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and some books**

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ATA NEWS

February 17, 2026 ■ Volume 60, Number 9

■ News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association

Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling

Conventions
reaffirm
profession
See page 7.



*Our hearts
are with
Tumbler Ridge*

*The Alberta Teachers' Association
expresses its deepest condolences to
the teachers, students, families
and communities affected by the
unimaginable tragedy at Tumbler Ridge
Secondary School in British Columbia.*



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Teachers and school leaders are rebuilding identity amid unrest



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
ATA News
Editor-in-Chief

In Alberta, after a time of incredible unrest, the professional identity of teachers is being reshaped under immense pressure.

When I was a new teacher in the 2000s, I thought that my teacher identity was grounded in stability, shared purpose and trusted expertise. But now I think teacher identity sits at the intersection of political turbulence, escalating classroom demands and a rapidly shifting curriculum landscape. The result is a profession grappling with profound instability, and yet still able to navigate its collective strength and moral purpose. In the midst of uncertainty, teachers continue to move forward in the best way they can.

Recent data collected from teachers by the ATA paints a stark picture. Ninety-five per cent of Alberta teachers report feeling stressed, and over 94 per cent express pessimism about the future of their profession. This reflects the strain felt after years of policy upheaval, labour conflicts and expanding expectations placed on teachers.

With student needs intensifying across behavioural, cognitive, language and socioemotional domains, teachers are no longer just teachers. They're caregivers, interventionists and first responders to youth mental health. How does this affect our identity as a profession?

Instability in the labour landscape for Alberta teachers has been another challenge that has not only disrupted school communities but shaken teachers' sense of autonomy and professional respect. When a government restricts rights, it sends a clear message about how teacher expertise is valued. For many, this

has pushed their professional identity toward activism.

The turbulence for teachers doesn't end there. Alberta's curriculum has been in constant motion, and there is an expectation for teachers to implement new content while also completing literacy and numeracy screenings and digital provincial assessments. When curriculum development feels top down, teachers are pushed further from their identity as pedagogical decision makers trusted to interpret, adapt and deliver meaningful learning.

And still, amid these challenges, powerful threads of resilience define Alberta's teaching force. Teachers' conventions are abuzz with excitement, with teachers learning new strategies they can bring back to their classrooms. Across the province, we also see members demonstrating leadership in their schools and communities, with the *ATA News* highlighting the remarkable achievements of teachers

and school leaders. Further, creative pedagogical approaches—like those celebrated in *ATA Magazine*'s award winning exploration of outdoor and unconventional teaching spaces—show a profession that is still driven by innovation and a deep commitment to student experience.

The truth is that instability may be changing teacher identity, but it is certainly not diminishing it. It is forcing teachers, individually and as a profession, to clarify who they are, what they value and how fiercely they are willing to fight for the conditions their students deserve. Alberta's teachers are redefining their professional identity not through the pressures placed upon them, but through the purpose they continue to uphold. In a time of uncertainty, they remain the steady force ensuring that classrooms are still places of possibility. ■

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

A vote of nonconfidence



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive
Secretary

Question: My local's council of school representatives passed a "motion of nonconfidence" in the Association's provincial leadership. What happens now?

Answer: Not much.

But before I get into this more deeply, full disclosure: as executive secretary, I am a table officer of the Association, although not a member of Provincial Executive Council. As such, I am swept up by, and even explicitly named in, some of the recently passed nonconfidence motions. As always, though, I will endeavor to be as accurate as I can in providing this response. Now back to the answer.

Not much.

A motion or vote of nonconfidence is a formal expression by a representative body that it does not support its current executive, conveying that the leadership is unfit to hold office because of some impropriety or perceived failure. In parliamentary systems, such as we have governing this country, the passage of a vote of nonconfidence, by convention, forces the immediate resignation of the cabinet and, typically, the dissolution of parliament followed by a general election. Note that it's not only the

leaders who have to face voters; it's every elected member of parliament. (Homework assignment for keeners, look up "King-Byng affair.")

However, the Association and its subgroups are not constituted as parliamentary structures and, in any event, a vote of a subgroup (such as a local) established by the provincial Association is not binding upon the provincial association or on Provincial Executive Council. The terms of office and the election/selection processes of the Provincial Executive Council and the table officers who form its executive are set out explicitly in the bylaws of the Association and in the *Teaching Profession Act*, a piece of provincial legislation. No provision exists for votes of confidence in either.

The argument might be made that a vote of nonconfidence by a local has symbolic weight and that the provincial office holders who are deemed to have lost the confidence of those they are supposed to serve are under a moral obligation to resign their positions. While I appreciate that the votes reflect the sincere sentiments of the participating representatives and locals, the votes themselves do not set out in any clear way how those to whom they are directed failed or erred in their duty or conduct. I understand that teachers are livid at the outcome of the strike—certainly the leadership of the Association is—but the passage of Bill 2, the *Back to School Act*, effectively stripped the Association and its leadership of the ability to further shape that outcome.

The blame for this lies squarely with the provincial government, and the Association is using every legal avenue to challenge the legislation.

Some have argued that the Association should have called upon teachers to defy the legislation and refuse to return to their classrooms. I can assure you that this possibility was carefully considered but, ultimately, rejected by a majority vote of Provincial Executive Council. In making its decision, Council weighed the cost and consequences for individual members against the limited prospect for such action achieving a better outcome. Also, a call for illegal action could potentially have divided the membership and invited further sanctions. You might well disagree with that decision, but principled disagreement on a hard question is not evidence of malfeasance or error, and is insufficient justification for a vote of nonconfidence.

Even if they have no formal effect, nonconfidence votes are not without consequences, mostly negative. They have the effect of personalizing policy discussions in unhelpful ways. Instead of constructively engaging difficult issues, they denigrate, alienate and demoralize the very individuals who are working to achieve better outcomes for teachers. When directed inward, nonconfidence votes sow division and undermine the credibility of those charged with speaking to external audiences.

