

ATA NEWS

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LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

The Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Conference, held June 4–5 in Edmonton, focused on supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ colleagues and included a keynote speaker and sessions on such topics as mental health, allyship and identity.

A growing pattern of overreach

Canada’s education leaders oppose use of notwithstanding clause
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One last history lesson

Hope lies in public education
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End-of-year reflections

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Make sure to review your summer pay
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A lifetime of learning, sport and believing in what’s possible
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Reflecting back, looking ahead and finding hope



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
 ATA News
 Editor-in-Chief

At the close of a long school year, it is hard not to focus on what felt difficult. Teachers in Alberta are carrying real fatigue. The work has been complex, expectations continue to shift, and classrooms reflect an increasingly diverse range of needs. Naming that reality matters. At the same time, the end of the year offers a chance to ask a different question: What do we have to look forward to?

Focusing on hope and possibility is not about ignoring challenges or presenting an overly simple picture of teaching. It is about choosing to notice what is working well, even in those moments of heaviness. It is about seeing the good work teachers do every day. It is about recognizing a student who finally takes a risk, a class that finds its rhythm after weeks of effort or a conversation that helps someone feel seen. These moments are easy to overlook, but they are not small. They are the core of the profession.

We know that growth is rarely immediate. Much of the impact of teaching is not visible right away. Students carry what they learn, both academically and personally, into future years. We need to remember that even when outcomes are not visible, the effort still matters. Every supportive interaction, every thoughtful lesson, every moment of patience contributes to something

request for teachers to share the most memorable thing a student said this year, we saw evidence of all of this (see Your Views on page 3 for just a few examples). Students care deeply about issues that affect their lives and communities. Guiding them as they make sense of their world is not always easy, but it is meaningful work.

Through professional communities, teachers share ideas, support one

of the best parts of teaching is our relationships with colleagues; those relationships continue to be a positive source of energy for me.

Choosing to be hopeful does not mean pretending everything is fine. It means recognizing that difficulty and possibility can exist at the same time. It allows space for both honest reflection and movement forward. As the year draws to a close, that balance and shift in perspective becomes especially important.

Summer offers opportunity for rest, which is not a pause in professionalism. It is what makes it possible to return in the fall with energy and perspective. Taking time to step back, reflect and recharge is an important part of sustaining a career in education.

In reflecting back and looking ahead, hope can be a practical tool. It can guide small decisions, shape relationships and ground daily work in purpose. Even after a demanding year, we still have many reasons to believe in the impact of teaching. Holding on to those reasons is not naive. It is essential. ■

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

“ Choosing to be hopeful does not mean pretending everything is fine. It means recognizing that difficulty and possibility can exist at the same time. ”

larger than a single school year.

Another source of hope and possibility is the students themselves. Young people continue to demonstrate curiosity, creativity and honesty about the world. They ask difficult questions. They make astute observations. They surprise us. In the responses to our

another and adapt to meet student needs. Through collegial conversations in hallways, staff rooms and professional learning sessions, new approaches take shape. Even in challenging conditions, teachers are not working in isolation. That shared commitment is a quiet but powerful source of strength. One

One last history lesson: Hope lies in public education



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
 ATA Executive
 Secretary

Question: Now that you are heading out to pasture, what are your thoughts on what the future looks like for education?

Answer: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” The opening paragraph of Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* sums up my conflicted view of our current reality and cautions us against thinking that we are living in some unique historical moment. My instinct is to try to identify a precedent for the challenges now facing us and our education system and then to ask what we might learn from that. Among a range of possibilities, I would suggest that the 16th-century Protestant Reformation and the ensuing Thirty Years War that engulfed western Europe in the 17th century offers a somewhat concerning parallel to our broader situation.

While I’m not going to attempt a Coles Notes (remember those?) summary of the period, I will note the key similarities with our own time, starting with the emergence of a disruptive technology. By the time that Martin Luther was posting his

95 Theses, the technology of printing with movable type on paper had been around for only 50 years. It is difficult to capture fully the impact of printing on the advancement of human history, but the parallel in our time is the emergence of the internet and, more recently, artificial intelligence. The effect of both has been to rapidly increase the speed, volume and spread of information, good and bad, with implications that we do not yet fully understand.

Five hundred years ago, printing enabled the rapid dissemination of the Protestant challenge to the religious and political orthodoxy which consequently created a crisis of epistemology that undermined the shared understanding of the nature of knowledge and how people knew things to be true. One could no longer count on the Catholic Church to be the accepted source of truth, and so the social consensus based around that belief began to fall apart. Today, we see a proliferation of ideologies and media sources, each promoting its own version of truth. Furthermore, there seems to be no agreed way of resolving resulting epistemological or practical differences or, frankly, there is little interest in doing so. Instead, there appears to be growing division and a loss of community.

In 17th-century Europe, ruling elites in church and state exploited this crisis and these divisions to advance

their own interests. The result was political, religious and geographic fragmentation that gave rise to the Thirty Years War and an unprecedented and unmatched level of violence across central Europe (estimated deaths amounted to between 4.5 and 8 million, proportionally higher than those resulting from the Napoleonic or World Wars). Although I do not believe that the political conflicts being exacerbated by technology and ideological division today will result in anything remotely similar, the current social order is fragile. There is an increasing potential for episodic violence.

In this rather dismal scenario, public education and the role played by teachers offer rare hope. Education, to draw from Jacques Delors’ model as set out in *Learning: The Treasure Within*, is about four things: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and with others, and learning to be. Of these, the latter two, often ignored by government and economic interests, are crucially important for creating a society that can put diversity at the forefront and help individuals achieve their full potential while being true to themselves. Our public schools, however imperfect, are the last great integrated and integrating institutions in our society that have this mission and the capacity to deliver on all those critical social goods. The challenge for teachers, their Association

and the greater society will be to preserve public education in the face of those who would seek to devalue it and substitute it with segregated, private alternatives. Within public education, the challenge will be to preserve teacher professionalism and the capacity to deliver a learning experience that prepares students’ minds and hearts to flourish in conditions of uncertainty. This is no small task, but I have confidence in you, and in the many friends of public education, to achieve it. However, these efforts will not be without struggle.

