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Exiting The Teaching Profession 2024: Qualitative Research Findings and Actionable Opportunities

The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Exiting The Teaching Profession 2024: Qualitative Research Findings and Actionable Opportunities

Prepared by Keith Greenawalt Consulting for the Alberta Teachers' Association

This document provides Keith Greenawalt Consulting's (KGC) initial findings from exit interviews with members of the Alberta Teacher's Association (ATA) during the summer of 2024.

"In the last couple of rounds of bargaining, I've been very frustrated by teachers in Alberta in general. The only way that we have to get more funding for education is through bargaining. That is our time to essentially talk to the province and say, "This is what we need. This is what we want. What can you do?" And I feel in the last couple of rounds of bargaining that the ATA has said, "Here's what we think about the offer that is being given," and most of the time it's been "We think this offer is shit. However, from the information that we get from the surveys that we do, we are not hearing that teachers are ready to take job action," and it really frustrates me. And it feels like we're stuck in this awful cycle of teachers do a hard job, and they're really exhausted. Then time comes to bargain, and no one has the will to do it. [So,] we get less than we deserve; teaching becomes more [difficult]; teachers become more exhausted, and it just goes around and around again. I don't fault my colleagues for being exhausted because until this last year, when I was working only half time and was not a specific classroom teacher, I was exhausted all of the time as well. But, and I'm going to sound very Catholic when I say this, but you know, you go to church, and they talk about the fact that the church is not the building. The church is the people. And the ATA is the exact same thing. The ATA isn't our 15 district representatives and the president and the vice presidents. The ATA is all of the teachers of Alberta. And so, I [. . . am frustrated, but . . .] I'm doing my part. I'm going to the meetings. I'm voting. I'm being informed. I'm doing everything I can. I need other teachers to do the same. and I know why they're not. But unless we get a new provincial government, or everyone gets over themselves and saves some money and gets ready to strike, so that we could vote no and vote no in strong numbers that show the government that we mean no, staying in the teaching profession feels like playing a losing game because it has already impacted my life and my mental health very seriously, even though I love it, and I hate the idea of leaving it. If things are not going to change, then it's a loss for me, to continue."

—A 31–35-year-old, mid-career teacher

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Introduction

Conversations with teachers validated the overarching story that has come to life through research findings from the time that Keith Greenawalt Consulting (KGC) has been engaged with the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA): Teachers love to teach, but teaching is difficult, and it seems like it is becoming increasingly so. The challenges teachers face are both *functional* (such as large, complex classes and an overwhelming workload) and *emotional* (for example, feeling undervalued and under attack). Teachers seem desperate for change, either at personal or industry levels, yet change has been difficult to achieve. Furthermore, while our interviews did not address the topic of *urgency* explicitly, there was nothing to refute the sense that something needs to happen soon, or this profession would face dire consequences.

It is important to highlight that the questions used to drive this round of exit interviews were different from those used in 2023. The questions in 2023 were intended to explore the reasons why teachers were motivated to exit the teaching profession in Alberta. The results offered a listing of the functional frustrations that teachers were experiencing. Since that wave of exit interviews, further research has confirmed those findings, most importantly the ATA 2024 pulse surveys and the external analysis of its data. Rather than conduct another wave of interviews that would likely reiterate the sources of teacher frustration, the questions for the interviews in the current study focused on the emotional experience of the teachers who are considering exiting the profession, looking beyond *what* is happening to these teachers to explore *how* those experiences make them *feel*.

KGC acknowledges that teachers need functional improvement in order to feel happy in this career; what is the point of focusing on their emotions, then? Our hope is that by getting a better sense of how teachers are feeling when they go past their *tipping point* and decide to make a professional change, we can broaden our opportunities for action to include *other, non-functional ways* to mitigate the emotional frustrations of teachers. Because functional change is often hard and slow and requires external engagement (for instance, from government), KGC believes that looking to address these negative emotions from a holistic perspective—that is, what are *all* the triggers that bring up these emotions, and what are all the ways we can reduce that emotional stress—might inspire different, faster or easier action items that can help mitigate the negative emotions that lead to exit and, in doing so, *buy time* for true functional change.

As a preview, the following three key themes related to negative emotions emerged in conversations with teachers; KGC recommends that the ATA focus on trying to mitigate these as quickly as possible:

- Losing hope for improvement → Can we start to make a few *peripheral* parts of the teaching experience better while we try to address big issues such as class size and supports?
- Feeling dehumanized → Can we find ways to prove that *internally* (that is, within the ATA and public education system), we respect and value our teachers while we strive to improve external respect and validation?
- Feeling victimized → Can we find ways to improve parts of the *internal* teacher experience that feel unfair, unexplained and out of their control while *buying time* to do the same with external stakeholders?

This report aims to honour a request made by one of the teachers interviewed:

> You don't have to be diplomatic. You are going to be placed in a position where you need to convey the sentiments that you so eloquently stated about all the interviewees that you've come in contact with. I implore you to please articulate, in the most strenuous language you feel comfortable with, the feeling that you just stated. I think that the ATA really needs to hear that from a third party. We talk amongst ourselves all the time. Tell them about the teachers who were crying. Tell them about the teachers who are leaving the profession because they can't take it anymore. Tell them.
>
> —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*

Methodology Overview

This document reviews findings from a qualitative research effort built around hour-long, one-on-one interviews with 16 teachers, conducted by Keith Greenawalt Consulting (KGC) between June 5 and July 31, 2024.

Please note that each interview was unique, meaning that KGC did not ask the exact same questions in the same way or in the same order with each interviewee. In addition to the *improvisations* required to maximize the value of a one-hour conversation given differences in verbosity, experience and perspective, KGC also made the executive decision to abandon certain questions that did not seem to prompt valuable conversations in the first interviews.

The teachers who participated in the interviews were recruited from respondents to an ATA survey, where they indicated that they had or were actively considering leaving the teaching profession in the coming years. The teachers interviewed were recruited to provide a cross section of demographics found in the profession.

It is also worth highlighting that the teachers who participated in the interviews this year included a high percentage (10 out of 16) of teachers that KGC might describe as *outliers*. By outliers, KGC refers to teachers who may be in atypical positions and therefore have atypical perspectives. More specifically, the interview participants include

- three teachers in a Catholic/religious school;
- one teacher from a French immersion school;
- two teachers who spent significant portions of their career in online teaching (non-COVID), one of whom also worked in homeschool support;
- one teacher who spent the past two years as a literary specialist;
- four teachers who taught options/non-traditional subjects (eg, Career and Technology Studies)
- one teacher who is a half-time, floating, elementary school teacher;
- two teachers who had only taught one year;
- one teacher who started teaching right out of high school; and
- one teacher who spent significant time on secondment assignments.

Table 1. Demographic information of teachers selected for exit interviews.

Gender Identification	Female* (n = 14)
	Male (n = 2)
School Location	Urban (n = 8)
	Medium** (n = 0)
	Small population centre (n = 5)
	Rural (n = 3)
School Type	High school (HS) (n = 2)
	Junior high school (JH) (n = 3)
	Jr/Sr high school (JH/HS) (n = 3)
	Elementary school (ES) (n = 8)
Teaching Experience to Date	Early career (two to four years) (n = 4)
	Mid career (five to 14 years) (n = 7)
	Late career (15+ years) (n = 5)
Age	26–30 (n = 3)
	31–35 (n = 2)
	36–40 (n = 3)
	41–45 (n = 2)
	46–50 (n = 0)
	51–55 (n = 1)
	55–60 (n = 1)
	N/A (n = 1)

* While the profession is skewed toward female teachers, this ratio overweighs the female perspective.

** The lack of medium perspective means that unique circumstances impacting those parts of Alberta are unlikely to have been captured.

To maintain anonymity as much as possible while still providing important context about the source, each illustrative quote will be tagged with a demographic identifier of the above information, in the form of *gender, school location, school type, teaching experience to date, age*, and in that order.

It is important to note that KGC is not intimately familiar with the high-level makeup of the teaching profession in Alberta, so these teachers may not represent *outliers* from the ATA's perspective.

Please note that in this report, quotes that come from teachers who fit one or more of the criteria (see page 8) are marked with an asterisk at the end of their demographic tag.

As with any qualitative research, it is important to keep in mind that these findings are directional in nature, based on the perspectives of 16 people—not a survey of thousands—and are subject to the recruiting biases and unique experience of those 16 individuals.

Please note that quotes have been edited for clarity by removing filler words (such as, "you know") and occasionally refining word choice to better communicate the intent of the speaker. For the sake of simplicity, KGC has also spliced together quotes that were related to similar themes but not delivered consecutively. KGC has marked areas where intervening words and/or sentences have been modified or removed from a given quote with [square brackets] to indicate a gap of time and/or words.

Key Findings

Belonging As a Strength, Not a Problem

Most teachers KGC interviewed felt like they belonged at their school and in this profession. In fact, being a teacher seems to be a core part of their identity, making it difficult for them to exit the profession and prolonging the exiting process compared with other professions.

The Pleasure Problem of the Profession

When presented with the pleasure/purpose framework for job satisfaction, teachers made it clear that they are exiting despite the purpose that they find in their work. This job has become so unpleasurable that it outweighs the purpose in teaching.

The Purpose Conundrum of the Profession

Purpose correlates with job satisfaction; therefore, any cracks in the sense of purpose can be catastrophic: *Why would I do something I hate if I don't feel proud about doing it?* Some teachers expressed that in the current teaching conditions, it is becoming impossible to have the kind of impact on students that they desire, and that is a motivator for exiting.

Reaching the Point of Hopelessness Being the Final Straw

When asked about their emotional experience over the past few years, teachers cited feeling exhausted (four respondents out of 16), overwhelmed (three respondents), cynical (one respondent) and experiencing empathy fatigue (one respondent). These emotions, coupled with other aspects of the conversation, suggest that the tipping point for deciding to exit may come with the transition from feeling angry to being *hopeless*.

The Increasing Dehumanization of Our Most Human Careers

When asked about their emotional experience over the past few years, teachers cited feeling undervalued (five respondents out of 16), disempowered/powerless (two respondents), oppressed (one respondent), disrespected (one respondent), unimportant/invisible (one respondent) and alone (one respondent). These are powerful negative emotions that, when combined, suggest that teachers feel personally and professionally diminished by their work experience, making it challenging to stay committed to this profession.

Feeling Victimized by an Accountability Crisis

Related to dehumanization, teachers feel like they are being measured and held accountable for performance more than ever before. At the same time, they feel like everyone else is abdicating their accountability—it is almost never the student, the parent, the school leaders or the government who is being held accountable.

Improving Teachers' Relationships with School Leaders As a Powerful Lever

Unfortunately, many teachers feel negatively affected by conflict with the government, parents, (difficult) students and sometimes with other staff members. School leaders are a powerful swing vote in terms of the teacher experience. An effective relationship with school leaders can help minimize these external conflicts, both tangibly and emotionally, while a negative one creates an additional battlefront for the teachers.

Unintended Consequences of COVID-19 and Mental Health Accommodations

While not caused by COVID-19, the postpandemic era of teaching is one where more students are missing school as in-person attendance is seen as less important. In addition, addressing the individual behavioural health needs of each student has been prioritized. As a result, teachers are expected to help students catch up more often when they fall behind due to increasing absences. At the same time, they have less time and energy to teach the majority of their students as they address the needs of their dysregulated students. As a result, teachers feel less effective (loss of purpose) and less satisfied (loss of pleasure) by their jobs.

Jacks of All Trades, Successful in None

Many teachers feel that in addition to being teachers, they now must also act as psychiatrists, counsellors, mediators, administrators, IT experts and more. The negative effects of these new responsibilities go beyond the additional workload. Teachers do not feel prepared for these roles. Being thrust into these roles diminishes their confidence and pride in the quality of their work. Moreover, these new responsibilities pull them away from what they see as their purpose: educating future generations.

Priorities for ATA action

The majority of teachers would prioritize improving conditions of practice in areas that are creating the most challenges. This can be done through more supports, more prep time, smaller class sizes and classrooms that are less complex. In addition, some of the teachers KGC spoke with recognize the need to win the support of external stakeholders, primarily parents, to support the pursuit of structural changes to conditions of practice and to reduce some of the tension/combativeness that they are experiencing.

Detailed Findings

BELONGING AS A STRENGTH, NOT A PROBLEM

For the most part, the teachers KGC spoke with felt a sense of belonging within the teaching profession and with their current colleagues. This was demonstrated both through their responses to the high-level question about whether they felt like they *belonged* and in the more detailed questions about different aspects of belonging (for example, "I feel like people at work are there to back me up," or "I feel safe at work."). In fact, several teachers suggested that their strong sense of belonging was one of their major concerns about exiting: they are struggling to come to terms with the idea of not being a teacher moving forward.

Within our exploration of the *aspects of belonging*, the only statement to which more than two respondents responded *no* was "I feel my talents are valued and utilized" (four out of eight responded *yes*, one responded *sometimes*). The small number of respondents who did not feel a strong sense of belonging usually came from a *non-core profile*, for example substitute, part-time or options teachers.

Teachers were most likely to highlight school leaders' role in creating a culture of active listening and open, transparent communication as a best practice for fostering belonging within a school. Schools that promote open communication have fewer cliques among teachers and seem to minimize the risk of an *administration versus staff* attitude among teachers.

A few teachers also highlighted the benefits of having paid time where teachers have a chance to interact with each other—whether that comes during prep periods, school days without students/early dismissals, etc. It is key that this time is part of a paid workday, not an extracurricular that would take away from their personal time.

It is worth being aware that some teachers described a potentially unhealthy form of belonging: *trauma bonding*. A few teachers described a foxhole mentality as they connect with each other by commiserating through conflict with administration, parents and students. Belonging created through these kinds of experiences may be strong, but it is also fragile and can lead to a contagious exodus once parts of the team begin exiting and peers start to feel that they are losing their support system.

Here are two responses to the question of belonging in the profession:

> *When you take the time to genuinely hear and actually respond to your teachers, they are going to feel like they belong. When you brush them off and you're not an active listener, then you're going to come into problems [. . .]. Listen to your staff, listen to their concerns. And say, "hey, that's not going to work, and this is why. But let's maybe try this or that." Or "let's try to find a solution together instead of just brushing them off."*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*

> *I do [feel like I belong], and that is probably my biggest struggle, which is why I needed to make the decision that I've made. Because I need time to prep myself for not being a teacher anymore [. . .]. It's almost like I'm needing to grieve. I wouldn't have been able to make a 30-day decision and be done [with teaching] because I need more time to let go of what I have invested 30 years of my life in.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*

Table 2. Belonging in the Teaching Profession.

		Prompts					
		I feel like people are there to back me up at work.	I feel like it's easy to ask for help when I need it.	I believe it's okay if I make a mistake.	I feel safe when I am at school.	I feel like my talents are valued and utilized.	It feels safe to bring up problems and challenging issues within the school community.
Responses	F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Sometimes	Yes
	M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 56–60	Yes	Yes	No	—**	No	—
	F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A	Yes	—	Yes	—	No	—
	F, Rural, ES, 5–9 years, 26–30*	—					
	F, Urban, ES, 2–4 years, 41–45, substitute	Sort of	Yes	No	No	No	Maybe
	F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	—
	F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
	F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part time*	—					
	F, Small population, JH/HS, 20–30 years, 56–60	—					
	F, Small population, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 41–45, part time*	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	F, Urban, HS, 20–30 years, 41–45*	—					
	F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	—
	F, Small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50	—					
	F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*	—					

** A dash signifies that a particular question was not asked of the interviewee.

THE PLEASURE PROBLEM OF THE PROFESSION

When exploring the pleasure ("How *net enjoyable* is my job?") and purpose ("How meaningful is my work to me?") elements of job satisfaction, it is clear that exiting teachers are being driven away from this profession due to a pleasure issue, not a purpose issue. Pleasure grades were universally lower than purpose grades.