When directed externally, a vote of nonconfidence, rather than advancing

a cause, can undermine any possibility of progress. For example, in 2014 and 2021, the annual representative assemblies of the day passed nonconfidence motions in education ministers Jeff Johnson and Adriana LaGrange respectively. Both were quite delighted. Not only did the passage of the resolutions prove to their party's base that the ministers were standing up to the big bad union, they provided these ministers and their departments with a ready-made excuse to freeze the Association out of any representation or engagement for several years afterwards. The ministers' position was clear: why would they talk or listen to an organization that has no confidence in them? However legitimate the motions may have been from teachers' perspective, if the intention was to move the government to address teachers' concerns, the effect was entirely the opposite.

I can tell you that my fellow table officers and members of Council have felt the emotional impact of these votes and have weighed individually how we will respond. We have also been frustrated, because when it comes to providing us with guidance and a path forward for the teachers we represent or serve, they do little good and, well, accomplish...not much. ■

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

Stranger things in Swift times

From one generation of teachers to the next



VIEWPOINTS

Nicholas Rickards
Teacher and university lecturer

New bachelor of education graduates beginning their teaching careers in 2026 will, give or take a few years, be retiring en masse around the year 2060.

Sit with that for a moment. 2060.

By then, the fears and elations around artificial intelligence will no longer be speculative. The stock market will have inflated and collapsed a few more bubbles (assuming capitalism exists at all). Defining conflicts—Sudan, Palestine, Ukraine—will have reached their conclusions. The fate of the global climate crisis will be clear. And the present world will be catalogued into university syllabi for preservice teachers and incorporated into new provincial curriculum delivered by practising teachers.

In Alberta classrooms, the story of this province will be taught as part of a broader Canadian saga, however exciting or boring it may be. Forces shaping our current political climate—the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, threats to Canadian sovereignty, the renewed hope in our prime minister, the Alberta separatist referendum, even the Great Alberta Teachers' Strike of 2025—will become case studies for the student in the back of a Social 30 class, whose learning is supported by technology so advanced it is incomprehensible to us.

It's a useful thought experiment. Give it a try.

It's 2060. Alberta's Gen Z teachers are entering retirement. Taylor Swift is turning 68. Super Bowl XCII (92) is on. Stranger Things (2016–2025) is remembered as a weird show teachers once watched on their ancient iPhones when they were young adults. Millennials, meanwhile, are well past their golden years.

By then, Boomers have been usurped by a new gerontocracy: millennials. Many of our elder millennial peers have been drawing from the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund for years, sustained in no small part by the Gen Z colleagues with whom they once shared staff rooms.

And that's the point we too often miss: generations in education need

each other. Millennial teachers would do well to remember that we didn't arrive fully formed. We inherited a public education system shaped by those who came before us. At the same time, we've been around the block ourselves. If we take stock, we've accumulated enough brick-and-mortar experience to build a bridge for the next generation of teachers—to help them understand the state of public education and where it might be headed.

Millennials began our teaching careers during the Great Recession and the Occupy movement. We navigated two Trump presidencies, the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of social media, the peak use of smartphones in classrooms (hard to believe, right?), the vaping epidemic, the introduction of AI and the largest teachers' strike in Alberta's history—all within a 15-year period. That's not only a decent résumé; it's also a living archive for understanding the public education system.

Today, we work alongside Gen Z colleagues who will one day fund our pensions while inheriting the schools, systems and policies we help shape. They will bring new perspectives, new tools and new questions.

Millennials are no longer the new teachers on the block. We bring a wealth of experience to our colleagues as mentors, school leaders and educational researchers, and we have a responsibility to share what we know, impart what we've learned and listen to our colleagues. That means offering guidance without gatekeeping, learning without defensiveness and remembering that the future of Alberta's public education system is not something Gen Z teachers will inherit alone.

The next generation of teachers will shape public education with what we give and leave them—and put their own spin on it. ■

Nicholas Rickards is a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellow and PhD Candidate at Brock University. He proudly teaches rowdy and rambunctious middle schoolers in Lethbridge, Alberta.

“Millennial teachers would do well to remember that we didn't arrive fully formed. We inherited a public education system shaped by those who came before us.”



YOUR VIEWS

We asked, how is your classroom or school marking Pink Shirt Day (which is coming up on Feb. 25)?

Andrea Riquelme

Our leadership students are planning activities and the assembly!

Jkrawetz

Books, songs, writing, crafts, sharing, a schoolwide assembly led by students, wearing pink!

Caleb Koning

I wear my pink shirt with my pink tie and have my kids reflect on why Pink Shirt Day is a thing.

Shawnaleeah

By wearing pink(!) and reading lots of books about friendship and kindness

Ricercatore

Our Parent Council provides parfaits after a schoolwide activity on kindness.

Alisha Shaikh

Creative mural, pink shirt art, kindness tree

FOR THE RECORD

“To the students, the teachers, the parents, every resident of Tumbler Ridge, all of Canada stands with you. May the memories of those lost be a blessing. May this community, which has shown its resilience so many times before, once again find the strength to heal. And may this House prove worthy of what Tumbler Ridge has always been, by striving to make Canada a better, kinder and safer place.”

— Prime Minister Mark Carney in the House of Commons on Feb. 11 addressing the tragedy in Tumbler Ridge



CHRIS SCHWARZ/GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Minister of Education and Childcare Demetrios Nicolaides at a Dec. 3 press conference



KRISTINE WILKINSON

ATA President Jason Schilling at a Jan. 21 press conference

ATA skeptical of new advisory panel

Cory Hare
ATA News Staff

A new teacher advisory council that the government promised while legislating the end to October's teachers' strike has now opened and closed its intake for applications, and ATA president Jason Schilling isn't enthused about the initiative.