Since joining the Association in 2001, my career has been tied to the *ATA News*, writing content, providing direction, authoring editorials and, finally, answering readers’ questions in this column. This will be my last routine appearance in these pages, and I want to take the opportunity to thank all the members of staff (particularly the long-suffering editors) who assisted me and whose work over many years has produced this unique publication for members and a larger audience. I also want to thank you for reading my work and that of many others appearing in these pages—your support has been invaluable.

Best wishes to you all and to this Association, which I have had the pleasure to serve. Now, which way is the pasture? ■



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The notwithstanding clause: A growing pattern of overreach

Joint statement from Canada’s education leaders

VIEWPOINTS

The notwithstanding clause was designed as a safeguard to be invoked only in exceptional and demonstrably justified circumstances. It was never intended to be a routine tool for governments to bypass the courts and silence workers amid legitimate labour disputes.

In the past five years, the notwithstanding clause has been used more frequently to deny human and democratic rights than at any other time in our lifetimes. Recently, premiers in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec have invoked the notwithstanding clause in the following legislation:

- Bill 2, *Back to School Act* in Alberta, 2025
- Bill 9, *Protecting Alberta’s Children Statutes Amendment Act* in Alberta, 2025
- Bill 137, *Parents’ Bill of Rights* in Saskatchewan, 2023
- Bill 28, *Keeping Students in Class Act* in Ontario, 2022
- Bill 307, *Protecting Elections and Defending Democracy Act* in Ontario, 2021
- Bill 96, *Limiting Access to English Language Education in Quebec*, 2022

When governments invoke the notwithstanding clause to end labour disputes, they are not simply legislating. They are telling workers that their rights are conditional, that the charter protections all Canadians depend upon can be switched off when it is politically convenient to do so. This is a threat not only to teachers, but to every worker and every citizen in this country.

Our collective position

The undersigned presidents, representing teachers and education workers in every province and territory across Canada, collectively and unequivocally declare:

- The use of the notwithstanding clause during labour negotiations is an abuse of legislative power. Governments must engage in good-faith collective bargaining, not weaponize the constitution to silence workers.
- Teachers’ rights to freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike are constitutionally protected and must remain so. No government should be able to pre-emptively nullify these rights and block the courts from providing recourse.
- The notwithstanding clause must only ever be used as a last resort, after judicial review has been permitted. Its pre-emptive use to shield legislation from charter challenge is a subversion of the democratic rule of law.
- The implications of this trend extend

far beyond education, threatening every worker and citizen in this country. What is happening to teachers today can happen to any worker, in any sector, tomorrow. This is a national issue requiring a national response.

Together we call on all levels of government to take the following immediate actions:

- Commit to good-faith collective bargaining with teachers and education workers, and resolve disputes through negotiation and mediation.
- Pledge not to invoke the notwithstanding clause in the context of labour relations with teachers and education workers.
- Support federal action to review and restrict provincial use of section 33 when it is applied to deny citizens’ fundamental democratic and human rights.
- Ensure judicial oversight is preserved by allowing courts the opportunity to examine the constitutionality of any legislation before the notwithstanding clause is considered.

Additionally, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF/FCE) board of directors has launched a petition that calls upon the federal government to “annul or repeal any future provincial legislation that restricts workers’ rights to strike and collectively bargain through the use of the notwithstanding clause, and to affirm the federal government’s responsibility to uphold charter rights across Canada.”

The presidents of all provincial/territorial teachers’ organizations strongly encourage all Canadians who share our values to add their names to this petition before it closes on July 24, 2026. The petition can be found at www.ctf-fce.ca/take-action/notwithstanding-clause-petition/.

It is not too late to act with integrity. But governments must choose to do so now. ■

Teacher organization presidents from across Canada representing more than 420,000 educators met in Banff, Alberta, on June 1, 2026, to discuss the potential use of the notwithstanding clause (section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms) by provincial/territorial governments for issues it was never intended for, as it has been in Alberta.

The presidents affirmed their shared commitment to the democratic rights of teachers and all workers and stand united in their condemnation of the use of the notwithstanding clause as a tool to override constitutionally protected rights to freedom of association, collective bargaining and strike action.

The full English and French versions of the joint statement, including the list of signatories, are available at <https://abteach.cc/statement>.

YOUR VIEWS

Teachers told us the most memorable thing a student said this year.

f Kat Sutherland
Yesterday, a student in conflict with another peer said, “Yo, bro, I believe that forgiveness is key to living a good life, so let’s move past this!” Both students fist bumped and went along with their day! My heart burst!

f Andrea Bogard
A student asked me if I had a pet dinosaur.

f Arlene Doshi
A student I never taught came to give me their grad photo and said, “I know you didn’t teach me, but when you said hi in the halls or good morning, you always made me smile.”

f Li-Li Marie Olson
Earlier in the year, the classroom EA was away without a replacement, and one of my Grade 1 students (in a class of 30) exclaimed during a chaotic moment, “WE NEED ANOTHER TEACHER!”

f Deborah Marie
The day after I was away for one day, a student said, “I didn’t just miss you with my mind. I missed you with my whole heart!”

f Alyssa Chuk
My class has a new obsession with Michael Jackson because of the new movie. One of my students asked me if Michael Jackson invented the ABCs.

