

Media Literacy Week

Building critical thinking skills | See *Tale End*, [page 16](#).

October 26-30



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Meet your representatives.

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ATANews

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LINDSAY YAKIMSHYN

Fall colours take over the province as temperatures cool down.



Not an “extra”

Connection-building essential to teaching

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Connection-building not an “extra” but an essential



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
 ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Every teacher has heard some version of the phrase, “Just teach the curriculum.”

It is often presented as common sense advice. Teach the subject matter. Cover the required outcomes. Leave everything else at the door. At first read, this makes complete sense! The problem is that this view misunderstands what teaching is.

If teaching were simply the delivery of information, teachers would be much easier to replace. Google can provide facts in seconds. Artificial intelligence can explain concepts, create summaries and generate practice questions (though not always reliably). Students today carry more information in their pockets than previous generations could access in an entire library. Still, schools and teachers remain vital because real learning is not the same as having the ability to access information.

The challenge facing teachers is not getting information in front of students. The challenge is helping our students engage with it, understand it, retain it and use it. That work depends on something critics often dismiss or overlook: human connection.

The suggestion that teachers should “just teach” assumes that relationships are somehow separate from learning, but relationships are often what make learning possible. Students who feel respected are more likely to participate. Students who trust their teacher are more willing to ask questions. Students who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to take academic risks and persevere when the work becomes difficult. This is what makes teachers the professionals they are; they have this skill down to an art.

“ Teachers must constantly adjust, motivate, encourage, redirect and support to facilitate meaningful learning. ”

Every experienced teacher knows this. A lesson that succeeds with one class may fall flat with another. This baffled me when I was a beginning teacher. The curriculum was the same, but the approach had to change. Teachers must constantly adjust, motivate, encourage, redirect and support to

facilitate meaningful learning. Teachers read a room, identify barriers to learning and respond in real time. That is teaching.

Critics sometimes speak as though relationship-building is something “extra” that teachers choose to do instead of teaching content. The reality is exactly the opposite. The connections that teachers build allow content to be taught effectively. It is the bridge between the lesson plan and student learning.

Teaching is much more than delivering content to students. It requires expertise, judgment, adaptability, empathy, communication and the ability to engage dozens of unique learners at the same time. Teaching demands a complex combination of skills that deserves more recognition.

Of course, teachers teach the curriculum. They teach mathematics, sciences, languages, fine arts, career education and countless other disciplines. But they also create the conditions that allow students to learn those subjects in the first place.

In an age when information is everywhere, it is important to remember that students do not learn from content alone. They learn through connection. Far from being an “extra,” connection-building is one of the most sophisticated and essential skills that the teaching profession requires. ■

I welcome your comments, thoughts and ideas. Contact me at kristine.wilkinson@ata.ab.ca.

AI: the risks, opportunities and what it can't replace



FROM THE DESK OF

Robert Mazzotta
 ATA Executive Secretary

With each passing day, new tools emerge that use artificial intelligence (AI) to supposedly make life easier or choices simpler. AI can help us generate lists or plans, write reports or organize our lives in some way. While AI creates some efficiencies, more and more dangers and cautions are surfacing. As professionals, we need to be mindful of how and when to use AI in our work, taking care that it does not lead us astray.

Recently, staff in the ATA's Teacher Employment Membership Support (TEMS) program area have noticed increased use of AI from the membership. Specifically, some members are using AI to interpret documents related to their employment. AI is also being used to help craft responses to concerns raised by a parent or colleague. The list goes on.

In some instances, members have been asking AI to review their collective agreement, legislation such as the *Education Act*, or employer policies on a variety of issues and then presenting the AI-produced information or arguments to their employer, often finding themselves in a more difficult situation as a result.

Can AI summarize information? Certainly. Can it rewrite a draft argument you have provided? Sure. What it cannot do is effectively interpret the information you share for your specific context or consider how your context intersects with other obligations or responsibilities. Your context includes your contract status, your teaching assignment, any interpersonal issues that may exist or the daily reality of your classroom. Staff in TEMS have noticed

an increase in calls where the member used AI to respond to a workplace situation that subsequently escalated because AI did not “read the room”—it did not understand the context and made the situation considerably worse.

Years ago, when I worked in what was then Member Services, we borrowed the phrase, “call before you dig,” and that advice still holds true today. Call TEMS before you proceed. They not only understand the context within which you are working, but also the nuances and interplay of legislation, collective agreements and employment law. They can provide advice specific to your concern. AI cannot do this. This is the power of conversation and relationships. It is the power of professional wisdom.

Teachers must also ensure we keep our professional judgment and skills sharp, which will serve to maintain trust in the profession. For teachers, the risk is moral passivity, allowing AI to make important decisions for us (or on behalf of our students) instead of exercising our own human agency. For students, the risk is that they may lose skills through a lack of use, or never fully develop them because AI has removed the effort that deeper learning requires. Teachers' judgment and expertise cannot be replaced with AI.

David Edwards, general secretary of Education International, shared a clear message to delegates at Summer Conference: what makes education successful is the relationship that teachers create with their students, their colleagues and the school community. While there is a push by some to replace professional teachers with technology and run education like a business, the reality is that this type of education would not be successful, and those students would be disadvantaged.

AI does not have the human empathy required to nurture these relationships so that students

can grow and flourish. Again, it is about the power of relationships, which AI cannot—and should not—replace.