The council will bring together up to 15 educators from a range of school settings to share practical

insights and ideas that will help shape government policies with the aim of meeting the needs of students, teachers and schools, said Education and Childcare Minister Demetrios Nicolaides while announcing the opening of the application period on February 2.

Nicolaides said teacher involvement on the council, whose members he will be appointing, is essential to addressing class size and classroom complexity.

"Teachers understand the realities of today's classrooms," he said. "The

Teacher Advisory Council ensures teachers have a direct voice as we work together to strengthen education for Alberta students."

Following the announcement, Schilling said there is already an organization that speaks for the province's 51,000 teachers: the Alberta Teachers' Association.

"We are confident that classroom teachers who might participate in this council will reiterate what the Association has been saying, clearly and consistently, for years," Schilling said. "Before, during

and after the largest strike in this province's history, this message has been communicated persistently: overcrowded and complex classrooms are unsustainable; they prevent students' needs from being met and contribute directly to teacher burnout."

Members of the advisory council will serve terms of up to 18 months and may be eligible for reappointment. Members will attend online meetings outside of school hours. Council appointments are unpaid and voluntary. ■

Familiar face to lead PD program area

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

This spring, one of the busiest program areas at the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) will see a new face at the helm. On March 15, Danny Maas will take over the Professional Development (PD) coordinator duties. Maas is looking forward to the challenges his new role will present.

"Certainly, what's front of mind right now is supporting our members in meaningful ways as they contend with extremely complex classrooms through advocacy work and supports," said Maas. "We've always been an Association of teachers helping teachers."

Maas graduated from the University of Alberta with his bachelor of education degree in 1993 and began his teaching career with the Edmonton Catholic School Division (ECSD). During his time with the ECSD, his roles spanned the classroom, school administration, the division central office and even a short stint with Alberta Education. In 2007, Maas achieved his M.Ed. in education technology. He used that

expertise at both the school division and ministry levels to help integrate new technology like whiteboards, iPads, iPods, Microsoft and Codex into the classroom.

During his final decade with his school division, Maas sat on the ATA's Educational Technology specialist council. "At that time, I saw first-hand the positive work being done by the Association," said Maas.

When he saw an opportunity to work in the ATA's PD program area, he applied, thinking it would be a great way to support members across the entire province.

Maas joined the ATA's PD program area in December 2019. Just four months later, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down in-person learning across the province. Maas's expertise in educational technology became invaluable to PD as teachers wrestled with the new tools to deliver their lessons virtually.

"I was able to offer, through Zoom, some ed tech webinars for teachers to learn about Google Classroom, the Google Suite and other digital tools, which were the only ways for them to communicate with their students during those first few months."

The PD program area, which



Danny Maas, incoming PD coordinator

Maas will oversee, encompass curriculum advocacy, Indigenous Education, diversity and equity, specialist councils and the Beginning Teachers Network. PD also develops and delivers a wide range of workshops and presentations that can be accessed either virtually or in person. One of their highest profile undertakings are the annual teachers' conventions. Every February and March, program area staff work

closely with teacher-volunteers to coordinate the nine conventions held throughout the province.

Teachers' conventions were part of Maas's original assignment with PD, but that will change as he moves into his new role. "It's a big piece of our work. It's one of the few things from the Association that touches every single teacher," said Maas. "I will miss it."

In 2023, Maas was named associate coordinator of PD to cover for a colleague on leave. He will remain in that position until the current coordinator of PD, Nancy Luyckfassel, retires this spring.

In his new role, Maas plans to focus on improving member access to the wealth of information PD holds.

"One of the things I'm excited about is that we have so many great resources and supports here at the Association," he said. "I want to find effective ways of taking those high-impact strategies and providing them in easier, bite-sized pieces that they can understand and implement easily." ■

Information on the PD program area and its work can be found on the ATA's main website, teachers.ab.ca.



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.

Cremona teacher earns national recognition for music education

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

Band teacher Alex Hutcheon was shoveling snow when he learned his work in music education has earned national recognition. Named a finalist for the 2026 MusiCounts Teacher of the Year Award, Hutcheon is being celebrated for building a thriving band program at Cremona School and championing access to music education in a small, rural community.

"I couldn't believe it," he said. "I'm just very honoured and humbled and grateful for all the support from the students and the community." As the only finalist from western Canada, Hutcheon added that he's proud to represent Cremona, a village about an hour north of Calgary.

Building the band

Hutcheon began his teaching career in 2015 at Holy Cross Collegiate in Strathmore and moved into a teaching role at Cremona School in 2017. When he arrived, the band program was small, sometimes with fewer than 10 students. Since then, he has built it up to nearly 150 students, though he emphasizes that this achievement is shared.

"It's taken us a long time to get here," he reflected. "But our staff is very supportive of the music program, and I've been lucky to have administrators who understand the benefits of music education and are willing to invest in it long-term."

Working in a small, rural K-12 school also allowed him to forge long-term relationships that supported the program's strength and continuity.

"The grade 8s this year were in my first kindergarten music class at the school," he said. "I get to create a clear direction with the students and know what we need to have in place to build up to the next step."



Teacher Alex Hutcheon with his school's junior high band at last year's MusicFest Nationals in Toronto

SUPPLIED

Accessibility has also been key to the program's success. When Hutcheon arrived, the band parent society already owned a fleet of instruments. He has since expanded that inventory to remove barriers to student participation.

"We want to make it as simple as possible for these kids to be able to have instruments," he said. He also works with students who face scheduling conflicts or other challenges, adapting timetables or instruments as needed.

"Whatever it is, we find a way," he said. "If a kid can't play an instrument for one reason or another, we'll find a way to accommodate them."

Last year, the program faced a new challenge: more students than instruments. Hutcheon applied for and received nearly \$16,000 in MusiCounts funding to purchase new instruments, helping the program

continue to grow and establish a strong reputation within the community. His work building the music program at the school reinforces his belief that music education matters, and that music teachers can make a difference for their students.