f Tawny Lehan
I’ve been working with a student on perseverance. One day in gym, he came up to me to let me know his legs were hurting. I asked if he needed to take a little break and he said, “Not yet! I can do hard things!”

f Jaime Rochelle
At graduation, I received a hug from a student who also told me, “I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for you.” Warmed my heart.

f Melissa Lee-Anne
Talking to a friend, not knowing I overheard, “You guys! Social studies just became my favourite subject!!!!”

f Heidee Meszaros
At camp yesterday morning, my hair was a mess, and I said to a student, “Woah! Oh my, my hair is such a mess, I look like a witch.” “Yes, madame, a bit. But not a bad witch, a good one.”

f Kara And-Piko
“I’m with you for the long haul.” (After finding out he may have me as a teacher for the third year in a row.)

f Morgan Brielle
“That game was low-key pretty cool.” That was definitely a win.

f Ash Leblond
A nonverbal kid said “okay” out loud! It was the first time we heard him say any word!

f Kris Elle
“I love when you smile at us. It makes me feel so happy.” My 3rd graders

f Michelle Dickie
One of my Kindies told me the other day, “Mme! I think I’m really getting the hang of this language!” (He told me this in English; I teach in French.)

f Tracy Innes
I love it when my Grade 1, 2 and 3 students say, “Miss Tracy, you are SO smart!”

f Violet Wallace
“Thank you for being so supportive and teaching us in multiple different ways—most traditional forms of teaching don’t work for me, but I learned a lot from you Miss W this quarter!”

f Suzanne Victoria
“Hey, Mrs. B! Time goes by faster when I work on my assignment!”

f Ashley Fowler
I had a student come up to me at recess a couple of years ago and told me, “I think your spirit animal would be a squirrel!” I had never taught her, just interacted in the hallways or recess. It made me laugh; I took it as a compliment!





End-of-year reflections: The power of our teaching community

Deciding what to write for this year’s final Off Script has been challenging, especially given the year teachers and school leaders have just experienced. How do I convey the mix of anger and hope, disappointment and pride, while both reflecting on the past and looking toward the future?

As I think about this tumultuous year, one theme stands out: the power of community.

Last October, teachers, parents, students and public supporters stood together for three remarkable weeks and told the government that the chronic underfunding of public education was no longer acceptable. Even after the strike was ended by the highly problematic Bill 2, the *Back to School Act*, our teaching community remained resilient. Teachers should be proud of the stand they took. While the outcome left many feeling angry and disappointed, the strike made a real difference. It influenced political decisions, shifted public opinion and reasserted the collective voice of teachers—a voice that will not be silenced.

I was also reminded of the importance of community when I hosted presidents from teachers’ organizations across Canada earlier this month. While Alberta’s circumstances are unique, many of the challenges we face—such as funding pressures, class size, classroom complexity and violence in schools—are shared across the country. There is comfort in knowing we are

not alone. Sometimes this work can feel isolating, but those conversations reinforced that leaders in education across the country remain committed to supporting their members, their students and public education.

Community also revealed itself in a more personal way this spring.

In May, I attended the celebration of life for my former colleague Mike Gibson, who passed away suddenly. Mike and I taught together for 14 years, and his loss is deeply felt by many. At the service, I saw colleagues with whom I had not connected in years. As I listened to the stories shared, I was struck by the community that had gathered around Mike and his family. Colleagues, students, friends and relatives came together to honour a life that touched so many others. Mike loved teaching, and that love was evident throughout the afternoon. We laughed, cried and shared memories of a colleague gone too soon.

Driving home, I reflected on the year—the struggles, the small moments of joy, the losses and the lessons—and was left feeling grateful to be part of this teaching community.

This year has been difficult, both professionally and personally, for many of us. As summer approaches, I hope you find the rest you deserve. Be protective of your time and generous with yourself. There is still important work ahead, but as this year has shown us time and again, we are strongest when we face it together. ■

Report highlights growing challenges

Survey shows Alberta teachers and principals are the most stressed in the world

Cory Hare
ATA News Staff

Alberta teachers and school leaders are experiencing a widening gap between their professional responsibility and professional authority.

This is one of several findings outlined in a new ATA report titled *Teaching in Tension*, which compares the findings of the ATA’s research with the OECD’s 2024 TALIS findings, which were released last October.

In the TALIS 2024 survey, 41 per cent of Alberta teachers indicated that keeping up with imposed requirements was a source of stress that occurred quite a bit or a lot. This was an increase of 13 percentage points from the previous TALIS survey in 2018.

Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by changes that were imposed but not well supported by the government or school boards.

“While [teachers] remain responsible for student outcomes, they report diminishing influence over the conditions necessary for fulfilling that responsibility,” the report states. “This represents a weakening of the professional contract between educators and the system.”

This finding aligns with the ATA’s previous research, which has noted a widening gap between teachers’ professional responsibility and professional authority.

“For example, the government’s introduction of a new curriculum and standardized testing without any feedback from the teaching profession

ATA REPORT continued on page 9

ATA’s newest hire to expand PD reach into south

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

Jackie Young, a teacher and Indigenous education consultant from Calgary, will join the ATA’s Professional Development (PD) team to expand the presence of PD programming in southern Alberta.

With nearly three decades of professional experience, Young brings to the PD program area a wealth of knowledge as a teacher and leader, as well as a strong commitment to relationship-based learning.

Young decided she wanted to be a teacher in Grade 2, after she was asked to leave the classroom for talking during story time.

“As I sat outside the classroom door, tucked under a table in the hallway, I remember thinking, ‘I want a job where I can talk all day and not get in trouble for it,’” she said.

“What I didn’t realize in Grade 2 was that teaching would become so much more than just talking. It would give me the opportunity to build relationships, share stories, learn from my students and colleagues, and hopefully make a difference in the lives of my students the way my teachers made a difference in mine.”

