

"PACK HOPE" BACKPACK CHALLENGE



PHOTOS: ROBERT MATHESON

On Aug. 20, volunteers with the "Pack Hope" Backpack Challenge, launched by EducationMatters and the Calgary Board of Education, assembled 2,000 backpacks to support students heading back to class.



On priorities

Listening, engaging and moving forward
See *From the Desk Of*, [page 2](#).



Strong leadership through difficult times

Dennis Theobald retires as executive secretary
See [page 4](#).



Are you ready to run?

2027 PEC election dates set
See [page 13](#) and [page 19](#).

Summer flooding

ATA's Barnett House set to reopen in early 2027
See [page 13](#).

Back-to-school hacks

Some tips and tricks to start off the new year
See *Tale End*, [page 20](#).



Caring without carrying it all alone



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

As summer draws to a close, teachers are preparing classrooms, planning lessons and getting ready to welcome students back for a new school year. Teachers return to work carrying their own hopes, concerns and responsibilities. And like everyone else, they are stepping into a world that can sometimes feel too demanding and fast-moving.

Across Alberta, conversations are happening around kitchen tables, in coffee shops, on social media and in staff rooms about many important topics, such as the upcoming referendum questions, ATA Provincial Executive Council elections and provincial elections. Even as public attention and debate center on the referendum and the question of separation, Albertans also need to think about broader questions of how our province is governed and how citizens participate in democratic decision making. Some of these questions hit close to home for teachers in Alberta's public education system.

September was always such an exciting time for me as a teacher, but I was also anxious to get into the

routine of the year. However, there were also times when the political environment or other external factors created challenges. When this happens, we need to remember the supports and supporters around us.

Teachers care so deeply about their students that they can begin to carry burdens that were never meant to be carried alone. When a child is struggling academically, emotionally, socially or personally, teachers want to help. When teachers see that a new curriculum may not be the best it could be for

“Teaching is, at its heart, an act of service.”

students, they want to help. When decisions are being made that teachers believe will affect our students and our profession, they want to speak up.

This desire comes from the best part of the profession. Teaching is, at its heart, an act of service. I know I spent many sleepless nights wondering about the welfare of my students and their futures.

The truth is that teachers play an extraordinary role in young people's lives, and fortunately teachers

are not the only people who care. Parents care deeply. Faith communities care deeply. Coaches, mentors, youth leaders and countless community organizations care deeply. Our goal should be to share the burden when we think about the education and advocacy work that needs to be done.

Recognizing our limits is not indifference. The work of teaching is so important that we must find ways to sustain ourselves for the long journey ahead. Advocacy does not have to consume us, and caring does not require us to carry everything on our own. Healthy communities understand that raising children has always been a collaborative effort and our advocacy work should be collaborative as well.

As a new school year begins, teachers should remember that the measure of our commitment is not how much we exhaust ourselves, but how effectively we serve over time. Students need teachers who are engaged, hopeful and energized for the year ahead. They also need teachers who care enough to take care of themselves.

There is a lot on our minds. There always will be. But we do not have to carry it all alone, and that is not a sign that we care less. Rather, it is a sign that we understand the importance of caring well. ■

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

Listening, engaging and moving forward



FROM THE DESK OF

Robert Mazzotta
ATA Executive Secretary

The Alberta Teachers' Association's (ATA) history of success in supporting teachers in this province goes back to 1918. First known as the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, the organization's goal was to improve the working lives of teachers. A seemingly simple aim, yet one that not only established but also continuously reaffirmed the professionalism and value of teachers for more than a century. In the ATA's 108 years, there have only been eight executive secretaries at the helm, and I am truly humbled and honoured to be the ninth executive secretary. Stepping into this role, I will do my best to uphold the objects and values of the ATA, and you, its members.

This past year has had more than its share of ups and downs, and I am aware of the frustrations that some of our members have with the ATA. I am hoping to turn that around. Part of my plan to do that is to be more visible at ATA events, and if you see me, I invite you to come say hello. I am happy to discuss issues with members so that I can better understand and address concerns, and provide insights into our processes where helpful. Transparency is vital and I want to demonstrate that to you.

I will also continue working closely with Provincial Executive Council—your elected representatives—to proactively advance the teaching profession and public education in Alberta. As executive secretary, I can explain the operational side of actions taken by the ATA, while Council is available to explain the political aspect of decisions made and directions taken.

School council representatives or local executive

members may start seeing me at local meetings, as I plan to attend them whenever my schedule allows. This will allow me to hear your concerns, alongside your district representatives, so that we can work together to make change happen where possible. Attending local meetings also creates opportunities for me to communicate key ATA messages and information directly to our teacher-leaders, which will equip these members with deeper understanding of ATA processes they can share with colleagues.

“I am committed to working with you and your elected representatives as we continue to advocate for better, sustainable funding and supports for the public education system.”

Another priority for the ATA, and me as executive secretary, relates to bargaining. Following the implementation of the imposed legislated settlement last October, the ATA clearly heard that members were not happy with how bargaining played out. While the blame for the imposed settlement lies at the feet of the provincial government, Council understood that a review of our bargaining processes was in order and struck a committee to review our structures and provide recommendations to Council prior to the next round of bargaining in 2028. The committee, made up of field members and an independent bargaining expert as cochair, has been

active since spring 2026, reviewing ATA bargaining guidelines and processes, as well as feedback from members gathered through research conducted by a third party. The committee will be reporting its findings and recommendations to Council later this fall and information will subsequently be shared with members in a way that is transparent but also mindful of privacy and regulations related to the labour code. It is my hope that members are satisfied with the review and any outcomes so we can move forward, unified as a profession, and position ourselves effectively for 2028.

A final priority is the implementation of the ATA's new database and information portal, MIDAS (Member Information Data Access System). MIDAS will allow members to update their profile more easily, register for ATA events, find information more quickly and stay informed. The online portal will also streamline our web presence and eliminate the need for the legacy site. Members will be able to sign up for regular communications from the ATA, and I encourage you to do so. Our strength comes from our unity and from members being well-informed and connected.

While these are just three key ways we're moving forward in the immediate future, I am committed to working with you and your elected representatives as we continue to advocate for better, sustainable funding and supports for the public education system.

You, the teachers of Alberta, help make the province's public education system one of the best in the world. My goal is to maintain that standing by representing and supporting you as best I can, upholding the ATA's longstanding aim of improving the working lives of teachers. ■

I welcome your comments and questions. You may reach me at robert.mazzotta@ata.ab.ca.

Building connections as teachers and families head back to school

VIEWPOINTS



Meagan Parisian
President
Alberta School
Councils'
Association

Back to school comes with a lot of stuff, for teachers, students and parents.

There are school supplies to buy, forms to fill out, schedules to learn, lunches to think about again, and the annual mystery of how every pair of indoor shoes from June disappeared before August. And then there's the lunch bag that's been sitting untouched since the last day of school. Do I really want to open that? Probably not.

Then there are the back-to-school events. Meet the teacher. Come for muffins. Drop off your school supplies. Find your classroom. Check the class lists. Meet your school council. Different schools may use different titles and terms, but the idea is pretty much the same: come in, look around, meet some people.

While it can be tempting to see these events as one more thing on an already packed calendar, they're actually doing some pretty important work.

For a child who's nervous about September, walking through the school before the first real day can make a huge difference. They find their classroom, meet their teacher and maybe recognize a few familiar faces. The building that once felt enormous and unknown starts to feel a little more manageable.

And that doesn't stop being important after elementary school. These opportunities can matter just as much in Grade 12 as they do in Grade 1. The reasons change, but the need to feel comfortable and connected doesn't. A Grade 1 student might want to know where to hang their backpack and find the bathroom. A Grade 12 student might be figuring out a new timetable, unfamiliar teachers, graduation requirements or what comes next.

Parents need some of that reassurance too.

Meeting the teacher before there's a problem means the first conversation doesn't have to be about a missed assignment, a behaviour concern or something that went sideways. You get to put a face to a name and get a sense of what the year might look like.

These events can be even more important for families who are new. Maybe they've moved across town, across Alberta or across the world. Maybe this is their first child starting school and they don't know how any of this works yet. Walking into a school where everyone else seems to know each other can be intimidating.

A muffin and a friendly hello won't solve everything, but they're a start.

This is also where school councils have an important role. Back-to-school time represents a chance to build or strengthen relationships between parents and families, teachers, support staff, administrators and the school council. These roles are different, and they should be, but we all share



Shelley Odishaw
Executive Director
Alberta School
Councils'
Association

a common goal. We all want kids to have the opportunity to learn, grow and do well.

Further, these relationships don't begin and end at meet-the-teacher night. They're built throughout the year, often in fairly ordinary moments. But it's much easier to ask a question, raise a concern, offer an idea or get involved when you've already met the people on the other side of the conversation—for both the families and the teachers.

For school councils, it's also worth remembering that the engagement of parents and families doesn't begin with asking someone to chair a committee or sell something. It's about helping families know they belong in the school. Introduce the council. Explain what it does. Answer questions. Introduce people to each other. Sometimes engagement starts with showing up, having a coffee and learning someone's name. Make it easy for people to come back.