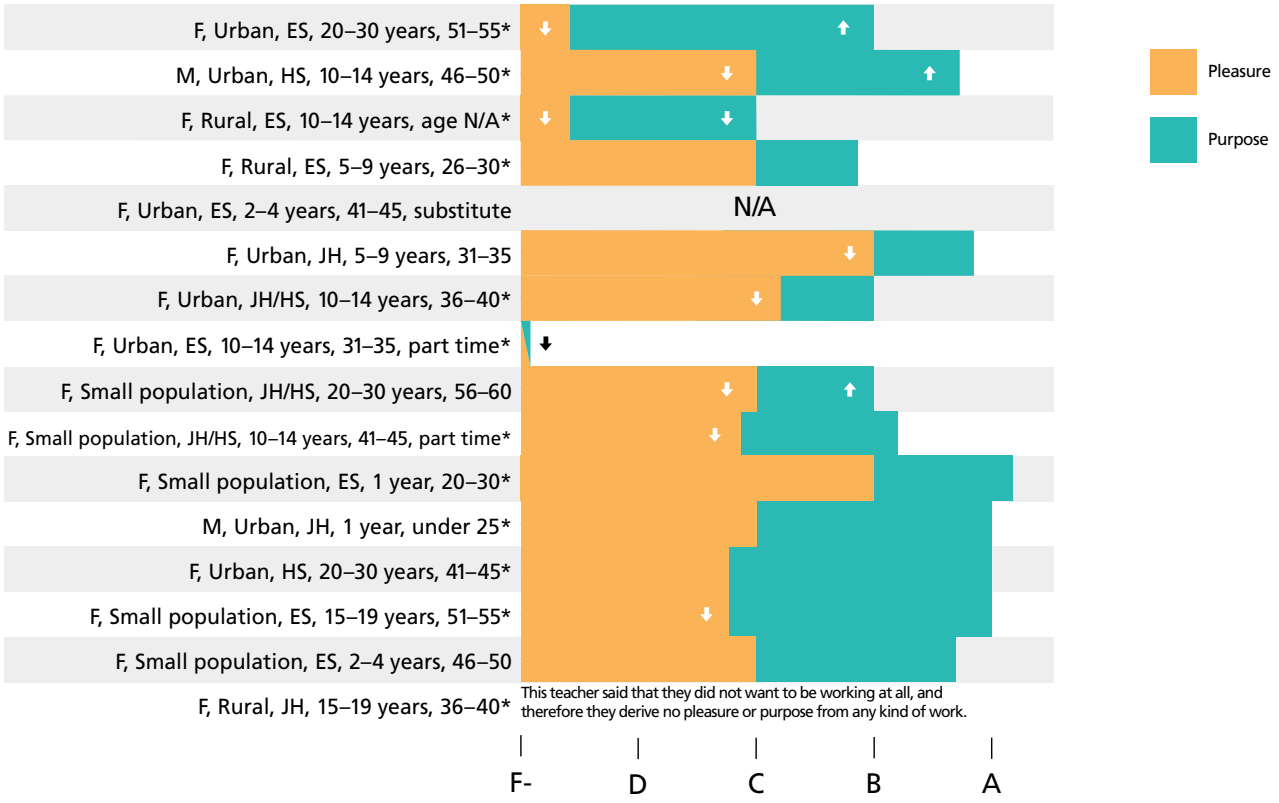
To provide a directional sense of the relative assessment of the two categories, all responses were translated to a score on a 100-point scale (either based on their verbatim answers, or by translating a narrative89response to an estimated score). The average score for pleasure was 70/100 while purpose had an average score of 86/100. Here is the ratio of grades that were a C+ or better to those that were C or below in each category (C+ and up:C and down):

- Pleasure – 3:11
- Purpose – 12:2

Further, all teachers (nine out of nine) who commented on change over time described a downward trend in their pleasure over the course of their career. The two most cited reasons for the downward trend in pleasure were the increasing demands of the career (bigger classes, more differentiation, fewer resources, etc) and the changing position of public education within society (disengaged/disrespectful students, unreasonable parental expectations, less pride in being a teacher, etc).

Meanwhile, most teachers (three out of four) KGC spoke with about the change over time shared that their satisfaction with the purpose of their career had stayed flat or even increased over the course of their time as a teacher. This seems to come from (1) feeling even more important in the lives of their students as other sources of support have fallen away and (2) getting better/more impactful at their jobs.

For the teachers who shared that their satisfaction with the purpose side of their experience had decreased, the reason for the decline was the feeling that changes to the system were preventing them from having the kind of impact that they previously had or hoped to have. Classes that are too large and/or too complex, less time/energy to invest in students, arbitrary and often inappropriate curriculum, and fewer resources to improve the educational experience are all areas where teachers feel like their expectations for impact are now impossible to realize.



* respondents characterized as outliers.

↑↓ indicates trend up or down over the career

Figure 1. Pleasure and purpose

THE PURPOSE CONUNDRUM OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Not surprisingly, a sense of purpose is why most people join the teaching profession. Their joy comes from seeing students have those *Aha* moments when a concept clicks into place. Multiple teachers shared that what they did not like about their jobs was everything that happened outside of teaching in the classroom. It is likely that without this profession's powerful sense of purpose, the pace of exiting would be dramatically faster.

On the surface, this may seem like something working to our advantage, and to some extent it is. However, this reality puts the teaching profession at risk of a sudden, significant and/or permanent exodus. Because they feel emotionally invested in this career and anticipate a loss of identity and intense guilt about leaving students in need, teachers are staying in a job that leaves them extremely unhappy day-to-day. Their sense of purpose allows this profession to *take advantage* of them—always asking them to give more and more while providing less and less in return—until they *break* and *cannot take it anymore*.

The importance of purpose in job satisfaction for this career also creates a heightened pressure on how much impact that teachers feel like they are having on their students. A teacher might accept suffering in their day-to-day because they think it is important to teach the next generation; however, if they suddenly feel like they are being prevented from teaching that next generation effectively, their job satisfaction can dramatically drop.

Two areas teachers highlighted as preventing them from delivering on their personal purpose were the curriculum and their crushing workload:

- Teachers spoke about the curriculum as a place where they feel like they are being forced to follow inappropriate and/or ineffective pedagogy and, for some, pedagogy that they do not morally agree with.
- With the workload, teachers bemoaned the amount of time and energy they devote to *not teaching*. KGC would intuit that when their experience aligns with "there is always more I could be doing," teachers feel guilt about practising reasonable self-care and are angry at the system for preventing them from being the teacher they aspired to be.

It is especially demoralizing when a teacher feels like they are making a personal sacrifice because they care *a great deal* about a student's well-being (evidenced in statements such as "I stopped teaching my class to deal with this dysregulated and disruptive student," or "I stayed late at work to help a student struggling with bullying about gender"), yet they receive no support (a disruptive

student sent right back to the classroom without consequences), no empathy (being told "What's so hard about dealing with a disruptive student?") or, in the worst case scenario, they are met with negative aggression (being asked "Who told you to talk to our child about their home life?").

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this theme:

> *As a starry-eyed new grad, [purpose] was probably an A. If I'm being honest, the way I was treated within the profession made me realize that the purpose of it was lower than expected over the years. Not getting supported, not feeling that I can even teach. And the discipline is so bad that you can't teach. The purpose goes away, and you become a babysitter. Is our purpose childcare?*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*

> *It's so frustrating to go and do your best at work and feel like in any one of the areas where you're working. You're not doing what you would hope because there's just not enough resources, time, energy, patience, to do all of the things that need to be done.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*

> *[. . .] You come into this job thinking that you're going to make a huge difference. And kids make progress, and you're obviously analyzing that data and making sure they're moving forward, whether it's academics or even socially. But I think where maybe the downfall is, is that you're limited because especially for me, I'm really academic orientated. So, I want to get these kids where they need to get. But then you're getting all of these hindrances because so and so threw a fit, and now I can no longer be teaching about this. I have to be over here trying to get the calming corner ready because this kid is throwing a tantrum. So now my 23 other kids are not learning, and they're getting trauma because so and so is hitting or scratching or whatever. And so that's where I feel like the sense of purpose is lost, and if you can go into it with the mindset of "I don't care what I teach, I'm just going to make sure these kids leave happy and healthy," well, then you probably are going to have a better day than what I'm going to have. But I didn't get into this profession thinking, "if the kids are just happy and healthy, I don't mind."*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 5–9 years, 26–30*

REACHING THE POINT OF HOPELESSNESS BEING THE FINAL STRAW

While only proactively stated as a driving emotion by one interview subject, reading between the lines across interviews, KGC believes that many teachers choose to exit when they just cannot see any future improvements.

One indicator of a creeping sense of hopelessness was the fact that teachers believe that their job description and the expectations on their performance has *only been increasing* in their recent memory, while their resources and support has *only been decreasing*. One gets the sense that there is something demoralizing about both of these factors heading in the wrong direction at the same time and without interruption. KGC believes that this element of hopelessness appeared in the different ways teachers described fatigue as a prominent emotional experience: exhausted (four out of 16) overwhelmed (three out of 16) and experiencing empathy fatigue (one out of 16).

Another finding that suggests that hopelessness might be an unspoken reality for the teachers KGC interviewed was their lack of optimism about returning to the public-school teaching profession in the future. Many talked about how they are experiencing challenges exiting the profession for a variety of reasons. Several also talked about trying to be educators for a different employer for the next stage of their career (for example, tutoring). However, very few seemed to believe they would ever return to a traditional classroom in Alberta. This viewpoint suggests that emotionally, many teachers yearned to return, but few (if any) logically believed that the conditions of practice would ever improve to the point where they would be willing to go back. Metaphorically speaking, it is difficult for a teacher to walk out the door of public education but, when they do, they slam the door behind them.

Relatedly, KGC heard about the feeling that they have been *screaming into the void* for a while now. Several of the teachers KGC spoke with mentioned that they felt like the ATA and school leaders may be doing an effective job of listening in the form of surveys or team meetings, but so far, it has been *all talk and no action*. The system—the ATA, government, etc—has lost its credibility to create change that is positive for teachers.

Additionally, some teachers perceive a lack of engagement and commitment for action from other teachers, which makes them pessimistic about their peers doing what it takes to demand change (for example, saving money and striking).

While most teachers felt a sense of belonging within their school and among their peers, many also noted feeling like no one supported them within the *system*. More specifically, different teachers mentioned that they did not trust their school leaders to support them in case of conflict with parents/students; they did not trust the ATA to support them in case of conflict with administrators, and they mentioned that their mental and physical health was not adequately protected. People lose hope when they feel like they have no support during difficult times.

Actionable Opportunity

Teachers desperately need a reason to believe that there is hope for improvement, but it is hard to point at anything that is improving. Investing significant resources to achieve an unequivocal *win*, big or small, for teachers—where at least one thing in their professional experience unequivocally improves because of an action from the ATA—might buy the profession time before exit for teachers who are at the precipice of hopelessness.

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this finding:

> *I was talking to a lot of colleagues, and then we all agreed, there [are] two words here [. . .] called "compassion fatigue." We try to give a lot to our students all the time, 24-7, and we take the work home. And we think about it. And we just don't have enough energy or thought space left for ourselves and our families. And I found that especially hard after I gave birth to my son. I just realized that when I go home, I think I just don't have that energy that I give to my students to my son; I have to conscientiously kind of turn that process around to stop thinking about school, to stop thinking about work, and then just give that to my husband and my son and my family.*
>
> —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35

> *I really don't believe the job of a teacher in Alberta is achievable. The expectations of students, parents and administrators in the field of mathematics, for example, are not aligned. I can't achieve the goals of my students and achieve the goals of my administrators. So, someone is not going to be satisfied.*
>
> —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*

> *[. . .] There's been years of the system you work in not getting the resources and the funds it needs and seeing kids every day who deserve so much better [. . .] And you know, it's like the kids who are doing okay or doing well, get almost no attention because they're fine. And so, there are more pressing things that you have to devote your attention to. But those kids deserve your attention just as much as the kids who have needs.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*

> *So, my husband and I have six kids between us, and the last one graduated from high school in 2014, and I always said, as soon as he graduates from high school, "I'm done. I can't keep working this." So, I'm 10 years later, and I'm finally just leaving. So, it's been building up because I kept thinking, okay, it's going to get better. It's going to get better and didn't get better.*
>
> —F, Small population, JH/HS, 20–30 years, 56–60

THE INCREASING DEHUMANIZATION OF OUR MOST HUMAN CAREERS

Another underlying theme, closely related to hopelessness, that KGC believes can be inferred by this round of interviews is that teaching has become increasingly dehumanizing for teachers. Specific emotions cited by teachers that suggested that they might be feeling dehumanized included feeling undervalued (five out of 16), disempowered/powerless (two out of 16), oppressed (one out of 16), disrespected (one out of 16), unimportant/invisible (one out of 16) and alone (one out of 16).

Several teachers spoke powerfully about their loss of professional autonomy. They pointed to numerous drivers of disempowerment, including the rigid curriculum/assessment (notably defined without their input) and being prevented from best managing their classes; parents and students and (sometimes) school leaders questioning their professional judgement; being forced to spend less and less time *teaching their class* and dealing with discipline/classroom management, administrative tasks, etc.

At the same time, several teachers talked about working in a system that seems to consistently deprioritize their needs. Related stories included not being able to enforce collectively bargained policies around lunch times, scheduling and personal days, the culture of *required volunteering* seen at many schools and a lack of flexibility to accommodate unusual circumstances in teachers' lives. This lack of flexibility and accommodations for teachers seems particularly challenging for those who feel like they are constantly being asked to adapt and improvise to accommodate the evolving needs of individual students. Double standards are difficult to accept, and it seems likely that it would be easier for teachers to hear "I'm sorry, those are the rules for everyone" from their school leaders if they could effectively apply "I'm sorry, those are the rules for everyone" in their increasingly large, complex and inclusive classrooms.

Another finding connected to the dehumanization of teaching came from multiple teachers who expressed their frustration around managing a teaching career. Most commonly, teachers talked about their inability to achieve their career goals. They also noted being unable to change school districts or grade levels, even with (albeit self-assessed) successful track records. These teachers mentioned that education was unlike most careers, where if you do a good job, you get rewarded with a promotion, better pay or access to more desirable work.

Although less common, other teachers described scenarios where they felt taken advantage of by the system, for example, when they agreed to one job (eg, teaching Grade 6 art) and found that the actual job was different (eg, teaching health to students in Grades 2–4).

The emotional experience of this second category of teachers—those who feel manipulated by the profession—is particularly dehumanizing. When people feel like pawns, moved around and sacrificed without explanation to advance *someone else's game*, they are more likely to feel like a victim, leading them to lose trust in and become angry at the people in charge and ultimately become hopeless about the situation improving for them.

Multiple teachers also described the changing place of public education in society as a frustrating and/or disappointing part of their reality. From their perspective, parents, students and politicians have lost respect for public education and, as a result, teachers, and that has led to a variety of dehumanizing experiences for them. These include the rise of absenteeism and distracted attendance (for example, when students are in class but distracted by their phones), increasing questioning of their professional expertise as it relates to grades or assessments and the increasing attacks on teachers in private and public spheres.

The loss of prestige and the rise of these attacks are especially painful for teachers in the face of the *unfair* nature of their professional practice. It feels like they are given zero credit for—and, in fact, maybe they are facing increasing scrutiny because of—the reality that their job description is growing to include new responsibilities, but their resources keep shrinking. The following response illustrates how unfair this feels to a teacher: "You're asking me to do more and more at my job, but my compensation isn't even keeping up with inflation. *And*, you're actively taking away help and resources for doing that job, making it harder and harder. *And* then, you're getting more and more aggressive in criticizing me privately and publicly about the quality of my work? How is that fair?"

Actionable Opportunity

While not explicitly stated in many of our interviews, KGC would highlight the significance of teachers feeling like this career is *unfair*. In the absence of information on any given topic, people will often invent a narrative that makes them feel the best about themselves, often leading to a victim's mindset (*I am being treated unfairly*), which is seen as extremely destructive to job satisfaction.

While the ATA cannot influence all the areas where teachers may feel like the rules of the game are working against them, performing an audit of processes and trying to implement as much fairness as possible into the teaching experience might help combat feelings of victimization and hopelessness. The challenge will be finding places where the ATA can improve the perception of fairness quickly and with minimal friction. Our interviews suggest that trying to drive increased transparency and communicating decision-making rationale through the hiring process would help. In addition, working to increase proactive, honest and transparent communication from school leaders, school boards and the ATA on all topics will help reduce the information vacuum that teachers are filling with their victim narrative.

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this finding:

> *Teachers keep making things work so (government) can keep giving them less money to do the same thing, and they'll just do it because they care about the kids. And so that feeling you're talking about earlier of being taken advantage of comes in here, because that's what happens right? As the system continues to get underfunded and under supported as teachers keep doing their very best, because that's what kids deserve. And it continues to be to the detriment of our own lives and to the lives of children, because we simply can't.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*

> *So now I feel disappointed, unvalued, frustrated and angry because I'm tired of being told I can't [. . .]. Twenty-three years of experience of classroom management, of building relationships, of all the things that* district *talks about being important to them. But you can't "take a chance" on me, that hurts.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*

> *[. . .] When I come home at the end of the day, I'm so depleted I have nothing left to give anybody. Because these kids …I just…I can't. I don't know how to separate, and I don't know how to put a wall around myself for these children to say, well, that's your issue, not mine. I'm just your teacher.*
>
> —F, small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50, part-time

> *I do feel like a bit of a chump. Maybe I've just been oblivious, because I look back, and I honestly haven't been treated very well by the profession. [. . .] But teaching is not something you go into for accolades or honours, right? But along the way, it hasn't been at the key moments where people could have treated you more professionally just like surplusing you and then telling you to go to another location when you have kids and stuff. That's a clear point of not being treated professionally.*
>
> —F, Urban, HS, 20–30 years, 41–45*

> *Besides the administration at my school, we had a very tight knit staff. I worked at a very, very challenging school, where, if the staff didn't stay together, the kids would eat you alive, and so like, I always had fun at work, and I feel like my team. They always came to me for things which made me feel good, but I feel like the administration, the people working in central office, did not feel the same about me. and I guess that's the same in Alberta education, where it's like everybody came to me with questions. But then the people who were in charge didn't know my name.*
>
> —F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*

FEELING VICTIMIZED BY AN ACCOUNTABILITY CRISIS

Accountability is hard; being accountable often requires hard work, including admitting your own mistakes and shortcomings and accepting unpleasant consequences. Teachers described an educational system where they feel like they are the only ones being held accountable:

- They talked about sending disruptive students to administrative offices in hopes of regulating their classroom but having that student sent back immediately or after minor consequences.
- They talked about having their assessments questioned when parents or students were not happy with the grades.
- They talked about a culture where no one is held back anymore, whether they are ready for the next grade level or not, putting students further and further behind their peers.
- They talked about not having avenues for holding school leaders accountable for their performance.
- Moreover, while they see students, parents and the education system consistently avoiding accountability, they are reminded that described a feeling that in the current cultural environment, *the buck always stops with teachers*. This is best illustrated by their belief that when a student is failing to perform appropriately, the first, and sometimes only, question is, *How did you, the teacher, fail the student?*

To the teachers KGC spoke with on this topic, this highlights a distinctive change in the reality of teaching over the last few decades. They spoke to growing up at a time or in other cultures where the baseline assumption is that the teacher is right, and that the accountability for misbehaviour and failure *usually* resides with the student and/or their family, not the school. From these teachers' perspective, not turning in assignments, not studying for tests or not showing up at class are decisions made by the student based the culture of their family, and it is not fair to make a teacher responsible for the consequences of those decisions.