Young earned a bachelor of education degree from the University of Alberta and began her career with the Sturgeon School Division before relocating to the Rocky View School Division in 2000. Since 2006, she has worked with the Calgary Catholic School District, taking on roles that expanded her impact beyond the classroom, such as district diverse learning teacher and behaviour consultant.

Most recently, she served as an Indigenous education consultant, where her work focused on supporting schools, teachers and school leaders in developing meaningful approaches to Indigenous education.

“That experience has taught me that meaningful change in Indigenous education does not come from a workshop alone,” she said. “It comes from relationship, from sustained learning, and from teachers feeling supported as learners themselves.”

Young has also supported professional learning as an ATA Indigenous education PD facilitator since 2018, an experience that provided



New ATA staff officer Jackie Young

her with insights into the ATA’s PD programs offered across the province.

“I have seen the difference it makes when teachers across very different communities come together around shared learning,” she said.

Set to work in the ATA’s Calgary office beginning this summer, Young is looking forward to strengthening relationships with Elders and Knowledge Keepers across the province, working with the Walking Together facilitator corps in a new way and helping build professional learning that allows reconciliation to become practice.

“Most of all,” she said, “I am looking forward to supporting teachers across Alberta as they continue the work of meeting their professional standard around Indigenous ways of knowing in their own classrooms, with their own students, in their own communities.”

With her career grounded in a relational approach, Young also emphasizes the importance of identity and relationship in her work. She shares that she belongs to the Fond du Lac Denesūliné First Nation in Treaty 8 and is Métis on her grandfather’s side, with family names including Lafferty, Mercredi and MacDonald. She is also of European ancestry through her father’s family.

“I share this because in Indigenous Protocols, knowing one another’s nations, families and lands is how relationship begins,” she says. “And relationship is the foundation of everything I do.” ■

4 MORE THINGS

about Jackie

- Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give yourself in your first year as a teacher?**
You don’t have to know the answers to everything to be a good teacher. Be a learner alongside your students, and they will teach you who they need you to be.
- What is the greatest life lesson teaching has taught you?**
The relationship is the work, and everything else comes naturally after that.
- Favourite song to put you in a good mood**
“Back on 74” by Jungle, or any rock ballad from the ‘80s.
- Favourite summertime activity**
Roaming the provinces with my partner in our camper van.



Check your summer pay, says ATA

ATA News Staff

Summer pay is not simple, especially this year. While the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) recommends checking your pay statement every month to ensure that your salary and deductions are correct, it is particularly important following the October 2025 labour action.

A teacher's annual salary is based on years of experience (as set out in the collective agreement) and years of education (as determined by the Teacher Qualifications Service). Teachers are paid according to the *Education Act*, which provides that teachers receive 1/200 of their annual salary for each day worked (with a few

variations). Teachers are not paid for vacation periods or holidays (such as summer). School division calendars determine which days teachers are expected to work, and teachers are paid for only those days.

Following fall 2025's labour action, which lasted 16 workdays, no provincewide process was set for how school boards should manage the strike's impact on teachers' pay. This resulted in school divisions using various methods to calculate pay, including teachers' summer payments. To help members better understand what their summer pay may look like, the ATA is offering a "Summer Pay 'Check'" webinar. Members will learn more about

- the rules for calculating pay,

- how various school divisions have approached the financial implications of the strike on teacher pay and
- how members can use the ATA's strike impact calculator to confirm whether the proper deductions have been made to their July and August pay.

Members can register for one of the following sessions:

- Tuesday, June 16, 2026, at 5 p.m.
- Wednesday, June 17, 2026, at 7 p.m. ■

Read the full Worth Knowing and register for a "Summer Pay 'Check'" webinar by visiting <https://abteach.cc/wk-summerpay>.



Travel plans? Review your insurance

If you are travelling within or outside Canada, it is important to consider your travel insurance options. Learn more about what is covered through the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP), as well as other options for trip coverage, at <https://abteach.cc/wk-travel-insurance>.



LEADERSHIP THRIVE5

Bite-sized takeaways to boost and brighten your leadership life

Genevieve Blais
ATA Associate Coordinator,
Teacher Employment
Membership Support

1: I am reading...



Legacy: What the All Blacks Can Teach Us About the Business of Life. This book

has really stayed with me. It shares leadership lessons from the All Blacks rugby team, but so much of it connects directly to school leadership, especially the ideas around culture, humility and leaving things better than you found them.

2: I am eating...



beans and lentils. Lately, I've been trying to add more beans and lentils into our family meals. They're healthy, affordable and honestly much easier to work into everyday meals than I expected—soups, sloppy joes, pasta sauces and curries have all been wins so far.

3: I am loving...



walking. I've been making more of an effort to get outside (or inside on a treadmill) for

short walks during the day. Even a quick walk helps clear my head, reset my energy and create a little breathing room in busy weeks.

4: I have signed up for...



the Things 3 task-managing app to help keep track of both work and family responsibilities.

I like how simple and uncluttered it feels. It helps me stay organized without adding one more complicated system to manage.

5: I am listening to...



the *Lead Her Higher* podcast, which I've really been enjoying. The conversations

feel honest and encouraging, and I appreciate hearing leadership stories that are thoughtful, practical and grounded in real experiences. ■

Are you a school leader? Would you like to share your "Thrive 5"? Submit your ideas to managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

#RED4ED



On May 29, more than 70 teachers gathered in Edmonton for a joint meeting of local political engagement officers and local communications officers. Here, meeting attendees show off their Red for Ed.



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.

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Teacher discipline: A year in review



EXECUTIVE REPORT

Tim Jeffares
ATA Associate Coordinator,
Regulatory Affairs

Poor communication. Long waits. High investigator turnover. These are some of the many challenges stemming from the transition of the profession’s regulatory function to the Government of Alberta.