The school year brings a lot—meetings, homework, permission forms, fundraising, report cards, graduation plans and so much more. But there is time for this. That first gathering just needs to make the school feel a little smaller and the people in it a little more familiar.

So, we encourage families to meet the teacher, have the muffin, find the classroom. Say hello to the parent standing awkwardly by themselves. Stop at the school council table. Introduce yourself to the teacher.

Whether the student is six or sixteen, finding simple moments of connection and reassurance might help them walk into the first day feeling a little less anxious.

You, too.

And that's a pretty good way to start a school year. ■

Meagan Parisian serves as the president of the Alberta School Councils' Association and started her education advocacy journey at the school council table. As a mom to three children with varying learning needs, she uses her experience to advocate for meaningful parent engagement and strong, inclusive public education for all students.

Shelley Odishaw is the executive director of the Alberta School Councils' Association and has been an actively engaged school council parent since 2008. A long-time advocate for public education, she believes strong relationships between parents and teachers begin with open communication, mutual respect and the shared goal of helping every student succeed. She is also a parent of two and remains deeply suspicious of opening any backpack that isn't hers.

YOUR VIEWS

What are you hoping to bring forward into this school year? What are you ready to leave behind?



Kkjohal769

My new resolution for this school year: Focus less on what students should stop doing and more on what I want them to be doing. Less correction. More direction. More connection. It's all about relationships.



mrs_tazzi

Sharing something I posted last week as my resolution.

What I aspire to for the year ahead.

As an educator:
to listen deeply,
to guide gently and
to see the good in everyone across from me.

For my students:
to feel loved,
to see their potential and
to feel at peace when they cross the threshold from the hallway into OUR room.

What is your back-to-school hack?



@ Susan Carter

Teach all the important things the first day you teach...not everything you know, just the "things" that are important for a great school year. You need to sit down in August and decide what is important in your classroom, the things that you want to carry through for the whole year. Before you walk into class the first day, you need to be clear on what you want to stress. Focus on two or three major points, not the whole list of rules, because the school will have a list already!

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

FOR THE RECORD

“One hundred and fifty years after Treaty No. 6 was entered into, it is important for all of us to reflect on its enduring significance and the ongoing importance of respecting the Treaty relationship that continues now and into the future.”

—Statement from minister of Indigenous relations
Rajan Sawhney on anniversary of Treaty No. 6, Aug. 23, 2026



Dennis Theobald retires after 25 years with the ATA

Departing executive secretary leaves legacy of strong leadership through difficult times

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

Dennis Theobald is first and foremost a teacher. A product of Alberta’s public schools, Theobald began his career as a teacher before moving to Alberta Education and then to the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) in 2001. Now, after 25 years with the ATA—including eight years as executive secretary and chief executive officer—Theobald is retiring.

Rich in experience

Theobald earned bachelor of arts and bachelor of education degrees at the University of Alberta (U of A) before taking his first teaching assignment at the Saddle Lake First Nation Reserve. He later moved to Tofield School, where he taught social studies until

1996. Theobald was then seconded to Alberta Education, where he worked in various settings, including the student evaluation branch, the system evaluation branch, the assistant deputy minister’s office and the system improvement and reporting division. Gordon Thomas, who preceded Theobald as executive secretary, says the combination of classroom experience and knowledge of education policy and administration at the provincial level made Theobald a valuable addition to the Association. “Dennis was able to bring experiences that are rich and this all benefitted the organization and the profession,” Thomas said. “And we’ve been especially fortunate in Dennis choosing to want to make his contributions to the profession because he could have made his contributions in many other ways and done just as well and made just as much of a contribution.”

In 2001, Theobald became an executive staff officer with the ATA. His responsibilities focused on political engagement and strategy, public relations, publicity and government relations. He later became coordinator of communications in 2008, associate executive secretary in 2011 and, finally, executive secretary in 2018. During his time at the ATA, he also completed his MBA at the U of A, further strengthening his capacity to lead.

Political engagement

Theobald joined the ATA at a time when political engagement was becoming an increasingly important part of the organization’s work. His experience with the provincial government and his political acumen proved particularly valuable in helping build coalitions across public education leading up to and following the 2002 strike.

“What was key in Dennis’s selection [for leadership] was the increasing role of the politics in education decision making and the importance of communications and political analysis in the actions of the Association, and he was the cream of the crop in those functions,” said Thomas.

That political work became a hallmark of Theobald’s career with the ATA. For 25 years, he remained steadfastly focused on advocating directly to the government on behalf of the ATA’s members and the students of Alberta.

Challenging times

Theobald’s tenure as executive secretary has also been marked by some of the most difficult periods in the profession’s and the organization’s history: legislative and policy changes, a global pandemic, an unprecedented provincewide teachers’ strike and, most recently, a flood at the ATA’s Barnett House.

He has been able to lead effectively through such challenging times thanks to his ability to assess complicated situations and communicate with different audiences, Thomas said.

“Dennis has done remarkably well in the most difficult of circumstances to keep the organization united, afloat, able to conduct its remaining business, and able to take forward the positions of members and to represent the views of the profession.”



Theobald at the 2021 Annual Representative Assembly, held virtually

Humility, humanity and a historical reference

Jason Schilling and Greg Jeffery, who each served as president during Theobald’s tenure, share what they will remember about working with Theobald and his contribution to the profession.

“I have seen Dennis in action standing up for teachers, students and public education in meetings with MLAs and other government staff. Not every member gets to see those moments, but they do happen, and with this government, they have happened a lot.

Aside from all his work, Dennis is also one of the smartest people I know. Of course, I will remember the work we did, but I will also remember the humanity and empathy he showed members, staff and myself. There were many hard days over the last few years, and Dennis’s humility and humanity helped them be just a little bit better.”

—ATA president Jason Schilling

“Dennis was originally hired to work in communications, and this skill has always shone through, with him bringing a more collaborative approach to communications within the organization.

I will remember that even after all the time he spent with the ministry of education and the Association, Dennis never lost his connection to the classroom. It seemed like whenever he had a question to respond to or information to supply, he always had an historical reference to support his statement. He was always a social studies teacher first!”

—ATA past president Greg Jeffery

Q&A quotable quips

Theobald became known for his turns of phrase. Here are a few quotable quips from his time writing for the *ATA News*.

“Well, I’m not the sort of person to gloat and say to my friends in government “I told you so” so... OK, who am I kidding? (September 2021)

“The government likes to call charters “schools of choice.” Fine. But in the lineup for limited public resources, they should take their place behind public, separate and francophone “schools of necessity.” (May 2023)

“Finally, I’ll leave you with a useful piece of advice that I myself have taken to heart when dealing with these provocations: “Never wrestle with a pig — you’ll both get filthy, and the pig likes it.” (August 2024)

“The strength of this Association derives from the commitment of each individual teacher. ... In the final analysis, our success, your success, depends upon your willingness to become involved and act in support of your interests and public education. (August 2018)

“Finally, there is the possibility of creative noncompliance. Having taught Grade 8 students, I became familiar with this strategy. It’s not about disobeying, but rather obeying in a creative, technical, limited or unhelpful way. (May 2026)

Through it all, Theobald has stayed committed to building an organizational culture and capacity to ensure that the Association can serve and represent its members.

“In contrast to my earlier years with the Association when we were working with ministers of education including Gene Zwozdesky, Dave Hancock and Thomas Lukaszak, who had positive and constructive visions for education,” Theobald recalled, “most of my eight-year tenure as executive secretary has been marked by continuing attacks on the status of the teaching profession and on teachers.”

While others credit Theobald’s strong leadership for the Association’s ability to weather a myriad of challenges, Theobald attributes that successful navigation to his colleagues.

“All of this work has only been possible through the collaborative efforts of extraordinarily talented and dedicated staff colleagues, elected representatives and member teachers,” Theobald said.

Hope in a changing context

Reflecting on the challenges and changes he has seen over his career,

Theobald looks to public education as a source of hope for a society facing political divisiveness and artificial intelligence. For him, teachers are key to unlocking that hope.

“I hope that teachers will actively seize the moment to lead the creation of a consensus around the critical role of universal public education and professional teachers in leading students to learn how to learn, to learn to be, to learn how to live together, and to learn how to be productive in a rapidly evolving economy,” he said.

From the classroom

With Theobald’s tenure as executive secretary now ending, what has endured—and will endure—is his passion for public education and the classrooms where he taught and learned so much.

“I have never forgotten that I came from the classroom, and my greatest source of satisfaction has always been teaching,” Theobald said, “Opening the minds of students and, occasionally, colleagues to new perspectives and knowledge, and ultimately learning more from them than they from me.” ■

Teachers gather for Summer Conference

ATA News Staff

This August, 251 teachers from across Alberta came together for the Alberta Teachers' Association's (ATA) Summer Conference, an annual event dedicated to professional development, leadership training and community building for teacher-leaders of the ATA.