This leads to another caution with AI: anthropomorphic artificial intelligence tools. At the Annual Representative Assembly in May, delegates passed a resolution stating that AI tools including AI companions and other AI systems designed specifically to simulate friendship, counselling or intimate relationships should not be deployed or introduced into any Alberta K–12 learning environments or support settings. The Canadian Teachers' Federation also adopted the resolutions the ATA advanced regarding anthropomorphic AI tools, calling for the federal government to develop model policies, strategies and legislation regarding these tools.

Anthropomorphic AI companions adopt humanlike personas, perform empathy and present themselves as always-available friends or counsellors. Young minds may not understand that their computer friend is not a real person, which could lead to a variety of social problems. As teachers, we need to ensure that our students can understand and use these emerging technologies and AI systems wisely, just as we continue to be informed and mindful in our use of these systems.

The Association is here to support members as we all navigate the shifts, risks and opportunities of AI. Aside from personalized advice from TEMS, the ATA offers a variety of workshops and presentations on AI and effective use of these tools in today's classrooms. If you want to learn about how AI can support your professional practice, reach out to the Professional Development area for assistance. As always, we're here to help. ■

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



CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK: A chance to celebrate and to reflect



VIEWPOINTS

Kelly Whalen
President, Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association

From October 17 to 24, Catholic schools and parishes across Alberta will celebrate Catholic Education Week. This year's theme is taken from Scripture: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:13). In addition to the special activities taking place within our community, this week presents an opportunity to share the story of Catholic education and the role it plays in Alberta.

Diversity, pluralism and Catholic education

Publicly funded Catholic schools are rooted in a history that predates Confederation and continues to the present. The minority right to establish, govern and manage denominational separate schools is enshrined in the 1867 *Constitution Act*, which created our country, and the 1905 *Alberta Act*, which created our province. It is reaffirmed in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as in Alberta's *Education Act* and other provincial legislation.

Minority denominational education rights are foundational to the pluralistic character of Canadian society. They reflect the kind of dialogue, accommodation and pragmatic compromise that made confederation possible and that continue to shape our country. In 1896, former prime minister Sir Charles Tupper reflected during debate in the House of Commons on the decisive role these minority rights played in unifying Canada:

"[...] but for assent that in the Confederation Act should be embodied a clause which would protect the rights of minorities, whether Catholic or Protestant, in this country, there would have been no confederation [...]"

Today, our pluralistic heritage is reflected in the diversity of educational options available to families in Alberta. Within this educational landscape, publicly funded Catholic education holds a distinct, constitutionally protected place. It embodies the principle that families ought to have access, through public funding, to an education for their children that supports their deeply held beliefs, values and traditions.

Alberta's publicly funded Catholic schools serve nearly 200,000 students—more than one in five provincially—along with their families and communities. This figure represents the intentional choice of Albertan families to select a distinctively Catholic education for their children. They are choosing schools where academic excellence is pursued in the Catholic tradition, and where faith in God, belief in the inherent dignity of the human person and a commitment to the common good are all cultivated.

While approximately one-third of Alberta's population identifies as Catholic (including many newcomers to Canada), our schools are open to all.

Catholic schools comprise a significant part of Alberta's public school system. More than 10,000 teachers provincewide are employed by Catholic boards. Both staff and the 150 democratically elected Catholic trustees share many of the same goals as their public colleagues: serve students, support families, strengthen community, and guide young people toward becoming responsible and compassionate citizens.

“ Catholic schools comprise a significant part of Alberta's public school system. More than 10,000 teachers ... are employed by Catholic boards. ”

At the same time, Catholic schools are distinct. We are called to love each student as a child of God, created to live a life of purpose through service to others. We seek to educate the whole person, body and soul, and form young people who will contribute selflessly to the broader community. In all we do, we strive to point students to the example of Jesus Christ: His teaching ministry, His sacrifice on the Cross, His glorious Resurrection and victory over sin and death.

Celebrating together in hope

Catholic education is an important part of Alberta's shared educational and constitutional heritage. In a world where hope, joy and peace at times appear scarce, our Catholic Education Week Scripture passage reminds us that these gifts come from God, and that our faith in Him is expressed by how we love and serve one another as Christ taught us. During Catholic Education Week, I invite all of us, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, to celebrate this shared heritage, as well as the students, families and educators who continue to carry it forward with hope. ■

Kelly Whalen is president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, providing unified spiritual and political leadership for Catholic school trustees across Alberta, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. He also serves as chair of Holy Family Catholic Regional Division and has been a trustee since 2004. A passionate Catholic and determined advocate, he works tirelessly to ensure every student has access to publicly funded Catholic education.

YOUR VIEWS

Teachers shared some of the unique Halloween costumes they have seen at school.

f Rebecca Robins

In our family, we love a good Halloween costume. My junior-high child built [an] alligator out of cardboard this year.

@ nteaches

One year, I had a student who was SO excited to dress up as Pikachu for Halloween. I decided to surprise him by dressing up as Ash Ketchum! His reaction when he saw me was priceless! Definitely one of my favourite Halloween memories from teaching!

@ mich_canada

A kindergarten student dressed up as Terry Fox: wig, old T-shirt, shorts, costume prosthetic. He had also practiced running like him. It was amazing and especially meaningful because we had learned the song "Je

cours comme Terry" ("Terry Fox – La Persévérance") in September, and sang it regularly. Terry was our class hero and this five year old took it to heart (with some adult help, of course)!

@ ungelus

One year, a student came as a box of Timbits.

@ 7.34.piglet

One of my sweetest students went as Ted Lasso last year, with the bushy moustache and all!