The few teachers who primarily dealt with engaged parents who accepted and expected accountability from their child recognized those parents as a *godsend*.

Meanwhile, teachers are facing what might be called an *accountability trap*, seemingly *set* for them by the government. Note that at least one teacher indicated that they do believe that the government wants to dismantle the public education system and is motivated to show that the system is failing.

- With a job that has become more challenging and fewer supports, it is easy to see how teachers feel like they are being set up to fail.
- However, as circumstances make it harder and harder to teach effectively, teachers are also seeing an increasing focus on their metric-driven performance and accountability, highlighted by a government that is spending millions of dollars on mandated testing of student performance, often several times a year.
- Therefore, the government is making failure and finding it inevitable—a perfect trap.

KGC can envision how teachers feel when students, parents and politicians are actively making it harder for them to help their students learn while they are the only ones being held accountable for the learning of these students. There is no shared responsibility, acknowledgement or grace for the unfair circumstances they are facing. This makes teachers feel like they are in a no-win situation—hopeless, dehumanizing and unfair.

Actionable Opportunities

While it may not be possible to achieve in the current provincial government, long-term success for the public education system would be far more likely if there is alignment of goals and expectations between our distinctive stakeholder groups, that is, between parents/students, teachers/schools and government. Creating that alignment intellectually and emotionally is a complicated process. However, it might be possible to implement something tactical in the nearer term that tries to reset

parental expectations by explicitly communicating the school's and school system's expectations of students, parents and teachers. For example, asking parents to sign an acknowledgment at the beginning of the school year might help create clarity for everyone involved and help teachers feel a shared sense of accountability and support from the administration. It could include statements such as, "A failing grade is not the teacher's fault. We understand that parents, administrators, teachers and the student themselves all share accountability for that student's performance," or "Turning in assignments on time is the *sole* responsibility of the student. Teachers will clearly communicate how late/unsubmitted assignments will affect a student's grade at the beginning of the year and have full autonomy in enforcing those consequences."

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this finding:

> *I would say the one thing that would have kept me around is, honestly, and it's going to sound bad, [. . .] I really think that there needs to be structure and discipline. And when I say discipline, I don't mean punishment, I mean discipline in the psychological sense; there needs to be boundaries, and students need to respect those boundaries, because when they get out into the real world, they're going to have a whole different situation if they're doing the same kind of things they're doing in schools. I feel like, without that, those boundaries and that structure, you can't maintain the classroom, because those kids that are acting out just come back to the classroom and just act out again.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 2–4 years, 41–45, substitute

> *I'm not responsible for either the kid who gets a 95 [. . .] or the kid who got the 30 per cent; same thing. I didn't write that test [. . .]. The force that comes to bear is: "Were you as a teacher diligent enough in ensuring that the failing student followed your pedagogy in the context of the mental health crisis that is ongoing within our youth [. . .]." How is it that the teacher can be held responsible for that? But that responsibility is being thrust upon teachers more and more by parents, students and administrators.*
>
> —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*

> *Okay, so we have this generation now, where for some reason, everything that happens is your fault as a teacher. When I was a kid, it was my fault if something went wrong, unless obviously the teacher was completely out of hand. In general, it was mostly like, "What did [the student] do wrong? Why did you do that?" Now it's, they look at you, and they're saying, "Why isn't this student learning? Why aren't you teaching them?" And it's not even that; it's just that, again, engagement levels and attention spans are pretty much shot, and then they expect you to reap results, and there's a lot of responsibility put on the teacher now, both from admin and parents, plus all the other things that we've spoken about. It just makes for a really bad, really bad, I don't know how to phrase it right now, [. . .] it's a bad storm.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 2–4 years, 41–45, substitute

> *It was mostly a child being blatantly [. . .] disrespectful that he's taking away learning opportunities by other people to the point of my sending him to the office. And, he gets a stern talking to, and that was it. There's no discipline for being that disrespectful? I did butt heads a bit with my last principal mostly because I felt like he was completely incompetent with discipline.*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*

> *So, I'm stuck in a situation where everything I'm doing seems like harm. "Oh, I'm not giving your kid high enough marks. Oh, well, must be my fault then. Oh, the average is a 90. Well, your kid's getting an 88." And apparently, I was the only teacher who, literally marked grammatical errors; apparently teachers don't do that anymore in high school.*
>
> —F, Urban, HS, 20–30 years, 41–45*

IMPROVING TEACHERS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOL LEADERS AS A POWERFUL LEVER

Multiple teachers highlighted the significant impact that their school leaders have on their teaching experience. A few specifically suggested that a good relationship with school leaders likely kept them in the profession during periods of frustration. Likewise, a poor relationship with school leaders was the catalyst for teachers exiting the profession.

It is worth noting that KGC is only hearing one side of this story, and would assume that, in most cases, the truth of the dynamic between teachers and school leaders is somewhere in the middle, and not the teacher-only or admin-only points of view.

While some teachers communicated a certain amount of empathy for the circumstances that school leaders are faced with, more felt like too many people who are being placed in administrative roles are not qualified for that job. One perspective shared in the interviews was that many school leaders manage their staff like they manage a classroom instead of managing an organization; being successful in those two environments requires very different approaches.

School leaders were often identified as drivers of dehumanization by the teachers that were interviewed. When school leaders do not authentically listen to their staff, give teachers the freedom to practise reasonable self-care without consequences, acknowledge the sacrifices and contributions of individual teachers, or when they individually or in conjunction with parents/students question the professional opinions of their teachers, teachers feel undervalued, unheard, unsupported, unsafe and unimpactful. These are powerful emotions that leave teachers asking, "Why am I doing this?"

Meanwhile, teachers who talked about great relationships with their school leaders highlight their ability to

- reduce the overwhelming workload by absorbing nonteaching tasks (such as engaging with parents first), rather than immediately passing the buck to the teachers.
- empower their staff by listening to their needs and trying to make decisions that are the best for their staff, regardless of district policies.
- demonstrate respect by supporting teachers in the face of parent criticism, by supporting teachers' disciplinary decisions and by creating a culture of accountability among parents and students.
- make teachers feel valued by proactively recognizing individual contributions.

It is worth highlighting that a few teachers communicated concerns with the ATA representing both teachers and school leaders. At the same time, teachers felt like the ATA did not always support them during conflicts with school leaders, and they view ATA's primarily role as supporting teachers. They also feel like the ATA representing both teachers and school leaders limits their ability to create performance accountability for the latter.

Actionable Opportunity

It should be noted that KGC is uncertain about the onboarding and professional development opportunities available to school leaders. However, driving performance improvement at the administrative level is one of the few (maybe the only) high-impact vectors within our ecosystem that can improve the teacher experience. In other words, in this situation, it is not necessary to change the mindset of people outside the profession, such as politicians or parents. Any efforts to rapidly improve the overall performance of school leaders in the areas that matter most to teachers would reap significant benefits for teachers and might help buy time to address the more structural issues that are going to require outside engagement and, therefore, take more time. Specifically, the ATA could develop a best practices manifesto for creating a school culture that prioritizes a staff-first mindset and provides school leaders with best practices for rehumanizing the profession and providing hope for teachers. In addition, revisiting school leader hiring practices would ensure fairness and suitability of new hires for the role. As a next step, improving the onboarding process for new school leaders would encourage behaviours informed by best practices, which would help create more consistently positive dynamics between teachers and school leaders.

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this finding:

> *As I see it, there are very few checks and balances on principals. I have witnessed and heard of far too many cases where principals destroy teachers through their decision-making and their lack of understanding of the context that individuals are being placed in. I think the biggest bang for the buck for me would have been for somebody to show up at my principal's doorstep and say, "Your staff are filling in their bubble sheets of information, and [you need to] actually do something about it."*
>
> —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*

> *[. . .] Parents often questioning what you're doing was really disrespectful. And then lots of times it's student behaviour, right? And how students treat you, that was often the most disrespectful. And then depending, I've been in lots of different schools within our division. It always depended on how supportive our administrator was, because I had an administrator that supported teachers one hundred per cent, and parents were a lot less disrespectful, or they were disrespectful to that principal, and that principal handled it before it got to us. So that was helpful. If we didn't have an administrator that kind of took that role, then of course it came down on us, whether it was the kid being disrespectful or the parents.*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 5–9 years, 26–30*

> *I think, if honestly, my admin, on the first time I had asked for help, said, "Hey, let's work on this together," or "what do you need? And I will help you," I think that would have made such a dramatic difference. I think after the like fifth time of just trying to [get help with] one of a few students dealing with assault, I think I just kind of gave up.*
>
> —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*

> *And the other principal that I was going to talk about, she would do little things for you. You know, she might do it once a month or every two weeks, and she'd just leave like a little note of, "Hey, I noticed you did this great work with this kid or great work with this parent." Just quick notes, leave it on your desk. And those teachers and that whole staff just really felt like a family, like they were strong, like they could do anything. If it was coming into the building, they could get through it.*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 5–9 years, 26–30*

> *I think choosing leadership should be something that every school division puts a lot of thought and energy into. I've had one principal that I felt didn't necessarily always have our back. He left right after I started teaching. And then, the principals that we've had since then have been amazing. And I think that makes all the difference because I have friends that are in other schools, and I feel like sometimes even the administration can create a sense of competition amongst teachers rather than you know congeniality. So, I've had really good leadership. And I think that makes a huge difference.*
>
> —F, Small population, JH/HS, 20–30 years, 56–60

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH ACCOMMODATIONS

While teachers seemed reluctant to *blame* the COVID-19 pandemic for the current educational environment, several suggested that the pandemic represented a period of acceleration for trends that were already changing the nature of teaching.

One specific trend teachers mentioned being accelerated by the pandemic is the diminished position of public education in modern society. As a caveat to the below, please note that KGC does not live in the Alberta context. While things like the *culture wars* and the government's criticism of public education are more likely the *seed* of the diminished respect for the education system within Alberta, teachers highlighted that remote learning during the pandemic (and likely other factors) reduced the perceived importance of in-person attendance at school, creating changes to student behaviour and attitudes in school, as well as a perceived reduction in attendance.

At the same time, our recognition of the youth mental health crisis that accelerated coming out of the pandemic encouraged a culture of *It's okay not to be okay*. In addition, it created an increased focus on acknowledging and accommodating the mental health realities of students on a day-to-day basis. These developments have produced a significant *hidden workload* for teachers.

While well-intentioned and arguably the *right thing* in a well-resourced education system, these changes have created significant challenges for teachers in the current environment:

- Increased focus on addressing the individual needs of a few students who are experiencing emotional dysregulation is severely limiting teachers' time to effectively educate the other 20–30 students in the classroom. Teachers feel that the needs of the few are holding back the progress of the many.
- Increased absenteeism, including being excused from classes for mental health reasons, is leaving students *behind* from an academic perspective. Teachers feel like they are now expected to work individually with those students to catch them back up; this forces teachers to teach the same content multiple times, usually outside of the typical classroom time.

A few teachers also mentioned the consequences of a *Don't hold anyone back* philosophy that seems to have emerged in recent years. While they shared that they expected to have to teach to different levels of *academic strength* in a single class, with this policy, the spread between students who are *ahead* and those who are *behind* is much bigger than before, and that creates substantial amounts of extra work for teachers.

Actionable Opportunity

The longer accommodations that were well-intentioned at the time but potentially harmful in the long run are allowed to become the new normal, the harder they will be to unwind. The ATA should identify and advocate for ways to reset expectations with parents in areas where it is possible to reduce the burden on teachers. For example, the importance of in-person attendance, who is ultimately accountable for catching up, communicating with students and teachers during the school day and maintaining real-time online classrooms and gradebooks are all areas where a *forced reset* would be helpful for teachers.

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this finding:

> *COVID did start something because we all went online, and parents got this, a sense of immediacy, I guess you could say, where all of a sudden, you need to be available to them at all times, because that is what they're expecting. But now it's just, every second of every day, you're getting an email about the most ridiculous things about, "My kid needs to have this in their lunch kit," or "My kid has to have this at snack time." And it's constant and then we, for some reason, have all gotten these apps now that parents can text us during the classroom or during the day.*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 5-9 years, 26–30*

> *What I find is that a lot of kids are just not, like they sort of lost the understanding of how to be at school. So, what does it mean to be a student? And what does it mean to be in a classroom and addressing a teacher and other students? Just that discrepancy in our expectations, I think, whereas I'm expecting the kind of behaviour that I saw pre-COVID, they're coming in with a very different expectation of what their day should look like, where it's very social and casual and just different standards of behaviour, I guess.*
>
> —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*

> *When you have to differentiate, when I was in practicum, they said, one of the middle school teachers told me, "You need to be able to differentiate for the grade below and the grade above." So, if you're teaching Grade 5, you should be able to teach the Grade 4 curriculum and Grade 6 curriculum, so that you can hit the kids that are at that stage, hit the kids that are right under it, and have the kids that need that challenge, right? But that's not how the differentiation is when you keep pushing kids through, because now I have kids that are really at a Grade 1 level in a Grade 5 class, and then I have maybe one kid that's at a Grade 6 level [. . .]. That's a huge spread, and that does add to the complexity of everything.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 2–4 years, 41–45, substitute

JACKS OF ALL TRADES, SUCCESSFUL IN NONE

Many teachers spoke to the ongoing expansion of their *job description*. In addition to teaching, they also have to act as psychiatrists, counsellors, mediators, administrators, IT experts and more. Since their responsibilities for teaching have not changed, all these new responsibilities represent an expanded workload that is destroying their ability to maintain any work-life balance.

However, the consequences of the role expansion go beyond the workload:

- Teachers talked about how unprepared they felt for these roles: their university experience was not designed to make them experts in these areas.
- Because many of these responsibilities fall outside of the expected job description, teachers also described them as being more *draining to their battery* than other responsibilities. Put another way, 30 minutes of time crafting a delicate email to a parent creates emotional exhaustion and is likely more damaging to teachers' job satisfaction than 30 minutes of grading or lesson planning.
- Moreover, the stakes are high: doing the wrong thing in response to a student in a mental health crisis feels much more *dangerous* than making an inadequate lesson plan. Therefore, these added responsibilities likely make teachers feel *less safe* on a day-to-day basis.

The expanded job description also contributes to teachers' dehumanization/disempowerment already highlighted: they did not choose to take on these responsibilities; they are neither in control nor able to say *no*.

Further, as previously noted, any aspect of the job that take teachers away from core teaching responsibilities eats away at their sense of purpose.

Actionable Opportunities

It seems obvious that we should be doing whatever we can to tangibly reduce the expanded job description for teachers as much as possible, as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, much of that change would be a longer-term proposition. In the immediate term, finding ways for school leaders to *increase the reward* for being successful in these parts of the job might help mitigate some of the psychological/emotional costs. In addition to highlighting the importance of being a *sponge* for nonteaching workload (such as accepting discipline issues at the principal's office), encouraging school leaders to give teachers positive recognition for dealing with difficult circumstances and finding ways to say thank you as much as possible can, at a minimum, show that the system sees and appreciates that teachers are stepping up in these arenas.

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this finding:

> *I teach physics, math, computing and science. Logic and reason rule my world. I am not a trained psychologist. It's not in my tool set to mitigate for mental health issues.*
>
> —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*

> *You're getting tasked with wearing all these hats. You're an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, a behavioural therapist, which goes into being a psychologist, and you're trying to help these parents with their kids, but then also dealing with all of these nuances of the kids. And the administrators are like, "Well, why can't you do all that? Well, I'm a general education teacher, but I'm being tasked with having to do all these extra things. And it's just making me feel extremely incompetent as a person, not being able to achieve what I would say they expect a classroom teacher to do with the limited time and resources [. . .]."*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 5–9 years, 26–30*

> *There are so many moving parts and so many different aspects that I don't understand what my job is. I have to be a manager to an EA. I have to be a teacher to teach curriculum. I have to be a psychologist to help students through their emotion. I have to be a dietician in order to make sure that the kids have enough nutrition in order to learn. I have to be a behaviourist; my classroom has to be just the right atmosphere for each student to feel safe enough to learn. There're too many hats. And I like the hats; I love wearing them. And I love the dynamic of having to manipulate and move and figure out which chess piece to play [. . .]. I feel successful when I can do it, but I need the support and the help to do it well to do it properly.*
>
> —F, small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50, part-time

SETTING TEACHERS UP FOR SUCCESS

Overall, the teachers KGC interviewed described a mixed bag in terms of how well-prepared they were for their career. Almost everyone noted that they felt well-prepared for the process of teaching—that is, understanding a subject matter, designing lesson plans and effectively assessing their students.