A musical legacy

A graduate of the University of Lethbridge with a music performance degree and an education after-degree, Hutcheon credits public school teachers with setting him on the path to a career in music education. In particular, he credits his mentors, music teachers Heather Biggin and Kirk Wassmer, for igniting his passion for music.

"The two of them are why I wanted to do this," he said. "I just want to bring the same level of joy to students that those two brought to me every day."

Now, receiving this national

recognition, Hutcheon praises fellow teachers across the province who are likewise championing music education in public schools. He hopes his recognition will inspire other music teachers to apply for MusiCounts funding and awards to bolster their programs.

"This has helped our school [...] and music education as a whole," he said. ■

The 2026 MusiCounts Teacher of the Year Award winner will be announced on March 26 at the JUNO Awards. Established in 2005, the MusiCounts Teacher of the Year Award recognizes teachers whose leadership and creativity make music a lasting part of a student's life. The award winner will receive a cash prize and a JUNO Award statuette, as well as a grant to support their school's music program and further expand access to music education.

RED for ED!

Alberta Teachers' Association staff wore red to show support for teachers bargaining in British Columbia.

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.entrifyshops.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.



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CALLING ALL MEMBERS

Apply to serve on an ATA committee!

The committees

Each year, a number of practising teachers are selected to serve on Association committees as well as to represent the Association on boards and committees of other organizations and provincial bodies.

The commitment

Committee members attend the committee's meetings, prepared to speak—from their perspective as a field member—to the forces affecting the respective committee's work.

Travel and incidental costs, as well as release time, are covered to enable committee members to attend meetings.

The 2025/26 list of opportunities and application form are available on the ATA website under Advocacy > Volunteer.



The deadline for applications is April 7.

The ATA embraces diversity and inclusion and is committed to representing members belonging to equity-seeking groups. Members belonging to equity-seeking groups are encouraged to apply.

» All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that Association committees undertake.

If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca or 1-800-232-7208.

aac
Alberta Assessment Consortium

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION

The Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC) is an independent educational organization that is committed to advocating for and improving student learning through effective classroom assessment practices.

With the upcoming retirement of its Executive Director, the AAC Board of Directors is seeking applications for this position.

Applications must be received by the deadline of **12:00pm, Monday, April 27, 2026**.

For all the details, please visit the AAC website at aac.ab.ca

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Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling

Conventions reaffirm our autonomy as professionals and strength as a profession

For more than a century, the Alberta Teachers' Association has worked for the common good of public education. That work continues today, grounded in a simple truth: progress happens when teachers are respected, trusted, supported and heard.

This month, teachers' conventions began, and these events remain one of the strongest expressions of professional trust in Alberta. At a time when professional learning is increasingly prescribed and constrained, conventions remind us that teachers and school leaders know what learning they need. Rooted in autonomy, collaboration and growth, they are spaces worth protecting. They are also spaces to reconnect with colleagues, to maintain and build collegiality, and to remind ourselves of the collective strength of the teaching profession.

This school year has demanded extraordinary commitment and courage from you. The strike was both a difficult and an extraordinary moment in our history. It asked a great deal of all of us, and of our families and communities. Being ordered back to work by Bill 2, with our charter rights overridden, was not how anyone wanted that chapter to end. It was frustrating, painful and, for many, deeply discouraging. We should never shy away from those emotions.

We need to talk about that experience. Those

conversations will not always be easy, but they must be respectful and honest. We owe it to one another to reflect on what happened, to learn from it and to use that learning to shape what comes next. We cannot pretend the past did not happen, but neither can we allow it to define our future.

It is tempting, after a difficult chapter, to disengage from the conversation, but now is not the time to pull back. The concerns teachers raised last year have not gone away—in many cases, they are deepening. Staying engaged is how we protect our profession, our students and public education itself. The collegiality we renew and strengthen at conventions can help sustain our collective engagement and remind us that we are in this together.

We must keep our eyes on the horizon while learning from the past. Our advocacy does not end because the government passes a bill. The voice of teachers is bigger than any single piece of legislation, and stronger than any attempt to silence it.

As you take part in conventions this year, I encourage you to stay connected and embark on those conversations with your Association, with one another and with the purpose in mind of what brought you into this profession. Let conventions be a time not only for professional learning, but for reaffirming the strength of our profession. Our work is not finished; it will and must continue. ■

Don't ignore the toll a complaint can take



PITFALLS AND PRECAUTIONS

Gordon King
Representation Officer

A teacher was facing a frivolous complaint from a parent. The Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC) did not gather information from the teacher during the mandatory preliminary inquiry stage. Unfortunately, without the teacher's perspective and account of the matter, the ATPC launched a lengthy investigation into the complaint. It dragged on for nearly two years—two years to deal with a frivolous complaint.

When the process finally concluded and correspondence arrived from the commissioner, the teacher asked me to be with her as she opened the email. She asked me to read the results. She wanted support for whatever came next. When I read aloud the wonderful words, "no further action," she was so overcome with joy and relief that she broke down and wept. The weight of prolonged anxiety and stress finally lifted. She said through tears that she was "finally free to live her life."

It was a bittersweet moment.

Over the course of the complaint process, I had witnessed our member change dramatically. She went from being a vibrant, enthusiastic person to someone who struggled to get out of bed, clouded by self-doubt and anxiety. The experience took a visible toll on her mental and emotional well-being.

Facing a regulatory complaint can be daunting and dispiriting, especially for those unfamiliar with the procedures involved. Whether a complaint stems from a conflict with a parent, colleague or community member, it often triggers feelings

of shock, anger, distrust and even grief. These reactions are not unusual; they are a response to a process that is stressful and deeply personal.

Should you find yourself the subject of a complaint, we advise you to first, call the ATA's Regulatory Affairs team, and second, look after yourself.

