



CONVENTION READY

How to make the most of teachers' convention

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ATA NEWS

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Have your say

**ATA NEWS
READER**

SURVEY

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Progress, not promises.

Real support for public education is needed now more than ever.



The ATA launches a new ad campaign calling for real action, just as teacher survey results raise red flags. See [pages 5 and 6](#).



Team building

Helping our communities help public education

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Government should protect, not undermine, public education

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Not done yet

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Helping our communities help public education



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
ATA News
Editor-in-Chief

Teaching can sometimes feel like a solo sport. We spend our days tucked away in our classrooms, focused entirely on the students in front of us. In the rush of lesson plans and grading, “community engagement” can sound like a buzzword—or worse, a chore we simply don’t have time for. But it’s time to shift that perspective. Engaging with the groups around us isn’t just about public relations; it’s about building a support system that makes our jobs more sustainable.

When we bridge the gap between our schools and the broader community, we stop carrying the entire weight of the system on our own shoulders. Real, tangible change often starts with something as simple as a conversation. I’ve seen this first-hand when I was a

principal in a small community school. When a local industrial site decided to donate its recycled bottle money, it transformed \$20,000 of waste into brand new basketball hoops for our students. That opportunity came about because a school council member casually mentioned a school need to a friend. Without that conversation, the school would not have benefited.

When our new playground needed assembly (and if you know, you know), a local service club didn’t just send a cheque—they showed up in work boots and spent their weekend bolting slides together. Even more powerful was seeing a local pipeline company send a crew to rake the playground sand, with many volunteers being former students of the very school they were helping. The investments community members make in our schools show they care about public education. And we need more than teachers and parents to share their voices in support.

By getting involved in our public schools, businesses and service clubs are not only donating time or labour

but also gaining a front-row seat to the incredible work teachers and school leaders do every day. Trustees, school council members and local business owners are some of our most important allies, but they can’t advocate for what they don’t understand. When we stay isolated in our buildings, we allow the story of public education to be written by budget spreadsheets and headlines instead of lived experience.

Every conversation with trustees, business leaders and community members matters. It isn’t just “small talk”; it’s an opportunity to provide the human context for why public education matters. You are showing them exactly why their taxes and donations toward public education are the best investment a community can make. When they know you, they are no longer just supporting a system; they are supporting you and your students.

Maintaining strong public support for our schools requires us to be visible. We need to be the faces of the profession in the places where

decisions are made. Stepping outside the classroom takes effort, but the payoff is a community ready to fight for us when it counts.

We can start by showing up. Attend a school council meeting. You don’t need a presentation; just be there to share a quick “win” from your classroom. The next time your local holds an event, invite a trustee and let them see the passion of the profession first-hand. Join a local board, a service club or a community group. Be the person who can answer questions about what’s actually happening in our schools today.

It takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a teacher to show the village how they can help. Let’s stop working in isolation and start building a team that has our backs. Our community is ready—to help with playgrounds, volunteer for hot lunches and stand up for our schools. We just need to make sure we’re opening the door. ■

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

Rebuilding the Special Emergency Fund a priority in the wake of the 2025 strike



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive
Secretary

Question: Why is the Association going to charge me \$40 more per month in dues?

Answer: At its January meeting, Provincial Executive Council had to deal with a thorny question—how to restore the Association’s financial capacity following our provincewide labour action.

Going into the strike on October 6, 2025, the Special Emergency Fund (SEF), used to fund extraordinary bargaining and strike-related expenses, stood at \$25.5 million dollars. Although the Association did not distribute strike pay, it committed to maintaining health benefit coverage for all teachers for the duration of the strike. By the time the strike ended by the passage of Bill 2 on October 27, the Association was on the hook for \$24 million of benefit payments alone, with other expenditures relating to communications, advertising and strike support bringing the total dollars committed to between \$25 and \$26 million.

While the Association will cover a portion of the costs incurred

by reallocating about \$5 million internally, effectively the SEF has been fully depleted. Restoring it on an expedited basis is important to send a strong signal to the government and school boards about teachers’ capacity and intention to return to bargaining from a position of strength at the expiry of the legislated settlement. Furthermore, it will provide the means to fund activities in advance of the next round of bargaining to build greater Association capacity and build public support for teachers.

Now, those who follow this column closely (all three of you), may recall that I had dealt with this scenario previously and had indicated that decisions about replenishing the SEF would ultimately be made by the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) through the Association’s budget process. Although this has been our practice over the years, there is another provision in the general bylaws of the Association that I had not fully considered in my previous answer but has now come into play.

Bylaw 11 allows Provincial Executive Council, when it believes that an emergency exists, to authorize, at its own discretion, the collection of an additional fee not exceeding \$20 per week per member during the continuance of the emergency and for so long thereafter as it deems advisable, adding the fees collected to the SEF. This provision was last

used over two decades ago, but for a relatively short period of time and in close proximity to the provincially coordinated local labour action of 2002.

By means of a weighted vote, Council decided that the current circumstances justified making novel use of bylaw 11 to levy a fee of \$10 per week (\$40 per month) beginning in February 2026. The fee, half of the maximum permitted under the bylaw, would be collected for up to 16 months, by which point the SEF would be restored to prestrike levels.

Recognizing that members had made a substantial financial sacrifice during the strike, Council has determined that it will not seek to collect regular Association fees for the month of October 2025. Under the *Teaching Profession Act*, the regular Association fees are set on an annual basis by ARA. Amending the fees for 2025/26 to reflect the decision not to collect the money that would be owed for October 2025 will require some fancy procedural footwork, likely including the convening of an emergent representative assembly concurrent with ARA 2026. More information will be forthcoming to ARA delegates in the next month or so.

This approach to managing the replenishment of the SEF has the advantage of being more transparent, flexible and less distorting of Association finances than collecting

similar funds by means of a conventional fee increase. It will also provide for a clear direction forward on an issue that has captured the attention of locals, seven of which have submitted ARA resolutions proposing diverse and conflicting solutions. Most importantly, the rapid replenishment of the Association’s fiscal capacity will be essential to positioning teachers and doing essential groundwork in advance of what will likely prove a contentious round of collective bargaining, which will be in full swing in 2028.