However, when it came to most of the other *realities* of this career—primarily classroom management—they felt rather unprepared. Based on these conversations, KGC understands classroom management to include both what would be experienced in a well-regulated classroom and all the nuances and details associated with inclusive classrooms and students who experience emotional dysregulation. None of the respondents in these interviews felt well-prepared to deal with managing classrooms that include large numbers of students who have individualized program plans (IPPs) or students who experience acute behavioural health issues.

While it seemed that teachers wished that they had been better prepared for the *hidden* workload, they acknowledged that it might be impossible for the educational system to prepare future teachers for managing a classroom for an entire year. According to the teachers who were interviewed, the only way to understand what that is like is through experiencing it.

Teachers also understand the balancing act that the preprofessional experience needs to perform. On the one hand, teachers should be prepared as much as possible for what is ahead of them, but they also should not be scared away to the point that they never enter the profession.

Our conversations suggested that focusing on improving teacher onboarding, both to a teaching career and to a new school, might be highly beneficial to the profession. The idea of improved onboarding from the ATA also came up during our conversations. Teachers noted they did not understand their collectively bargained rights or their avenues to engage with the ATA until later in their careers.

Multiple teachers noted the importance of mentorship for creating success for a teacher who is at the early stages of their career. Some teachers mentioned how valuable their mentorship relationship(s) were, while others talked about the negative impact of not having an effective mentor. These mentorship relationships were cited as being valuable both from a *competency* perspective (that is, helping someone understand what is happening and solving problems) and from a *culture* perspective (or, helping them feel like they belong). To tie this in with the issue of onboarding, it

should be noted that improving onboarding for experienced teachers starting at a new school would primarily benefit teachers culturally.

A few teachers also spoke to the inconsistency and difficulty of the hiring/staffing process. They talked about learning the grade or subject they would be teaching only a few days before a school year started, or signing up for a substitute opportunity described one way and finding out that the actual assignment would be completely different. While these practices might seem like the school leaders' attempt to *make things work*, we should recognize their traumatic impact on teachers' job satisfaction in terms of increased stress, increased workload to prepare to teach different subjects and lost trust in the system.

Actionable Opportunity

Even though KGC is not fully informed about the current process for onboarding, it seems that formalizing mentorship and onboarding protocols would reduce the number of teachers exiting the profession after only a few years of teaching (*in-and-out exits*), inspiring longer-lasting careers. Our interviews suggested that the most important driver of success is identifying the right people to act as mentors—teachers with the right experience and people skills to nurture young teachers. Importantly, for improved onboarding to be *net beneficial* to the profession, KGC recommends that mentorship become a *formal part* of the job description for mentoring teachers, meaning that it would become part of a teacher's compensated time at work. If mentorship becomes another of the many mandated volunteering responsibilities that add to a crushing workload, it cannot be expected to have a lasting impact.

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this finding:

> *Mandatory mentoring, I think, should be within the first five years of teaching, hands down, with a teacher who actually has the time and wants to help a new teacher. That's definitely part of it. You know, it's one thing to say this is your teacher that if you need help or questions you can go to. But I think the ATA needs to set aside time like prep time that you can meet with that teacher within your first five years. Even if it's a half an hour, a week. Something that is tangible that is set aside that you have the time to ask those questions and talk about school policies and procedures that sort of thing. Teachers need more paid time to do those things.*
>
> —F, Small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50, part-time

> *I never formally learned how to run an IPP in my entire teacher education. And of my 11 different sections of students, on average, the lowest number of students with an IPP was seven, my highest being 13, and I don't exaggerate. I actually talked to other colleagues at other sites, and I asked, "Is this normal?" And they couldn't give me a straight answer in that regard. I think it does also come back to the teacher education process. I think they do an effective job of explaining how to connect, to curriculum, how to effectively plan, all the things of building a lesson. But the education on some of the hidden things were not there, and it was an unfortunate culture shock that I found out, not even in my student teaching, but I had to find out my first 14 days in the profession, so to speak.*
>
> —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*

> *I think something the ATA could do better is making sure that at the local level, that their local reps are really well-trained in communication and also well-trained in how to approach new teachers. I think that's something that's lacking in most of the divisions that I have done work in, and I've worked in most of the divisions across the province, doing, presenting and things like that that lots of times new teachers don't even know who the person is who's supposed to be their connect.*
>
> —F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*

> *They decided right away in university that classroom management wasn't important. And then you even had teachers basically say that it wasn't important to learn classroom management. And I would argue that that is the most ignorant thing one could ever say, because if you can't manage the classroom, then you can't teach the classroom. So, I don't know where university got off on this idea that classroom management is a bad thing.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 2–4 years, 41–45, substitute

> *I wish that mentorship piece would have been there, and I think that the ATA can have an effect on that. I think that there should be more of a person-to-person mentorship. There was nobody to even tell me where things were, what equipment I had access to, what the ins and outs of the different email groups and chains and this and the softwares or whatnot. And we've been through like four different reporting systems for grades and attendance. And I've always really wished that I had more support in those things.*
>
> —F, Small population, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 41–45, part-time*

PRIORITIES FOR ATA ACTION

KGC asked each teacher what they would prioritize if they were put in charge of the ATA and were tasked with increasing career longevity for the teaching profession. KGC specifically asked them to be *realistic* in their answers. The most cited priorities were consistent with our expectations from prior research:

- Adding educational assistants (EAs), supports and staffing (seven respondents out of 16)
- Reducing class size (five respondents out of 16)
- More time to prepare lessons and a four-day work week (four respondents out of 16)
- Reducing classroom complexity (three respondents out of 16)

In this set of interviews, improving external perception and relationships (noted by 4 out of 16 respondents) was a higher priority than would have been anticipated based on 2023 interviews. Perhaps, when forced to consider *reality*, teachers recognize that they need these external stakeholders to get behind the need for change.

Improved government relationships, improving public perception of teachers, and bridging the gap between parents and teachers were specific mentions associated with this theme. Improving the administrative experience was also cited by two of the interviewees.

Here are responses from interviewees that illustrate this finding:

> *Trying to decide between complexity and class sizes because they're both tough. I think honestly, [I would suggest] diverting some of the focus and some of the funds spent on, how can I put this, things that are theoretically great. So, like PD sessions about, new research and all that. I would maybe move some of that into [. . .] boots-on-the-ground [supports], like EA supports, or being able to hire some more teachers.*
>
> —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*

> *[I'd prioritize] Having that extra set of hands like, no, you could have a class of 20, and it'd be insane, or you could have a class of 30, and it'd be fine like, it really depends on the kids in the room. And if you see, like the increasing need. We know that's not going to go away. [. . .] You're never, not going to have a class without behaviours. It's just easier to have another adult with you in there to help out with where what is needed and where.*
>
> —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*

> *I think I would choose smaller class sizes [over more EAs]. because I think if I have less students in front of me every single day, even if there is a specific class wide issue, or a specific need, or something that a student is struggling with, I would feel more able to go get advice or resources myself to support that student. I think that our support staff works incredibly hard. But if you don't have the right person in the [EA] position, it's worse than having no one at all.*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time**

> *That was just my saving grace, that prep time to know that I actually had a half an hour to get some things because I was so overwhelmed. I always have probably five to seven [autistic] kids; I'm always loaded. And I love those kids. Those are the kids I do well with, but that half an hour when it was taken away for me, I felt devastated. It ruined my whole day. Because I needed that time. You can't even explain how busy it is, or how much that's going on in a classroom, or what you have to do, or you have to phone this parent. When do we get time? That half an hour prep time has to happen [if we are to meet] those expectations that we have. There're more and more expectations for documentation and IPPs and different things. We need time.*
>
> —F, Small population, ES, 15-19 years, 51–55*

Here is a summary of individual responses:

Priorities if they were in charge of the ATA

Government relationships Salary School leader capabilities	Smaller classes—but only if a hard cap Improve public perception of teachers Treat marginalized teachers equally
Supports for mental health and social services Improve public perception of teaching	Bring oversight/discipline for teachers back to the ATA More EAs
Reduce class sizes Educate on classroom management realities Supports for inclusive classrooms	More boots on the ground (EAs and teachers) Banning phones Reducing classroom complexity
Time: more prep time, 4-day work week	Increased staffing
Begin holding students back again Reduce classroom complexity	Prep time Improved Administrative experience
Reduce class sizes Educate on classroom management realities Supports for inclusive classrooms	Improve local rep communications and new-teacher onboarding Bridge the gap between parents and teachers
Protect our time (personal days, prep, etc) Reduce class size	Class sizes More supports
More EAs More prep time (bigger blocks)	Class size Specialized supports
Protect the rights of teachers	

VALIDATING 2023 FINDINGS

As a starting point, it is important to acknowledge that the discussion guide from 2023 is different from the one that was used this year. As a result, it is difficult to speak confidently about changes to teacher perspectives.

Several key themes from 2023 were reinforced in 2024:

- Teachers are experiencing crushing workloads that are preventing them from achieving work-life balance. They always feel like there is more they could or should be doing—but they have already given all they can.
- They feel like their job description/requirements are expanding into areas that used to be the responsibility of someone else.
- They feel like their professional autonomy is under attack, and they feel micromanaged.
- They find it hard to practise self-care, either because they feel guilty or because they perceive consequences professionally if they say *no*.
- School leaders play a crucial role in how teachers feel about their experience. Teachers noted they wished for more transparency and communication with school leaders.
- Teachers find this career difficult to understand and navigate.
- They are experiencing a loss of social status and feel undervalued and misunderstood.
- They are frustrated by the lack of engagement and change created by the ATA and tend to believe that the time is right for more aggressive action.

KGC could not identify any key findings from 2023 that were refuted by our 2024 conversations.

From a subjective perspective, the conversations this year were more resigned and less angry than last year. However, KGC would attribute most, and maybe all, of that change to the differences between the two discussion guides. Last year's guide focused on a listing of frustrations, in contrast to this year's focus on the emotional experience of teaching and discussing elements of job satisfaction. Therefore, while it is probable that the longer teachers are suffering through less-than-ideal teaching conditions, the more resigned to their fates they are becoming; the interviews do not provide evidence the that there is a major change in tenor from this year to last.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

- **Concerns About Word of Mouth**. Even though there was not a prompt in the discussion guide, multiple teachers proactively mentioned the fact that, if asked, they would no longer recommend the teaching profession to others. Although this is not necessarily surprising since these are teachers considering exiting, it showcases teachers' strong emotions. The following statements illustrate this:

> *I'd start by saying if I knew any young person who was going into education and said to me, "Would you recommend being a teacher?" I would say, "Fuck, no. don't do it."*
>
> —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*

> *I went back to teaching [. . .] God. I even start crying when I think about it. It was so hard. I was 38 when I went back to teaching. So, I've taught for 15 years; my husband had left; I had 4 kids, really little, so I went back to school, and I thought education would change it all. But you know, it doesn't. I've had a really bad experience in education. I would never tell anybody to go into education. Isn't that terrible?*
>
> —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*

- **One Solution Does Not Fit All**. Not surprisingly, the priorities for change are different depending on a teacher's circumstance. For example, due to the limited marking required with younger students, elementary school teachers seemed more likely to prioritize prep time or getting additional adults in their rooms to help with real-time class management, while teachers of older students seemed more likely to prioritize smaller class sizes.

- **Paid Time with Peers**. Many teachers talked about the benefits of spending time with their peers. Whether those interactions were impromptu or planned, specific to work or social in nature, time spent with other teachers increased the sense of belonging and helped teachers solve problems and manage their mental health. However, teachers explained that over the years, there was less and less time or bandwidth for teachers to connect and collaborate. If we want teachers to spend meaningful time together, they need to be paid for the time and not be expected to give up personal time. The following statement illustrates this:

> *Yeah, [. . .] I think a lot of people feel that way. They're very isolated and alone. And yet we don't even get a chance to actually get to know people that we work with, to tell you honest truth, and to actually have really good relationships because we're so darn busy, right? But in most jobs, not all jobs, I know lots of jobs have it. But I mean, you know, most jobs. You do get that 15-minute break or that coffee break [. . .], but [. . .] where we are, we don't. We just don't get it.*
>
> —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*

- **ATA ≠ Action**. Teachers generally gave the ATA credit for listening to their concerns. However, they seem pessimistic about the ATA's ability to drive change. The interviews highlighted the ATA's passivity in prior bargaining (telling members "This is a bad deal, but we're not going to do any better, so we should accept it."), the lack of engagement and commitment to action from ATA membership and the role of government as a *gatekeeper* for change as reasons why teachers are skeptical about the ATA being able to catalyze improvements for them. The following statements illustrate this:

> *I think the ATA does a reasonably good job. The president of our local has been to our school and has encouraged us to reach out to her. It's less about that. It's more about the ATA can advocate all they want, but unless we strike or we take job action, what comes of it?*
>
> —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*

> *I think we need to strike. It's been too much for too long. I don't think anything other than striking is going to get through.*
>
> —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*

- **Momentum for Momentous Change**. During this round of interviews, multiple teachers introduced ideas for more dramatic evolution to the educational system, largely based on experiences they had when they felt much more positively about their teaching experience. One teacher who was part-time, working at a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 0.8, shared that their perception of the workload was completely different. This teacher noted that they could get everything done without *homework*, and that they, at least, were happy with the reduced pay in exchange for the better balance in their life. Others talked about having a day shift and a night shift at school, so that classes could be smaller; having a true team-teaching setup for all teachers; and installing an every-other-day attendance schedule to cut class size in half. Whether individual ideas are feasible or not, these comments point to these teachers' interest in finding a solution that is better than what is being done now. The following statement illustrates this:

> *It's tough between class sizes and more prep time. I would like if 80 per cent became the norm. That would revolutionize things. And that is a faster fix because you're not building more classes, and you're not changing the mentality about things. But at 80 per cent, every teacher would have a couple hours every day to do stuff. To sit in a room alone and drink a bottle of water and go to the bathroom when they want to go [. . .]. It would just be requiring schools to hire more teachers, not build more rooms.*
>
> —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*

A Hypothesis for Considering Urgent Action

Please note that the following hypothesis is a subjective interpretation of the conversations that KGC has conducted over the past two years, not something that was explicitly communicated by any of the teachers interviewed.

We are going to outline the dynamics of exploitative work relationships to preface our interpretation.

The person who is exploited at work starts by being driven by a deep sense of mission; usually there is something that they love about the work. During the initial part of the work relationship, the mission of the teaching profession compensates for the excessive workload and unrealistic expectations. However, as the career journey continues, the teacher or school leader feels unable to decline tasks or advocate for their needs due to fear of retaliation, job loss or damage to their professional reputation. Guilt, shame and normalizing the experience of feeling overwhelmed and burnt-out serve to replicate and reinforce exploitative notions of what it means to be a good teacher or school leader.

The exploitation of teachers and school leaders is also reinforced by their love of an idealized vision of what teaching and learning can be, even as they are being treated less and less fairly at work. They are coerced to ignore their doubts about the exploitative nature of the work relationship, making it difficult to leave. However, at some point, the evidence becomes overwhelming—it becomes clear that the work relationship is exploitative and is unlikely to change—so they decide to leave.

Intuitively and anecdotally, we believe that when teachers and school leaders exit the profession, it is very unlikely that they will go back; there is trauma, distrust, shame, anger and resentment. In addition, we believe that leaving the profession may be contagious: people are more likely to see themselves as exploited and understand that change is possible when they see someone else leave.

KGC proposes that the relationship that many teachers have with their careers is fundamentally exploitative and characterized by the following process:

- The initial attraction to an idealized vision of teaching, and to the sense of purpose that they feel, is so powerful that teachers are somewhat insulated from the unpleasant nature of the day-to-day circumstances at the outset of their careers.
- Over time, the job asks for more of them, giving them less in return.
- The joy of seeing an *Aha!* moment or being recognized by their school leaders reminds them of *the good days* just often enough to keep them going, even as they are made miserable day after day.
- They start asking for change in surveys and at staff meetings, but no matter what they hear, things do not improve. They find comfort in trauma bonding with other teachers: "We can get through this together." They feel guilty about leaving: "What about the kids?" They also struggle with the loss of identity that would come from no longer being a teacher.
- Therefore, they continue in the profession far longer than a those outside of the teaching profession would, until the scales fall from their eyes, and they say, "I'm being taken advantage of," and "I've got to get out of here."
- Once they do make the hard decision to leave, they have a hard time thinking about going back.

This way of looking at the dynamics teachers may be feeling or experiencing should be frightening for this profession, especially given the diffuse accountability for the exploitation and the potentially dire consequences of teachers *exiting the teaching profession*. Outlining the characteristics of exploitative work relationships makes it easier to understand the causes and consequences of such dynamics. For teachers, the exploitation is coming from a *system* that includes government, parents, students, administration and society, making it difficult to identify who is accountable and whom to ask for change. Moreover, the consequences of a teacher exodus are both widespread (impacting students, school leaders, parents, government and society) and delayed (we will only know the full scope of a failure of the educational system in another decade or longer). Therefore, it is challenging to effectively ask for change when there are so many different accountabilities, and it is difficult to motivate change because the consequences of not changing on an individual stakeholder group are often indirect, hard to predict and easy to ignore as a problem that can be passed on.