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS!

What is your best tip or strategy for preparing for parent-teacher interviews?

Submit your response by Nov. 1 to newsandmag@ata.ab.ca and be entered to win an ATA prize pack! Submissions may appear in the ATA News.

FOR THE RECORD

“ The confidence, resilience and leadership the women and girls in Alberta demonstrate every day is a powerful source of inspiration and a reminder of what is possible when girls are empowered to pursue their aspirations. ”

—Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women Tanya Fir
on the International Day of the Girl, Oct. 11

That feeling when you realize Halloween falls on a Saturday



What’s happening with curriculum?



EXECUTIVE REPORT

Terra Kaliszuk
ATA Executive
Staff Officer, PD

Following years of unrelenting K–6 curriculum rollouts, Alberta Education and Childcare has slowed its aggressive curriculum development timelines. Since Sept. 2022, the ministry has implemented new K–6 curriculum in seven subject areas. With junior high and high school curriculum development now underway in six subject areas, curriculum development continues to move forward, but at a more deliberate pace.

Throughout this curriculum change process, K–6 teachers have expressed deep concern that the pace of the rollout put significant strain on students and teachers across the province. Taken together with the implementation of literacy and numeracy screening assessments and the shift to a digital provincial assessment platform, K–6 teachers have been inundated with change for years.

In response to these concerns, the ministry has shifted to a five-phase curriculum development process that has slowed the pace of implementation. This five-phase process—develop, consult, field test, pilot and implement—now takes approximately four years to complete and is used for each curriculum draft. This shift marks a significant change from the ministry’s approach to the April 2022 release of several subjects that were piloted and then implemented provincewide in Sept. 2022, only five months later.

The slower pace of implementation for Alberta’s secondary classrooms is a welcome change. However, teachers continue to voice concerns about the ministry’s learning and teaching

resource strategy, lack of teacher voice at the curriculum development table and disjointed implementation approach.

Curriculum development and consultation

As of the time of writing, the ministry has not yet announced subjects that will be under development in the 2026/27 school year. While we do not yet know how curriculum development work will expand in junior high and high school, we do know that the ministry will continue to consult with teachers in the process.

In fall 2023, the ministry introduced a consultation strategy called Teacher Curriculum Consultation Groups (TCCGs), which consist of teachers from across the province who provide feedback on draft curriculum documents prior to their public release. Draft curriculum is developed by the ministry first and then shared with TCCGs and education partners, including the Alberta Teachers’ Association, for feedback. Since introducing them, the ministry has used TCCGs as a component of their curriculum consultation strategy.

At the same time, TCCGs alone are far from curriculum development best practice. Teachers continue to lack confidence in Alberta’s curriculum and, until such time as teachers are seated at the curriculum-writing table, these concerns will likely go unresolved. Teachers also continue to be dissatisfied with the degree to which their feedback is used to inform curriculum development and revision. The K–6 mathematics curriculum, for example, is the subject of substantial teacher concern that has yet to be addressed. Further, teachers have expressed the need to balance the ministry’s intense focus on career education with curriculum development work related to the fine arts and additional languages.

Curriculum field testing and piloting

The 2026/27 school year marks the field testing of three new secondary subjects: Grades 7–9 science, Grade 10 career and life management (CALM), and Grade 10 physical education and wellness (PEW).

Up to the public release of the draft CALM curriculum on Sept. 22, 2026, the ministry stated its intention to release and field test a Grade 10 career education and financial literacy (CEFL) curriculum. This unexpected return to CALM and the resulting shift away from the new CEFL curriculum approach we currently see in Grades 7–9 is evidence of a response to calls to retain the time-tested CALM course and further slow the pace of curriculum development within the complex context of high school career education. Teachers continue to call for direct involvement in the design of high school career education pathways and the writing of high school career education curriculum.

Optional classroom piloting is also underway for 7–9 mathematics, 7–9 social studies, 7–9 PEW and 7–9 CEFL. The ministry reports that more than 2,200 teachers across the province have registered to pilot the new curriculum this year, with piloting occurring in public, separate, charter, First Nations, francophone, independent and international schools.

Like their K–6 colleagues, piloting 7–9 teachers have expressed deep concern regarding the lack of purpose-built, comprehensive resources created to support new curriculum. As a result of this lack of resources, the work of resource creation and procurement has been downloaded to teachers and schools engaged in the piloting phase.

Teachers continue to request that the ministry procure comprehensive resources, such as textbooks, that are created specifically for the Alberta curriculum and provide purpose-built support for teachers who are charged with bringing the curriculum to life. Comprehensive resources would work alongside the locally created resources shared on new LearnAlberta and, taken together,

create a more supportive approach to curriculum rollout.

Implementation strategy

In the 2025/26 school year, as part of their consultation strategy, the ministry introduced Leaders of Learning meetings, where school authority leaders and education partners are invited to attend virtual consultation meetings to provide insights regarding implementation, resourcing, curriculum content and other implementation-focused feedback topics.

While the current implementation approach now involves formalized consultation and differs from the ministry’s 2021 intentions to implement all K–6 curriculum at once, teachers have expressed concern that this implementation strategy does not address continuity of student learning.

The current implementation strategy sees curriculum rolled out to classrooms in blocked cohorts. That is, curriculum is generally introduced in three-grade cohorts wherein a subject is implemented in three grades at a time. For example, this year the Grades 4–6 social studies curriculum is now in the mandatory implementation phase. This blocked cohort model does not account for continuity of student learning. Students who are in Grade 8 this year, for instance, have bounced back and forth between old and new mathematics curricula multiple times, impacting year-to-year scaffolding of student learning.