While the temporary fee will address the immediate problem and secure the SEF for the immediate future, there remain other more fundamental questions concerning the purpose, deployment and size of the SEF that teachers may wish to address through Council, their locals and ARA. ■

Find an extended Q&A on the ATA’s website here:



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

Advancing women and girls in science

Why does it still matter?



VIEWPOINTS

Sana Waseem
Learning leader, CTF, Technology and Library

Each year, the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (marked annually on Feb. 11) invites us to celebrate progress: more women and girls are choosing STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), and more organizations are addressing gender equity. As a learning leader with the Calgary Board of Education (CBE), someone who has worked professionally in laboratories, and an advocate who supports women and gender-nonconforming youth in various STEM settings, I truly believe in advancing women and girls in science.

My commitment to this work is deeply personal. Despite being accepted into medical school, my mother could not attend because she lived in a society that did not value educating girls. Determined that her daughters would not be held back, she supported my sister and me when we pursued

“Girls are not lacking interest or ability in science; they are lacking the feeling that they belong there long-term.”

science. My sister, Sarah Waseem, is now an engineer and the recipient of a Young Women in Energy award. When asked what advice she would give to women and girls pursuing science, her reply was simple yet powerful: “Look at everything as an opportunity. An opportunity to try something new and explore our interests. An opportunity to adapt when things around us change. Even what we call ‘setbacks’ are opportunities to learn and grow. Never be afraid of taking on opportunities, for you never know where they might lead.”

Equally inspiring is that my mother did not abandon her own education. While raising children, she pursued a computer information systems degree and an MBA and now works as a financial systems supervisor with the Calgary Board of Education (CBE). Her story is a testament to why this work is not just about access, but also about ensuring systems allow women to return, persist and lead at any stage in life.

In my roles as a math and science teacher with the CBE and as a coordinator for the Canadian Association for Girls in Science (CAGIS) Calgary, I see clearly that creating cultures that highlight women

role models—and where girls are introduced to and challenged in STEM—not only increases knowledge and confidence, but also fosters a sense of belonging. What I observe repeatedly is that girls are not lacking interest or ability in science; they are lacking the feeling that they belong there long-term. Subtle messaging adds up—it might be as simple as who gets called on to answer questions or lead experiments—and it shapes how girls view themselves in science. By being mindful about inclusion, we help girls better envision a future in STEM. While this may seem like special treatment, it is, in reality, the intentional removal of barriers that should never have existed in the first place. It is permission for girls’ talents to thrive alongside boys’ talents, rather than behind them.

I have also seen how women’s presence in leadership facilitates STEM programming for girls. It was a woman principal who supported my colleague and me a few years ago in securing grants to organize STEM field trips for girls. Proposing the idea felt natural, as my principal already understood its importance. This experience is one of the reasons I promote women in leadership as part of the provincial ATA’s and my local’s Women in Leadership committees, and why it has become part of my doctoral focus. We need to create environments where women teachers and school leaders can experience success without having to constantly prove themselves in ways their male colleagues do not.

At the same time, I want to emphasize that lifting women up does not mean putting men down. We have amazing male allies, my father being one of them. He has been our biggest supporter and a role model for my wonderful brother. His experience also demonstrated how gender equity benefits men’s well-being as well. When he was the sole breadwinner, he had far less time with his family than when he and my mother both worked and shared home life together.

While the progress we have made is real, the work is far from finished. I remain deeply grateful that I have the opportunity to encourage women and girls in the same way my parents have always encouraged me.

Sana Waseem (Ed.D. candidate) is an award-winning education professional with over 13 years of experience in multiple settings. She currently works as a learning leader for the CBE, and serves on provincial and local ATA committees. With an unwavering dedication to promoting diversity, Waseem has made diversity in leadership a focus of her doctoral research at the University of Calgary.

YOUR VIEWS

We asked, how are you chasing the winter blues away?

Sandra Collisson
Dress warmly and attend all the winter festivals! Also, an evening walk when it’s snowing is magical.

Patricia Gagnon
Hot chocolate with Baileys and a good book. I also like to make a point of getting together with good friends.

Joanna Ruth
Birdwatching. It chases away the blues every month of the year.

Kristen Byrnes
End of semester is always super busy! Who has time to be blue?

Scott Raible
My dogs Baggins and Pippin always chase away the blues!



Letters to the editor: We welcome letters to the editor. Please limit your submission to 300 words. Only letters bearing a first and last name, address and daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. Teachers are also asked to indicate where and what they teach. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Email managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn: lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

FOR THE RECORD

“We know the old order is not coming back. We shouldn’t mourn it. Nostalgia is not a strategy. But we believe that from the fracture, we can build something better, stronger, more just.”

— Prime Minister Mark Carney’s remarks at the World Economic Forum on Jan. 20



“Your voices should be amplified”

Teachers asked to share thoughts on back-to-work legislation

ATA News Staff

What do you want the public to know about the effects of Bill 2, the *Back to School Act*, and the notwithstanding clause? What do you need in your classroom to make it manageable, and why?

This February and March, teachers will have the opportunity to record their responses to these questions at teachers’ conventions across the province. Members can stop by the ATA table at their convention to ensure their voices are heard, with staff available to facilitate the recording.

This project aims to capture how the return-to-work legislation and the notwithstanding clause are affecting Alberta teachers and school leaders.

“We want to hear from our members,” said ATA president Jason Schilling. “Their experiences and insights are critical to understanding the impact of the government’s decisions on classrooms, students and the teaching profession.”

Back to the fall

Under Bill 2, teachers were legislated to return to work on October 29, 2025, after striking for 16 work days. Bill 2 also prohibits teachers from striking for the duration of the agreement, and suspends local bargaining while the agreement is in effect.

“In halting lawful labour action and imposing an agreement on teachers, Bill 2 was designed to break the union,” Schilling said. “But we remain strong.”

The bill outlined significant penalties for noncompliance, including fines of up to \$500 per teacher per day and \$500,000 per day for the ATA. Given the potential exposure of individual teachers, locals and the provincial ATA to immediate and significant sanctions, the ATA and its members reluctantly complied with the return-to-work order.

“We complied not because the legislation fixed anything—it didn’t—but because Provincial Executive Council has a responsibility to protect

our members and our union,” said Schilling. “Any attempt to pass a motion that called for unlawful conduct, such as defiance of the order, would have been beyond the authority of the organization.”