Held in Banff, the conference offered

a lineup of programs tailored to support and empower teachers in their roles. This year's offerings included seminars focused on collective bargaining, local political engagement and women in K-12 educational leadership.

The conference featured a keynote presentation from David Edwards, general secretary of Education International. Edwards spoke on the experiences of teachers around the world and the challenges that public

education continues to face, from inequity to inaccessibility. He shared with delegates the role that Education International has played in bringing teachers together to help solve these challenging issues.

The conference served as a reminder of the value of working collaboratively to continue to strengthen public education and the teaching profession, both within and beyond provincial borders. ■



General Secretary of Education International David Edwards presented the opening keynote at the 2026 Summer Conference.



Sessions included one focused on women in leadership.

#RED4ED



Alberta teachers gathered in Banff for the ATA's premier professional learning event, with some showing 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.



New MERCH online now



The ATA's online store has shirts, mugs and more! Find gear with Red for Ed,



I Support AB Teachers or I Heart Public Education branding at www.abteach.cc/ATAStore.

LEADERSHIP THRIVE5

Bite-sized takeaways to boost and brighten your leadership life

Featuring ATA speaker series attendees in Fort McMurray

1: We are reading...



Who We Are by Murray Sinclair and *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage* by Alfred Lansing.

2: We are eating...



the start-of-the-year (or end-of-the-year) staple of rotisserie chicken with a bag salad (so easy, quick and healthy), fun dips (there are so many choices at the grocery stores now) and yam fries made in the air fryer.

3: We have signed up for...



the Principal Principles Leadership Community on Facebook, Edutopia and Amazon Prime (because sometimes you really do need something delivered overnight).

4: We are listening to...



the Principal Exchange Podcast: Where Leadership Meets Real Life.

5: We are loving...



to thrive this new year by doing hard things with kindness and grace, knowing my teachers will do amazing things by being supported and encouraged by the leadership team, knowing how much joy my students bring me everyday, and acknowledging the daily acts of kindness my staff do for one another each and every day. ■

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.



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Change is all around us and while we can't imagine everything that might come at us, let's look ahead to what we can anticipate, prepare for and even dream about.

- Dyscalculia, and the Science of Learning across Tiers
- Teaching gifted students with ADHD/LD
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- Hormones, pregnancy, menopause and women's ADHD
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2025 Conference Attendee

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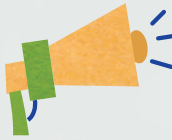
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Complexity teams expand to 7–12

Filling vacant roles a significant challenge for many boards, says ATA president

Cory Hare
ATA News Staff

The expansion of complexity teams to Grades 7 to 12 is a good step but not enough to undo 10 years of neglect. That's the assessment by Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling in reaction to the late June announcement that the government was committing \$100 million toward 221 new complexity teams, including 63 new K–6 teams under a program announced in February and 158 teams for Grades 7 to 12. The program aims to provide targeted training for staff while improving access to specialized services in rural and remote communities.

Here is a summary of the thoughts Schilling shared with the *ATA News* during a recent interview. (Responses have been edited for length and clarity).

Q. What are your thoughts on the expansion of the complexity teams to Grades 7 to 12?

A. Once again we're seeing the government make a move to address the classroom complexity issue that teachers highlighted during the strike. But we know, given the scope and the scale of the complexity problems that we see across our schools in Alberta, that this is just a drop in the bucket. It's a start, but we definitely need to see more investment to address the complexity issues in our schools.

Q. What is your opinion on the complexity teams themselves in terms of their effectiveness in addressing what they're aimed at addressing?

A. Throughout the strike and with the initial proposal, we were trying to find a teacher-student ratio with a complexity factor that would affect every classroom. With the complexity teams, we know that there are still a lot of classrooms out there with many kids with complex needs that still need to be addressed. So, though it's not the solution that teachers were looking for through bargaining, it is what we have from the government, and we know that the government would not have moved on

this without the pressure that teachers and parents brought through the strike.

Q. What more would you like to see happen?

A. We need to see an influx of funding in the schools to address the complexity. We need more teachers in the system, more than just one or two hired for a district. For example, mid-sized or rural-sized districts are getting only one or two complexity teams. We need more educational assistants (EAs), we need more professionals such as speech pathologists and occupational therapists in schools. We need to reduce class size, and it's going to take sustainable funding to ensure that our students are getting the very best learning conditions they can have.

Q. When it comes to funding, where do you lay that responsibility? Some critics target school boards for how they manage their finances more than the overall funding from the government. What's your take on that?

A. School boards are definitely part of the conversation, and we can't let them off the hook. We know with the initial announcement of the complexity teams in February, some school boards wanted to absorb that funding into their central office and then be able to distribute it the way that they felt fit, and not directly to the schools or to classrooms. There needs to be a conversation between the government and school boards about how much funding they get and how that is allocated in a way that actually benefits classrooms and students.

Q. What kind of feedback have you received from teachers on these complexity teams?

A. It runs a spectrum. We hear from some members that the complexity teams have made a difference in their schools and their classrooms. We hear from other colleagues that have not seen any improvements whatsoever in their schools. There has been a lot of trouble with some boards trying to hire individuals into these roles. They're very complex roles, and sometimes new teachers might not have the training, so boards have



CHRIS SCHWARZ/GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Minister of education and childcare Demetrios Nicolaides announced funding for complexity teams on Feb. 12, 2026.

shifted other people into these roles. It's a mixed sort of feeling among teachers when it comes to the implementation of these teams.

Q. Expanding on what you mentioned about hiring, do you have a sense of how successful boards have been in hiring teachers around the province?

A. There are still many unfilled vacancies out there. Some rural areas are really struggling to get teachers into schools, but with the sheer number of teachers that need to be hired by urban boards, we're also seeing some vacancies there.

Q. As we head into a new school year, what are your overall thoughts on this initiative from the government?

A. We have to make sure that people are being hired, that the EAs are in place, and that they're able to make it better for students and for teachers in classrooms and schools. We also need to hold the government to account to extend this. This can't be a one and done. They need to expand their efforts to address complexity issues, and they also have to ensure that the funding is sustainable, as our students' needs will not end with this budget cycle. ■

New "neutrality" legislation in force, flag policy delayed

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

New regulations affecting the profession took effect this fall as part of *An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026* (previously known as Bill 25), with the implementation on some requirements being delayed. Amendments and regulations taking effect Sept. 1 address a wide range of matters, including diverse student viewpoints, impartial education programming, parental involvement in a child's schooling and superintendent contracts.

Bill 25 implementation

Bill 25 had been framed by the minister of education and childcare a way to strengthen accountability and ensure neutrality within Alberta classrooms.

"Parents expect schools to be safe, focused on learning and open to diverse perspectives," said Minister of Education and Childcare Demetrios Nicolaides. "These changes strengthen accountability, reinforce neutrality and respect, and make it clear that politics and ideology have no place in Alberta classrooms."

At a press conference held Sept. 1, Nicolaides added that Bill 25 would help ensure that school divisions do not enter or take sides in potentially divisive social and or political issues or causes. Addressing the effect on the classroom, he spoke on how curriculum encourages students to examine both sides of an issue.

"It's critical and to ensure that our students are able to formulate their own opinions and not have

a particular view or opinion imposed on them," Nicolaides said.

Other changes are set for a compliance deadline of Dec. 1. These include revised language describing the environment schools are expected to provide. The legislation replaces "welcoming, caring, respectful" language with wording calling for "a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours." A new statement for student codes of conduct will also be introduced.

Critics of Bill 25 have questioned the need for the legislation, with NDP leader Naheed Nenshi challenging the argument that the legislation is focused on making schools safer.

"It's about restricting freedom of speech. It's about making sure that social studies teachers can't actually teach current events," Nenshi said. "It's about dictating what flags can be flown, and it's about naming schools because they don't want schools named after people they don't like."

Flag on the play

In August, a statement from Nicolaides shared that several regulations under Bill 25 have been delayed, including those relating to flags, the playing of the national anthem and school naming and renaming.

"We are taking a thoughtful and measured approach to implementation to ensure these changes are introduced effectively and that education partners have the support they need to successfully transition to the new requirements," the statement from Nicolaides read. The statement added that the ministry remains committed, however, to fully implementing Bill 25.

On Aug. 22, Premier Danielle Smith addressed the delayed regulations on flags during her call-in radio show. She explained that the ministry is taking a few more months to implement restrictions on flags in Alberta schools to alleviate confusion.

"What we intend is we don't want to have flags that are clearly trying to demonstrate some kind of ideology or some kind of political positioning on international conflicts," she clarified. "We don't want those creating discomfort in a classroom, and so that's where we're going."

The impact on teachers

Since Bill 25 was announced, the ATA has raised concerns with the legislation and called for the profession to be consulted on wording and implementation. ATA president Jason Schilling hopes that the delay in certain regulations will allow the government to engage in meaningful consultations with education partners and to ensure that clear guidance is provided once the policy is ready.