On January 1, 2023, the province assumed responsibility for teacher discipline for all Alberta-certificated teachers. While this move was touted as a way to ensure proper, timely discipline of teachers, it was a political move designed to address a problem that did not exist. The ATA had overseen discipline for its members for decades and was considered by many as an exemplary regulator, operating in line with regulatory standards adhered to by regulators across Canada.

The government’s new process has had many challenges due to ill-conceived legislation and structural issues with the new area responsible for receiving, investigating and prosecuting cases. High staff turnover at the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC), along with poor communication, has created excessively long timelines for cases to work through the process. The ATA’s Regulatory Affairs unit supports and represents teachers who find themselves subject to ATPC complaints and the resulting protracted processes.

In the past year, the ATA’s active representation numbers have remained constant. At this time one year ago, the Regulatory Affairs unit had 224 active representations. At the time of writing this article,

there are 205 active representations. While 91 cases were closed over the past year, staff have represented or are currently representing 497 teachers since the beginning of the government’s new process in 2023.

In the past 12 months, Regulatory Affairs has assisted members in 11 dispute resolution processes, 21 disciplinary hearings, 3 disciplinary hearing appeals, 14 complainant appeal hearings and more than 200 investigations. These figures include both matters successfully closed over the year and files that remain active.

Recently, more cases have been disposed of at the preliminary inquiry phase, meaning that more consideration of cases has occurred at the front end of the process, thus avoiding a needless investigation. However, far too many frivolous cases have been forwarded to investigation that would have been dealt with more appropriately via one of the nondisciplinary measures available to the commissioner at the front end of the process.

One example of a front-end process that is underutilized is mediation, a strong regulatory tool that could drastically reduce caseloads and help to ameliorate disputes between two parties. In the last 12 months, none of the members who requested representation from Regulatory Affairs were sent to mediation. This seems to signal that mediation has been taken off the table, leading to some cases proceeding to an investigation needlessly.

When the commissioner orders an investigation, members can expect to wait months, if not years, for an investigator to contact them for an interview. These timelines cause undue stress for our members and serve to delegitimize the government’s process. These delays harm both members under investigation and complainants alike, and result in complex employment issues for our members as they live with complaints hanging over their heads.

Dispute resolution processes are nondisciplinary in nature; they typically run effectively in a timely manner and conclude matters in positive, constructive ways. However, hearing processes have proven to be very frustrating for members. Delays, prosecutorial overreach and poor timelines on behalf of the commissioner and ATPC legal counsel have resulted in hearings that are more complex, adversarial and lengthy than members might expect. Even so, Regulatory Affairs officers have had a great deal of success negotiating appropriate sanctions when warranted and have engaged in fully contested hearings when the matter at hand has required a positive result for the individual teacher that will serve as an important precedent for ATA members.

Members who have been supported by Regulatory Affairs staff report significant negative impacts in connection with the ATPC processes. Nearly all respondents to an exit survey (98 per cent) indicated that the government’s disciplinary process has negatively impacted their physical and/or mental health. More than half (57 per cent) stated that the complaint negatively impacted their career path, and more than three-quarters (84 per cent) indicated that having a complaint and going through the government’s process have negatively impacted their feelings toward the teaching profession.

Unfortunately, most members with lived experience in the government’s disciplinary system this past year expressed concerns with teacher regulation in Alberta. These concerns are being shared as the Regulatory Affairs unit works to ensure fair representation and timely due process for members.

The ATA believes that high-quality professional regulation is a cornerstone of all professions and will continue to advocate for sound processes to ensure members are treated fairly even as the profession is upheld. ■

ATA offers support for teachers called as ATPC witnesses

Neil Thember
ATA Regulatory Affairs Officer

Every so often, a teacher may receive an unexpected message from an investigator with the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC) requesting to be interviewed as a witness. This does not mean that you are being accused of any misconduct; instead, it indicates that you may hold information relevant to a complaint under review. Understanding your role and your responsibilities and rights can make the process far more manageable, and the ATA is here to help you.

At its core, the investigator’s job is straightforward and is rooted in professional responsibility. They need to gather information impartially. The witness’ role is equally clear: to provide factual, firsthand accounts of what they have observed, heard or documented. Participating in an interview as a witness is not the same as appearing at a formal hearing. An earlier step in the process, interviews focus on information gathering rather than determination or judgment. Cooperating, when appropriate, aligns with professional expectations.

It is important to note that while witnesses will not have representation for an investigative interview, support is available prior to the interview through the ATA’s Regulatory Affairs unit, if questions arise.

What to know as a witness

1. Don’t assume anonymity. It is natural to assume that participating as a witness means that you can remain anonymous. However, the reality is that anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Depending on the circumstances and procedural fairness requirements, a witness’ identity or the information they provide may need to be disclosed later in the process. It is important to understand and be aware of this possibility from the outset as it sets realistic expectations and avoids surprises later.

2. Clarity and precision matter. Stick to what you know or have observed firsthand and stay grounded in facts. Distinguish carefully between direct knowledge and second-hand information. If something was shared with you by another person

or if you overheard something, say so. If you’re unsure or don’t remember, it is entirely appropriate to respond with statements like “I do not recall” or “I was not present.” Speculation, guesswork and filling in gaps, even if well-intentioned, can complicate an investigation. Clear, concise answers rooted in fact should always be the goal.

3. Prepare yourself. Before an interview, take time to review any relevant records that may refresh your memory. This could include emails, messages, notes, calendars and anything else relevant to the investigation. These records can help ensure your responses are accurate and complete. It is equally important that you preserve those records. Do not alter, delete or discard anything that could be relevant. Maintaining the integrity of information is an essential part of the process.