On November 6, the ATA filed an application with the Court of King’s Bench seeking to overturn sections of Bill 2 and requested an injunction to halt enforcement of the legislation while the legal challenge proceeds. The case is currently still working its way through the courts.

Reactions and next steps

Many organizations and individuals spoke out against Bill 2 and the government’s use of the notwithstanding clause. Now, the ATA is making space to hear from the members who were directly affected by these measures. By sharing their experiences, teachers can provide insight into and help document the effects of the legislation, from classroom realities to professional challenges.

“The public needs to keep hearing from teachers,” said Schilling. “Your voices should be amplified, and this is one way to do just that.” ■

How can I participate?

Drop by the ATA table at your convention, sign the consent form and record your thoughts! Staff will be on site to answer any questions and support your recording.

Will teachers’ messages be shared publicly?

Only with explicit written consent. The recordings may be shared on social media or similar mediums.

ATA program area renamed to reflect added focus



Coordinator of the ATA’s TEMS program area, Sean Brown.

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

There’s a new ATA acronym to watch for.

In 2024, Teacher Employment Services (TES) gained a subunit that focuses on providing members with timely, effective support regarding their online accounts. Now, that change is being reflected in the program area’s name: TES is now Teacher Employment Membership Support, or TEMS.

TEMS coordinator Sean Brown says this change better aligns the program area’s title with the work it is already doing, including its emphasis on ensuring members can access the

information and tools they need to stay engaged with and supported by their Association.

“The new name more accurately captures the scope of work being undertaken in our program area,” said Brown. “Over the past two years, staff have been transitioned to TEMS to create a more seamless experience for our members.”

TEMS offers a range of services, including assisting members who are experiencing issues within their professional role. The Membership Support subunit complements the work of the program area by helping members access the Members Only website, update their personal and contact information, and participate in voting processes.

With the name change now in effect, Brown emphasized that existing programs, staffing and services will remain intact.

“Members can expect to start seeing the TEMS acronym and updated branding,” Brown said. “However, our commitment to providing high-quality, timely service to members remains unchanged.”

If anything, he added, the rename reasserts the ATA’s commitment to ensuring supports are responsive to member needs.

“We are here to ensure our teachers get the support they need, and this is one way to improve our efficiency and efficacy in service to members,” he said. ■

RED for ED!

Launched by Calgary teacher Alicia Taylor, a Citizen Initiative Petition on private school funding is in its final stretch. The petition asks, do you think the Government of Alberta should end its current practice of allocating public funds to accredited independent (private) schools?

Since mid-October, more than 2,000 canvassers—including current and retired teachers—have gathered tens of thousands of signatures in support of the petition. For the question to qualify for a referendum, the petition must have 177,000 signatures by February 11.

More information on the petition and where to sign over the last few days is available at <https://abfundspublicschools.ca/>.

ALBERTA FUNDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
abfundspublicschools.ca

Show us your RED for ED!

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

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

Teacher survey results raise red flags

Classroom complexity and government disrespect have teachers feeling stressed

Cory Hare
ATA News Staff

Alberta teachers are reporting extreme levels of stress and pessimism due to increasing classroom complexity and recent government decisions.

The ATA’s latest pulse survey of nearly 6,000 members found that 95 per cent reported feeling stressed and 94 per cent were pessimistic about the future of the teaching profession. Respondents pointed to two key sources of their emotional turmoil: increasing classroom complexity and the government’s use of the notwithstanding clause to end the teachers’ strike.

“At the personal level, teacher well-being has deteriorated to alarming levels,” the report states. “These metrics paint a picture of a profoundly fatigued and demoralized workforce struggling to find solid ground.”

Qualitative comments in the report describe widespread moral distress, burnout and despair. Many teachers, across ages and experience, expressed a sense of hopelessness and even an intent to leave the profession.

“I am burned out. I come home and want to sleep or cry. I don’t have it in me anymore,” wrote one survey respondent.

“Everyone seems especially depleted since the strike and the devastating results,” wrote another.

The ATA is calling for real solutions that lessen the burden on teachers and school leaders. ATA president Jason Schilling said this can be done by adding more teachers to reduce class sizes, providing more educational assistants to support with complexity, placing a counsellor in every school, and by providing access to mental health workers and other wraparound services like speech and physiotherapy.

“The use of the notwithstanding clause along with the increasing complexity in classrooms has demoralized teachers and left schools scrambling to meet the diverse needs of their students,” said Schilling. “It’s time for real solutions.”

Complexity index unveiled

This latest research report makes use of an online classroom complexity index tool designed by ATA researcher Phil McRae to quantify the additional workload generated by complex student needs. To apply the index, a number is assigned to students of various levels of complexity to reflect the amount of additional time they would require compared to a “typical” learner. For example, while a typical learner counts as one student, a gifted student would count as 1.25 students because they generally require 25 per cent more teacher time. In applying the index, a student with severe needs is counted as two students.

Based on class size and complexity data gathered through the survey, the average indexed class size in Alberta was 38. That is, when various complexities are factored in, the average teacher workload is the equivalent of 38 typical students.

“Classroom complexity is the real instructional load for teachers,” McRae said. “It is measured by both the class size plus the full range and intensity of student needs that require extra planning, supports and coordination.”

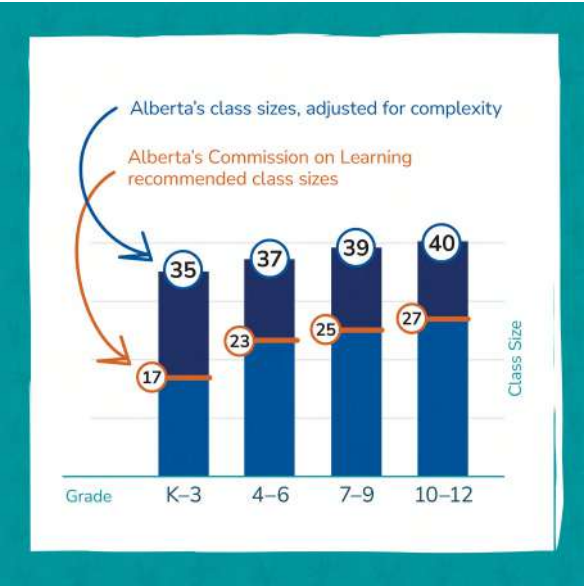
PERSONALIZED CLASSROOM COMPLEXITY INDEX

This index estimates the amount of teacher attention students require based on their level of need and produces an indexed class size score that estimates a teacher’s actual workload.