"Any approach must recognize the importance of belonging in schools and respect the diversity of Alberta's school communities," Schilling added.

Teachers are encouraged to wait for clear direction from their employer regarding how to manage the changes coming into effect. For assistance or guidance, teachers may contact the ATA's Teacher Employment Membership Support at 1-800-232-7208.

Further information on the legislation is available on the government's website at www.alberta.ca/removing-politics-and-ideology-from-alberta-classrooms, while the updated implementation timelines are available at www.alberta.ca/system/files/ecc-implementation-timeline-bill-25b.pdf. ■



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WITH THEATRE PROSPERO ASSOCIATION



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The Alberta Teachers' Association



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Teachers encouraged to vote in Alberta’s referendum

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

Albertans will head to the polls on Oct. 19 to vote on 10 referendum questions dealing with immigration, public services, Canada’s constitution and Alberta’s place in Canada.

With 10 separate ballots to consider, this will not be a typical trip to the polls. Teachers who want to make sure their voices are heard should plan ahead, and voting by mail may be the simplest option.

Consider voting by mail or at advance polls

Applications are now open for Elections Alberta’s Vote by Mail program, also known as a Special Ballot. Any eligible Alberta elector can apply, and no reason is required.

Voting by mail allows voters to receive all 10 referendum ballots at home, consider the questions and complete them on their own time.

Elections Alberta began mailing Special Ballot packages on Sept. 1. Each package includes the voting materials and a prepaid return envelope.

Applications for a Special Ballot, available at <https://specialballot.elections.ab.ca>, must be received by Sept. 25. Completed ballot packages must be received by Elections Alberta before 5 p.m. on Oct. 16, so voters should apply and return their ballots well ahead of the deadlines.

Voting by mail may also help voters avoid potential waits at voting locations. With 10 questions, Elections Alberta is preparing for a much larger and more complex voting process than a typical provincial election.

Albertans who prefer to vote in person can do so during advance voting from Oct. 13 to 17 or on referendum day, Oct. 19.

Why this referendum matters to teachers

Several of the questions have implications for public education, with two dealing directly with access to public services, including education.

Albertans will be asked whether access to provincially funded services should be restricted based on immigration status and whether people with nonpermanent immigration

status should pay a fee or premium to use Alberta’s public education and health care systems.

The Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) has raised concerns about proposals that could restrict a child’s access to public education. The ATA has also said teachers and other school staff should not be put in the position of determining or policing a child’s immigration status.

“Children do not choose their immigration status, and they should not be denied an education because of it,” said Jason Schilling, ATA president, “Every child in Alberta deserves access to publicly funded education.”

Other referendum questions, such as one about allowing provinces to opt out of federal programs in areas such as education while retaining federal funding, could have broader implications for public services and the relationship between provincial and federal governments.

As teachers have a stake in decisions affecting Alberta’s students, schools, communities and public education system, members are encouraged to learn about the issues, consider the questions carefully and make a plan

to cast their ballots. Information on the referendum and its questions is available at www.elections.ab.ca/elections/referendum/.

KEY DATES

Sept. 25: Deadline to apply for a Special Ballot

Oct. 13–17: Advance voting dates

Oct. 16 at 5 p.m.: Deadline for Elections Alberta to receive completed Special Ballot packages

Oct. 19: Referendum day

Public Interest Alberta advocacy campaign

Public Interest Alberta has launched a referendum information and advocacy campaign that includes information and resources related to the referendum questions. Teachers who are interested in learning more about that campaign can visit www.albertareferendum2026.org.



Use your voice, shape what comes next

As a teacher, I have found that the start of the new school year was more like New Year’s than the actual holiday in January. Across the province, teachers and school leaders are experiencing a new start—new students, new schools, and, for some, their very first classroom. A new year can bring a lot of excitement, but it can also be a painful reminder of the past.

The past year was one of the most challenging in recent memory for Alberta’s teachers and public education. There are lessons to learn from both what went well and what did not, but learning from the past does not mean living in it. As teachers, we know it means using those lessons to shape what comes next.

The past year also reminded us of the power of collective action. Teachers stood together, supported by parents, students and members of the public, in a moment that demonstrated what solidarity can achieve. Let us carry that solidarity forward into this school year.

As we have witnessed, the government likes to create noise and distraction, but we cannot afford to chase every issue that dominates the headlines. We must continue to define our priorities when it comes to education. Overcrowded classrooms, increasing complexity, stretched resources and unmet student needs remain urgent concerns. As the government makes decisions about education, it is our collective job to ensure that those commitments

translate into meaningful improvements for teachers and students.

As we start another school year, it is important to remain grounded in our values. The year ahead will bring new challenges, including curriculum implementation, new certification pathways, funding and a provincial election. We need to be ready and you, my colleagues, have a critical role to play in this province’s future. As trusted professionals, you understand classroom realities because you live them every day. Your experience, stories and professional expertise must continue to shape public conversation and hold governments and school boards accountable. When we use our voices together, we can influence what comes next.

Coming very quickly is the October referendum. ATA policy is very clear: every child deserves access to education, regardless of their circumstances or immigration status. It is important as teachers that we vote because the referendum could deeply affect public education. Plan to vote and take your time to review closely each question being posed. What are the implications for our students and for our profession? I have already applied for a special paper ballot to ensure that my voice is heard.

As we begin this new school year, let us learn from the past, remain focused on what lies ahead and continue to stand together to shape the future of public education in our province. ■

New scholarships support ATA members’ graduate studies

Daniel Ross
ATA News Staff

Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) members pursuing graduate studies have a new opportunity to support their professional learning.

Beginning in the 2026/27 school year, City University is offering up to seven scholarships for active ATA members enrolled in select graduate programs.

“Professional learning is an investment in both teachers and their students,” said ATA President Jason Schilling. “Graduate study gives teachers an opportunity to deepen their knowledge, expand their professional practice and bring new perspectives back to their classrooms and school communities.”

This fall, up to five scholarships will be available for City University’s Master of Education in Leadership program, providing a 50 per cent reduction in the tuition. The program is intended for educators who want to strengthen their leadership knowledge and apply it in schools, classrooms and other learning settings.

City University will also offer up to two scholarships for its Master of Counselling Psychology program, with each providing a 25 per cent reduction in tuition. The program is offered in Calgary and Edmonton, as well as virtually.

“These scholarships are one way the ATA is supporting members as they continue to grow in their career,” said Schilling.

City University will manage the application and adjudication processes for these new scholarships. Active members interested in either program should review program requirements, delivery options and admission information through City University’s website at cityuniversity.ca.

For more information about this opportunity and other funding opportunities, visit the ATA’s Grants, Awards and Scholarships page at abteach.cc/grants-awards-scholarships.

City University is a not-for-profit, accredited institution that has offered post-secondary programs in Canada since 1984. It has campuses in Edmonton and Calgary, as well as virtual learning options for students across Canada.



ISTOCK

READY...

SET...

This is the time of year when teachers turn their attention to (among dozens of other things) their professional growth plans.



SPECIALIST COUNCIL OPPORTUNITIES

The Association has 20 specialist councils that organize annual conferences, workshops, webinars and other opportunities to help teachers and school leaders meet their professional development goals.

The information on this page lists the assigned dates for major specialist council conferences and events for the 2026–27 school year. For an up-to-date list of all specialist council conferences and events, please check out the ATAPD Sched site at <https://atapd202627.sched.com>.



DID YOU KNOW?

➤ Active ATA members are able to choose a no-cost membership in the specialist council of their choice. To learn more, call 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208, email specialistcouncils@ata.ab.ca or visit <https://abteach.cc/specialist-councils>.

➤ The ATA Educational Trust offers \$500 grants to members to help offset the costs of attending specialist council conferences. Apply by Wednesday, September 30, 2026 at 4:00 PM at <https://abteach.cc/ATAEdTrust>.