Teachers continue to call for an implementation strategy that employs cohorts that progress through curriculum from year to year to ensure continuity of learning. With the approach to high school curriculum development still uncertain, the Association will continue to advocate on behalf of students and teachers across the province. ■

Draft curriculum, teaching and learning resources and curriculum implementation information are available at <https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/home/en>.

The Curriculum Implementation and Supports Timeline is available at <https://abteach.cc/ab-curriculum-timeline>.

WANT TO SHARE YOUR VOICE?

Teachers interested in becoming involved in junior high and high school curriculum development consultations are encouraged to stay tuned for ministry announcements in the coming months.

From beginning to end, we’re in this together

Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling

I welcome your comments.
Contact me at
jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca.

Recently, I attended the Beginning Teachers’ Conference (BTC) in both Edmonton and Calgary, as well as my own local’s induction ceremony and years of service celebration.

As always, the BTC is full of enthusiasm, optimism and excitement for what the future holds. The teachers attending are eager to learn and seeking support in all sorts of areas, from lessons and assessments to, most importantly, mentorship. I think we can all remember how challenging the first few years of teaching can be. I was lucky to have a team of mentors at my first school who helped me out, listened to my concerns and reminded me that Rome wasn’t built in a day.

We all know how difficult teaching these days can be, and it is important for all of us to support one another. Whether it’s a helpful tip, a lesson plan suggestion or an ear at the end of a busy day, we are all in this together. Teaching is not a solitary job; it’s built

on relationships, collaboration and care.

This sense of connection came full circle for me just after the Calgary BTC, when I attended my own local’s induction ceremony and years of service celebration. I have always appreciated how ATA Palliser Local No. 19 acknowledges years of service to the Alberta Teachers’ Association, not just years of service to a school board. For example, a teacher might spend 10 years teaching for one school board before switching to Palliser and teach there for another five. This teacher would be recognized for 15 years of service to the Association, because our membership crosses school board boundaries throughout the province.

Not only was I tasked with bringing greetings to the local, but I was also honoured to be recognized for 30 years of service to the Association. That still blows my mind. How did that even

happen? One moment, you’re setting up your first classroom, and then you blink and 30 years have gone by.

My career has had its ups and downs, some private and some very public. However, I wouldn’t change a thing. Every day brings a lesson to learn, and I am grateful for the people I have worked with over the years, many of whom were in the room that evening. (A special shout-out to the Kate Andrews crew!)

As I stood at the podium that evening, I was struck by how much the experience reminded me of standing at the podium at the BTC. At both events, I saw the faces of colleagues who care deeply about public education and their students. Whether we are just starting our careers or reflecting on them, we share a common purpose: supporting one another, serving our students and strengthening public education. And to me, that’s pretty cool. ■



ISTOCK

Diversity and Equity Networks creating spaces to connect

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) has three Diversity and Equity Networks (DENs), all of which provide a structure for teachers who identify as members of a diverse group to come together to support each other and organize relevant events and services. The three DENs—Teachers with Disabilities (TWD), Together We RISE: Racialized Teachers’ Circle, and ATA Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA)—are self-defining and self-organizing, and create spaces for teachers from across the province to connect.

Below, the DENs share insights into their work.

Teachers with Disabilities

The Teachers with Disabilities (TWD) DEN is a provincial network that provides a safe and brave space for teachers with disabilities and allies interested in learning more about teachers with disabilities. The DEN is open to all active members.

Our network provides support that enables teachers with disabilities to thrive at work and amplifies their voices as strong contributors to public education. We advocate for an accessible ATA; accessible schools; accurate and positive representation of people with disabilities; and for all Albertans with disabilities to be seen, heard, supported, and valued for their experiences, perspectives and knowledge.

Some notable achievements of this DEN include helping to organize the ATA DEHR conference centered on accessibility, belonging and inclusion; helping the ATA advocate for a just disability policy in the province; and convening a book club for contemporary writing by authors with disabilities. Most importantly, TWD has helped our members grow their sense of belonging, hope and confidence, and supported their self-advocacy and skills in navigating the complexities of teaching in Alberta as teachers with disabilities.

Some events to look forward to are

- ongoing listening circles to give voice to teachers with disabilities (December 15, 2026; February 16, 2027; April 20, 2027; and June 15, 2027);
- a film night series centering on belonging and activism, introduced by Alberta artists/advocates in and for the disability community (November 3, 2026 and February 2, 2027); and
- expert speaker sessions in which DEN members and invited guests educate about issues impacting the community (dates forthcoming).

Together We RISE: Racialized Teachers’ Circle

When we think of racialized teachers, we recognize dedicated professionals whose diverse experiences, perspectives, cultures and talents enrich our schools and enhance student learning. These teachers bring valuable insights and lived experiences that contribute to more inclusive, responsive and welcoming learning environments. At the same time, some may experience barriers, isolation or challenges that require understanding, support and collective action.

The ATA is strongest when every member feels respected, valued and included. The Together We

RISE DEN was established to foster a supportive community wherein racialized educators can connect, share experiences, build relationships and learn from one another. Through collaboration and dialogue, the group provides a space to celebrate successes, address challenges and strengthen engagement with the ATA.

The impact of the Together We RISE DEN extends beyond its members. Through mentorship, professional learning, leadership development, advocacy and networking opportunities, the group supports personal and professional growth while promoting greater awareness, understanding and meaningful conversations across the educational community. These efforts contribute to stronger schools, more inclusive workplaces and positive outcomes for students.