Student type	Index score
Typical	1
Gifted	1.25
Needs individualized supports	1.5
Has mild to moderate specialized needs	1.5
New to the instructional language	1.5
Severe or multiple specialized needs	2

Here is a breakdown of the complexity index by grade level.

Grade level	Average indexed class size
Overall	38
K-3	35
4-6	37
7-9	39
10-12	40
Online/blended	50



SURVEY RESPONSE	% of respondents
Feel stressed	95
Feel pessimistic about the future of the profession	94
View the use of the notwithstanding clause (Bill 2) as detrimental	91
Concerned about curriculum changes	74
Concerned about proposed funding model changes	54
Feel their views are respected by the provincial government	13



A profession in crisis

The well-being of teachers and school leaders remains at crisis levels.

“Teaching the ‘normal’ child has taken a back seat. Many students need individual or small cluster supports that I, on my own, cannot provide.”

“Students could be in specialized settings but there are no spots. Inclusion without support is not safe, and it is not working.”

“I spend my lunch break prepping or meeting students. I never leave my classroom. I have never worked harder in my life.”



Find it online

The ATA’s fall 2025 pulse survey polled more than 5,700 teachers from November 21 to December 5.

Find the report online at <https://abteach.cc/Fall2025Pulse>.



ATA event connects, supports school leaders at every stage



Leadership Essentials participants learning together in a breakout session

Chris Gonsalvez
ATA News Staff

School leaders from across the province gathered on January 19 and 20 for Leadership Essentials and the Educational Leadership Academy, a professional development event hosted by the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Designed for both school-based and central office leaders, the conference provided a vital space for professional learning and collaboration.

This event was uniquely structured to support educational leaders at every career stage. It featured two distinct streams: Leadership Essentials was for those new to administrative roles, and the Educational Leadership Academy offered experienced leaders the opportunity to deepen their practice.

While sessions covered a wide range of operational strategies, the

conference focused on the well-being of the people behind the titles. Keynote sessions centered on compassionate leadership and leader mental health, acknowledging the significant emotional weight carried by school leaders in today’s educational climate.

During the event, participants were also able to customize their experience through a diverse selection of breakout sessions tailored to specific leadership challenges. The event balanced intensive learning with intentional community building, creating an opportunity for participants to connect with and learn from fellow leaders across Alberta.

As these leaders return to their schools and offices, they bring with them new frameworks for leading with empathy and refreshed strategies for maintaining healthy, sustainable school environments for staff and students alike. ■

New ad campaign calls for progress, not promises

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

It’s time for real, measurable improvements in Alberta classrooms.

That’s the core message of a new advertising campaign that the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) has launched. Titled “Progress, not promises,” the ads will be appearing on radio, television, movie theatre screens, social media and billboards.

“For years, teachers have heard promises about new schools, more teachers and additional supports for students,” said Chris Gonsalvez, the ATA staff officer who oversaw the ad’s creative development. “But now it is time for accountability. What is actually being done to help Alberta students succeed?”

The campaign highlights concrete outcomes that teachers want to see. These include tangible and observable reductions in class size, meaningful wraparound supports for students and

active strategies to address classroom complexity. Also being called for is transparent and sufficient funding, with per-student spending that at least matches the national average.

“Progress isn’t about announcements; it’s about what students experience every day,” said Gonsalvez. “This campaign calls for progress to ensure that Alberta’s public education system is no longer the least funded per student.”

Designed to spark public discussion and hold policymakers accountable for translating promises into tangible results, the campaign aims for the government to prioritize resources and examine practices to make a meaningful difference for teachers and students.

“The government has expressed promises and commitments to students and education in this province,” said Gonsalvez. “We hope that this campaign brings attention to the need for progress through tangible actions and policies to reflect those promises.” ■



Don’t click the bait

Since the strike, teachers across the province are increasingly becoming targets of online harassment campaigns driven by bloggers and podcasters who falsely accuse educators of “indoctrination” for doing nothing more than teaching the mandated curriculum. These groups attempt to manufacture outrage and personal attacks. I know this from experience, as I am often the target of such posts. The goal is not accountability or transparency, but intimidation: to make teachers fearful of doing their jobs.

The word “indoctrination” is used to stir anger, not to describe what is actually happening in classrooms. Teachers are required by law to follow the curriculum set by the government. They do not decide what students must learn. When a teacher explains history, health or social issues that appear in the curriculum, conspiracy bloggers turn that into proof of wrongdoing. They take lessons out of context and spread false stories to attract attention and clicks.

Even more troubling is the minister of education and the premier choosing to publicly weigh in on individual classroom situations. When elected government officials intervene in matters involving a single teacher, they blur the line between political

theatre and professional oversight. This is not leadership; it is escalation. By repeating or amplifying claims originating from partisan bloggers known for misinformation, they lend institutional legitimacy to stories that should have been dismissed outright or left to legitimate processes that school boards have in place to investigate alleged incidents.

This amplification effect is powerful. When the province’s highest offices echo allegations rooted in distortion and speculation, those allegations gain traction regardless of their accuracy. What might begin as fringe commentary suddenly carries the weight of authority. Speaking from experience, the result is reputational damage and increased harassment. It also creates a chilling effect on classrooms where teachers should feel safe to teach openly and students should feel safe to learn.

Elected public officials have a responsibility to protect the integrity of public education, not undermine it for political advantage. Teachers deserve due process, professional respect and freedom from mob-style scrutiny driven by online outrage. Conspiracy theories thrive in environments where facts are ignored and fear is rewarded. Governments should not be feeding that cycle. ■





STORIES AND PHOTOS WANTED

If something newsworthy is going on in your school, district or local, please let us know. We will also consider articles, photos and cartoons. Please email tips and submissions to managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn: lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

Wetaskiwin vice-principal receives prestigious award

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

History isn't just something you read about in books; it's something to which we are all connected. That's the core lesson of Erin Quinn's Discovering Our Roots project, a hands-on, community-based initiative for which she is now receiving one of Canada's most prestigious teaching honours.