It is critically important to attend to both your physical and emotional well-being. That may mean leaning on friends, family or pets for comfort, or seeking more formal supports such as counselling or therapy, which are often available through your collective agreement. In some cases, the impact is so significant that medical treatment or a leave of absence may become necessary, and these are supported by entitlements under your collective agreement. ATA staff in Teacher Employment Membership Support are available to help you understand what services and protections are available. Having accurate information empowers you to take care of yourself.

No matter where you are in your career—whether you are a first-year teacher, a seasoned administrator or somewhere in between—you should never ignore the emotional toll of this process. As a wise mentor once told me, "You could be gone tomorrow, and they will have a replacement by the end of the day. It's up to you to look after yourself."

On a more hopeful note, I recently received a holiday card from the teacher whose journey I have just described. Surrounded by family and pets was the vibrant, passionate teacher I had first met. She had taken care of herself—and it showed. ■

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.

Private school funding petition falls short of goal

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

The clock on the petition on public funding for private schools has run out.

The grassroots movement started by Calgary teacher Alicia Taylor last October did not meet its required quota of 177,000 signatures by the February 11 deadline. The petition aimed to force a provincewide referendum on whether the Government of Alberta should end its practice of allocating public funds to accredited independent (private) schools. The petition gathered just over 126,000 signatures.

"We mobilized over 2,000 people who wanted to get involved in advocating for better funding for public schools," said Taylor in a news conference announcing the outcome.

Taylor said that many of the people who signed the petition were unaware that public funding goes to independent schools. She said most of the people to whom canvassers spoke were outraged.

"We gave a voice to the people of Alberta who understand that a strong public education system is foundational to a prosperous, equitable society," Taylor said. "These Albertans know that public education drives economic growth, while fostering informed, engaged citizens."

Taylor encourages all Albertans to continue in their advocacy efforts to support public education by contacting their MLA, getting involved with government or a political party, and asking candidates about their plans for public education during our next provincial election.

"We need people who value public education to continue to be engaged," Taylor said. ■



Alicia Taylor addressed the media on Feb. 11. ■
SUPPLIED

ATA offers retirement planning sessions

ATA News Staff

If you are an early service teacher, retirement planning may feel far away, but the choices you make now can impact on your long-term financial security. Starting your active planning now gives you more flexibility, stronger growth potential and a clearer understanding of how your pension fits into your overall career plan.

The ATA's Teacher Employment Membership Support (TEMS) program area offers virtual retirement planning sessions designed to help members at the beginning of their career learn about pension plans, personal savings and additional retirement income sources available to teachers. Topics such as debt reduction and early-career financial planning are also covered.

The next information session, "Understanding Your Pension," will be held on March 18 at 7 p.m. Your pension partner/spouse is invited to attend with you so you both gain a clear understanding of the planning considerations that will support your future.

To learn more about retirement planning sessions, contact TEMS staff at 1-800-232-7208. ■

Register for the March 18 session here: <https://abteach.cc/pensionsession>.



“

My programs have impacted my life in every way, both directly and indirectly.”

Preet Kamal Kalsi, Graduate



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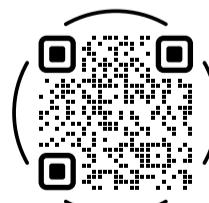
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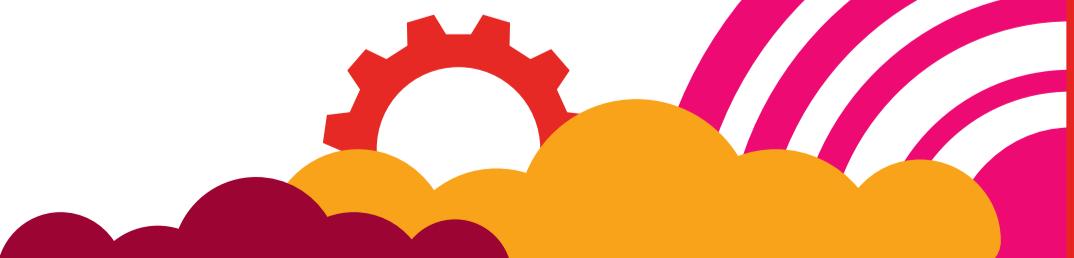
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Explore leadership seminars today at
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Teachers' convention season kicks off

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

For more than 80 years, the ATA's teachers' conventions have created space for meaningful professional growth for Alberta's teachers. This year, conventions kicked off on February 5–6 in Edmonton with the North Central Teachers' Convention (NCTC), where members made memories, networked, and learned new strategies and pedagogical approaches they can apply to their teaching context.

Teachers across Alberta will be attending conventions throughout February. Convention season will wrap up on March 5–6, with the Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention in Grande Prairie. ■

What has been your favorite learning from this year's teachers' conventions? Let us know!

Send an email with your name, local and a brief description of a memorable moment of professional development to newsandmag@ata.ab.ca by March 1. Feel free to include a relevant photo as well. Your submission may be featured in the ATA News.



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Keynote presentations featured a variety of topics, including productive struggle and its application within the classroom, the power of story and the joy of missing out. Bestselling author Carl Honoré (pictured above) spoke on the value of slowing down to build resilience and connection in the digital age.



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Presenter Ian Doktor showed off his homemade catapult as he led a session on engineering projectile motion that gave physics and science teachers new ways to engage their students.

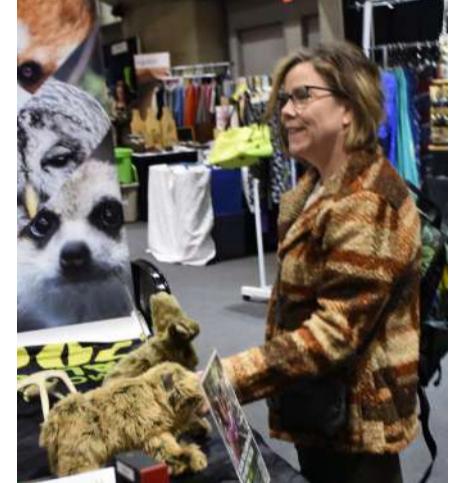


LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Presenter Melanie Fricot got participants up and moving during her line dancing session.