Importantly, the essential nature of this exploitative employment dynamic is not unique to education. Productivity gains are capitalism's holy grail, and productivity gains without negative human consequences are rare (they are usually due to technology advancements). When businesses achieve productivity gains by asking for more out of people, there are typically short-term gains and long-term consequences. In the short-term, profits are made, stock prices go up and executives become rich while employees realize that they are being taken advantage of. Because long-term consequences (such as employee exodus, loss of quality in what is being sold, loss of brand equity) are difficult to predict and quantify, the tendency is to not worry about them until they start to fail. Until then, it is a problem that can be passed on.

We would recommend being as aggressive as possible, as soon as possible, to change this dynamic, based on the following findings: (1) teachers are experiencing something like an exploitative relationship with their chosen career; (2) the increasing signs of exit behaviour suggest that more and more teachers are realizing that they are being taken advantage of by the system; (3) exiting exploitative relationships can be contagious and (4) each exiting teacher increases the potential for overwhelm and exploitation experienced by the teachers left behind. We must stop the contagion before it cannot be contained. In addition to trying to prevent a major exodus, the ATA also cannot be seen as being complicit in or enabling the exploitation of Alberta's teachers or we will lose our credibility and our power to advocate for members.

Appendix A: Additional Illustrative Responses

BELONGING AS A STRENGTH, NOT A PROBLEM

Responses
I think I would say even now, I would say I have a good sense of belonging with my immediate peers in my school, my school district. At teachers' convention, I have colleagues from other schools that I'm always happy to connect with. So, belonging hasn't really been an issue, I wouldn't say. If anything, it's gotten better through my career. —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40
Basically, so, for me, it would have been at one time a major point of frustration was sometimes the way the staff would treat you as a substitute. As a substitute, […] they can say anything they want, but their actions say a whole different thing, and I think that's the big deal. [They seem to say], "we appreciate you, but then we're going to screw you over." —F, Urban, ES, 2–4 years, 41–45, substitute
I definitely do feel like I belong. And in some ways that makes it actually harder to leave the profession because, for myself, I started teaching when I was 23. And that's been my career […]. That's all I've done for over a decade is identify as a teacher. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
I think the one of the best things about teaching is connecting with my colleagues. And I would say I would definitely miss that the most after leaving. And then, of course, connecting with just people who come in and volunteer, or even the substitutes that come in. When you're coaching, right, when I coach volleyball, or when I coach badminton, we have these coaches come in, we make connections, we talk to the parents and all of that. I think those are really enjoyable relationships. —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35

Responses
I said [I'm a teacher] my whole life. And I think that's what's really jarring now. Because it's hard to explain why I'm not a teacher right now. So, I think because it has been part of my identity for such a long time, I think leaving it is that much more traumatic? —F, Urban, HS, 20–30 years, 41–45*
I have made incredible friends on staff. I've made lifelong friends, and I feel I do feel that there is a sense of belonging. And I'm going to say in certain groups, because I think in our school very much like high school was when we attended. There are cliques. And so, I have felt a sense of belonging with that core group of people that I've surrounded myself with, and they've been very, very supportive and listening, and that's good. Now, in talking about Alberta. Yes, I believe that I have made incredible connections and done some incredible work with the ATA and with the Specialist Council. Yes, I have been very proud to say that I am a teacher. And yes, I believe that I do belong in the profession. I believe I'm a natural leader. The students love me. —F, Small population, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 41–45, part-time*
I especially started feeling alone when [I asked for help, and] some of my colleagues who have been first year teachers have kind of said, "Your first-year teaching is hard. It just sucks. It's the dog's breakfast. You just kind of got to get through it." As someone who has worked in highly collaborative teams and done lots of collaborative work and knows how to seek out supports especially, that was very difficult to hear, especially when it's been promised throughout our postsecondary degree in education that it's a highly collaborative career. And you know, everyone's here to support you. —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*
I had a really great admin. I had really great teachers on staff who are really helpful. So, it was a very supportive environment that way overall. Parents were really decent […]. The divisions been very supportive. We've had an instructional coach come out very regularly to our school, and we can sign up for time to get advice from her and get help. So very supportive division that I work in, and I've really enjoyed it. If I could take everybody with me, I would. —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*

Responses
But there's a lot of bullying that goes on in [faculties]. There's a lot, and nobody likes to talk about it is that ugly elephant in the room. But nobody wants to talk about being cynical when people say, "What a great team! It's such a great division to work for. We treat each other like family. Everybody belongs." [But], do we? Really? We're expected to do that for our students, and we do a very good job. And there's a lot of teachers, including myself, that do a very good job of making sure that we protect these kids. They feel like they belong. But we don't do the same in in, in our, on our staffs. —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*
[After KGC read the list of emotions] Honestly. Every single one that you said, except for I belong. I didn't feel like I belonged. —F, Small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50, part-time

THE PLEASURE PROBLEM OF THE PROFESSION

Responses
There are a lot of days, come three o'clock when that bell goes, and I'm like done. Teaching has more and more gone down the [pleasure] scale and is pretty close to failing. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
I feel like [teaching] is fairly compensated, personally, which you will not hear many teachers say […]. But I also don't think you could pay me enough to do some of that work that I was dealing with. I think I'm just done. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
[I want to highlight] the slide I have seen in the pleasantness of the workplace since 2009. Just the change in the student body, the change in the expectations, the politics on the provincial level have all led to a slide where I now look favourably on the pleasure of being an engineer in hindsight. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*
[Pleasure] hasn't always been a D. After my [kids] were born, my husband and I decided I would go back to work because I enjoyed work, and he didn't. So, he stayed home, and I went back because I enjoyed it. So, there was a time that I picked going to work over being a stay-at-home mom. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
For the happiness level, I definitely went from like an A to like a B minus just because I didn't realize there's so many other things that you do as a teacher on top of just teaching the subjects. And then the first, like the other part of the question is the passion part. I think I started to lose my passion because students, they're very different than, for example, in an international school. I grew up in China where the students really loved to help the teacher. Well, I mean, they listen really well, but here you tell a student to pick up the garbage. They'll ask, "why?" And I think these little things, they add up over time and just having to deal with the behaviours of students rather than the actual teaching has made me exhausted. —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35

Responses
I think, with those who you can see growing and prospering, [I'm] getting enjoyment of seeing people learn and grow and make those positive changes. It is a huge bucket filler to redistribute from the negatives that happen in the day. But it's just not being able to let go at the end of the day, and it is what it is. Well, we could do everything till 10 o'clock at night and still have more to do. —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*
I think that's something. Moving into a new district. That's I'm going to find to be very hard is that people don't just trust that I know what I'm doing. And that part was great about my school. Nobody ever questioned what I was doing academically with the kids. And I had good relationships them. So, that part was really good. It's everything else that's terrible. Everything between 5 and 8 AM. Like the drunk emails from parents at 3 AM. Those kinds of things those are not for me. —F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*
There's no moment to rest, you know. You can pass out at the end of the day, or you can just chuck off your [work]. I found in my previous job, and especially my current one, the ideas of perfect boundaries in terms of the ability to take a moment to scale things back, if necessary, was always available to me. Whereas in teaching, I felt there was no time to scale anything back, and that we were always behind. And I think the other factor [is intensity]. I've talked about hours a lot more, but I found that even with the hours being similar between both my teaching role and this one with that, whether 37 or 40 hours per week. I felt in teaching it was like a very charged and loaded and exhausting 40 hours versus in this role, with very high level work and curriculum pedagogy. It's not the same 40 hours. And I don't know how you quantify that. But maybe just the feel of what that those hours actually entail. —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*

THE PURPOSE CONUNDRUM OF THE PROFESSION

Responses
The purpose of what we do [is huge]. I mean, without us there's a lot of things that don't happen. I feel like I picked this profession because of [purpose], to make a difference and to have an impact. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
[It also diminished my purpose when] different parents would be [denigrating] the teaching profession. I think in society, teachers are more and more looked down upon. In certain circles and certain scenarios, if you mention you're a teacher there's the opportunity for a big conflict. You're like, "I didn't come here for an argument about the education system." —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
But when you're trying to [engage a class] with 25 kids, especially when you have a mix of kids in the class that have just been pushed forward and actually are so far behind that they really shouldn't even be in that class, it becomes kind of a circus because you have those kids causing problems. Then you have the kids that are kind of almost there, but they still can't pay attention long enough to get the concept. So, it really ends up being more like you're babysitting than teaching, which I think is by far the biggest frustration out of everything. If it wasn't for that, I would still be teaching despite all the issues I have. —F, Urban, ES, 2–4 years, 41–45, substitute
So, I've always foresaw myself as a teacher, and I did well in a classroom setting, and I enjoyed that. I think every teacher is just so amazing because there hasn't been one teacher that I've come across that I was wondering, "why are you in this profession?" Every teacher is here today because they have such a strong passion about where they come from, and that they want to change the life of kids. —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35
What I mentioned earlier about autonomy has a big impact for me in this area as well because I can write as great a lesson plan as I want and know that it's great. I can, you know, do any number of things that are within my control as well as I can. But if I'm writing a great lesson plan for a shitty curriculum, you know, […] if I'm teaching a lesson that reinforces the binary of male and female when I don't think that that is appropriate. To teach children that purpose doesn't mean a lot to me. —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*

Responses
There are a lot, still a lot of really great experiences with kids and knowing that you can make a difference for them. It's just, I just find this getting outweighed. It's not an equal balance anymore. —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*
KGC: What are the emotions that you feel when you sort of are not able to give your best to the classroom? Response: Huge guilt. And in the past, I used to do so many different things. And this last year I just couldn't physically do it. But I really felt a lot of guilt. Was I doing things up to my standard? No. But they did meet standards and above. Yes, they did. But still, huge guilt. Huge amounts of guilt. —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*
I'm not somebody who does things at a half measure, I really do go all in. And I really loved the teaching career for the ability to take ideas and run with them. And I've never been doubted on my intentions. But to think that people would think that I'm doing something bad with my extra efforts has been, really devastating. And that was after I'd been spending, you said I had no life outside of work. —F, Urban, HS, 20–30 years, 41–45*

REACHING THE POINT OF HOPELESSNESS BEING THE FINAL STRAW

Responses
Throughout the process [of trying to change grades] I was still a little bit hopeful because I was doing the right things, and then finding out that I did get to teach a Grade 11 course because another teacher gave up his opportunity so that I could get in. [But] It wasn't that I got in because of what they saw in me. It was only because someone else gave it up for me. In any other corporate world, I felt like I could apply for a promotion—and I wasn't even asking for a promotion! I was wanting a lateral move, and I wasn't given that chance, and I wasn't being heard. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
I have approximately a hundred students that I'm responsible for; before I went on leave, about 60 per cent of those students have IPPs. And obviously it's all individualized, so I can't speak to [an] overarching theme [for] them, but that's a huge increase from when I started teaching 10 years ago. Very few of them have EAs. I don't find that there's support for EAs. I don't find that there's support for the increased complexity, the sheer number of IPPs and accommodations that we need to make. [Students] need the accommodations, but there just doesn't seem to be any. —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*
No, I don't see me coming back. Unless I can do magic and decide that we all get prep time every single day. And I know that's never going to happen financially. The schools could never afford it. —F, Small population, JH/HS, 20–30 years, 56–60
There are people who want to coast by as in any profession. But I think most teachers want to do the very best job that they can, and the set of circumstances in terms of shitty curriculum, not enough supports, huge class sizes has left us in a position where we can't do that. —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*

Responses
I started to feel the most [alone] whenever there [were] problems in the classroom, especially when it came to, like, student misconduct [or] abusive parents questioning my professional judgment. I found that no matter how much I actively pleaded with my admin, wrote notes, had evidence and brought them into my classroom just to let them in on what the problems were, it got playfully kind of played off as, "This is just how it is." It's like a way to justify the experiences almost as, "Hey, don't worry. You'll get through it." Which, [I actually] think that was the biggest driver of why I ended up deciding to leave—that feeling of, like, will I ever get support in my career? And can I survive 35 years worth of this? —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*
I can see the frustration building in my colleagues, of dealing with the same things over and over again. And while there is help available, there's not enough. And then the help that was there has been reduced; there's been a quite a few funding cuts in the past couple of years with what's available. So, there's such high needs increasing in the schools. And you're not able to meet them all because there's a limit to how much is being funded. —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*
You know this is the only job where I've had that I have to work before I go to work. That when I get to work, I know what work I have to do. But then, while I'm not work, I can't do my work. So, then I need to do it when [work is over]. So that was really hard, and that makes you feel alone, and then feeding into that is, everyone says, you know, you can ask for support. You can get support; it is here for you. But you don't want to ask for that support a lot of the time because you know that every other person you're going to ask for support is just as busy as you are. And it almost takes more time to seek out that support because then you have to, like, find time where you can both help each other. —F, Small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50, part-time
I love and care so deeply for these students that it is depleting me as a human being, financially, emotionally, socially. There's nothing left to give. I don't even have the energy to put on my oxygen mask before helping anyone else, because there is so much help needed that you don't even have those three seconds to put your own oxygen mask on. —F, Small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50, part-time

THE INCREASING DEHUMANIZATION OF OUR MOST HUMAN CAREERS

Responses
I think that this is a core problem with the profession of teaching at the high school level. We need to fill these positions, but when people get into the positions, they find that their hands are tied in terms of the institutional pedagogy of that subject. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*
I see it with my colleagues that have been in the system the same length of time as me, and even ones that haven't been there as long. When they present an idea, or they ask for help, or they come with something they want heard, and there's no time for that, there's no room for that, and [there's] "No, you can't do that." And it's like, "I know what my class needs!" So, when [something that's working] is stopped, and you are told "No, you can't," it takes away your professionalism and your autonomy to be able to know what your kids need. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
I would say [. . .], I felt frustrated, angry and oppressed. Because my previous year, I had an admin who […] pigeonholed me in a certain spot […]. But I think that changed my perspective on teaching a lot. Just because in schools, we teach about antiracism, no discrimination; we teach about all of these, but I felt like my culture was not respected. […] My freedom of speech was limited. My rights were revoked. —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35
Teachers are expected to do so much. You're expected to be an admin; you're expected to be a parent; you're expected to be the breakfast provider out of your own income, or supplies and all of that. You buy everything for the students! And it's almost as if it's expected, like there isn't one teacher who has not spent, so much in the beginning of the year and throughout the year, just getting things for their students. And I feel like in any other profession, like that is just absurd. —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35

Responses
I think [the powerlessness stems from the fact] that our voices aren't heard. The school board is always asking for input and surveys; the ATA asks for input and surveys. I give the ATA a little bit more credit for what they do with the information, but it feels like we're screaming into the void. So, I'm responding to surveys, my colleagues are responding to surveys and giving our input, and it doesn't feel like much is done with our experiences and our information and what we're telling you it's like that just seems to get filed away. —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*
I've had my sub set up, and I said, "I really want to go down and visit with my family. It's a special day for one of the little grandsons." And they just said no. [. . .] I have worked six days a week since I started teaching in 2003, and I feel like me asking for a day [off] was not a big ask. And I'm frustrated by our contract. I'm frustrated by the lack of care for the teachers who give and give and give. —F, Small population, JH/HS, 20–30 years, 56–60
I feel that our provincial government is undervaluing education in totality. Not respecting teachers [is a major issue]. I think the curriculum is a big issue for me, because that's what we have to go by and teach right. And we can choose the best practices to teach that, and we can find resources to support that. But when, at the end of the day, what you are putting down on a report card is, "Yes, this kid can or can't do this thing." If that thing is inappropriate for their age or development or is biased. That's just some big bullshit, and I think that many years of conservative government in Alberta has continually underfunded, […] education, and [they] refuse to see teachers as experts and individuals to be collaborated with. —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*
[Government impact is frustrating]—how they've changed the funding in general. They've reduced funding and then changes to the curriculum I'm not too fond of, and then just not as much support from the [government's] side. But it's just those overarching things that you [can't control]. There's no way to change it and control it. That is completely out of our hands. —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*

Responses
I expect kids to be the same, no matter where they are. The curriculum is a lot freer in BC, compared to Alberta. There are just more overarching big ideas. So, it's just a little less prescriptive. So that's always helpful for being able to meet kids where they're at. —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*
The people who do the most in the building, and I see it are taken for granted. Like we had nobody to coach badminton, and so I gave up all of my lunch hours for two months to coach badminton and help out, because nobody would step up. And yet nobody would say thank you. It was constant, they would always say thank you to the ones who actually weren't doing anything in hopes that they would. Does that make sense? There was five people in our building that were expected constantly to carry the school. And, interestingly enough, all five of us left this year. We're all leaving, and we never talked. There was nothing. But basically, I'm sure we all felt the same way: not valued. —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*
I feel like my skills were not being put to best use. I felt like I was constantly in competition with a person who was incompetent, and they continuously didn't provide me with opportunities to move up because I think they were, I don't know, if jealous is the right word. —F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*