Quinn, vice-principal at Parkdale School in Wetaskiwin, has been named a recipient of the 2025 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. The national award recognizes teachers who demonstrate excellence and innovation in teaching Canadian history—like Quinn, who developed the idea for Discovering Our Roots two years ago while teaching Grade 7 social studies.

"The curriculum on Canadian history covers all the way from precontact to the 1950s and mostly focuses on events in Eastern Canada," said Quinn. "I was looking at that and thinking, where are the opportunities to connect this to my students?"



Erin Quinn, recipient of the 2025 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching

ASPEN FILMS

That question led her to take a "hyperlocal" approach. Quinn reached out to the Wetaskiwin District Heritage Museum Centre and the City of Wetaskiwin Archives to explore a partnership that would allow students to investigate local history.

"The museum was really great about providing us with primary sources," Quinn explained. "Students used those first-hand accounts to learn about what drew people to this area and the impact on the Indigenous people who lived here."

As part of the project, students curated an exhibit for the museum, giving them the opportunity to share their learning with the broader community and deepening the connection between students and local history.

"In some cases, the people they were learning about were direct ancestors of students in my classroom. That connection made the learning feel real."

The exhibit remains on display at the museum two years later, serving as a lasting reminder of the students' work and its impact.

"They learned that history isn't something you receive, but something you create," Quinn said. "They learned that history is not neutral, that the stories we tell matter and that history happened here, where we live."

Now in her first year as vice-principal, Quinn says the recognition

affirms her long-standing commitment to learning that feels relevant and meaningful to students. The award includes a \$2,500 prize for Quinn and \$1,000 for Parkdale School, funds she hopes will support future opportunities for learning beyond the classroom.

"I've always wanted to make learning meaningful, connected and authentic," said Quinn. "This just reinforces that drive."

Administered by Canada's History Society, the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching is presented annually to teachers and schools across the country. This year, eight teachers, including Quinn, representing six schools nationwide are being honoured.

Information on the award and the 2025 recipients is available at www.canadashistory.ca/awards/governor-general-s-history-awards.

Weather in the Classroom project engages students

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

For many Alberta students, the daily forecast is no longer just background noise that their parents pay attention to; it's become a hands-on look into the natural forces that shape the world around them. The Weather in the Classroom project, a long-standing joint initiative of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and CTV, brings the fascinating world of weather directly to the next generation of learners.

The program is designed to align with the Alberta Grade 5 curriculum, where students explore weather patterns and earth systems. Rather than simply reading about barometric pressure or the water cycle in a textbook, students get to engage with professional meteorologists, like CTV's Josh Classen in Edmonton or Danielle Savoni in Calgary. These experts provide real-world context to classroom theories, explaining how data is collected, how forecasts are built and how shifting climate patterns affect our local environment.

To accommodate the diverse needs of students, the project offers several interactive formats:

- In-studio experiences: Classes can visit CTV studios to see the magic of the "green screen" first-hand and learn how a live broadcast comes together.
- In-class visits: CTV's meteorologists travel to schools, bringing specialized equipment and engaging stories from the field.
- Virtual lessons: Using digital



platforms, the program reaches rural and remote Alberta communities, ensuring that geographical barriers don't limit educational opportunities.

The partnership between CTV and the ATA highlights a shared commitment to public education. By sponsoring morning weather segments and encouraging teachers to submit student photos and work for air, the project celebrates the amazing work happening in Alberta's public education system. It turns the local news into a digital gallery of student achievement, fostering a sense of community pride.

Web guides support Black History Month learning

ATA News Staff

February is Black History Month and teachers can access several ATA library web guides to support their learning and teaching, now and throughout the year.

■ **Black History Month (February)** <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/blackhistory>

This guide features resources about the history of the Black community in Alberta as well as information about the Underground Railroad and the history of Black Loyalists in Canada. Teachers will find fascinating biographies of famous Black Canadians and influential non-Canadians, as well as teaching resources focused on Black History Month. Both the achievements of the

Black community and the struggle against racism in Canada are included throughout the guide.

■ **Mois de l'histoire des Noirs (février)** <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/histoiredesnoirs>

Ce guide présente l'histoire de la communauté noire en Alberta ainsi que des informations sur le chemin de fer clandestin et l'histoire des loyalistes noirs au Canada. Les enseignants trouveront des biographies fascinantes de Canadiens noirs célèbres et de non-Canadiens influents. Les réalisations de la communauté noire et la lutte contre le racisme au Canada sont abordées tout au long du guide.

■ **Diversity and Inclusion** <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/diversity>

The Diversity and Inclusion guide includes a collection of new books

available in the library, as well as resources on immigration, racism and acceptance.

■ **Diversité** <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/diversite>

Notre guide de la diversité comprend des ressources sur l'immigration, les brimades et les droits de la personne.

■ **Antiracism** <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/antiracism>

The Antiracism guide includes some of the new books available in our library. It also has links to Canadian and American antiracist materials as well as links to lesson plans, TED Education videos and ATA-produced materials.

■ **Lutte contre le racismisme** <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/antiracisme>

Notre guide sur l'antiracisme

comprend des liens vers des documents antiracistes canadiens ainsi que des liens vers des plans de cours, des vidéos et des documents produits par l'ATA.

■ **New Canadians in the Classroom** <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/immigrantstudents>

The guide on New Canadians in the Classroom has excellent online resources for teachers working with immigrant and refugee students.

Find these guides—and others full of free online materials to support teachers' professional development—on the library's website at library.teachers.ab.ca.

If you need more information about any of these topics, please contact our library staff at library@ata.ab.ca.



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TEACHER VS. TEACHER COMPLAINTS: Do I need to tell my colleague first?



PITFALLS & PRECAUTIONS

Marv Hackman
Representation Officer

It's been about two years now since the new Code of Professional Conduct came into effect. How does the Code compare to the previous one in terms of teachers' obligations to their teaching colleagues? Read on.

Old Code

The most significant changes made, effective January 1, 2023, pertained to the former sections 13 and 14 of the ATA Code of Professional Conduct (the old Code). These sections read:

In relation to colleagues

13 The teacher criticizes the professional competence or professional reputation of another teacher only in confidence to proper officials and after the other teacher has been informed of the criticism, subject only to section 24 of the *Teaching Profession Act*.