4. Know your rights. While cooperation is encouraged, witnesses have agency. You are entitled to ask for clarification, and you can take time to review documents before responding to any questions. Scheduling is also flexible, within reason. Interviews can often be arranged around your professional responsibilities, like during a preparation period, over lunch or after school. It is also appropriate to request for additional time to prepare if you need it. Further, asking for a break, or even to reschedule, if necessary, is acceptable.

5. Keep it confidential. Conversations about the interview or its subject should be limited only to situations where sharing is appropriate or necessary. If you are unsure, seek guidance from Regulatory Affairs before discussing details with others. Discretion is essential to ensure that privacy is protected and that the integrity of the investigation is not compromised.

6. Be ready to press pause. There is a clear distinction between being a witness and being the subject of a complaint. However, if questions turn personal and you feel like your conduct or competency seems to be in question, pause the interview and reach out to the Regulatory Affairs team for advice. Getting guidance early can help you navigate the situation with clarity and confidence.

7. Be a record keeper. After the interview, make



ISTOCK

notes about the details of the interview and keep your own record. It is important to record information such as when the interview took place, who was present and any follow-up actions discussed. If you are asked to provide documents, keep the originals and provide copies wherever possible. These records can be useful if questions arise or further involvement is required later.

Being contacted by the ATPC can feel daunting, but remember that the process is meant to be grounded in fairness, professionalism and the pursuit of accurate information. By approaching it with honesty, preparation and a clear understanding of your role, you contribute to that process, while also protecting your own interests. ■

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.

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ATA REPORT
continued from page 4

has put teachers in untenable positions. They are forced to carry out the government’s directives, resulting in ethical stress and moral distress,” the report states.

Divide between teachers and government

In recent months, the government has announced initiatives aimed at addressing class size and complexity, such as the Class Size Reduction Grant, complexity teams, hiring more EAs, and fast-tracked teacher certification. However, while teachers have been voicing concerns about these issues for years, these initiatives have done little to assuage the distrust that has built up among many teachers, said ATA president Jason Schilling. “Teachers remain skeptical that the government will actually be able to fulfill the recent announcements,” Schilling said. “The government continues to create new solutions that are questionable in their sustainability.”

What is TALIS?

Conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), TALIS stands for Teaching and Learning International Survey. It’s the world’s largest survey of teachers and principals. The latest survey, conducted in 2024, involved 280,000 educators from 55 education systems around the world who shared insights into their working conditions, professional development and the realities of the modern classroom.

Highly stressed and ready to bolt

One of the most disturbing findings of TALIS 2024 is that Alberta teachers reported the highest levels of stress internationally, said report author Lisa Everitt, an ATA executive staff officer and researcher. The TALIS data shows that 42 per cent of Alberta teachers reported experiencing stress “a lot in their work,” more than double the OECD average of 19 per cent. The next highest response was from Costa Rica, where 36 per cent of teachers reported high stress. “Alberta teachers and students are doing their very best to navigate a system that is causing significant suffering due to resource restrictions and poor policy decisions,” Everitt said in an interview. Another concern highlighted by the research is the percentage of teachers under age 30 who intend to leave the profession within five years. This figure has more than doubled since 2018, from 9 per cent to 21 per cent. Also, 58 per cent of teachers who are 50 or older indicated that they planned to leave teaching in the next five years—well above the OECD average of 48 per cent for that age group. “Sadly, I think the profession is at a crossroads, and teachers and school leaders are sacrificing their own health and family lives to try and help students succeed,” Everitt said. “This is not sustainable, and there are strong signals, getting stronger every year, that many teachers are seriously considering leaving the profession.”

FIND THE REPORT

<https://teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/education-research>

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David Martin
ATA News Staff

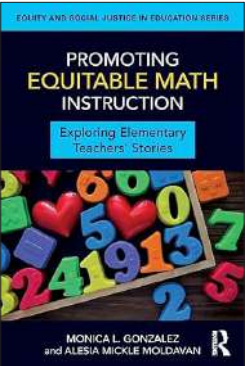
L’été est à nos portes ! Vous avez travaillé fort toute l’année et méritez bien de passer du temps à l’écart des écrans, question de ralentir la cadence pour mieux vous ressourcer. Lorsque l’enseignement vous reviendra inévitablement en tête, songez à simplifier votre planification en vue de la prochaine année scolaire en consultant les guides de ressources en ligne de la bibliothèque de l’ATA… votre bibliothèque ! Ces guides proposent uniquement des ressources accessibles gratuitement et bon nombre d’entre eux ciblent directement les thèmes abordés dans les programmes d’études en vigueur en Alberta. Au cours des derniers mois, l’équipe de la bibliothèque s’est attelée à créer des guides qui reflètent le curriculum récemment mis en œuvre en études sociales, et ce, de la maternelle à la 9e année. Vous avez désormais la possibilité de consulter un guide distinct conçu pour vous aider à trouver plus facilement des ressources pour chacun de ces niveaux scolaires (veuillez noter que le guide pour la 9e année sera publié sous peu). Chacun de ces nouveaux guides se distingue des versions existantes pour l’enseignement des études sociales par la mention « nouveau programme » dans son titre. À l’intérieur de chaque guide, vous trouverez des onglets où nous avons regroupé des ressources portant sur

les principaux thèmes abordés dans le cadre du programme scolaire en vigueur dans les écoles de l’Alberta. Chaque onglet se répartit en sections dont les titres vous aideront à repérer rapidement des liens pertinents pour le ou les résultats d’apprentissage faisant l’objet de votre planification. Par exemple, si vous planifiez une leçon sur la chute de la République romaine pour votre classe de 6e année, sélectionnez le guide intitulé « Études sociales (nouveau programme) – 6e », puis consultez l’onglet « Romains » où vous trouverez une section intitulée « Chute de la République ». À l’heure actuelle, nous vous proposons 83 guides de ressources en français et ceux-ci sont régulièrement mis à jour et évoluent constamment. Vous avez déniché un excellent site gratuit pour l’enseignement d’une matière ou d’un thème en particulier ? N’hésitez pas à nous en faire part ! Nous acceptons les suggestions de ressources en tout temps. Il suffit de nous écrire à l’adresse library@ata.ab.ca pour que votre trouvaille s’ajoute à nos guides et que vos collègues aux quatre coins de la province puissent en bénéficier, que ce soit en juillet, en janvier ou à tout autre moment de l’année. ■