FEELING VICTIMIZED BY AN ACCOUNTABILITY CRISIS

Responses
The lack of parenting regarding discipline and follow through [is a major source of frustration]. The phone calls that I made home with discipline issues—my child would have lost many privileges [if I received that call]. And then also administration and their lack of follow through and lack of discipline and support regarding behavioural issues [. . .] drove me nuts. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
[One class the kids] were just going to do whatever they wanted, and it's just frustrating because then you have almost zero support from admin. You can send people to the office, but that doesn't really do much. —F, Urban, ES, 2–4 years, 41–45, substitute
And that's one other area that I feel like burns a lot of teachers and stresses them and gives them anxiety about because it's not just about pure teaching or how you build up the lives of your students anymore. It's about you treading carefully on eggshells through all of these policies that are thrown at you. And you have to be very careful about what you say, what you comment on, your emails—because anything can be used against you, technically. —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35
Even though I'm a first year teacher, I do have a very comprehensive background in working with students. I've been coaching for over a half a decade. And I've been in complex conversations with parents and the things that come with a teaching job. And yet I found that, especially on the disrespect side, my perception of what was a problem versus not was made to feel as overreacting. I've had students who have done online comment campaigns against me. I've had parents who have requested meetings to essentially come and complain when I ultimately held student accountable for not doing work. And to me as a second language teacher, not being a core subject, [I feel like I am] an important teacher, and yet I'm not really. And you know parents can call in and complain to not have to take my course. I think that made me really question like is the work I'm doing worth it. —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*

Responses
There is policy in our school that if a student is to miss over 15 classes in a 3-credit course, they are to be removed from that class. And I had been again contacting parents and doing everything. And I've done this consistently for two years, sending out emails and communication every two weeks, consistently, and I had multiple students at 18 absences or up. The worst were at 22, and there were some discipline problems that arose in the class with those two students that were at 22 absences, and I was told that that doesn't pertain to them. Because they are successful at holding up jobs at the community flower shop and a community coffee shop, and they're good kids. And just because they don't come to school is no reason to have [consequences]. And I'm thinking, "When they do come, they're disrupting the learning of others. Disrespecting the space, disrespecting the school's property." —F, Small population, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 41–45, part-time*
But I found, especially with new teachers, that if the Administration didn't back up, like, the consequences that they put into place with the parents, it made it challenging for that teacher for the rest of the year. —F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*
I think, incompetent leadership [was a driver of feeling undervalued]. So, having people being put in place who were not prepared to lead, who had no background skills to do it. and then them constantly relying on you to do things without acknowledging the work that you put in. —F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*
There's a lot of importance placed on grades and so, I fear repercussions and retributions [from students]. I think most of my colleagues would express fear of the assessment piece causing them to feel unsafe due to how administration reacts to them. I've seen that many times. It's disgusting every time it happens. I'm always there to support teachers in their assessments. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*

IMPROVING TEACHERS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADMINISTRATORS AS A POWERFUL LEVER

Responses
None of our administrators are project managers. None of our administrators have the management piece. Very few have witnessed how management of staff happens outside the school system. They've only ever seen classroom management. Managing adults who are professionals takes an entirely different skill set. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*
I think the strongest sense of belonging in the staff that I've been in, in the most schools, is actually when the admin really puts teachers first [. . .]. She just did a really great job of saying, "What do you need? Let's get it to you the best we can." And I think the central office would not like it when [. . .] she would do things like that, where she doesn't care what she's being told she has to do. She's just focusing on what [her staff needs and what she can give them]. That's feasible, that's realistic. —F, Rural, ES, 5–9 years, 26–30
I would highlight the lack of professional autonomy as being a deficiency within the school system that relates, in my option, to the reality that our administration is a product of the school system and therefor, treat staff as another classroom. Teachers become administrators and then [manage] their staff as though they are a class. But we aren't a classroom of students. We are staff. We are professionals, and we have a variety of skill sets and professional obligations. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*
For an administrator, [I would recommend] being an active presence in your school. So, getting out of the office, being a presence in the hallways or in classrooms, so that you both understand what's happening in your school, and also so that the students know who you are and that the teachers know that you're there—you get what we're doing. You've seen my classroom. You've seen how I teach, or you've seen what goes on. So, being an active presence throughout the school is something I would recommend. —F, Urban, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 36–40*

Responses
I think that administration has a large amount of influence on how a school feels, especially to staff, and I've worked for a couple of principals who created an environment that to me felt unwelcoming and not very collaborative. —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*
Up until the last two years I was in the classroom, they gave me exactly what I wanted to teach. There were never any problems. Nobody ever questioned what I did, because my kids were getting great results. The last year that I was there with that new administrator, she couldn't figure out how to make a timetable. So, at the start of the year, I was teaching a split Grades 5–6 art, but just the Grade 6 out of the split, and then six weeks into the year, she took away the art, gave it to the new teacher, and had me teach a Grade 5 health with no prep time, with 45 kids in it. So instead of teaching like 12 sweet Grade 6 kids art, I ended up teaching 45 kids Health for a year. —F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH ACCOMMODATIONS

Responses
COVID irreparably changed the social capital that teachers had in our society. It was a jarring responsibility in COVID, so that slow decline went into a nosedive and climbing out of it back to the way things were previously has been slow. While we, while society was quick to impose restrictions, society has been slow to remove or undo what occurred in COVID. And sometimes, that's good and sometimes that's bad. I think that in the sense of teachers, it's been overwhelmingly bad. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*
Parents and kids have changed since a pandemic. They have changed parenting styles. There is really a disconnect, between the way I was raised, and the way I raised my kids to now. And there's a disconnect with the age groups. It's harder and trying to deal with parents [. . .]. I think dealing with parents for most, for most of the teachers has increased in difficulty. And even students, there's a lot of apathy. It's hard to motivate the students nowadays because their parents are doing mostly everything for them. —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*

JACKS OF ALL TRADES, SUCCESSFUL IN NONE

Response
Tasks are increasing, and the resources are actually shrinking. That stems from the position of our provincial government with respect to the teaching profession and the ATA. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*
It's [frustrating] not having enough time to get everything done. In the 21 years that I've been teaching, the amount of prep time has been just whittled away and whittled away and whittled away, and the expectations that you at least help coach, one team, or that you are on this other committee, or something. I just feel like the demands have grown. The amount of paperwork has grown. We've had, in the last 15 years, maybe a giant influx of international students, a lot from the Philippines, but not necessarily all from the Philippines. And the amount of paperwork that goes with English language learners is incredible, and the number of kids that are coming with IPPs for emotional behaviours and actual acting out behaviours just seems to keep growing as well. —F, Small population, JH/HS, 20–30 years, 56–60
[What makes the job less pleasurable?] Just the amount of admin related, like, extra things that a teacher has to do on top of teaching. That's not even related to teaching. So those are things like paperwork and, communicating to parents and, the securing supplies and applying for grants, all those things that are sort of not directly related to the classroom experience and your impact on kids. —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35
Part of the workload part of it, too, is as the classroom numbers get bigger. Not only do we have more papers to grade, more photocopies to make, but we have more ISPs [Individual support planning] to write, and more ELL [English language learner] reports to write, and you know, more time, you know, talking to parents at interview time or making phone calls. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*
There are a lot of things about teaching that you can't know until you're actually doing it. And as you gain more experience, and you learn how the school district works, or you go through the bargaining process a couple of times, or all of these things that are the stresses of teaching that collision of what you thought you were going in to do, and what your day-to-day life looks like paints a pretty stark picture that that isn't really nice to look at. —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*

SETTING TEACHERS UP FOR SUCCESS

Responses
What I've seen with how new administrators manage their staff and operate their buildings, that's cause for a lot of people to want to jump ship. So, if they can have some type of program coursework or meetings, on how to deal with newer people. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
We come into the profession really wanting to make a difference with the kids. And I actually felt with my education that I was given from our university that I wasn't prepared for this profession to what the expectations are these days. And so, that's actually why I ended up going back and getting my master's because I was actually feeling super incompetent with having to teach kids how to read. —F, Urban, JH, 5–9 years, 31–35
There are a lot of things about teaching that you can't know until you're actually doing it. And as you gain more experience, and you learn how the school district works, or you go through the bargaining process a couple of times, or all of these things that are the stresses of teaching that collision of what you thought you were going in to do, and what your day-to-day life looks like paints a pretty stark picture that that isn't really nice to look at. —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*
I'm not sure if it would be helpful if there were more practicums, or if there were longer, or even […] if you have a couple of days in your practicum where neither you nor the teacher is teaching, and you have time to sit together and really talk. Because I don't think that young people should be scared off from the profession of teaching, but I think that they should be able to hear from someone who is currently doing it about what the hardest parts of it are. And I don't think anything prepares you for teaching. You just kind of have to do it, and you can theoretically understand things and practise things, but until you're doing it and you're doing it for a whole year or multiple years. the weight of those things isn't apparent. And so, you know there's not a really great way to tell new teachers that. But I think that if that practicum experience allowed for some time where neither the mentor, teacher nor the student teacher had to be with the class, and they could spend time together. That's not just after school or a time when no one's being paid for it. I think that would be beneficial. —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*

Responses
What I probably wasn't prepared for was that every two or three years we seem to go through the next greatest thing that's replacing the last next greatest thing. And constantly, you know. Try this new initiative. Try that new initiative, and it's, you know, a revolving door of new things. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
I would have really valued more of a mentorship. When I got into the job. I actually created my own mentorship situation. Because I knew that that is what I needed. —F, Small population, JH/HS, 10–14 years, 41–45, part-time*
I sometimes think of the expression "You figure it out on the fly." That's the first hour of teaching that I experienced. So, from like we were given these instructions that were very rough on, "Here's a schedule. Here's kind of how things will go." And our school was open for almost a decade at this point. So, I think I was presuming everything would be [communicated] very well. [However,] I think I got five days' notice before I had to start this this role. So, I finished my job. And I really had 12 hours to transition to this new job. And right away I could tell that there is information that wasn't really given to me, and I had to run to another classroom while my students were in there to essentially ask "What am I supposed to be doing?" It was just expected you could figure it out. —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*
I felt very prepared, like academically, with being able to lessen plan, being able to pull ideas, find resources. I felt less prepared was just extreme behaviours. Like, you guys, you expect it, but until you experience it, you don't know how you're going to react and what you're going to do. —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*

Responses
I think that the enforcement, sometimes in a school division and on a school site, of collective agreement, and especially what do you do if that collective agreement isn't being upheld? I think it's been communicated that you contact ATA, but I've got to be honest, as a first year teacher, I didn't know that my schedule was a problem until I talked to a 15-year teacher who saw me and said, "That's unacceptable." So, I think, like sometime like an informational communication piece, I don't know if it's like an ATA basics [would be helpful], to help out those 1st year staff members. Frankly, student teaching never told us any of this, and University never told us any of this. —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*
[I've been thinking about leaving since] honestly, my first year of teaching, [. . .] probably since the very beginning, I just once I graduated and got into it. I was like, "Oh, I don't think I signed up for this." —F, Small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50, part-time*
I don't feel that new teachers get enough support. Because I see this all the time we need new teachers. We need the ideas. [New teachers] have such an abundance of energy and ideas. And I love it right. These are the teachers we need. And I find a lot of times our colleagues are not supportive enough. They're very jealous of the energy, the enthusiasm, and I thrive off that. So that's where I find that there's not enough support there. —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*

PRIORITIES FOR ATA ACTION

Responses
One of my best friends at my school right now, he just went from a class last year of 33 kids to this year, he had only 16. And he said the biggest difference between that class was not actually the size but the kids in it. Because if he had this kids that were class size of 16, but they were actually 34, but all of those same kids, they were highly motivated, highly academic, great parent group. So, good support system. He said, "I could make that work." But he instead had a group of 34 kids who didn't care. They didn't like school; they didn't want to be there. And how do you motivate somebody to do it If they don't want to? So, he said that was the hardest thing for him. —F, Rural, ES, 5–9 years, 26–30*
I think [it would be great] if you can get more supports for inclusion. And if you can have something meaningful to address class sizes. Our salary is like 20 per cent behind inflation. It's ridiculous. But if that didn't go up and those things were addressed, I would be okay with that. —F, Urban, ES, 10–14 years, 31–35, part-time*
[I hope that] principals and vice principals are not a part of the ATA anymore. They're separated from teachers—that has to happen [. . .]. They say that "Oh, no, we're built on this profession. We're about collegiality, and we get along. And we communicate." No, it's not working. I remember calling the ATA in distress. When my VP was picking on me so badly, I remember crying, and I remember calling the ATA, and they just said, "Just apologize." [But] I didn't do anything wrong. No, I didn't do anything wrong. She's the one who's should apologize. But that was the answer that I got. So, you're not really there to help me. You're backing them, so [. . .] at that point I felt so devalued and lost in a union that was supposed to protect me. —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55*
Well, number one is prep time. They have to have that prep. Time has to be built in every day. I don't care. It has to be done there. Those teachers have to be given time to prepare, and they can't be taken away. —F, Small population, ES, 15–19 years, 51–55**

Responses
Really the biggest thing they should be doing is trying to bridge the gap between parents and teachers. because if you don't have parents on your side, it doesn't matter what policies you put in place. The more rules and restrictions you put [in] that parents feel like are an infringement on their rights, the more challenging it makes my day-to-day. —F, Rural, JH, 15–19 years, 36–40*
The example I'll give is for my junior high team in our school. So, we had roughly 200 or 300 students, and we had one EA for that whole group. Frankly, if we had a second or even a third EA, that additional support in the classroom, especially around literacy and numeracy, I think we'd see students feel a little more confident. I think two on that scheduling bit if we were able to have one more teacher on that floor. I think we maybe would have less exhausted teachers, folks with a little more like capacity and bandwidth, and to on try to build culture in the schools which I know unfortunately falls on the role of the teaching staff. —M, Urban, JH, 1 year, under 25*
[I'd want the ATA] protecting our ability to have some autonomy over our time off. One of the neighboring school divisions here, and it's a very rural division, […] they have even harder time keeping and retaining teachers. And they let their teachers bank their personal days up to a week and be able to take a week off every couple of years and, like, that is amazing. You know, that would make me feel like my time was valued. —F, Small population, JH/HS, 20–30 years, 56–60

CONCERNS ABOUT WORD OF MOUTH

Responses
The principal of the school that [my mom] worked at recommended that I not go into education. I [still] went [into education]. [But,] teaching is not just teaching these days. You're dealing with behaviours on behaviours, and it's way more than what it used to be. —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*
I wouldn't necessarily tell people to be a teacher anymore. And that's really hard. —F, Urban, HS, 20–30 years, 41–45*

PAID TIME WITH PEERS

Responses
More and more teachers walk in the front door, and they don't go to the staff room. They go right to their classroom, and they close the door. They turn their computer on, and they start their day. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
Co-teaching is a best practice [for creating belonging]. Getting teachers together to work together rather than in the silos of their classrooms; that is a relic of the 50s. It's an important pathway to enabling teachers to build that sense of belonging. —M, Urban, HS, 10–14 years, 46–50*
There'd be a lunchtime where the staff was there, and the kids were gone [from early dismissal]. And we used to do a thing where you were on a team, and your team would provide lunch for the week. So, you had to provide one random item every two months or so, and we would come together and have a meal together. That was really good for creating that sense of community. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
The instructional coaches in our division are really helpful. So, we also have collaborative days within our division, where all the teachers of the same grade will meet up and go over things together. And so that's been like another [positive], just finding those people that will help you out there. —F, Small population, ES, 1 year, 20–30*

ATA ≠ ACTION

Responses
Lots of [admins] are all talk. But they are not action. They sound good when they present to the big wigs at the top, but it's not happening on the front line. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
The way the ATA completely turned their back on all the teachers during the vaccine mandate during COVID, I think was absolutely ridiculous. It felt very invasive of personal stuff and the ATA didn't back us. They fully supported it. And so, from a professional standpoint, not even within the classroom, I really felt that there was not as much support as I thought. I thought I could turn to the ATA, and I lost a lot of faith in the ATA around that. That they would treat fellow colleagues and myself [like that]. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
This is the first time in my career that I've actually called the ATA, and this year I've called them a number of times. And to be honest, if anything, they offer a sympathetic ear, and they understand. But they haven't followed up in any way, and they haven't done anything concrete at all. Like, not even a responding email. I send an email. And then they say, "Oh, this is going to happen," or "I'm going to take this to the board," and I haven't heard anything after that. —F, Urban, HS, 20–30 years, 41–45*
I think the ATA has picked a lot of fights in the wrong place in Alberta with politics in my opinion, that have not helped. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
And then you call the ATA, and you ask for help. And they say, "Well this is all hearsay. We need proof. We need this. We want your name." Okay. if I give you my name, I'm sure you know someone who knows someone who knows someone, and if they know that I'm complaining about this, you know who's not going to get hired. —F, Small population, ES, 2–4 years, 46–50, part-time