We all have a role to play in advancing this work. By listening with openness, learning from the experiences of colleagues, addressing bias, sharing opportunities and fostering inclusive environments, members and allies help build a profession grounded in equity, respect and belonging.

The vision of the Together We RISE DEN is a profession where race is never a barrier to opportunity, leadership or success; where every educator feels respected, represented and empowered; and where the diversity of our membership is reflected and valued at every level of the profession.

ATA Gender and Sexuality Alliance

The ATA GSA exists to create a safe, welcoming and empowering space for 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers and their allies across Alberta. We foster connection, affirm identity and advocate for equity through education, professional learning and collective action. Our work includes provincial outreach to isolated educators, capacity-building through professional development, and supporting teachers in navigating oppressive systems safely and collaboratively. We champion intersectionality and strive to accept, affirm and uplift the voices and experiences of marginalized educators, including those who are Two-Spirit, racialized or living with disabilities.

The ATA GSA builds partnerships within the Association and beyond, acting as a consultative body, a creator of resources and a hub for collective learning. We aim to connect GSAs across the province, document our histories and celebrate queer joy through events, storytelling and shared learning. Through newsletters, conferences, public education and research initiatives, we strive to diversify the ATA membership and representatives, raise awareness of career pathways, and foster a more inclusive profession and society. ■

DENs
DIVERSITY EQUITY
NETWORKS

Additional information about ATA DENs, including details on joining a DEN and attending upcoming events, is available at <https://abteach.cc/atadens>.

LEADERSHIP THRIVE5

Bite-sized takeaways to boost and brighten your leadership life

Featuring Jennifer Baeta, Assistant Principal, Edmonton Catholic Schools

1: I am reading...



several books at once. I like to be fully present when I read, so if I’m not absorbing the learning, I give myself permission to pause and come back when I’m ready. I’m currently reading *The Power of Mattering* by Zach Mercurio and *Mattering* by Jennifer Breheny Wallace. The concept of “mattering” has really resonated with me. Understanding what it means to feel seen, heard and valued truly is foundational, not only as a leader, but as a mom, wife, friend, and as a human. I’ve recognized that we never outgrow the desire to feel like we matter. As adults, we just become better at masking that we don’t.

2: I am eating...



protein, vegetables and healthy carbohydrates for every meal—a non-negotiable in our household. This also includes us sitting down as a family every night (even if it’s brief) to discuss the best and hardest parts of our days as we eat. At the same time, life is about balance. Eat the cookie. Bake the cake. Life is precious, and finding moments of joy along the way is just as important as making healthy choices. Besides, if wellness were all kale and discipline, I’m not sure any of us would stick with it.

3: I have set intentions for...



protecting time for the people who matter most. Just as we schedule meetings and appointments, I’ve learned to schedule connection. Whether it’s a shopping date with my mom, coffee with a friend, a workout, or sitting on the deck by myself with a hot coffee, those moments matter. As a full-time working mom, if it’s not in my calendar, there’s a good chance it doesn’t exist.

4: I am wearing...



what makes me feel good. My grandma once baked her own birthday cake because, she said, “You never know if you’ll get another one.” She passed away shortly after her next birthday, and that lesson has stayed with me. So, I wear the lipstick, curl my hair and pull out the heels. Not for anyone else, but for me. It’s a small act of gratitude and a reminder to show up authentically, confidently and unapologetically. Life is too short to save the good lipstick for a special occasion.

I am watching...



not a lot of television, but when I do, it’s usually something created by Taylor Sheridan. It reminds me to channel my inner Beth Dutton. We also watch classic ‘90s favourites with my daughters: *Happy Gilmore*, *Full House*, *The Wedding Singer*, *Legally Blonde*...all the good ones. Watching them through a modern lens always makes it so much more entertaining and sparks some interesting family conversations. ■

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.



**Menopause
can be a
tough journey.
Let's take it
on together.**

Perimenopause and menopause can have a significant impact on your life. Access trusted information and practical guidance to help you better understand symptoms and find support.

Learn more at asebp.ca/womenshealth



Local initiatives boost engagement

Once again, several Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) locals stepped into the spotlight at Summer Conference as part of the "Stars of the ATA Showcase," which highlights the work locals have done over the past school year in the areas of

- diversity, equity and human rights (DEHR);
- Indigenous education and reconciliation;
- public relations;
- political engagement; and
- other member and public engagement initiatives.

This year, 11 locals took part in the showcase. Projects undertaken by these locals are summarized here.

Black Gold Local No. 8

The local DEHR Committee's microgrant program approved 10 innovative projects across various schools. These initiatives focused on fostering inclusion, celebrating cultural diversity, supporting neurodiversity and building community connections. Each project was awarded up to \$250. The local also called on the membership to nominate a woman who shines in their school. Twenty-five names were drawn from the 114 nominations, with each winner receiving a pair of Hillberg & Berk earrings.

Calgary Public Teachers Local No. 38

The local held two online public engagement forums. The first was held just before the Calgary Board of Education trustee elections, and the second was held during April's Constituency Week, where several MLAs were invited to discuss classroom challenges. A billboard campaign was also launched outlining the challenges facing public education.