Conventions created opportunities for learning and connection during sessions, at the ATA booth and in the exhibitor hall.



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Inspiring global citizens, *together*

2026 Teachers' Leadership Institute



Apply now!

Build the skills and knowledge you need to educate Canada's next generation of global citizens and leave with the tools to bring global topics to life in your classroom.

AKFC is recruiting globally minded educators across Canada for a 5-day, fully funded program in Toronto.



Applications are now open to all grade 6 to 12 educators across Canada! Apply by February 28.

“

Through rich exchanges with colleagues, **I deepened my understanding of global citizenship and education for sustainable development**, leaving inspired and hopeful for the future of our youth.

Nolian Seitaj

Grades 10-11 Teacher
Quebec



The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association invites applications for the position of

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

Competition: ESO3/26

Location: Edmonton

Commencement: June 1, 2026
(or on a mutually agreeable date)

Position Overview

The Executive Secretary and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) is the organization's senior executive leader, as established under the Teaching Profession Act and ATA bylaws. Reporting to Provincial Executive Council (PEC), the Executive Secretary and CEO is accountable for advancing the ATA's legislated mandate and for providing strategic, operational and organizational leadership in support of ATA members.

Working in close partnership with elected leadership, the Executive Secretary and CEO leads the implementation of PEC-approved strategic priorities and ensures the effective stewardship of the ATA's people, resources, programs and reputation. The role provides strategic direction, inclusive leadership and operational oversight across the ATA, ensuring alignment with the objects set out in the Teaching Profession Act and the direction established by PEC and the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA).

The Executive Secretary and CEO provides prominent external leadership, representing the ATA to its members, government, education partners and the public. This includes cultivating trusted relationships across the education sector, participating in public policy discussions and supporting advocacy on behalf of the teaching profession. Internally, the role is responsible for fostering a strong organizational culture; ensuring effective management systems; and promoting a respectful, inclusive and high-performing workplace.

This position offers a unique opportunity to lead a highly respected member-driven organization at a critical time for public education in Alberta. Candidates who bring strategic insight; strong relationship-building skills; and the reputation, commitment and energy needed to lead in a complex and highly visible environment are encouraged to explore this opportunity.

Qualifications

The successful candidate will bring the following qualifications and experience:

- Extensive senior leadership experience in public education, a professional association or a comparably complex member-based organization
- A proven track record of leading in politically complex, multipartner environments, with the ability to navigate competing interests while advancing organizational priorities
- Demonstrated commitment to the ATA and its mission, or to another Canadian teachers' organization, along with a strong understanding of the public education context in Alberta
- Strong experience in operational and financial leadership within a not-for-profit or public sector environment, including budgeting, resource allocation and organizational accountability
- Well-developed ability to analyze data and information, identify risks and opportunities, and respond effectively to emerging issues affecting the ATA and its members
- Demonstrated success in developing and sustaining collaborative partnerships, including productive relationships with government, education partners and key stakeholders
- Strong capabilities in people leadership and change management, with a commitment to equity, inclusion and respect for the diversity of the teaching profession
- A university degree, preferably at the master's level or higher, from a recognized institution, or an equivalent combination of education and senior leadership experience

The following are additional considerations:

- Strong preference for candidates who have a teaching certificate.
- Travel and evening and weekend work may be required.
- The ability to work in the French language is considered an asset.
- School leadership experience is considered an asset.

What This Position Offers

The successful candidate will be employed under a personal services contract, which includes an attractive compensation and benefits package. The initial location will be in Edmonton, but future assignments may be at any current or future ATA office. Duties will commence on June 1, 2026, or on a mutually agreeable date.

Applicants should quote position ESO3/26 and include the names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of at least two references who are not ATA employees or elected officials of its provincial executive. Applications must be received by 4:00 pm on April 3, 2026, and should be addressed to

Ms Kathryn Dick
Human Resources Director
The Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton T5N 2R1
E-mail: careers@ata.ab.ca

As an employer, the ATA aims to reflect and respond to the diversity of our membership, our staff and the public. To help us better serve our members across the province, applicants who speak more than one language or offer diversity in other areas are encouraged to identify these assets in their employment application.

For more information, please visit www.teachers.ab.ca

We are ATA

ATA News Staff

Did you know that practicing teachers and school leaders serve on standing committees of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)?

Serving on an ATA provincial committee gives members a direct role in shaping decisions that affect the teaching profession in Alberta. These committees bring together teachers, school leaders, Provincial Executive Council members, ATA staff and external stakeholders to discuss a wide range of issues affecting both members and public education in the province.

Below, six current members of provincial standing committees share their perspectives on what it means to serve.



Sarjenka Kuryliw

Gr. 8-10 Language Arts Teacher, Greater St. Paul Local No. 25

Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee

Why I wanted to serve: To help advocate and serve our rural members' perspective. I was one of the founding members of my local DEHR committee. I left that role to serve as the local's president, but remained very passionate about advocating for DEHR. The provincial committee opportunity felt like the perfect fit.

The most surprising and/or rewarding part: How much I have grown in my leadership skills and my breadth of understanding of the impacts I can have across Alberta.

It was a great experience as a first-time committee member, and I hope all members can serve on a committee of their interest at least once.



**Preston Huppie
nitisiyihkason**

Indigenous Education Consultant, Edmonton Catholic Local No. 54

Indigenous Education Committee

Why I wanted to serve: My work is grounded in my Indigenous identity, lived experience and as an Indigenous educator. I chose to serve on a provincial committee to bring Indigenous perspectives to provincial conversations and decisions that influence teaching, learning and professional practice across Alberta.