14 The teacher, when making a report on the professional performance of another teacher, does so in good faith and, prior to submitting the report, provides the teacher with a copy of the report, subject only to section 24 of the *Teaching Profession Act*.

These provisions required teachers to raise concerns with their colleagues directly first, and only after taking that step could they then raise their concerns with persons deemed to be proper officials (those in a line position of authority relative to their colleague). In other words, if Teacher A felt Teacher B

engaged in unprofessional conduct, Teacher A had to speak with Teacher B before taking any other steps.

Similarly, for written communications or statements that were critical of a colleague's teaching performance or reputation, teachers were required to provide their colleague with a copy of the communication before it was sent to a teaching colleague. It was not sufficient to simultaneously send a copy to both their colleague and to proper authorities; rather a gap of time between the transmission of each copy was required to allow the colleagues to find a resolution before raising the concern with officials in a line position of authority.

New Code

The new Code addresses these same issues under section 3:

- 3** In relation to colleagues, the teacher or teacher leader shall
- (b) not criticize the professional competence or professional reputation of another teacher or teacher leader, except (i) in confidence to appropriate officials, or
 - (ii) in making a complaint about the alleged unprofessional conduct or alleged professional incompetence of a teacher or teacher leader under the Act

In effect, the new Code removed the requirement to speak with a colleague first or provide a colleague with the first copy of correspondence critical of them. So, can a teacher openly criticize their colleague without consequence? It's not that simple.

What to consider before making a complaint or criticism

While you are no longer required to do so, addressing an issue with your teaching colleague first remains the best practice in most cases.

Issues between colleagues have a better chance of being quickly resolved through dialogue between the parties. Further, not addressing concerns directly with a colleague—for example, by communicating a criticism only to a proper official—would likely have an adverse impact on the collegial relationship. Of course, exceptions are appropriate in certain contexts, such as where the complainant has been physically or sexually intimidated or harassed by a colleague and would feel unsafe raising the matter directly with them.

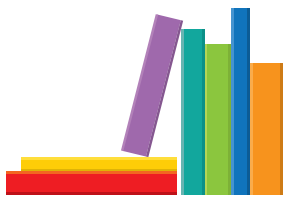
It should also be noted that the new Code obliges teachers "to report to the Commissioner the conduct of another teacher or teacher leader who is alleged to cause or have caused psychological, emotional, physical or sexual harm or abuse to a student." This is in addition to other reporting required by law.

In any case, complaints about a colleague must be made in good faith. Teachers should not pursue the discipline or dismissal of another teacher or teacher leader because of animosity or for personal advantage. ■

Support and advice

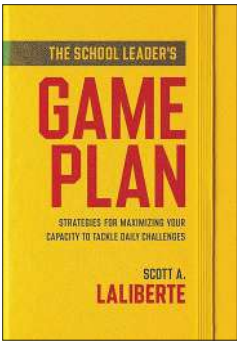
Before making a criticism or complaint about a colleague, teachers are strongly encouraged to discuss the matter with the ATA's Teacher Employment Membership Support by calling 1-800-232-7208.

If you have received a complaint from the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission, contact the ATA's Regulatory Affairs unit for support as soon as possible by calling 1-800-232-7208 or emailing regulatoryaffairs@ata.ab.ca.

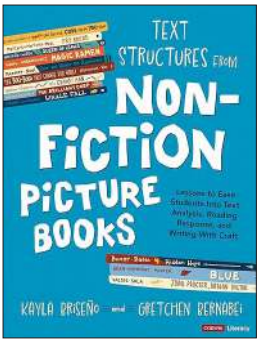


CHECK ME OUT!

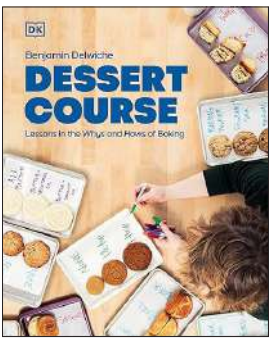
Some of the ATA Library's newest reads:



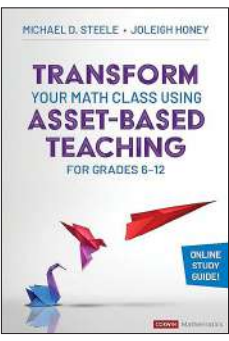
The School Leader's Game Plan: Strategies for Maximizing Your Capacity to Tackle Daily Challenges
by Scott A. Laliberte



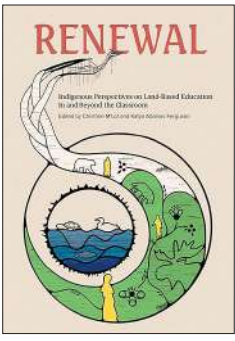
Text Structures From Nonfiction Picture Books: Lessons to Ease Students into Text Analysis, Reading Response, and Writing with Craft
by Kayla Briseno and Gretchen Bernabei



Dessert Course: Lessons in the Whys and Hows of Baking
by Benjamin Delwiche



Transform Your Math Class Using Asset-Based Teaching for Grades 6–12
by Michael D. Steele and Joleigh Honey



Renewal: Indigenous Perspectives on Land-Based Education In and Beyond the Classroom
by Christine M'Lot and Katya Adamov Ferguson

WANT TO BORROW THESE?
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<https://abteach.cc/2epdpy>



The Alberta Teachers' Association

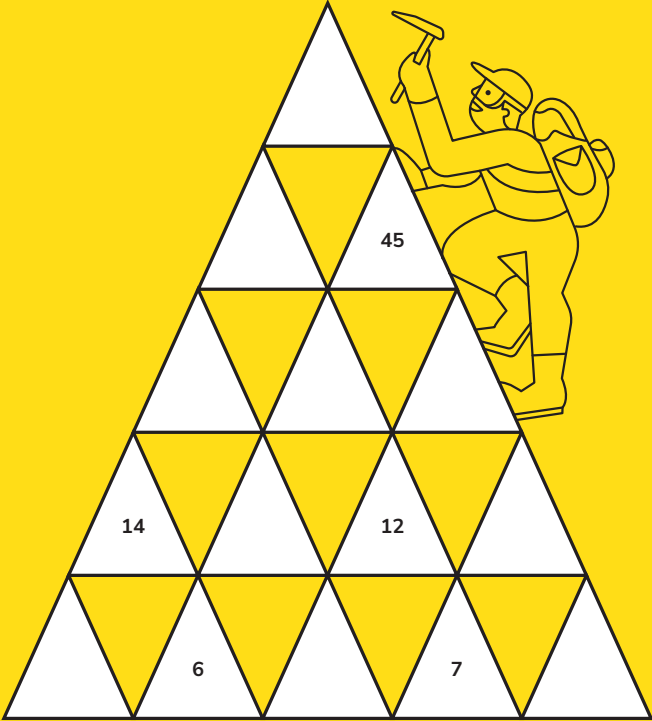
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We want to hear about it!