Local No. 38 also participated in the Centre for Sexuality's Pride Brunch for Camp fYerfly, and representatives acted as marshals for the Calgary Pride parade. Local No. 38's DEHR committee hosted an Authentically Indigenous learning series at the Brown Bear Woman Events Centre and launched their very first DEHR conference, welcoming members from locals No. 38, 35 and 37. Drag bingo nights and a trivia brunch were held to boost member connection and engagement.

Edmonton Catholic Teachers Local No. 54 and Edmonton Public Teachers Local No. 37

The two locals organized a variety of wellness and community-building activities to help support their members throughout the strike: community walks, yoga, Zumba, salsa lessons, therapy dogs, volunteering with Hope Mission, blood donations and two large rallies at the Alberta legislature. They also teamed up with ATA's Professional Development (PD) program area and hosted several PD opportunities to learn and connect.

Fort McMurray Local No. 48

The local hosted a two-day Women in Leadership retreat, providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment where participants could learn, connect and grow together while advancing their understanding of gender equality. The event strengthened community connections by engaging local women as presenters and showcasing women-owned and women-led businesses.

Greater Peace Teachers Local No. 13

During the 2025 teachers' strike, the local created and operated a highly



successful mobile strike centre initiative, designed to bring member support, advocacy and engagement directly into local communities across the region.

Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones de l'Alberta ou section locale n° 24

Le 2 mai 2026, l'AEFEA a contribué au premier Sommet sur la transmission linguistique, culturelle et identitaire de l'Alberta, un évènement majeur ayant réuni plus de 240 participantes et participants engagés dans la vitalité du français en contexte minoritaire.

Parkland Teachers Local No. 10

The local proudly supported the Bring Dignity Home campaign. School representatives across the local organized donation centres in their schools, encouraging staff to contribute items such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, feminine hygiene products and other personal care essentials. The campaign aimed to address an often-overlooked barrier faced by some students and families by collecting essential hygiene products for those in need.

Red Deer City Local No. 60 and Red Deer Catholic Local No. 80

Local No. 60 wrote over 250 letters that were personally delivered to MLAs all over central Alberta. Local No. 60 and Local No. 80 joined forces to hold a "pints and politics" event, allowing members to connect with local political leaders in a relaxed, informal setting. The two locals also hosted a rally during the 2025 strike.



SUPPLIED

Swag for substitute teachers' appreciation in Red Deer

Several other activities, such as trivia nights, food security support and barbecues were planned to encourage engagement and support for their fellow teachers.

Timberline Local No. 9

The local once again hosted their Fine Art Walk, an outdoor student art exhibition that runs concurrently with the Canadian Mental Health Association's Mental Health Week. The project targets two core objectives: promoting public fine arts education by showcasing local student artwork and encouraging community members to experience the physical and mental health benefits of being outdoors and exercising. ■



A lawn sign pick-up event in Calgary

SUPPLIED



Les participants au Sommet sur la transmission linguistique, culturelle et identitaire de l'Alberta

SUPPLIED

SHOW YOUR WORK

Locals are encouraged to shine the spotlight on their initiatives through the "Stars of the ATA" program. The deadline for locals to submit entries for next year's showcase is June 2027. Additional information, including on grants that can support local projects, is available at <https://teachers.ab.ca/events/stars-ata-local-showcase>.