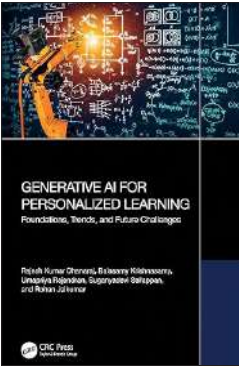
Vous trouverez les guides de la bibliothèque ici : <https://abteach.cc/ressources>



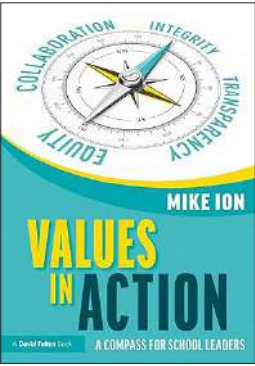
CHECK ME OUT!
Some of the ATA Library’s newest reads:



Promoting Equitable Math Instruction: Exploring Elementary Teachers’ Stories by Monica L. Gonzalez and Alesia Mickle Moldavan



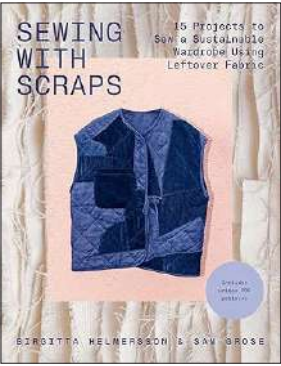
Generative AI for Personalized Learning: Foundations, Trends, and Future Challenges by Rajesh Kumar Dhanaraj, Balasamy Krishnasamy, Umapriya Rajendran, Suganyadevi Sellappan and Rohan Jaikumar



Values in Action: A Compass for School Leaders by Mike Ion



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gotcha! PHOTO CONTEST

And the winners are ...

The 2026 Gotcha! Photo Contest drew dozens of submissions from Alberta teachers. Here are the judges' top three picks, along with some honourable mentions.



1st

ALL AN ILLUSION

For this assignment, students were asked to create an art piece using sidewalk chalk. At least one member of the team had to interact with the creation. I then used the school's drone to take the photo with a top-down view at about 20 feet.

Photographer: Mark Knoch, Eastglen High School, Edmonton

Date of photo: May 2026

Judges' comments: This is a technically outstanding photo, with a delightful optical illusion that required skill, time and effort to capture! The bright colours of the chalk contrast nicely with the neutral pavement, and the subject's relaxed pose and smile bring warmth and personality to the scene.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS



Photographer: Sarah Walter, Griffith Woods School, Calgary



Photographer: Jessica Matus, St. Matthew Catholic School, Rocky Mountain House



Photographer: Mark Knoch, Eastglen High School, Edmonton

Prizes are awarded as follows:

1st place:
\$200

2nd place:
\$100

3rd place:
\$50

The contest judges were:

Alexa Guse
ATA graphic designer

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News managing editor

Kristine Wilkinson
ATA News editor-in-chief



SKI ON!

This photo was from a cross-country skiing field trip for Outdoor Education with an eager group of Grade 9s.

Photographer: Tyler Dixon, West Ridge School, Calgary
Date of photo: March 2026
Judges' comments: A striking photo with engaging composition and perspective, and good use of colour. The crisp detail, balanced lighting and dramatic mountain backdrop show the photographer's keen eye for capturing depth and scale.

NATURE WALK

Our Grade 1 and 2 students ventured on a fall walk that involved making patterns from things found in nature, as well as a scavenger hunt of signs of fall. In this photo, you see a Grade 2 student demonstrating his ABAB pattern.

Photographer: Irene Blackburn, École Notre Dame, Leduc
Date of photo: September 2025
Judges' comments: This is a well-composed photo—the low angle and framing connect the child's expression with the details in the foreground, creating a strong sense of story. The natural lighting and the bright pop of colour against the softer background highlight the photographer's skill in capturing this moment of learning.



Photographer: Michelle Dickie, Varsity Acres School, Calgary



Photographer: Danielle Jean, Hillgrove Campus, St. Albert



Photographer: Susannah Killey, Beaumont Composite High School, Beaumont



Photographer: Kerri-Ann Brauner, St. Peter School, Calgary



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INSIDE INSIGHT

Lucie Fillion
Special to the ATA News

I have been working in schools since 1981. Over the years, I have coached children, supported students with their learning and helped many build confidence in themselves. One of my greatest joys has been helping young people discover that they are capable of more than they imagined. As a teacher, I believe this message matters deeply for students: you can accomplish incredible things when you believe in yourself, stay committed and keep moving forward—even when the path is not easy. I coached rope skipping teams and had the privilege of bringing students to international competitions, where our teams finished among the top three in the world. I also taught high school art. Years later, one of my students asked me, “When are you going to