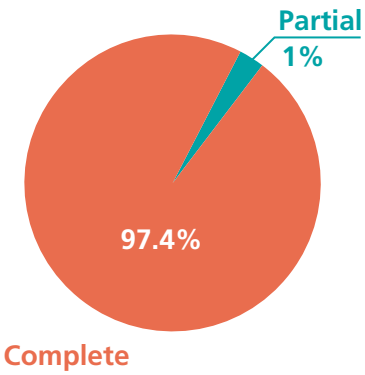
MOMENTUM FOR MOMENTOUS CHANGE

Responses
Do we throw [the system] out? Would parents sign their kids up if they were told your kid will have 10 kids in the class, but you only go to school for two days a week? [. . .] I think the ATA needs to look at these alternative education options because that's going to be the solution for the future. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
We have to fight now. Because that's going to affect you for the rest of your career. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
It is insanely hard to get part-time teaching to have work-life balance. When I was at 80 per cent, I did all my work at school. I didn't have homework and that makes a huge difference. Like I didn't take marking [home], all my report cards were done during the school day because I had a huge chunk at the beginning of the day. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*
I want a bigger connection with the government because I feel that the ATA can only do so much if we don't have a government that values us and supports us. It's going to be even harder for the ATA to do what we talk about, when we talk about policies and procedures and we pass motions, which are great because it shows the rest of the Alberta teachers that we listen and we're standing behind them. But when it ultimately comes down to how the government interprets [those ideas] and their support, we don't have that. That makes the messaging back to teachers harder. 'Yes, we hear you! But [the government] isn't going to do anything. —F, Urban, ES, 20–30 years, 51–55*
I liked [working at] 80 per cent. Going fulltime I think it's the workload—the mental workload. It's the physically getting stuff done to prep and marking all that stuff. But the mental workload of 80 per cent was so much more enjoyable, and I was okay to take the pay cut. —F, Rural, ES, 10–14 years, age N/A*

Appendix B: Survey Data

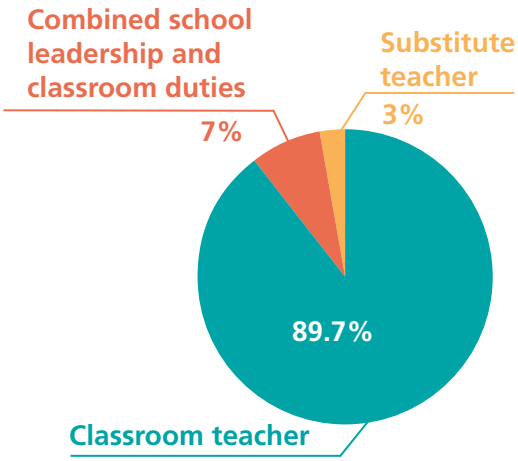
REPORT FOR EXITING THE PROFESSION RESEARCH STUDY 2024: INSIGHT AND EXIT INTERVIEW REGISTRATION

Response counts



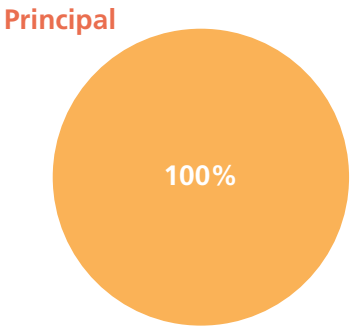
Value	Responses
Complete	38
Partial	1
Total:	39

1. Your current assignment



Value	Responses
Classroom teacher	35
Combined school leadership and classroom duties	3
Substitute teacher	1
Total:	39

2. Please select

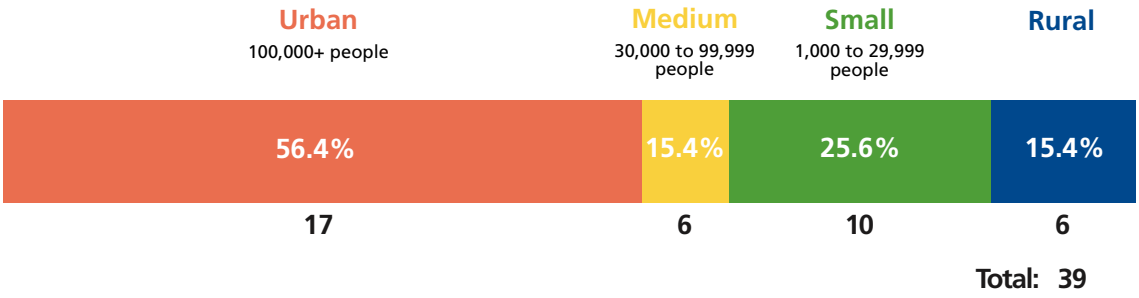


Value	Responses
Principal	2
Total:	2

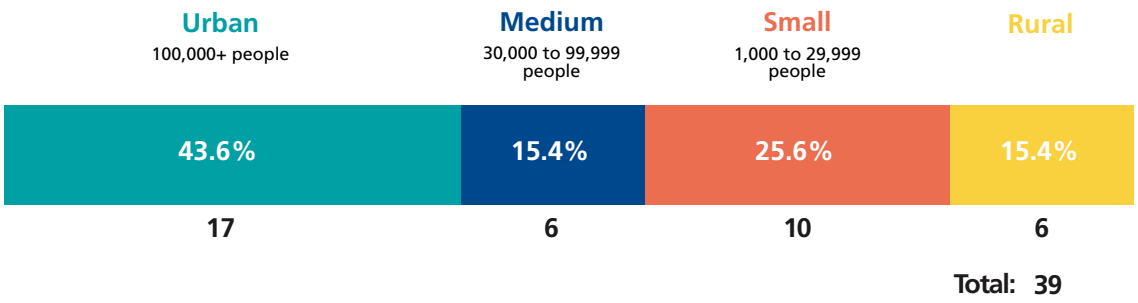
3. What grade levels are you currently teaching? (Please check all that apply.)

Grade	Percentage	Responses
ECS/ Kindergarten	10.5%	4
Grade 1	13.2%	5
Grade 2	15.8%	6
Grade 3	23.7%	9
Grade 4	21.1%	8
Grade 5	18.4%	7
Grade 6	13.2%	5
Grade 7	28.9%	11
Grade 8	28.9%	11
Grade 9	28.9%	11
Grade 10	28.9%	11
Grade 11	23.7%	9
Grade 12	18.4%	7

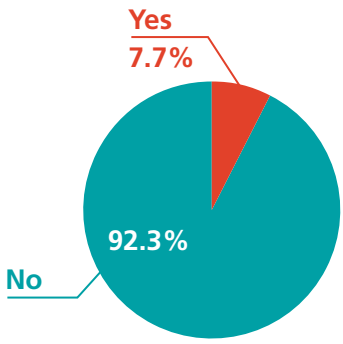
4. I currently live in a



6. I teach (or used to teach) in a



7. Have you already exited the profession of teaching or left the province of Alberta?



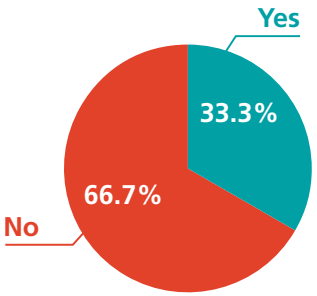
Value	Responses
Yes	3
No	36

Total: 39

8. Did you leave for professional, personal and/or other reasons? (Please check all that apply.)

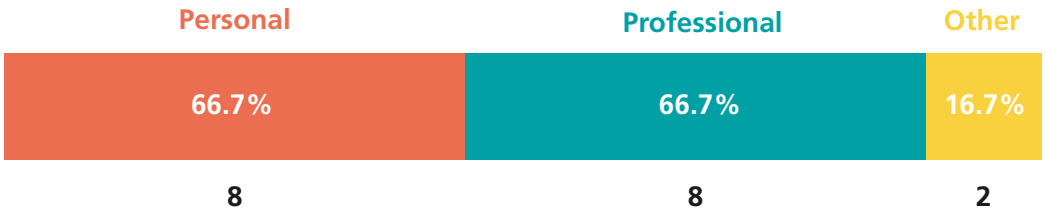
Value	Percentage	Responses
Personal	66.7%	2
Professional	66.7%	2

9. Will you be exiting the profession of teaching or leaving the province of Alberta at the end of this school year?



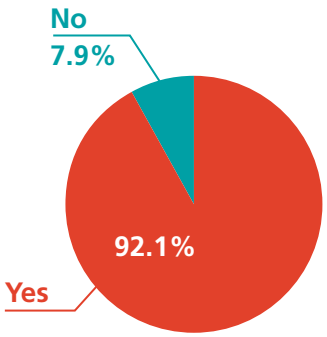
Value	Responses
Yes	12
No	24
Total:	36

10. Are you leaving for professional, personal and/or other reasons? (Please check all that apply.)



Other – (Please specify)	Responses
Other opportunities	2
Potentially leaving teaching, it is unsustainable and I am burnt out.	2

11. Would you be willing to participate in a one-on-one confidential exit interview at a time of your convenience? This would be a one-hour virtual interview to be conducted in confidence with an Association representative(s) between May or August 2024?



Value	Responses
Yes	35
No	3
Total:	38

12. If possible, please share what you are planning to do after leaving teaching in Alberta?

Responses
Enter the private sector or return to school.
I am hoping to teach in [another province], or something in professional development.
I would love to work in curriculum support development. I know that the 7–9 science curriculum needs to change, so I am waiting to see how that plays out.
Financial Advisor.
Private Enterprises.
Run my business and develop courses for CTF.
I am looking for a job, mostly with the government. Will stay teaching until I find a new job. Hopefully by the end of the year, if not, I will be back to teaching in Sept. As a [parent], I have no choice but to keep teaching until I find something else that pays enough to cover my bills.
Unsure.

Responses
I have accepted a full-time teaching contract in […].
I will be going on […] leave next year and hopefully, I will find another job. I don't know what field, possibly project management of some time.

13. What may change your mind about leaving teaching in Alberta?

Responses
Pay raise, class sizes/supports improved.
Change in government's interaction with the teaching profession.
See how central table negotiations go and whether the association is willing to fight to make things better or if we are going to "wait for the next government," again.
Changes in how teaching/education is valued.
Change in government, increased funding allowing for more staff within schools, lower class sizes, supports for coded students, a raise to keep up with inflation.
Admin changes, govt changes
Family
A significant pay increase, class size caps, and mandatory prep time built into the day.
Not sure. The only thing holding me back from not leaving right now is the pay and benefits. Financial stability/security is very important to me.

Responses
Better pay, aggressive/older teachers retire/strong Admin (we need to hire, and the applications are very few), funds given to inclusive education to manage the students who are several grades behind or who experience behaviour issues inside the regular class is not working! It's a detriment to our good students!
Finances, stress level, workload.
Changes in parental expectations, shift in the system (realization that teachers should have more time to PREP/plan) and not have to do these things on their weekends, more support for challenging behaviours/class sizes.
A strong union push for change in Alberta classrooms to support teachers who support all students in the classroom, for learning. A change in provincial policies and outcomes to support children's needs within the classrooms for all cultures.
Work-life balance, classroom sizes and subsequent workloads.
Getting a job.
Possibly a different job assignment or different division.
A better relationship with my school board and being respected by the Alberta government.
Possibly finding a school that fits, but I highly doubt it.
If my principal hires me in my current position (floater teacher, no assigned class, small group support) for another year, I will remain. But I will not return to being a classroom teacher.
If the work environment substantially changes.

14. Using a sentence or two, can you explain your personal motivations for entering the teaching profession?

Responses
I enjoy working with kids and helping them realize their diverse aptitude and potential.
I started teaching due to negative experiences I had from Grades 4–12.
Alberta used to have one of the best education systems in the world. Used to be well funded and forward thinking.
It seemed like a job that would make me feel good about what I did, it used to have an okay pension and benefits and allowed me to pursue other things in the summer. I thought having an impact on the next generation would be fulfilling, but in the current climate it does not. Seemed like a terrific profession, working with kids, fair work-life balance, inspiring future generations.
I loved learning and wanted to share that with others.
I wanted to give [back] to students.
I always wanted to be a teacher, to make a difference and be there for kids.
I felt, and still feel, that I have the skills to build relationships with kids that can impact their lives for the better. I liked the ever-changing environment of education—always learning new and better ways to engage students.
Give back [to] STEM learning.
Working and building relationships with children has been the most personally and professionally satisfying career I have held as an adult. It sounds cliché, but making a difference in a child's life is all the motivation I ever needed. The camaraderie and professional relationships with fellow educators is a close second.
I love teaching kids, and I want to help them develop into resilient and empathetic citizens.

Responses
I entered the profession after I had my children, and I wanted to have the same schedule as them. I had volunteered at their school and was attracted to the idea of teaching science.
Love kids, love coaching, love to learn.
I was inspired by amazing high school teachers, to make a difference in student lives.
I enjoy being around/working with kids.
Wanting to support learning for children to become self-esteemed, confident, empathetic and capable citizens in a peaceful, caring province/country.
My son [had a learning disability]; teachers pushed him through. Got into teaching because lots of kiddos fell through the cracks. Like seeing kids shine (although it's so overwhelming with class sizes; it's hard to reach all the kiddos now!)
I wanted to give back and make the world a better place than when I entered it. I didn't want students to feel inadequate like I did.
To make a difference. Teachers have always made a difference in my life growing up. I wanted to do the same.
Seemed like a terrific profession, working with kids, fair work-life balance, inspiring future generations.
My mother was a teacher, and I saw the difference she made in the lives of her students. I wanted to have the same influence on my students.
To help students learn about trades, give them options in their futures, and be a part of the profession.
Love teaching, loved the work with the kids, seeing the growth and learning from and with them. Contributing to the future of our country. Continual learning and passion for the subjects I teach. Passing on that passion to others.

Responses
I wanted to be a French as a second language teacher who actually knew French and could spark a joy for learning languages. I wanted to help students find joy in learning in general.
I enjoyed working with kids and thought I could make an impact on them. I still enjoy working with some of them and I know I make an impact on some of them, but to a lesser extent than previously.
The benefits are far outweighed by all the things that make teaching so difficult.
Deep belief in access to equitable public education—strong society is based upon access to education. And, personally grateful for my diverse experiences as a product of public education.
Worthwhile and essential contribution to society.
I love planning, organization, working with others, and wanted to have an impact.
Working with youth. I felt I could build meaningful relationships with students.
I wanted to help make a difference. I care about children and wanted to help them succeed.
I enjoyed working with children, I had always taken on the role of being a coach and enjoyed tutoring. I spent time volunteering in classrooms and enjoyed it.
It had been something I always wanted to do. Working with kids has always been when I am at my happiest, so teaching seemed like a natural fit.
I had some really good teachers in high school that motivated me to be a good teacher. They were teachers that truly cared. I also work well with kids, and my experiencing in teaching small groups before my teaching degree made me think that it was something that I would enjoy and be passionate about.
I am definitely passionate about the power of education and literature. I think that education more than anything can change the trajectory of someone's life.

15. How long have/had you been thinking about leaving either the teaching profession or teaching in Alberta?

Value	Percentage	Responses
Less than 6 months	11.1%	4
6 months to a year	13.9%	5
1 to 2 years	44.4%	16
2 years or more	27.8%	10
Other	2.8%	1

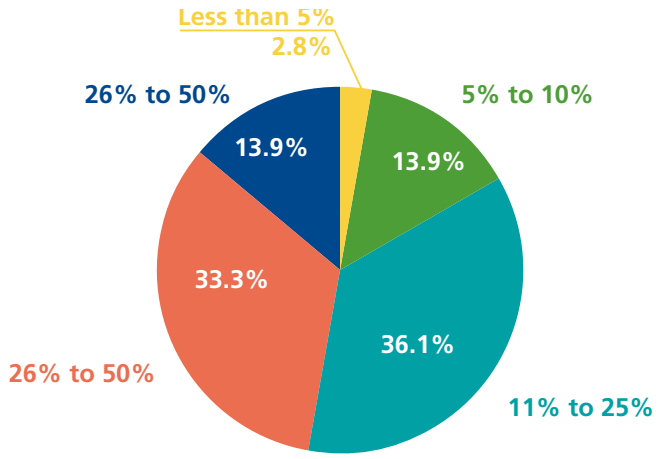
16. Which of the following are/were drivers for your decision to leave the teaching profession in Alberta? (Please check all that apply.)

Value	Percentage	Responses
Conditions of professional practice (workload/balance)	91.7%	33
Inability to meet all the students' needs in my class or school	72.2%	26
Political environment (government rhetoric/job security/funding cuts)	66.7%	24
Frustration with parental expectations	58.3%	21
The changes to curriculum and other new requirements in Alberta	52.8%	19
Concerns about aggression in schools	47.2%	17
Because of low pay	38.9%	14

Value	Percentage	Responses
Health considerations	36.1%	13
Loss of autonomy in my work	33.3%	12
Other – Write In	25.0%	9
The challenging experience of teaching during COVID-19	22.2%	8
Better financial opportunities were available	16.7%	6
Reasons unrelated to teaching (eg, moved to be closer to family)	2.8%	1
Chose to stop working entirely to care for children or a family member	2.8%	1

Other – Write In	Count
Barely have enough lunch time in my day	1
Being personally bullied, and having a toxic work environment	1
Health considerations—but specifically mental health.	1
Mental health	1
Negative workplace culture	1
No future in the profession	1
Schedule flexibility	1
Smartphone use and lack of clear, consistent policy	1
Being bullied by admin and students, and no one caring or helping, including ATA and HR	1
Total:	9

17. From your perspective, what percentage of your present/former colleagues are also considering leaving the teaching profession at this time?



Value	Responses
Less than 5%	1
5% to 10%	5
11% to 25%	13
26% to 50%	12
51% to 75%	5
Total:	36

18. Which of the following drivers seem prevalent among your colleagues who are also considering leaving the teaching profession in Alberta? (Please check all that apply.)