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

Email Managing Editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn your ideas at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.



COOR-2019-2025-03

Teachers urged to check their TWINS account

Neil Thember
ATA Regulatory Affairs Officer

Teachers are being encouraged to verify that their contact information in the Teacher Workforce Information System (TWINS) is accurate and up to date. Maintaining current details is essential, as the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC) relies on this registry to reach teachers about whom a complaint has been filed.

The ATPC uses the information in TWINS to notify teachers of a complaint and provide important procedural details. If a teacher's contact information is not current or accurate, they may not receive timely—and vitally important—communication from the ATPC, including information on reaching out to the ATA for representation. Because there are legislative timelines at the start of the ATPC's process, accurate

contact information in TWINS is critical.

Teachers are also reminded to use their personal email address and phone number because work email and phone numbers belong to, and can be accessed by, the employer. Using personal contact information ensures teachers can receive messages from the ATPC at any time. There have been instances when the ATPC has attempted to reach teachers during breaks in the school year (such as summer, spring or winter holidays). If teachers are not regularly checking their work email or voicemail over these breaks, the risk increases that their voice will not be considered at the beginning of the process.

This is especially important during the preliminary inquiry phase, which is triggered when the commissioner receives a complaint. The ATPC has only 30 days to complete this process. In many cases, the ATPC has reported being unable to reach the teacher

during this initial window, meaning the complaint is referred to investigations based solely on information provided by the complainant. Had the ATPC been able to speak to the teacher accused of misconduct during the preliminary inquiry phase, some complaints could have been resolved more quickly, potentially without an investigation and with less stress for the teacher.

Teachers can scan this QR code to update their TWINS contact information.



The earlier a teacher is made aware of any complaint, the more time and options they will have. Remember that you are not alone. You have the support of the ATA.

If you receive a notice of complaint from the ATPC, contact the ATA's Regulatory Affairs team immediately at 1-800-232-7208 or regulatoryaffairs@ata.ab.ca for support. ■



ISTOCK

Committee established to review central table bargaining

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held December 4–5, 2025, Barnett House, Edmonton

1. Authorized Association legal counsel to consider and, if deemed advisable by counsel, to advise the court that, if it is provided with the injunctive relief it is seeking, the Association would undertake not to resume labour action for a minimum of three weeks following the issuance of the injunction and, thereafter, only upon provision of 72 hours' notice and, furthermore, that the Association would undertake during the hiatus to engage in good-faith bargaining in an effort to conclude a voluntarily negotiated collective agreement with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association.

2. Authorized the Association to make application for intervenor status at the Supreme Court of Canada in *Government of Saskatchewan as represented by the Minister of Education v. UR Pride Centre for Sexuality and Gender Diversity* (41979).

3. Authorized a thorough written response to members specifically addressing Provincial Executive Council's decisions and advice to members respecting the back-to-work legislation.

4. Approved two financial contributions of \$1,000 each, both made through the Canadian Teachers' Federation to Education International's Solidarity Fund: one in support of sister organizations in Palestine, and one to support the Jamaica Teachers' Association in assisting colleagues, their families and school communities affected by Hurricane Melissa.

5. Authorized a winter holiday charity donation in the amount of \$2,000 to

the Alberta Division of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

6. Approved the names of two recipients to receive the Public Education Award at the 2026 Annual Representative Assembly.

7. Approved in principle and referred to Resolutions Committee for preparation a resolution that amends policy related to providing a single, no-cost specialist council membership to all active members and those associate members who are at the highest level of membership.

8. Approved that the Association offer to be a sponsoring partner in the National Council of Canadian Muslims' proposed Canadian Democracy and Rights Summit through authorized logo use, staff participation in program planning, \$20,000 in financial support for the summit, and authorizing the president, or designate, and one staff member to attend the summit.

9. Approved that the Association continue to remit fees to locals, as per bylaw 10, until the Finance Committee provides an alternative option.

10. Approved the transfer of the entire Office Staff Pension Plan fund to Canada Life as soon as possible to facilitate the establishment of a defined contribution plan for eligible staff in the 2025 tax year.

11. Approved the selection timelines, selection committee composition and the appointment of members to the selection committee for the position of ESO1/26, Coordinator, Professional Development.

12. Requested that staff investigate the feasibility of returning to a five-day format for the Summer Conference in 2027.

13. Approved amendments to the Administrative Guidelines regarding the fee structure for associate members (bargaining) who are on a leave of absence.

14. Approved amendments to the Curriculum Committee frame of reference to reflect wording used in Association policy.

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held January 16–17, 2026, Barnett House, Edmonton

1. Approved the name of one recipient for honorary membership in the Association, which is reserved for members and other persons who have given meritorious service to the teaching profession, to the Association or to the advancement of education.

2. Authorized staff to develop and implement an online communications campaign regarding the loss of teachers' charter rights through the use of the notwithstanding clause in Bill 2, with costs up to \$75,000 allocated from the Special Emergency Fund.

3. Established the Committee on the Review of Central Table Bargaining 2020 and 2024 and approved its frame of reference.

4. In accordance with bylaw 11, approved an additional fee of \$40 per month, applicable to full- and part-time members (0.2 FTE or greater), commencing in February 2026 and remaining in effect for up to a maximum of 16 months.

5. Approved interim policy setting the annual membership for 2025/26 at \$1,303.50, which represents a one-twelfth reduction in the annual membership fee to address the month of job action in October 2025 where no member dues were collected.

6. Approved that the associate membership fee for 2025/26 remain unchanged at \$213.30.

7. In accordance with bylaw 10(1) (a), approved that locals continue to receive an amount equal to 20 percent of the fees collected under bylaw 9(2), based on the revised annual fee of \$1,303.50.