WHO'S WHO
2026/27

Meet the current Provincial Executive Council members and local presidents

TABLE OFFICERS



JASON SCHILLING
ATA President



GREG CARABINE
ATA Vice-President



ALLISON MCCAFFREY
ATA Vice-President



GREG JEFFERY
ATA Past President

NORTH WEST



RHONDA KELLY
District Rep



NICHOLL URDAL
Fort Vermilion
Local No. 77



GENEVIEVE PAYEUR
Grande Prairie and District
Catholic Teachers Local
No. 42



JACKIE BASNETT
Greater Peace
Local No. 13



JENNIFER TAYLOR
High Prairie
Local No. 62



DEBBIE HARRIS
Northern Spirit
Local No. 6



TERRI-LYNN MCLEOD
Northland
Local No. 69



ASHLEIGH BARSALOU
Trumpeter
Local No. 26

CENTRAL EAST



MURRAY LALONDE
District Rep



JOCELYN ARTHUR
Aspen View Local No. 7



KATHERINE COOK
Battle River Local
No. 32



SARJENKA KURLIOW
Greater St. Paul Local
No. 25



TANA DEIBERT
Lakeland Catholic
Separate Local No. 30



KELLY MURPHY
Northern Lights Local
No. 15



JANICE JACKSON
Park Plains East
Local No. 31

CENTRAL NORTH



RICK KREMP
District Rep



JESSIE SMEALL
Evergreen Local
No. 11



VANESSA AMYOTTE
Evergreen Catholic
Local No. 44



KATRINA ZACK
Northern Gateway
Local No. 43



MOE TELIANI
Parkland Teachers'
Local No. 10



MICHELLE SAVOIE
Pembina Hills Local
No. 22



KIM NAHIRNIAK
Woodland Rivers
Local No. 40

SOUTH EAST



HEATHER MCCAIG
District Rep



JEFF SCOTT
Grasslands Local
No. 34



MICHAEL JERRED
Medicine Hat
Local No. 1



DEANNA BURZINSKI
Medicine Hat Catholic
Teachers Local No. 39



MARK BREADNER
PrairieLand Local
No. 36



LYLE KENNEDY
Prairie Rose Local
No. 2



MICHAEL ROBERTSON
Three Drums of
Wheat Local No. 20

SOUTH WEST



KATHERINE PRITCHARD
District Rep



JOHN TEMPLIN
Holy Spirit Catholic
Local No. 5



SHARALYN PATCHING
Horizon Local No. 4



DEREK RESLER
Lethbridge Public
School Local No. 41



MADISON STOCKER
Livingstone Range
Local No. 14



MARLISS VISSER
Palliser Local No. 19



STEPHEN GIBBINS
Westwind Local
No. 12

CENTRAL PRAIRIE SKY



JANET WESTWORTH
District Rep



MAXINE HOLM
Elk Island
Local No. 28



RHONDA BOROWSKI
Elk Island Catholic
Teachers' Local No. 21



CARRYL BENNETT
Greater St. Albert
Catholic Local
No. 23



JAROD LETENDRE
St. Albert Public
Teachers' Local No. 73



DAVID MCINTYRE
Sturgeon Local No. 27

EDMONTON MCMURRAY



CARMEN GLOSSOP
District Rep



CHANDRA HILDEBRAND
District Rep



JAY PROCKTOR
District Rep



AMBER NICHOLSON
Edmonton Catholic
Teachers Local No. 54



HEATHER QUINN
Edmonton Public
Teachers Local No. 37



NADINE ARMBRUSTER
Fort McMurray
Local No. 48

CENTRAL



BRENTON BAUM
District Rep



ÉRIC CLOUTIER
Association des enseignantes
et des enseignants
francophones de l'Alberta



KIM ST. ANDRE
Black Gold Teachers' Local
No. 8



KRISTIAN HEARTT
St. Thomas Aquinas
Teachers' Local No. 45



MIKE WHEELER
Timberline Local
No. 9



CADE BENGERT
Wetaskiwin Local
No. 18

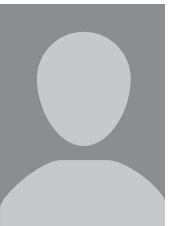
CENTRAL SOUTH



BRICE UNLAND
District Rep



CHERRA-LYNNE OLTHOF
Chinook's Edge Local
No. 17



DENYSE BOYD
Clearview Teachers
Local No. 33



SARA LAMBERT
Red Deer Catholic
Local No. 80



EVELYN CHAN
Red Deer City
Local No. 60



MICHAEL DOLL
Wolf Creek Local
No. 3

SOUTH CENTRAL ROCKIES



WADE WESTWORTH
District Rep



MONICA BULAS
Canadian Rockies
Local No. 59



CHRISTIAN SCHELL
Christ the Redeemer
Local No. 29



DAVID TAIT
Foothills Local No. 16



AMRIT RAI NANNAN
Rocky View
Local No. 35

CALGARY CITY



KEVIN KEMPT
District Rep



KENT KINSMAN
District Rep



ALICIA TAYLOR
District Rep



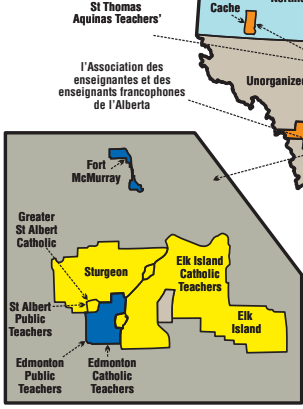
MJ EAGLESON
Calgary Public Teachers
Local No. 38



LEE MARTIN
Calgary Separate
School Local No. 55

ATA geographic districts and locals

- Calgary City
- Central
- Central East
- Central North
- Central Prairie Sky
formerly Edmonton District
- Central South
- Edmonton McMurray
- North West
- South Central Rockies
formerly Calgary District
- South East
- South West