The most surprising and/or rewarding part: The most rewarding part has been meeting educators from across the province and learning alongside them through shared experience and collaboration. I value the relationships built through this work and the collective commitment in advancing Indigenous Education. I also volunteer my time because I believe contributing to Indigenous Education, reconciliation and educator growth is a shared responsibility.



Ian McLaren

K-9 school principal, Wolf Creek Local No. 3

School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee

Why I wanted to serve: On the surface, choosing to attend three more meetings per year doesn't immediately seem like an attractive proposition. However, I strongly believe that if we really want to improve Alberta's public education, members of our Association need to get involved in every way they are able. A few years ago, I began looking at the various ATA provincial committees,

Members set direction as part of provincial committees

and this one stood out for me. I am a school leader and have been for over 18 years, and I definitely have concerns. It isn't that the issues facing school administrators are bigger or more difficult than those faced by classroom teachers, but they are different at times.

The most surprising and/or rewarding part: The most surprising and most gratifying part of serving on this committee has been how much our discussions focus on the needs of teachers. One of the most significant stressors on administrators—and the one we talk about the most—is how we are struggling to give the teachers in our school what they need. School principals know their role is to ensure teachers have the time, resources and working environment to, in turn, support their students. In today's public school system, that has become a real challenge.

The time commitment isn't all that onerous, and it is important to get involved. How many times have you heard it? We ARE the ATA.



Naomi Herriman

K-9 school Inclusive Education Coordinator and Instructional Coach, Evergreen Catholic No. 44

Curriculum Committee

Why I wanted to serve: I wanted to serve on a provincial committee to ensure the perspectives of classroom teachers are reflected in conversations about curriculum and assessment. In my roles, I interact with teachers of many grade levels. Decisions made at the provincial level have a direct impact on daily teaching and learning, and I believe it is essential that those decisions are informed by current classroom realities. Serving on this committee allows me to advocate for and support teacher and student success.

The most surprising and/or rewarding part: The most rewarding part has been the opportunity to collaborate with and learn from educators from across Alberta who bring diverse experiences and deep expertise to the table. Hearing different perspectives, especially from those who teach outside of my context, has broadened my understanding of provincial issues while reinforcing how much educators share common goals when it comes to supporting students and strengthening public education.

Serving on a provincial committee is one of the meaningful ways I can contribute beyond my own school or local. It offers professional growth, a deeper understanding of how the Association supports teachers, and the opportunity to represent colleagues at a broader level. I would encourage any educator interested in advocacy, collaboration and shaping the future of education to consider becoming involved in provincial committee work. #WeAreATA



Cheyenne Kopinsky

K-9 Instructional Coach (Inclusive Programming, Reading Intervention, EAL Support), Edmonton Catholic Local No. 54

Strategic Planning Group

Why I wanted to serve: I wanted to bring a classroom-based perspective, particularly from the lens of an elementary teacher. With a background in early learning classrooms (kindergarten to Grade 3) and experience teaching in highly diverse, inclusive settings with a significant English as an additional language population, I felt it was important to ensure these voices were represented in provincial conversations. This role allows me to continue advocating for teachers and students while contributing to meaningful, positive change that supports classrooms and communities across our province.

The most surprising and/or rewarding part: Through this role, I've had the opportunity to examine emerging issues and provide informed advice to our Association. It continually challenges me to think beyond my own classroom and community, consider the broader educational landscape, and reflect on the issues and concerns that may shape our profession in the years ahead.

The best time to get involved with our Association was yesterday and the next best time is now. Our Association—and our profession—is strongest when members are informed, engaged and involved.



LaToya Bartlett

Principal, Rocky View Local No. 35

Women in Leadership Committee

Why I wanted to serve: I joined this committee because, despite progress, women in education still face unique challenges when pursuing leadership roles. Many don't recognize that the skills they use every day—collaboration, relationship building, instructional expertise and problem solving—are already core leadership strengths. Women are often leading in classrooms and schools without seeing themselves as leaders. I hope to highlight these strengths, support women in recognizing their leadership potential, and help mentor and empower those aspiring to advance their careers.

The most surprising and/or rewarding part: What surprised me most was realizing how many women share the same challenges when entering official leadership roles. Many women juggle competing life and career priorities yet often feel alone. I also learned how often women underestimate their own leadership skills, even though they lead every day in classrooms, in school communities and at home. Seeing how common this is reinforced the importance of supporting and encouraging one another. ■

Committee need-to-knows

Is this a volunteer role?

Yes. The ATA covers expenses incurred for members to attend meetings, as well as release time when necessary.

How often and where do committees meet?

Most standing committees meet three to five times per school year. Meetings may be held in person (generally in Edmonton) or online.

For which committee(s) should I apply?

Committee opportunities for 2026/27—including for such committees as the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee and Teacher and Education Certification Committee—are now posted on the ATA website under **Advocacy > Volunteer**. You may apply for more than one, so feel free to express your interest in any that align with your interests, experience and expertise.

How can I serve on an ATA committee?

Apply now! Applications are due **April 7**. All applicants will be advised as to the outcome of their application.

Inclusion of Students with Intellectual Disabilities - Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports

A workshop with Dr. Virginia Walker

April 17, 2026 | 9 am - 4:30 pm

Fantasyland Hotel, Edmonton

\$210 | Group pricing available

Join us for a workshop on inclusive education.

Learn practical strategies for implementing Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to promote the meaningful participation of students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

Inclusion Alberta

To learn more and to register, visit inclusionalberta.org



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING → to Enhance Your Practice

Teachers, educational administrators, educational leaders — earn a **Master's degree in Educational Studies** while continuing your career! Study part-time online or in a blended format. Apply by March 31.

The **Graduate Certificate in School Leadership** is a four-course experience based on Alberta's Leadership Quality Standard. Develop leadership capacity in this part-time, fully online program through authentic tasks and experiences. Start in any semester!