- Additional Languages and Intercultural Council

Date:

Oct. 24, 2026 (morning)

Location:

Online

Theme:

ALIC Professional Learning and Annual General Meeting: Excellence in Additional Language Education

Website:

www.alic-ata.ca
- Career and Technology Education Council

Date:

Nov. 5–7, 2026

Location:

Coast Canmore Hotel and Conference Centre, Canmore

Theme:

Forge & Flame: Where Innovation Meets Inspiration

Website:

<https://abteach.cc/cteconference>
- Le Conseil français

No events scheduled at this time.
- Council for English as an Additional Language

Date:

May 7–9, 2027

Location:

Malcolm Hotel, Canmore

Theme:

Deep Roots, Strong Connections, Lasting Impact

Website:

<https://abteach.cc/cealconference>
- Council for Inclusive Education

Date:

May 28–29, 2027

Location:

River Cree Resort and Casino, Edmonton

Theme:

TBD

Website:

www.cieducation.ca/conference
- Council for School Leadership

Date:

Apr. 17, 2027 (preconference), Apr. 18–20, 2027 (conference)

Location:

Fairmont Banff Springs, Banff

Theme:

uLead 2027—The Summit of Educational Leadership

Website:

www.ulead.ca
- Council of School Counsellors

Date:

May 27–28, 2027

Location:

Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge

Theme:

TBD

Website:

www.ataschoolcounsellors.com
- Early Childhood Education Council

Date:

Apr. 22–24, 2027

Location:

Banff Park Lodge, Banff

Theme:

TBD

Website:

www.ecec-ata.com
- Educational Technology Council

Date:

Sept. 25, 2026 (evening)

Location:

Rec Room, West Edmonton Mall, Edmonton

Theme:

BTC #LevelUp Social with the Educational Technology Council

Date:

Oct. 2, 2026 (evening)

Location:

Best Western Premier Calgary Plaza Hotel and Conference Centre, Calgary

Theme:

BTC #LevelUp Social with the Educational Technology Council

Website:

<https://etc.teachers.ab.ca>
- English Language Arts Council

No events scheduled at this time.
- Fine Arts Council

Date:

Oct. 16–17, 2026

Location:

St. John Center for Arts and Culture, Calgary

Theme:

Arts Elevated

Website:

<https://abteach.cc/facconference>
- Global, Environmental and Outdoor Education Council

No events scheduled at this time.
- Health and Physical Education Council

Date:

May 14, 2027

Location:

Red Deer Polytechnic, Red Deer

Theme:

One Day in May—One Day of Professional Learning

Website:

<https://www.hpec.ab.ca>
- Indigenous Education Council

No events scheduled at this time.
- Mathematics Council

Date:

Oct. 15–16, 2026

Location:

TBD, Edmonton

Theme:

Math Adventure Begins Here

Website:

<https://abteach.cc/mcconference>
- Middle Years Council

Date:

Apr. 30–May 1, 2027

Location:

Banff Park Lodge, Banff

Theme:

Middle School Matters

Website:

www.ata-myc.com
- Outreach Education Council

Date:

Nov. 12–14, 2026

Location:

River Cree Resort and Casino, Edmonton

Theme:

Building Bridges—Inspiring Change

Website:

<https://abteach.cc/oeconference>
- Religious and Moral Education Council

Date:

Oct. 24, 2026

Location:

TBD, Edmonton

Theme:

Chalk Lines and Fault Lines: Frank Conversations for Challenging Times

Website:

<https://abteach.cc/rmeconference>
- Science Council

Date:

Nov. 7, 2026

Location:

Virtual

Theme:

Space & Technology Online Symposium

Website:

www.atasciencouncil.com/conference.html
- Social Studies Council

Date:

Oct. 15–17, 2026

Location:

Winsport (Canada Olympic Park), Calgary

Theme:

Podium for Positive Change: Sports at the Intersection of History & Culture

Website:

<https://abteach.cc/ssconference>

GROW



TEACHERS' CONVENTIONS

Teachers' conventions enhance professional practice by providing teachers and school leaders with opportunities to share innovative practices, discuss professional issues and meet the learning goals identified in their professional growth plans.

Each of the ATA's nine teachers' conventions is organized by a regional convention board of volunteer teachers who plan world-class PD events filled with expert keynotes and meaningful breakout sessions, many of which are led by fellow colleagues. Members are assigned to conventions based on their employing school authority and ATA local.



- **North Central Teachers' Convention Association (NCTCA)**
 - Date: February 4–5, 2027
 - Location: Edmonton Convention Centre, Edmonton
 - Contact: Carryl Bennett, president, president@nctca.ca
 - Website: <http://mynctca.com>
- **Calgary City Teachers' Convention Association (CCTCA)**
 - Date: February 11–12, 2027
 - Location: Telus Convention Centre, Calgary
 - Contact: Andreas Berko, president, president@cctca.com
 - Website: www.cctca.com
- **Endless Skies Teachers' Convention Association (ESTCA)**
 - Date: February 11–12, 2027
 - Location: Edmonton Convention Centre, Edmonton
 - Contact: Melissa Petruk, president, estcapresident@gmail.com
 - Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/estca>
- **Central Alberta Teachers' Convention Association (CATCA)**
 - Date: February 18–19, 2027
 - Location: Red Deer Polytechnic, Red Deer
 - Contact: Brenda Lewis, past president, catcapresident2024@gmail.com
 - Website: <http://mycatca.com>
- **Palliser District Teachers' Convention Association (PDTCA)**
 - Date: February 18–19, 2027
 - Location: Calgary Telus Convention Centre, Calgary
 - Contact: Jenn Munton, president, president@pdtca.net
 - Website: www.pdtca.org

- **South Western Alberta Teachers' Convention Association (SWATCA)**
 - Date: February 18–19, 2027
 - Location: University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge
 - Contact: Kevin Sheen, president, president@swatca.ca
 - Website: www.swatca.ca
- **Southeastern Alberta Teachers' Convention Association (SEATCA)**
 - Date: February 18–19, 2027
 - Location: Medicine Hat College, Medicine Hat
 - Contact: Ashley Bohonos, president, ashleyseatca@gmail.com
 - Website: <https://seatca.atapd.ca>
- **Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention Association (GETCA)**
 - Date: February 25–26, 2027
 - Location: Edmonton Convention Centre, Edmonton
 - Contact: Karen Sucie, president, president@getca.com
 - Website: www.getca.com
- **Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention Association (MPTCA)**
 - Date: March 4–5, 2027
 - Location: Charles Spencer High School, Grande Prairie
St. Joseph Catholic High School, Grande Prairie
 - Contact: Sue Hauser, president, president@mptconvention.com
 - Website: <http://mptca.teachers.ab.ca>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about teachers' conventions, visit <https://abteach.cc/teachers-conventions>.
If you have any further questions, please contact the Professional Development program area at PD@ata.ab.ca or 1-800-232-7208.



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Are you ready to run?

ATA News Staff

It's time for ATA members to start thinking about running for Provincial Executive Council (PEC). Nominations will soon open for all elected positions on PEC. Active and associate ATA members are eligible to run and vote in the 2027 PEC election.

Details about the nomination and election processes will be mailed to schools (care of ATA school representatives) and made available on the ATA website when nominations officially open this October.

What is PEC?

PEC is the 20-member executive committee which directs the business of the ATA. It comprises the ATA president, two vice-presidents, the past president, 15 district representatives and the executive secretary. With the exception of the past president and executive secretary, all positions are elected once every two years by the ATA membership.

Members of PEC

- are teachers;
- meet as a council two days at a time at least eight times each year;
- serve on internal and external committees and ATA subgroups, like specialist councils;
- engage in professional development as part of their duties;
- make decisions affecting the budgets, policies and strategic direction of the ATA; and
- are accountable to the ATA membership.

Note: Budgets and policies of the ATA are voted on at its Annual Representative Assembly by more than 400 teacher delegates who represent teachers employed by every public, separate and francophone school board in the province.

Additional details on the nominations process will be available on the ATA's election page this October. The PEC election is set to take place in March 2027. ■



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

ATA's Barnett House to reopen early 2027 after summer flooding

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Managing Editor

After closing due to severe flooding this summer, the ATA's head office, Barnett House, is expected to reopen in early 2027.

In July, Edmonton was hit by record-breaking rain and storms, one of which triggered flooding in the mechanical room of Barnett House. Since then, crews have been on site to pump out close to one million litres of water, complete abatement in the space and begin restoring the building's systems.

"When the flood hit, our staff worked diligently to manage critical infrastructure," said Robert Mazzotta, ATA executive secretary.

The recovery process has been complicated by the need for specialized, custom-ordered components, with some materials expected to take up to 24 weeks to arrive, be installed and tested, Mazzotta added.

"It will take more time than we would like, but we are actively working toward safely reopening the building to all staff, tenants and our members," he said.

Despite the prolonged closure of Barnett House, the ATA's service to members is unchanged. Most staff based in Edmonton are working from home until the building is reopened, while the ATA's Southern Alberta Regional Office in Calgary remains open. The ATA library is also open and ready to support teachers with a variety of resources.

"Staff were able to pivot to working from home quickly," said Mazzotta. "We are committed, as always, to providing high-quality service and expert support for Alberta's teachers."

Meetings and events that were scheduled to take place at Barnett House will either move online or be held in alternate venues, and members are encouraged to watch for further information online, from staff and in the ATA News. Members can also contact the ATA for assistance at 1-800-232-7208 (Edmonton) or 1-800-332-1280 (Calgary).

"Teachers can rest assured that the ATA is here for them as the new school year starts," Mazzotta said. "And Barnett House will be back in the new year." ■

wîcihtotân

Let's Help Each Other

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

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

December 11, 2026 1:00 – 3:30 pm, online via Zoom

March 8, 2027 1:00 – 3:30 pm, online via Zoom

June 4, 2027 9:00 am – 3:30 pm, in person, location TBD

Release time will be provided by the Association.

