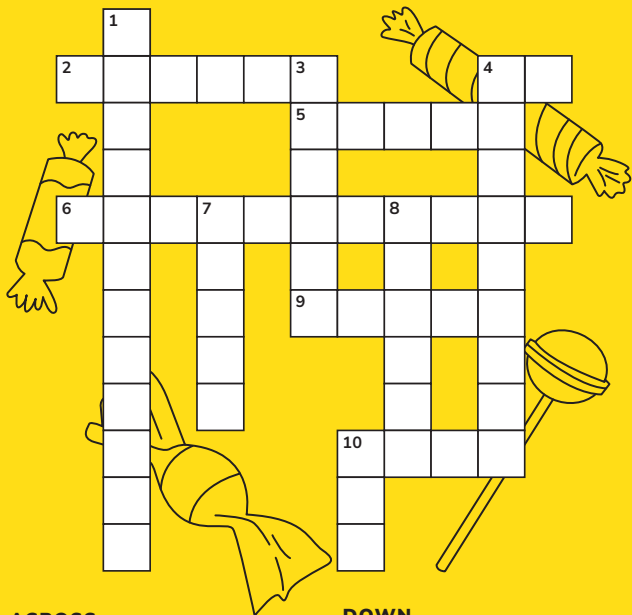
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ATRF Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund

popquiz! **Crossword**



ACROSS

- 2 Evaluate, measure
- 4 Not stop
- 5 What is gathered during trick-or-treating
- 6 Used in teaching (and construction) to build higher and higher
- 9 Students might walk in single-file ones
- 10 A collection of colleagues

DOWN

- 1 Not at the same time, as in some online classes
- 3 Teachers' workplace
- 4 Place for dodgeball, basketball, kickball, etc.
- 7 Out-of-school excursion: _____ trip
- 8 Synonym for indicate or signify
- 10 Schoolyard game with endless variations

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in solidarity

Alberta teachers have received an outpouring of support since their historic strike action began on Oct. 6. Here are some shows of support and solidarity from allies in Alberta and teaching colleagues across Canada.



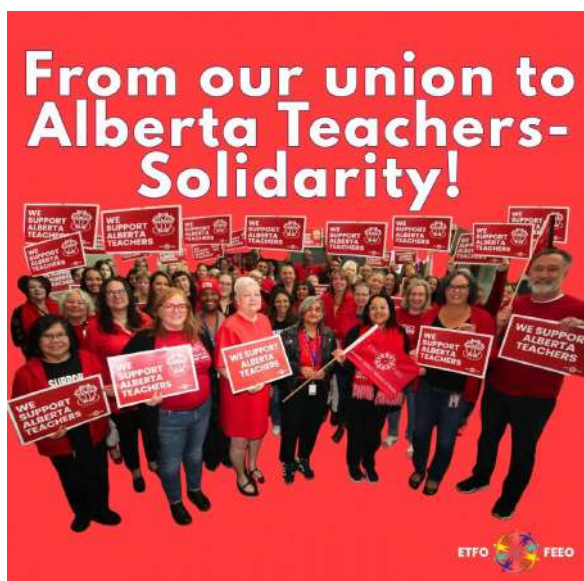
CTF/FCE

The CTF/FCE executive stands in strong solidarity with the Alberta Teachers' Association. Educators across Canada are right at your side during this provincewide strike. 🍏

Alberta's students deserve so much better. It's time to #StopTheExcuses because #KidsCantWaitAB.

La direction de la CTF/FCE témoigne toute sa solidarité à l'ATA. D'un bout à l'autre du 🇨🇦, les travailleur-euses de l'éducation vous soutiennent dans votre grève Générale. 🍏

Les élèves de l'Alberta méritent tellement mieux!



ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO

From Ontario, we stand with you to defend public education for students!

Your fight is our fight, and in Ontario, we know all too well the impact of blooming class sizes and the devastating effects of chronic underfunding. #KidsCantWait and there is no time for excuses from governments—invest now!



NOVA SCOTIA TEACHERS UNION

The NSTU is proud to stand with the Alberta Teachers' Association as they take a historic stand to ensure Alberta's students, teachers and classrooms receive the support they need and deserve. Today, NSTU provincial executive members and staff wore "Red for Ed" to show their solidarity and support for Alberta's teachers!

Le NSTU est fier de se tenir aux côtés de l'Alberta Teachers' Association alors qu'elle mène une lutte historique pour que les élèves, les enseignants et les salles de classe de l'Alberta reçoivent le soutien dont ils ont besoin et qu'ils méritent. Aujourd'hui, les membres du comité exécutif provincial et le personnel du NSTU ont porté du rouge pour démontrer leur solidarité et leur appui envers les enseignants de l'Alberta!



CUPE ALBERTA

Members from CUPE 5352 in East Central Catholic School Division in Wainwright, Vermillion and Stettler are showing their support for teachers by wearing Red for Ed!

We're with you, teachers! 🍏



UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA

Alberta Nurses 🍏 Alberta Teachers! 🍏 UNA members were proud to march with Alberta teachers this week [week of Oct. 13] in Edmonton, Lethbridge and other communities across the province. UNA continues to stand in solidarity with striking Alberta teachers in their fight for fairness, respect and better classroom condition for our kids and grandkids.



UNION OF HEALTH-CARE PROFESSIONALS (HSAA)

HSAA staff wearing #Red4Ed to support teachers on the strike line! We need a strong public education system AND a strong public health care system. It's time for a better deal on both fronts, one that actually supports the people teaching and caring for Albertans.



BC teachers know how essential it is to have working conditions—like class size—protected in our collective agreements. We support Alberta teachers in their fight to improve classroom working and learning conditions. Kids matter, teachers care!"

—BC Teachers' Federation



We know the heart, passion and strength it takes to stand up for public education. You are not alone. We are here standing with you."

—Lillian Klausen, President, Manitoba Teachers' Society