do your own exhibit?” That question stayed with me. I eventually did—and I learned something important: sometimes we encourage others so much that we forget we are also allowed to chase our own goals. In 2013, when I began semiretirement, I decided to explore my athletic potential again and entered the World Masters Games. I placed fifth in the world, and that experience gave me the confidence to return seriously to archery. As a teenager, I had competed in archery at the Eastern Canadian Championships, but I stepped away while raising my family. Returning to the sport years later was both exciting and challenging. In 2014 and 2015, I competed on the archery circuit and became the only Canadian to reach the finals two years in a row in the senior division. In 2018, when World Archery held a world championship event, I won silver in the World Field Championship after leading the target qualification round. It was a proud moment and also a reminder that every experience teaches resilience. While continuing to teach part-time, I kept training and competing internationally. I also discovered that I

love challenging myself in other sports. In 2015, between indoor archery tournaments, I competed in long-track speedskating at the Winter World Masters Games and earned a bronze medal in the 3,000 metres, along with strong finishes in other distances. In 2020, I competed in alpine skiing at the Winter World Masters Games. Returning to that discipline and finishing in the top 10 was another exciting challenge. Then, in 2023, at the World Masters Games, I competed in field archery, earning bronze, and placed fourth in target archery. During those same games, I also entered speed kayaking—mostly as a hobby at first—and came away with six medals: three gold, two silver and one bronze. I missed another medal by only one second. In 2026, I was honoured to receive the 2025 Female Athlete of the Year award from Archery Alberta. The award is presented the following year, once the season is complete and results can be reviewed. Receiving this recognition at the provincial indoor championship was a meaningful moment for me. My experiences over the years—both wins and misses—remind me of something I often tell students.

Growth does not stop when we get older. Learning does not stop. Dreams do not stop. We may begin something new later than expected. We may return to something we loved years ago. We may surprise ourselves. Sport has taught me discipline, courage and perseverance, but most important, it has taught me that we are all capable of continuing to grow. To every student: Keep trying. Keep learning. Be brave enough to challenge yourself. Trust the process. You may discover strengths you never knew you had. ■

Lucie Fillion has been teaching in Alberta for four decades and is currently a substitute teacher.

Inside Insight is your chance to write about a memorable moment, a lesson learned or a poignant experience related to teaching. Please submit articles to managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

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25 neutral lessons for Alberta's public school students

Derrique DeGagné Assistant Principal, Edmonton

Whether you see your flag flying
Whether you see yourself reflected in the halls and on the walls
In public schools
No matter your faith, politics, race, sex, gender identity, immigration status or ability,
Whether your ancestors are Indigenous or settlers
You are welcome
Hate is not welcome
You belong
Intolerance does not
You deserve to feel safe
And we will protect you
Every child matters
And we will honour you
Your ideas matter
And we will help you explore them
Your stories matter
And we will help you tell them
Your hopes matter
And we will help you uncover them
Your dreams matter
And we will help you realize them
Your future matters
And we will safeguard it
Despite our best efforts, adults (even leaders) make mistakes
Teaching is a radical act of hope
Learning is too
Together, we are honouring our ancestors and investing in the next seven generations
You are the next leaders
And we believe in you
Your curiosity, courage, conviction, creativity and compassion are our greatest hope

Derrique DeGagné (MEd) is passionate about school culture and the power of the arts to foster meaningful connections. DeGagné is an assistant principal with Edmonton Public Schools, serves on the GETCA committee and sits on the Citadel Theatre's board of directors.



Word Scramble

Unscramble these summertime destinations and activities.

ebeacsh _____	khigni _____
nddbgpaileodar _____	cadpmruong _____
deranig _____	otrdparis _____
seavftils _____	esakl _____

Answers: beaches, hiking, paddlesporting, campground, reading, roadtrips, lakes, festivals

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FIELD TRIP MEMORIES

Teachers shared some favourite field trip memories from back when they were students.

In 1985, I was in Grade 7 at Nelson Heights Middle School in Cold Lake. We took a field trip to an Edmonton Oilers game and had an opportunity to get autographs afterwards. ❤️
—Jennifer Paradis Podhaniuk

Our high school band went on a week-long trip from Dawson Creek, BC, to Vancouver for a band festival. The principal, band teacher and a few others were our chaperones. After only 20 minutes on the road, the bus pulled into an ice cream stand and our teachers bought us all ice creams! The bus ride seemed like a wonderful summer vacation. I managed to sit beside a beautiful girl I had a crush on. She’s now my beautiful wife.
—Ribsy Ludwig

Sleepover at the Royal Tyrrell Museum!
—Christy Amanda

Grade 6 visit to the legislature in the morning, followed by an afternoon at the water park!
—Megan Classy

My favourite as a student was our Grade 7 trip from Dawson Creek to Vancouver. We had a chartered Greyhound bus and about 50 kids. We stayed in the youth hostel on the beach. We visited things like the CBC, Roger’s Sugar, Playland, the aquarium, a Whitecaps game, and we even did a day trip to Victoria! So many amazing experiences!
—Brenda Parker

In Grade 10, we went on a week-long canoe trip in northern Saskatchewan. It was an experience of a lifetime, creating many amazing memories!
—Ariane Taylor Brzoza

Overnight trip to Drumheller in Grade 6. I remember getting all 33 of us into the Little Church at the same time; it was a tight squeeze.
—Melissa Henke-Lambert

A ski trip to a very small ski hill in Saskatchewan with only a T-bar to pull you up. I don’t remember much about the skiing, but the bus ride home with my friends singing “My Heart Will Go On” will live on in my memory forever!
—Dana Johnston

In Grade 6, we travelled two and a half hours to Edmonton for a Chinese trade fair. I think we had been studying China in social at the time. What made the trip so unforgettable, though, was that our bus broke down on the way home. I still remember all of us Grade 6 students out in the ditch beside the highway, treating it like an adventure while the driver tried to figure out what to do. Eventually, we limped our way into Vegreville and waited there for a replacement bus. I can only imagine the stress my Grade 6 teacher must have been feeling. Ironically, I now teach in Vegreville.
—Lisa Salisbury