To Register go to
<https://abteach.cc/wîcihtotân2026-27>

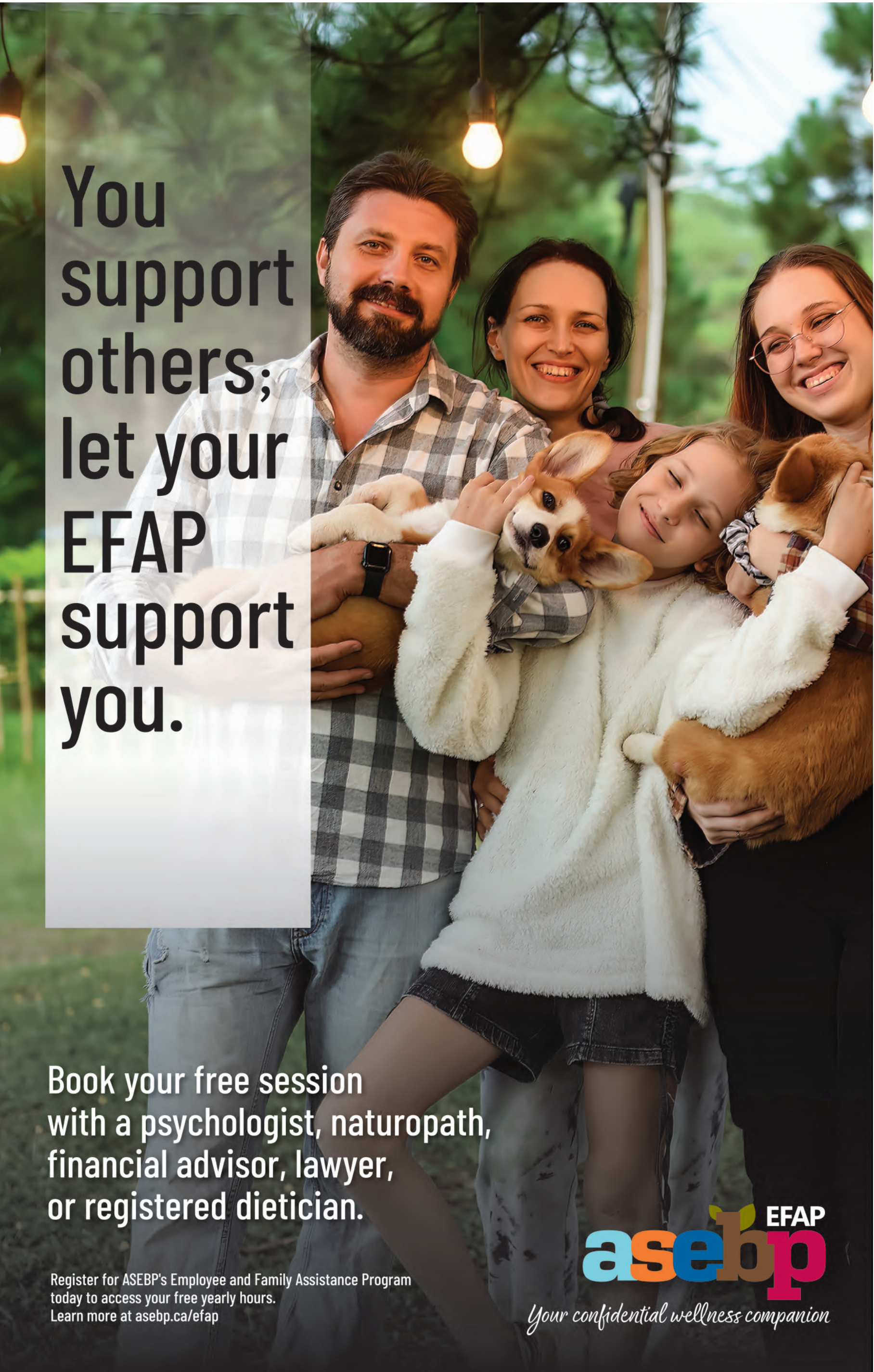
Registration Deadline: November 30, 2026

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

PD-208-2026 09

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association invites applications for the position of

EXECUTIVE STAFF OFFICER, TEACHER EMPLOYMENT MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT (SARO)

Competition: ESO5/26

Location: Calgary

Commencement: December 1, 2026, or at a mutually agreeable date

Position Overview

The executive staff officer will assist with the work of the Teacher Employment Membership Support (TEMS) program area, supporting both teacher employment and collective bargaining functions. Duties may include the following:

- Being responsible for organizing and providing direct service to members as part of the TEMS team, including handling teacher employment field service requests, acting as a representative of the bargaining agent in collective agreement negotiations and providing support to Association subgroups
- Advising members on teacher personnel problems, collective agreement entitlements and legal assistance
- Handling collective agreement grievances and board of reference appeals
- Participating and carrying out presentations and workshops for TEMS conferences
- Serving as an Association resource person in specific areas of expertise
- Carrying out special projects from other areas of the Association's operations, as assigned

Qualifications

Key requirements:

- Knowledge of the Association's mission, objects, program areas and how they contribute to improving the profession and the working lives of teachers
- An understanding of the role of TEMS
- Familiarity with applicable legislation, policy and the Education Act
- A valid teaching certificate and a minimum of five years of successful teaching experience in public education
- Proven commitment to public education
- Ability to undertake travel and evening/weekend work

In addition, the following are considered assets:

- Experience in bargaining, labour relations, application of collective agreements and conducting investigations
- Coursework, training and/or experience in human resources and labour relations and knowledge of pension and benefits
- School leadership experience
- Demonstrated proficiency in written and spoken French
- A demonstrated commitment to the Alberta Teachers' Association (or other Canadian teachers' organization)

Key competencies:

- Problem solving and decision making
 - Analyzes problems systematically, organizes information, identifies key factors, identifies underlying causes and generates solutions
- Change agility
 - Embraces change and adapts to it effectively in response
- Effective communication
 - Regularly seeks feedback to understand other peoples' perspectives, and integrates feedback into decisions to improve service to members
- Accountability and self-awareness
 - Manages professional relationships by performing work in a timely and effective way to enable departmental success
- Commitment to collaboration
 - Works effectively both within the program area/unit and across the organization
 - Contributes to team building and success

The Association is committed to reconciliation and a candidate's knowledge and experience of related issues and/or membership in an Indigenous community is considered an asset.

Who We Are

As a professional organization and the voice of the province's teachers, the Association is dedicated to advancing the cause of education and to building the teaching profession in Alberta. The Association represents all public, separate and francophone teachers in the province of Alberta.

The provincial Association, its locals and its subgroups perform both union and professional functions. As a union, the Association negotiates and monitors collective agreements and represents teachers in matters of employment. The Association also represents members who may be subject to regulatory processes relating to professional conduct and practice, as administered by the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission.

In its professional role, the Association promotes and supports the preparation of candidates to the profession, provides ongoing professional development to members, makes representation to the government on education policy, advocates for public education, and works with like-minded organizations at the provincial, national and international level. To further these goals, the Association actively promotes the representation and participation of member teachers in its governance and the delivery of its programs.

What The Association Offers

Total compensation for the executive staff officer position includes a starting salary of \$151,583, pensionable service under the Teachers' Pension Plan of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund Board and employer-paid benefits as stipulated in a collective agreement. The initial location will be in Calgary, but future assignments may be to any present or future Association office. Duties will commence on December 1, 2026 (negotiable).

In their application, applicants should quote position ESO5/26 and must include a cover letter, resume/curriculum vitae and a separate, short professional biography not exceeding 150 words, along with the names, telephone numbers and email addresses of at least two referees who are not Association employees or elected officials of its provincial executive. Applications must be received via email in **one file by 4 PM on Friday, September 25, 2026**. Applications can be sent to

Ms Kathryn Dick

Human Resources Director

E-mail: careers@ata.ab.ca

For more information, please see our website at www.teachers.ab.ca.

Wishing you a wonderful start to the year—but call the ATA if you need to



PITFALLS AND PRECAUTIONS

Tim Jeffares

ATA Associate Coordinator,
Regulatory Affairs

As a new school year begins across Alberta, most teachers, students and families are focused on fresh starts, learning and building strong relationships. But occasionally issues arise that can quickly escalate into formal complaints. If this occurs, it is important for teachers to contact the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) immediately for assistance.

Sometimes a complaint comes from a seemingly innocuous, routine circumstance. This was the case recently when two members, a teacher and a school leader, found themselves the subjects of complaints. The issue? A parent was not happy with a decision made by the principal regarding programming in the school. In this case, the parent questioned the principal's decision and ultimately filed complaints against the principal and a teacher with both the school division and the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC).

Both the teacher and the school leader required support navigating the division's investigation, assisted by staff in the ATA's Teacher Employment and Membership Support (TEMS) program area. At the same time, they received support from the ATA's Regulatory Affairs unit for guidance through the ATPC process.

The division investigated the matter and ultimately concluded that the principal's decision was sound and that the teacher hadn't engaged in misconduct either. The ATPC case remains ongoing—given the ATPC's usual timelines, a decision isn't expected for many more months.