8. Approved that locals advise whether they wish to have the October 2025 levy collected, with written notice to Association Finance by 2026 01 23.

9. Approved the 2026/27 proposed budget for presentation to locals, which maintains the annual fee payable by a full-time, active member at \$1,422.

10. Authorized the transfer of \$2,000,000 from the Defence and Advocacy Fund to the Solidarity Fund to assist with payment of health and benefit invoices received from school divisions.

11. Approved in principle the proposed timeline for succession of the executive secretary and authorized the commencement of an external recruitment process.

12. Authorized staff to implement a plan to collect data on class size and complexity.

13. Authorized the Association to issue *Protection of Privacy Act* information requests to all 61 school divisions for all communications associated with the request to collect class size and complexity data between October 2025 and February 2026.

14. Approved in principle and referred to staff for preparation and submission to the 2026 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) a resolution to request that the Auditor General supervise the collection of key education data, including class size data.




15. Approved one executive resolution for submission to the 2026 ARA and approved that the reports on resolutions 2-3/25 and 2-25/25, both requiring report to the 2026 ARA, be approved for publication in the *Resolutions Bulletin* and *ARA Handbook*.

16. Authorized the Association to establish a process for the regular reporting to members on votes on motions in Provincial Executive Council.

17. Amended the Administrative Guidelines pertaining to recruitment processes, student local grants and the Indigenous Education Committee frame of reference.

18. Authorized all members of Council who identify as women to attend the Canadian Teachers' Federation 2026 Women's Symposium, taking place 2026 04 30–05 03 in Toronto, Ontario.

19. Approved dates of key Association-sponsored meetings in 2028/29. ■




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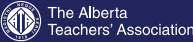



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ATA NEWS READER

SURVEY

You can also complete
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Thank you for reading the ATA News!

We value your feedback and would appreciate your thoughts to help us ensure that the publication is meeting the needs of ATA members.

Please note that all responses will be kept confidential and only aggregate data will be reported.

1. How often do you read the ATA News?

- ☐ Every issue
- ☐ Most issues
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Never

2. When you read the ATA News, how long do you typically spend with the publication?

- ☐ 5 minutes or less
- ☐ More than 5 minutes but less than 15 minutes
- ☐ More than 15 minutes but less than 30 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes or more
- ☐ Not applicable

3. How easy is it to navigate and find relevant information in the ATA News?

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

4. What type of content in the ATA News do you prefer to read? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ News stories related to the teaching profession
- ☐ ATA updates and announcements
- ☐ ATA program and grant information
- ☐ Member stories or profiles
- ☐ Opinion pieces and editorials
- ☐ Executive secretary’s Q&A
- ☐ President’s Off Script
- ☐ Pitfalls and Precautions
- ☐ Executive reports
- ☐ Legislature highlights
- ☐ PEC Points
- ☐ Cartoon
- ☐ Pop quiz puzzle
- ☐ Tale End
- ☐ Other (please specify):

5. Is there any topic or type of content you would like to see more frequently in the ATA News?

6. How do you prefer to access the ATA News?

- ☐ Print version
- ☐ Online version (individual articles)
- ☐ Online version (full pdf or flipbook)
- ☐ Both print and online

7. Currently, 15 regular issues of the ATA News are published each school year. How many issues would you like to see published per school year?

- ☐ More than the current 15 issues
- ☐ The same as now (15 issues per school year)
- ☐ Fewer than 15 issues

8. What would help you keep (or start) reading the ATA News?

9. Any additional comments or suggestions for improving the ATA News?

10. My current role is

- ☐ Classroom teacher
- ☐ School leader
- ☐ Central office staff
- ☐ Retired teacher
- ☐ Public member
- ☐ Other (please specify):

11. Teachers’ convention area (if applicable)

- ☐ Calgary City
- ☐ Central Alberta
- ☐ Endless Skies
- ☐ Greater Edmonton
- ☐ Mighty Peace
- ☐ North Central
- ☐ Palliser District
- ☐ South Western Alberta
- ☐ Southeastern Alberta

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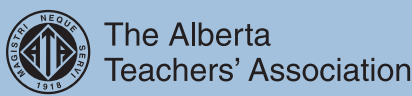
or send it by mail to the following address:
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Attention: ATA News

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The **winter** **issue** of the *ATA Magazine* has landed!

Feature

Fils francophones dans le tissu albertain

Francophone Threads in Alberta’s Fabric



Print copies arriving in schools in February.
Digital version at <https://abteach.cc/ATAMagazineFlipbook>

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Unsung Hero
Kerri Mckinnon: Cheerleader for inclusive education

Wellness
Rebalancing Indigenous wellness through spirit, land and story

Technology
CLEAR Thinking: A framework for AI Use

Diversity
Taking the ‘person’ out of ‘personalized’ land acknowledgements

Research Insights
Curriculum and assessment is contested ground in Alberta

In Profile
Path to the classroom one of discovery for Chestermere teacher

Who’s Out There?
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TALENT

February 3, 2026 | Volume 60, Number 8

CONVENTION READY

Veteran teachers shared their tips for making the most of teachers' convention. Some responses have been edited for length.

Go to the **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**, as they are usually quite inspiring. Meet **FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES** for lunch and attend sessions that interest you, not necessarily those you think you "should" go to.



Attend at least one **WELLNESS** session, and don't feel guilty about it. Your convention board has worked hard to give you a balance of sessions.



Find one or two sessions that are directly related to your assignment/role in your division. Then find some sessions that are of pure interest and **OUTSIDE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE**. I find this gives me a recharge to get through that long winter.



Consider if **PRESENTING** is something you'd like to do, and what kinds of skills or ideas you could share with others.



Bring a **BACKPACK FOR SWAG** so your arm doesn't fall off. Talk to whoever is in charge of budgets at your school to see if you can be reimbursed for any purchases.



Always **PLAN FOR LUNCH!** And **PRIORITIZE** the sessions that look the most helpful.



Don't feel obliged to implement everything you learn. **ONE OR TWO NEW THINGS** for the rest of the year are plenty.



Pay attention to **WHERE SESSIONS ARE**. You don't want to sign up for great back-to-back sessions only to realize you have just 10 minutes to travel between the convention center and the art gallery.



PACK FOOD if you're travelling from out of town. It isn't always easy to find food there and if you do, it's busy.