The **Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies** enables you to engage with your teaching passions in a part-time, flexible program without taking leave from your career. Choose from the following focus areas:

- Contemporary Literacy Education: K-9
- Elementary Music Teaching and Learning
- Indigenous Education
- Indigenous Language Sustainability
- Mathematics Education
- Science Education
- Structured Literacy and Reading Science
- Teaching English Language Learners
- Teaching Students with Complex Communication Needs
- Technology in Education



Visit uab.ca/prolearn to register for an online information session and start planning the next phase of your professional journey.

ATA NEWS READER

SURVEY

You can also complete
this survey online:



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

If you would like your name submitted to a draw for a \$50 gift card, please include your name and contact information below. *Providing this information is optional.*

Name:

Email address:

Phone number:

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SURVEY BY MARCH 10.

You may email the completed survey to
newsandmag@ata.ab.ca

or send it by mail to the following address:
Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 142 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1
Attention: ATA News



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

Celebrating 40 years together! \$35K GIVEAWAY



ENTER FOR YOUR
CHANCE TO WIN

\$15,000

Cash for you

+ Up to \$15,000

Donation to CMHA Alberta

+ 10 x \$500

Gift cards up for grabs



*NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Open February 1, 2025 to May 31, 2025 to legal residents of Alberta who at the time of entry: (1) have reached the age of majority in Alberta and (2) are a member of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Odds of winning depend on the number of eligible entries received. Math skill test required. Rules: cloud.information.belairdirect.com/40years-rules

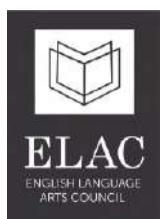
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popquiz!

Sudoku



6					7		9	
	7	1		4	9			
	5	6				7	8	
	5			2	8	3		
	6						8	
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3	2			4	5			
		8	7		9	2		
	9		2					4



novel ideas

Join us April 24-26, 2026 at the Banff Park Lodge for the English Language Arts Council Novel Ideas Conference

Featuring keynote speakers Richard van Camp and John Warner
+ over 25 other educators leading breakout sessions



Richard van Camp
The Alberta Teachers' Association



John Warner

Discover new approaches, connect with fellow educators, and transform your classroom with fresh strategies!

REGISTER HERE



GOT THE INSIDE SCOOP?

We want to hear about it!

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

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



COOR-209-2025-03

Winter issue
arriving in schools
in February.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

IN THIS ISSUE:

Feature
Fils francophones dans le tissu albertain
Francophone Threads in Alberta's Fabric

<p>Unsung Hero Kerri Mckinnon: Cheerleader for inclusive education</p> <p>Wellness Rebalancing Indigenous wellness through spirit, land and story</p> <p>Technology CLEAR Thinking: A framework for AI Use</p> <p>Diversity Taking the 'person' out of 'personalized' land acknowledgements</p>	<p>Research Insights Curriculum and assessment is contested ground in Alberta</p> <p>In Profile Path to the classroom one of discovery for Chestermere teacher</p> <p>Who's Out There? Teachers are writing, singing and running</p> <p>Most Memorable Lesson The legend of Sloof Lirpa spans generations</p>
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Print copies arriving in schools in February.
Digital version available at:
<https://abteach.cc/ATAMagazineFlipbook>



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TALEEND

February 17, 2026 | Volume 60, Number 9



Oh, the books you will read!

Freedom to Read Week is an annual event held during the last week of February that invites Canadians to reflect on—and reaffirm—their commitment to intellectual freedom, a right protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

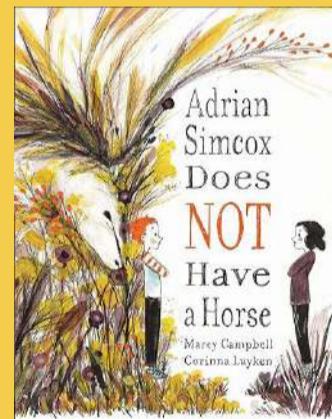
How can you mark this week?

- Find your next read in the ATA Library—check out library. teachers.ab.ca.
- Access a range of resources on literacy, censorship and other topics connected to Freedom to Read Week by using the ATA Library's web guide at teachers-ab.libguides.com/freedomtoread.
- Share your professional reading recommendations with colleagues.



A few faves

Members shared some of their favorite books to teach.

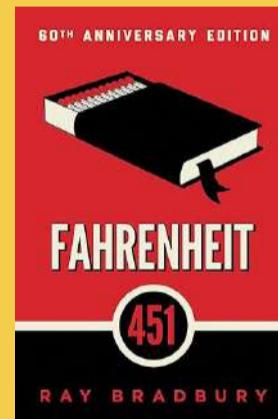


Adrian Simcox Does NOT Have a Horse by Marcy Campbell and Corinna Luyken is one of my favourite picture books for teaching tolerance, empathy, compassion and understanding.

Adrian Simcox lives with his grandpa in a small house and insists he has a horse when talking to his school peers. He is alone and alienated until an understanding mom and her child walk by Adrian's house one day.

On every page, there is a hidden horse in the foliage. The illustrations are brilliant watercolours and the story is poignant and meaningful, especially for February.

—Patricia Gagnon



My absolute favourite novel to teach is *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. Despite being written over 70 years ago, its themes are incredibly relevant today.

I love the beautiful use of figurative language and the character development.

—Jennifer Johnson



The Wild Robot by Peter Brown is one of my favourite books to read aloud to the class.

It keeps the kids engaged and has important lessons about what it means to be resilient and about learning to be part of something bigger than yourself. I've had kids tell me they went on to read books two and three on their own, which is always a great feeling!

—Andi Lee

Did you know?

Freedom to Read Week was founded in 1984 and is now led by Library and Archives Canada, the Canadian Urban Libraries Council, and the Ontario Library Association in partnership with the Book and Periodical Council.