Cases like this are not uncommon. Complaints can arise in a variety of circumstances and may proceed through different channels—the division and the ATPC—simultaneously. When they do, early action is critical.

If a complaint is made at the division level, members are encouraged to contact TEMS for assistance, particularly with employment-related matters and collective agreement issues. If notified by the ATPC of a complaint, teachers should reach out to the Regulatory Affairs unit as soon as possible, as legislated timelines and processes at the front end of the government's regulatory process require your immediate attention.

Complaints happen. And while the possibility of complaints at the start of school year, or any time, is an unwelcome reality, the ATA is here to offer teachers support and expertise in both employment and regulatory issues. If you receive a complaint in either venue, please call the ATA immediately at 1-800-232-7208.

Our team wishes teachers all the best as the new year begins, and reminds you that the ATA is here for you. ■



DIGITAL NEWS

**The ATA News is
available online.**

For the latest issue, visit

www.teachers.ab.ca/news.

Subscribe to receive an email
when a new issue is available.

<https://abteach.cc/subscribe>

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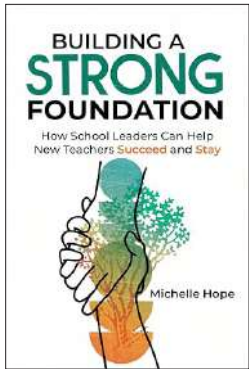
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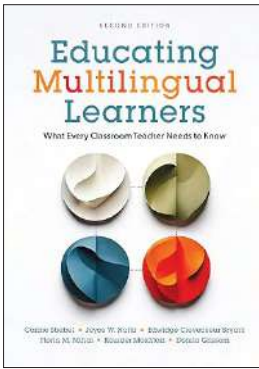
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CHECK ME OUT!

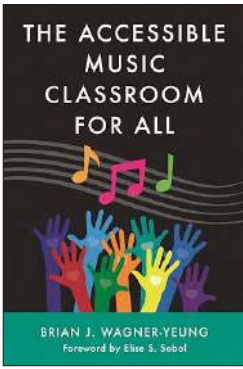
Some of the ATA Library's newest reads:



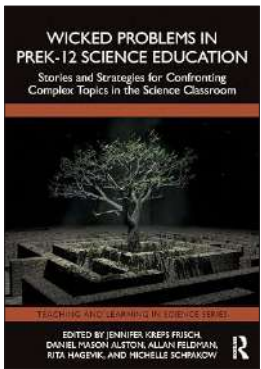
Building a Strong Foundation: How School Leaders Can Help New Teachers Succeed and Stay
by Michelle Hope



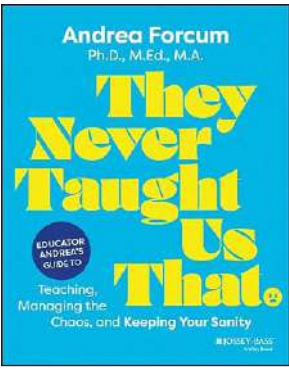
Educating Multilingual Learners, Second Edition: What Every Classroom Teacher Needs to Know
by Carine Strebel, Joyce W. Nutta, Edwidge Crevecoeur Bryant, Florin M Mihai, Kouider Mokhtari and Donita Grissom



The Accessible Music Classroom for All
by Brian J. Wagner-Young



Wicked Problems in PreK-12 Science Education: Stories and Strategies for Confronting Complex Topics in the Science Classroom
edited by Jennifer Kreps Frisch, Daniel Mason Alston, Allan Feldman, Rita Hagevik and Michelle Schpakow



They Never Taught Us That: Educator Andrea's Guide to Teaching, Managing the Chaos, and Keeping Your Sanity
by Andrea Forcum

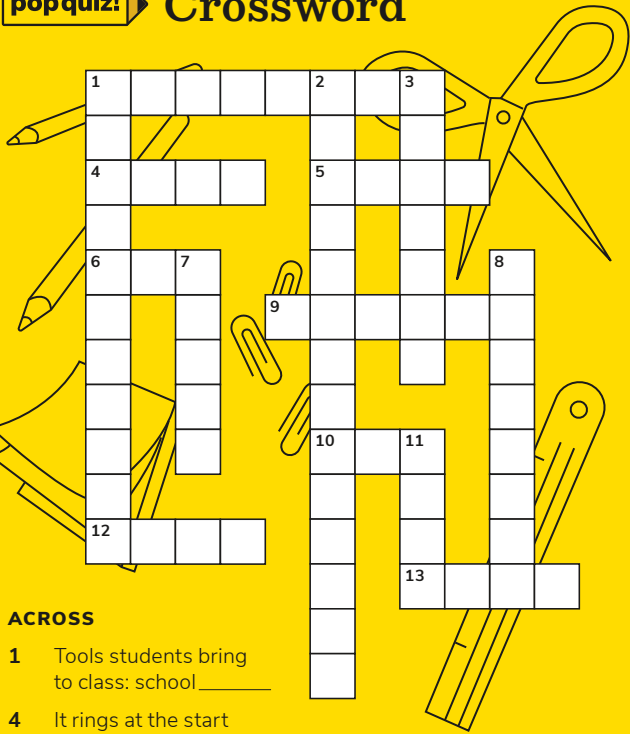
WANT TO BORROW THESE?
(HINT: IT'S FREE FOR ATA MEMBERS!)

Head to the ATA Library's webpage to find these books — and so much more!

library.teachers.ab.ca



popquiz! Crossword

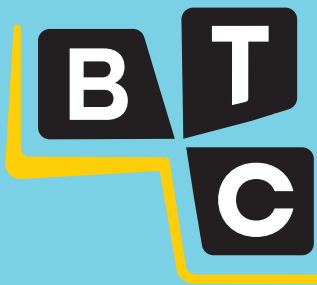


ACROSS

- 1 Tools students bring to class: school _____
- 4 It rings at the start (and end) of the day.
- 5 What a sharp pencil becomes after use
- 6 Alternative to coffee
- 9 Opposite of multiply
- 10 Often displayed on bulletin boards
- 12 Wise or insightful person
- 13 Students _____ notes during class.

DOWN

- 1 Colleagues who fill in when a classroom teacher's away
- 2 _____ Program Plan
- 3 What you do with a problem (or equation): two words
- 7 Type of fruit associated with teaching
- 8 This makes the dream work.
- 11 Assessment



BEGINNING TEACHERS CONFERENCE

Registration is open to teachers in their first two years of classroom teaching who have not previously attended the conference and those teachers new to teaching in the province.

Teachers who live in Red Deer and north should register for the Edmonton conference.

Edmonton conference— September 25-26, 2026

(<https://reg.unityeventsolutions.com/se/2026BTCEDMONTON/ATT>)

Calgary conference— October 2-3, 2026

(<https://reg.unityeventsolutions.com/se/2026BTCCALGARY/ATT>)

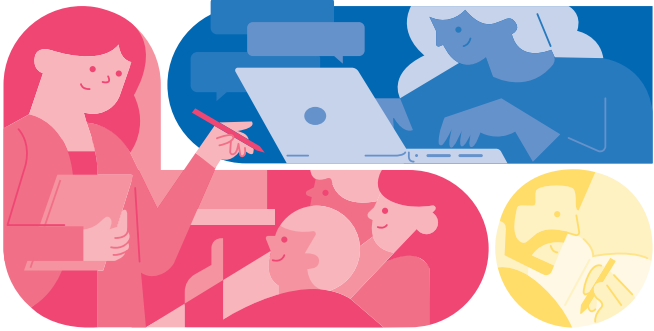


The Alberta Teachers' Association



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.



THE ATA

SUBSTITUTE

TEACHERS

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS' CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 16-17, 2026 | ACCLAIM HOTEL, CALGARY, AB

SCAN FOR MORE INFO AND REGISTER



Forge & Flame

WHERE INNOVATION MEETS INSPIRATION



CTF/CTS/CTEC CONFERENCE

November 5-7, 2026
Canmore, AB

Ignite your passion for teaching and innovation at the Forge & Flame CTF/CTS/CTEC Conference in beautiful Canmore, AB.

Designed specifically for CTS educators, this dynamic event brings together inspiring ideas, hands-on learning and real-world connections. Through sessions across all clusters—BIT, HRH, MDC, NAT and TMT—you will gain practical skills to use in your classroom, explore meaningful industry partnerships and discover pathways to valuable certifications for both you and your students.

Whether you are looking to refresh your teaching practice or lead cutting-edge programming, this conference is where innovation meets inspiration.

Register soon to be part of it!
<https://reg.unityeventsolutions.com/se/2026CTECCONF/ATT>





CTEC
CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION COUNCIL



The Alberta Teachers' Association

CTEC-27_EXT_2026

Request for Study Participants

Are you a K-9 teacher in Alberta? We are interested in hearing about your experiences with generative AI. You may be more experienced or just beginning to learn about GenAI.