Value	Percentage	Responses
Conditions of professional practice (workload/balance)	91.9%	34
The changes to curriculum and other new requirements in Alberta	73.0%	27
Political environment (government rhetoric/job security/funding cuts)	70.3%	26
Inability to meet all the students' needs in my class or school	67.6%	25
Frustration with parental expectations	62.2%	23
Concerns about aggression in schools	48.6%	18

Value	Percentage	Responses
Loss of autonomy in my work	40.5%	15
Because of low pay	35.1%	13
Health considerations	32.4%	12
The challenging experience of teaching during COVID-19	29.7%	11
Ready to retire	27.0%	10
Better financial opportunities were available	18.9%	7
Concerns about smartphones and digital addiction to the learning environment	10.8%	4
Reasons unrelated to teaching (eg, moved to be closer to family)	5.4%	2
Chose to stop working entirely to care for children or a family member	5.4%	2

Other – Write In	Count
Bullying and intimidation by admin and other staff, going to highest levels for support and still not getting support needed. Aggressor always backed, teachers never supported.	1
Total:	1

24. If possible, please share any specific short-term (one-year) or medium-term (one to three year) ideas about what would have kept you in the profession of teaching in Alberta?

Responses
Support or incentive for coaches who volunteer five to 10 hours per week during sport seasons; Pay raise (significant): we don't make enough to live in the current economy; Classroom size reduction/support: I have had two classes with Grades 7–8 with 36 students without EA. At some point I started to feel like I couldn't cover needed concepts for students to move onto high school in Grade 9 and started to just plan engaging activities. Teaching and doing things like an essay or business letter in a class that large with varying needs (behavioural, academic) and levels was nearly impossible, and I couldn't reach the students to provide effective instruction. This was extremely disheartening and resulted in reduced teaching efficacy/feelings of inadequacy.
A government that values the work and the workload of our teachers in this province. As well as respect from the province toward our provincial ATA.
If we were willing to fight to make education better in Alberta.
Salary increase and opportunities for growth. The ability to teach what I want and what I am good at. More flexibility in scheduling. Better PD funding and opportunity. The ability to earn more: I believe that if you work harder, you should be incentivized. Or if not, being creative in how to reward the people that work the hardest.
A job that paid twice as much with more flexible time off to help support taking care of my husband's mother.
Admin changes
More/better support and resources (both physical and manpower), and an educational system and curriculum cycle that is—and will stay—nonpartisan!
Short term: class size caps, increased pay, prep time. Medium term: improved workplace culture and provincial respect for teachers.
I have worked six days per week for more than 20 years. More prep time is urgently needed to maintain our ability to do this job long term. Add onto that a new curriculum that we need to figure out how to teach, no additional time to do that, and work becomes the ONLY thing we ever do. Daytime, nighttime, weekends and summer break.

Responses
More personal days, where we don't have to pay for a substitute. Travelling is impossible in this profession, with this pay. We are so restricted in every front; it feels like suffocation. Classroom not met; we don't even have budgets for differentiation materials like Mathletics, which I know would benefit students by 1000%, but resources like this we have to cut back, and so my lower learners are suffering. If there was more support, higher pay, better vacation days, I may consider staying.
The opportunity to teach a grade for more than one year, not having to choose part-time work over a bad working environment, paid planning time, paid report card and IPP time, more support for new teachers outside of their first year of teaching, more classroom support for inclusion.
More accountability among our leadership in schools. Admin should not be part of the ATA.
More pay, opportunities for growth, professional development, merit-based pay.
Adequate support from admin, head office and the government
Action by ATA or HR on bullying/intimidating admin. Two psychologists, a therapist and a GP all said I needed to be moved schools due to the bullying by admin. HR refused despite knowing exactly what was going on in the school and having received several complaints about the admin, yet never doing anything. Actually caring about teacher well-being not just a facade to look good yet doing nothing about it even when teachers ask for help, or giving minimal support.
Banning smartphones in schools would be a good place to start. Having a clear policy in place that is enforced would make teaching easier and help students be more engaged with the content. I feel like most of my day is policing phone use.
I was really hopeful of the results in the last provincial election, and the UCP winning again really dashed any hope I had of conditions in schools improving.
A more engaged school culture. Hope that current government would be willing to work to truly benefit education, not undermine the profession.

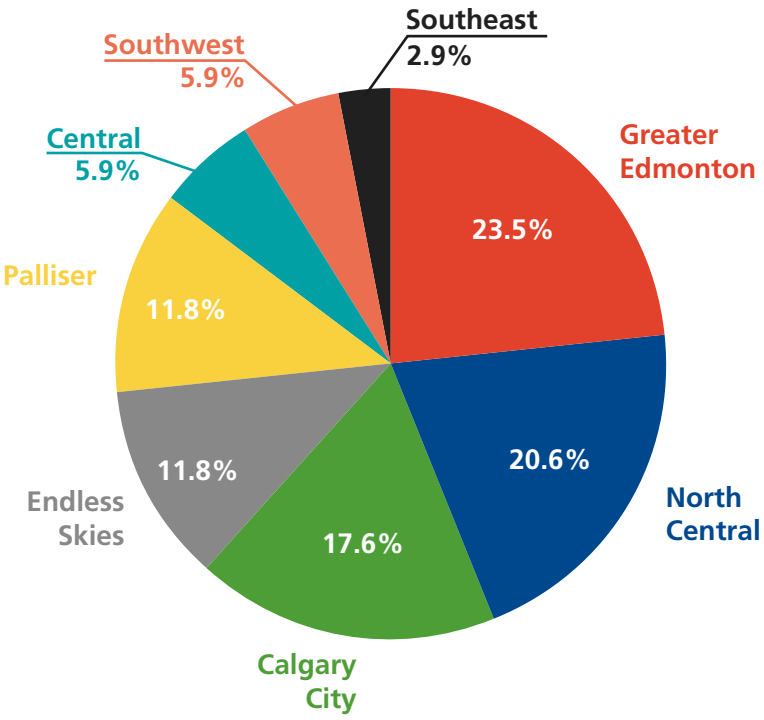
Responses
Reduced workload, more autonomy, respectful staffing/HR (not getting surplused in October). Greater support for hybrid learning/teaching.
Smaller class size, access to support for students, access to professional development related to classroom management, part-time EA within the classroom
Not being brushed off by admin for concerns of student behaviour, bullying and assaults. Knowing me and my colleagues were respected and would actually get support. Actual time to prep in a timetable.
A class with a reasonable range of differentiation. I literally had students in a Grade 5 class who couldn't read. At all. Consequences for violent and intimidating behaviour.
Short-term: offered a continuous contract in larger population centres. Medium term: government increases funding and central bargaining goes well.
Supportive work environments, proper funding, smaller class sizes, a safer work environment, less judgement, and protection from parent threats (I should not be threatened that a parent is going to beat me up and have no support from administration).
Rewarding positive teaching assignments. Hiring based on quality not friendships/seniority.
Having better practices on classroom management specifically aimed towards junior high [school] behavioural needs. Learning how to work and talk to administrators about behavioural needs in classrooms that become overwhelming.
If I could figure out a way to limit my marking and prepping to less than five hours a week. Class sizes of no more than 25.

25. Are there any other opinions, comments or questions that we might want to ask those leaving the profession in our live virtual exit interviews?

Responses
What are some other ways to keep teachers, recruit teachers. If we are unable to increase pay, what can we do?
How to best support a better work-life balance within the profession to lessen burnout and attrition.
What do school boards need to know about why teachers are leaving? The ATA could then communicate on our behalf of policies that are hurting our employers in the long run. Particularly in rural Alberta, many of us feel unheard and uncared for by our school boards. The feeling is that there are always new teachers that are willing to take our positions. This is becoming a real problem in rural Alberta. Attracting and keeping teachers is an urgent issue in rural settings. But our employers are not finding ways to keep their existing teachers. It's like once we have a job, we should just be grateful and not ask for more.
How does administration (direct supervisors read principal positions) impact your desire to teach/move locations? What specifically would help teachers stay if admin could change something at a school level? (ie, prep time, reduced meetings, consuming instructional minutes with announcements/prayer/anthems, interruptions on PA during instructional time, etc) What programming do you wish your district (or government) could provide for [students who have advanced intellectual ability]? [How about] specific programming for [students with different needs] to allow for equal learning opportunities [. . .] in the classroom that would have aided in your decision to stay in the profession and how would that have impacted your decision?
I can't think of any.
Workplace bullying.
What could we have done to keep you?

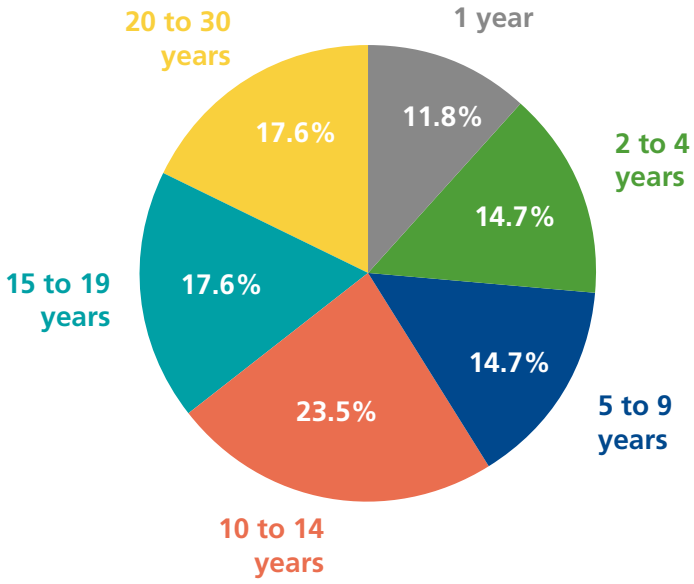
Responses
Why are you leaving? What do you plan to do next? Do you have any ideas to improve the environment for other teachers?
Effect of admin behaviour on your decision to leave.
How has the profession changed since you started teaching? What tangible differences do you notice and how has that impacted your decision to leave teaching?
Are they willing to take a pay cut and fewer holidays for more work-life balance?
Ideal working conditions?
None that I can think of.
Did you feel safe at work? How often did your job make you feel defeated? How often did work make you cry? Did your job affect your health? Did the school implement a support system for new teachers? Did you feel isolated? What were administrators' expectations of you? Did they expect you to take on more extra-curriculars to deem you as worthy? Were administrators passive-aggressive? How did you feel on Sundays?

26. Teachers' convention that you attend/attended



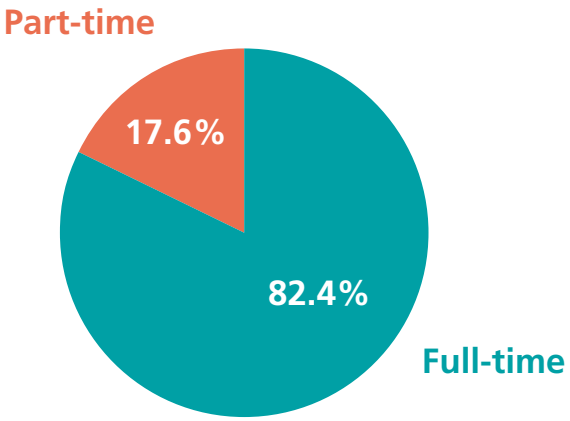
Value	Responses
Greater Edmonton	8
North Central	7
Calgary City	6
Endless Skies	4
Palliser	4
Central	2
Southwest	2
Southeast	1
Total:	34

27. Your teaching experience, including current year



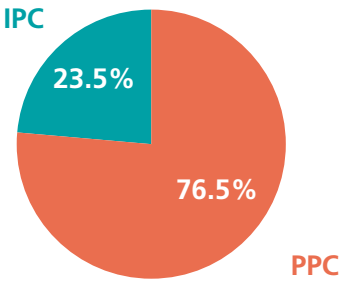
Years	Responses
1	4
2 to 4	5
5 to 9	5
10 to 14	8
15 to 19	6
20 to 30	6
Total:	34

28. You are employed



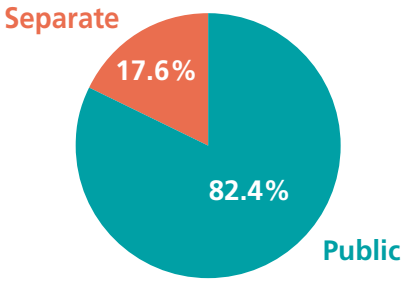
Value	Responses
Full-time	28
Part-time	6
Total:	34

29. Alberta teaching certification



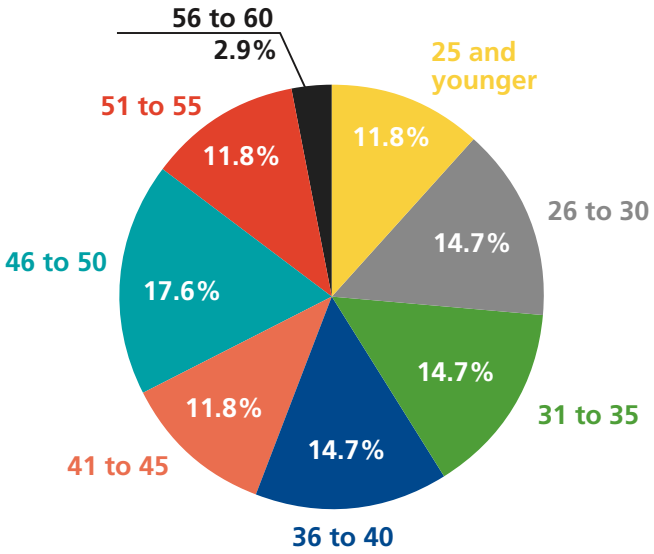
Value	Responses
Permanent Professional Certification (PPC)	26
Interim Professional Certification (IPC)	8
Total:	34

30. Type of school authority in which you are/were employed



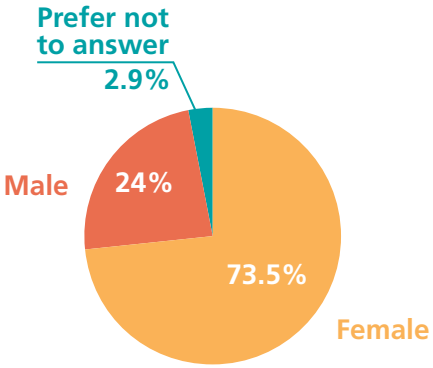
Value	Responses
Public	28
Separate	6
Total:	34

31. Your age



Value	Responses
25 and younger	4
26 to 30	5
31 to 35	5
36 to 40	5
41 to 45	4
46 to 50	6
51 to 55	4
56 to 60	1
Total:	36

32. How do you identify?

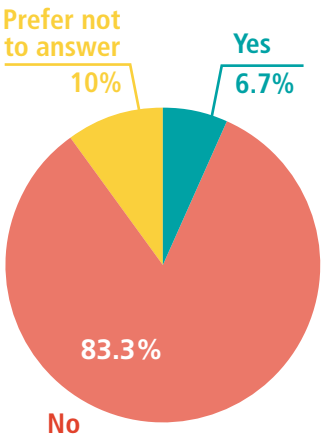


Value	Responses
Female	25
Male	8
Prefer not to answer	1
Total:	34

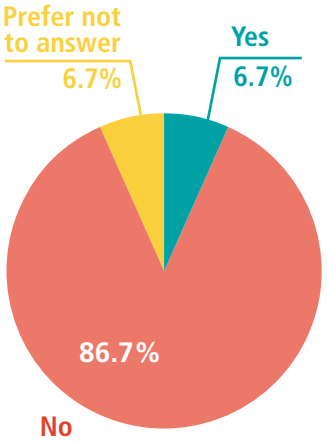
33. The following information will assist the Association in identifying the extent to which the profession includes underrepresented groups

Question	Responses			Total
	Yes	No	Prefer not to Answer	
Do you identify yourself as a member of a sexual of gender minority?	2	25	3	30
Do you identify as a member of the Black community or of a community of Colour?	2	26	2	30
Do you identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit ancestry?	0	29	1	30
Do you identify as a person with a disability?	4	25	1	30

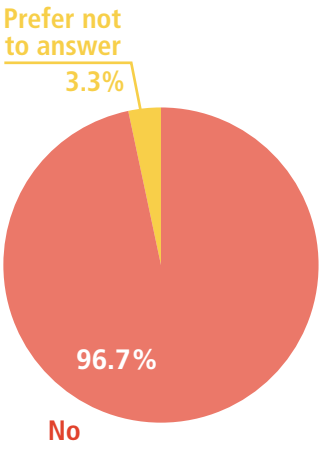
Do you identify yourself as a member of a sexual or gender minority?



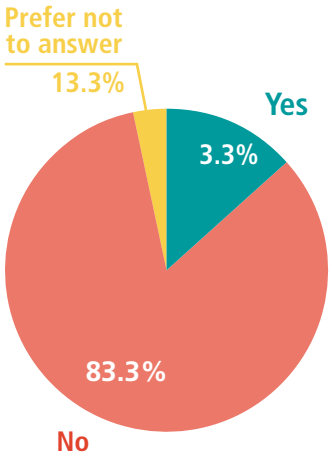
Do you identify as a member of the Black community or of a community of Colour?



Do you identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit ancestry?



Do you identify as a person with a disability?



The Alberta
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