- Survey takes 10-15 minutes
- Is confidential
- A University of Alberta and ATA collaborative research Study

Your input will help inform

- Professional learning
- Innovation in Alberta Education
- Resources for teachers

To participate, scan the QR code or click on the [link](#)



University of Alberta Research Study

Ethics approved. Funded by a joint University of Alberta-ATA Research Collaboration Grant through the Kule Institute for Advanced Study.

Questions? Contact: Dr. Suzanna Wong at suzannaw@ualberta.ca



KIAS | Kule Institute for Advanced Study







Healthy interactions WORKSHOP

Resolve conflict with confidence!

Join the Alberta Teachers' Association for a day-long conflict resolution workshop.

Teacher and school leader participants will learn to

- strengthen communication skills,
- recognize different types of conflict,
- navigate conflict, and
- move beyond the conflict.

EDMONTON
October 19, 2026
DoubleTree by Hilton
West Edmonton
16615 109 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5P 4K8
Minimum attendance must be met to run.

New date!

Scan to register



Register today!

Register at:
<https://abteach.cc/healthy-interactions-reg>



The Alberta Teachers' Association

TES-MS-HI-13g-i 2026-07

GOT THE INSIDE SCOOP?

We want to hear about it!

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

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



COOR-209 2025-03



The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association invites applications for the position of

ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Competition: ESO4/26

Location: Edmonton

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

Position Overview

Under the general direction of the Executive Secretary (who serves as the Association's chief executive officer), the Associate Executive Secretary assists in providing strategic and operational leadership related to the general management of the affairs and programs of the Association. Some of the duties of this position are as follows:

- Planning and coordinating Association business
- Overseeing and directing various Association initiatives, events and activities
- Examining trends
- Attending and participating in Provincial Executive Council, Table Officers and other committee meetings as assigned and being responsible for Association representation
- Having general responsibility for matters related to the status of the teaching profession, political and legislative affairs, public relations and internal and external governance
- Having general responsibility for policy and bylaw development and implementation
- Acting as Coordinator, Operations, and overseeing and facilitating the work of Teacher Qualifications Service, Central Records/Archives and Building Services
- Acting on behalf of management in negotiations procedures with professional and support staff

Qualifications

Key requirements

- Extensive senior leadership experience in public education, a professional association or a comparably complex member-based organization
- Commitment to prioritizing and advancing the broader strategic and operational goals of the Association in an evolving political, economic and governance environment
- Strong capabilities in leadership and change management, with a commitment to equity, inclusion and respect for the diversity of the teaching profession
- Demonstrated success in developing and sustaining collaborative partnerships, including productive relationships with government, education partners and key stakeholders
- Awareness of where to find and apply legislation, policy and the *Education Act*

Additional competencies:

- Problem solving and decision making
 - Ability to analyze problems systematically, organize information, identify key factors, identify underlying causes and generate solutions
- Change agility
 - Ability to embrace change and adapt effectively in response to it
 - Commitment to continuing the evolution of the program area within the Association
- Effective communication
 - Commitment to regularly seeking feedback to understand other peoples' perspectives and to integrating feedback into new behaviours and decisions
- Accountability and self-awareness
 - Ability to manage professional relationships by performing work in a timely way while maintaining the quality that enables departmental success and advances the objectives of the organization
 - Ability to manage personal stress and work conflict in respectful and tactful ways
- Commitment to collaboration
 - Ability to foster effective working relationships and collaborative partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders
 - Commitment to contribute to team building and success
- Vision and direction setting
 - Ability to embrace ambiguity, nuance and complexity
- Supporting people and results
 - Commitment to managing with integrity and with an ongoing commitment to improving service to members
 - Ability to mobilize and manage resources to deliver on the Association's priorities, improve outcomes and add value
 - Ability to manage performance and provide constructive and respectful feedback to encourage and enable excellence

In addition, the following are required:

- Must qualify for an Alberta teaching certificate and have a minimum of five years of successful teaching and/or management experience in public education
- Proven commitment to public education
- Ability to undertake travel and evening/weekend work
- Experience in school leadership is considered an asset

A demonstrated commitment to the Alberta Teachers' Association (or another Canadian teachers' organization) will be considered an asset, as will the ability to work in the French language. The Association is committed to reconciliation, and a candidate's knowledge and experience of related issues and/or membership in an Indigenous community is considered an asset.

As an employer, the Association 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 application.

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 Association office. Duties will commence on November 1, 2026, or on a mutually agreeable date.

In their application, applicants should quote position ESO4/26 and must include a cover letter, resume/curriculum vitae and a separate short professional biography not exceeding 150 words in addition to the names, telephone numbers and email addresses of at least two referees who are not Association employees or elected officials of its provincial executive. Applications must be received by **4 PM on Friday, September 18, 2026**, and should be addressed to

Ms Kathryn Dick

Human Resources Director

E-mail: careers@ata.ab.ca

For more information, please see our website at www.teachers.ab.ca.

2027 PEC election dates set

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka

ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held June 11–12, 2026, Barnett House, Edmonton

1. Set 2027 03 19 as the date for the announcement of voting results for the 2027 Provincial Executive Council (PEC) general election. The call for nominations is set for 2026 10 19, the deadline for nominations is set for 2027 01 13, and voting, which will be conducted by electronic vote, will take place 2027 03 15–18.
2. Approved a \$900,000 withdrawal from the Special Emergency Fund to fully fund the remaining health and benefit premium liability arising from the October 2025 work stoppage.
3. Approved that the Association's fiscal restraint measures, which were implemented due to the 2025 work stoppage, be ended by 2026 07 31.
4. Declared in effect amendments to the general bylaws, as set out in electoral ballots 8 and 10 of 2025 and approved by the 2026 Annual Representative Assembly. Electoral ballot 8 amended general bylaw 44 to clarify "appointed office" in a local or Association subgroup and electoral ballot 10 amended general bylaw 37 to add that the executive secretary will be a nonvoting officer of the Association.
5. Received in principle and determined its position on three electoral ballots proposed by locals. The finalized ballots, along with a statement of PEC's position on each, will be prepared and distributed to locals before the end of September.
6. Set the timeline for recruitment of the position of associate executive secretary, determined that the position is required to hold a teaching certificate and appointed members of Council to serve on the selection committee.
7. Set the timeline for recruitment of the position of executive staff officer, Teacher Employment Membership Support, determined the location of the vacancy as the Southern Alberta Regional Office and appointed members of Council to serve on the selection committee.
8. Approved Canadian Custom Apparel as the Association's online Public Education Store, which is set to open in September 2026.
9. Approved the names of six teachers for addition to the approved name bank for possible appointment as Association instructors.
10. Authorized staff to prepare a response to Red Deer City Local No 60, including actions taken and planned response, once the particulars of Bill 25 become known.
11. Authorized an overexpenditure in principle of up to \$12,000 in the 2026/27 fiscal year to host the 2027 Canadian Educational Press Association Conference in Alberta.
12. Approved that the Association cover the reasonable food costs of dependent children of Provincial Executive Council and staff at Summer Conference.
13. Approved additional support to Public Interest Alberta.
14. Approved amendments to the Administrative Guidelines regarding alternative accommodations outside of commercial accommodations, the Association's kilometrage rate, convention guest registration fees and the Facilitator Corps.
15. Approved field member committee and representation assignments for 2026/27.
16. Approved amendments to the Women in Leadership Committee frame of reference by adding an additional field member position to its membership and approved that the additional field member position be filled during the June 2026 meeting.
17. Approved amendments to the Indigenous Education Committee frame of reference by adding the responsibility for the adjudication and administration of the Indigenous Education Initiatives Grant. ■



Follow us on Instagram: [abteachers](https://www.instagram.com/abteachers)

Back-to-school HACKS

A new school year has just begun! It's a busy time, with lots of nerves, energy and new ideas. To ease this transition, ATA Professional Development executive staff officers have provided some of their best back-to-school hacks to consider for this or any new year!

Ask the secretary to print you a pictorial directory of your class(es) before the students get there. You'll know all your students' names and faces in record time.

— Jackie Young, PD executive staff officer

Bulletin boards don't need to be Pinterest perfect the moment students walk in the door. Build a bulletin board together as a class to demonstrate students' learning early in the school year—it saves you time, and students get to feel a sense of ownership over their classroom community right away.

— Terra Kaliszuk, PD executive staff officer

Have a large, visible sign outside the classroom so students can easily identify where they need to go. I used an A-frame sign that was visible from the end of the hallway, and then I was also at the door to greet students by name as they arrived.

Choose a day prior to the first day of school to let families come and drop off school supplies. Then the students have one less thing to worry about on their first day of school.

— Leanne Watson, PD executive staff officer

Be sure to include lots of physical activity breaks that first week back! It's tricky for everyone to get back into the groove of sitting for much of the day.

Also, instead of calling out names to take attendance the first day, ask students to say their own names aloud so everyone can learn how to pronounce each other's names.

— Andrea Berg, PD associate coordinator

One more ATA member hack:

ATA members can access exclusive deals from Belairdirect Insurance, Capital Estates Planning, select Alberta hotels and more!

Find out more at
<https://abteach.cc/ata-special-rates>.