The Alberta Teachers' Association

STUDENT LOCALS

TBA
University of Alberta ESA, Student Local No. 1

MANAR AL-YASIRI
University of Calgary ESA, Student Local No. 2

HAYDEN BECKER
Red Deer Polytechnic EUS, Student Local No. 3

AIDEN LAIR
University of Lethbridge EUS, Student Local No. 4

ALEXIS UNREINER
Medicine Hat College EUS, Student Local No. 5

JACKSON CHAMBERS
Concordia University ESA, Student Local No. 6

MACKENZIE GAME
Campus Saint-Jean EUS, Student Local No. 7

KELLIE FLETT
Northwestern Polytechnic ESA, Student Local No. 8

DANIEL PASECHNIK
Keyano College ESA, Student Local No. 9

MIMI TEST
Mount Royal University EUS, Student Local No. 10

SAMANTHA UKRAINETZ
Ambrose University ESA, Student Local No. 12

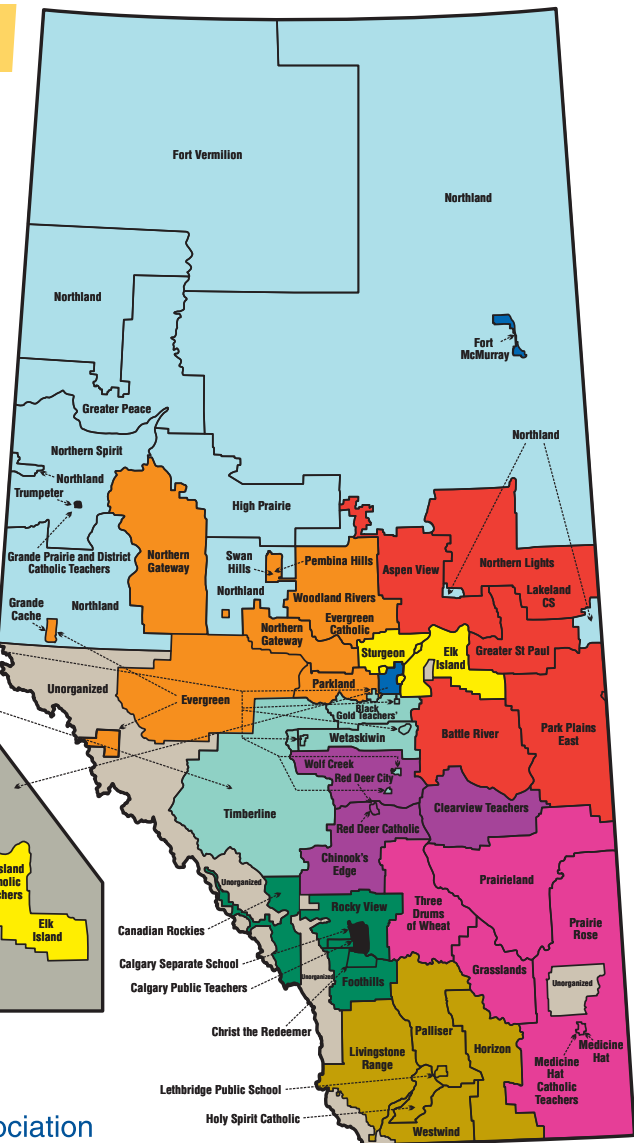
JACKY CHAN
The King's University ESA, Student Local No. 13

NOAH PRICE
St. Mary's University, Student Local No. 14

SPECIAL LOCALS

RAY HOGER
Alberta Retired Teachers' Association
Special Local No. 1

Learn more about the ATA's governance structure at <https://abteach.cc/about-ata>.



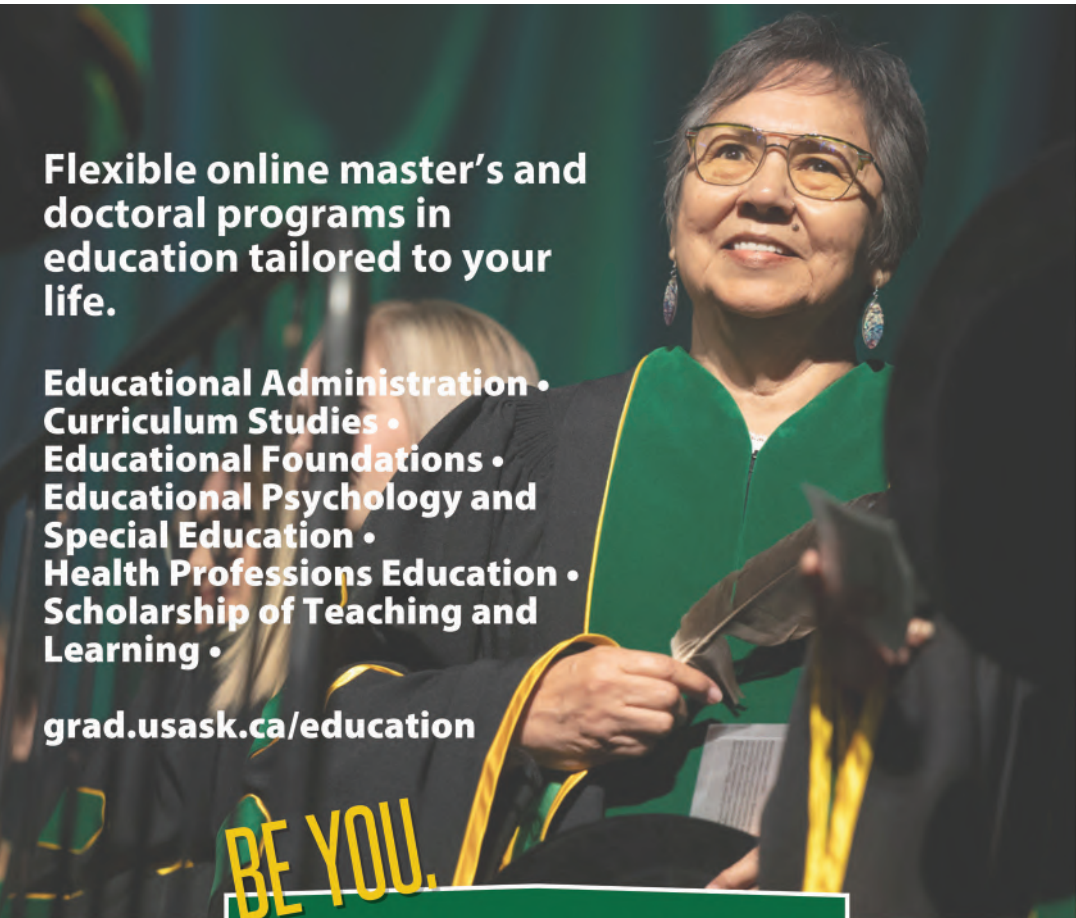
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The Alberta Teachers’ Association

Alberta

Werklund Centre



Teachers! Unlock your students’ passion for learning through National Geographic Live.







LIVE SPEAKER SERIES

- A PIRATE’S LIFE**
with Lisa Briggs

November 2, 2026 | 10:15am

Learn how pirates lived, sailed, and shaped history around the world.
- DIVING THE GREAT BARRIER REEF**
with Erika Woolsey

January 25 & 26, 2027 | 10:15am

Dive beneath the waves to learn how coral reefs support ocean life.
- EARTH AFTER DARK**
with Babak Tafreshi

March 15, 2027 | 10:15am

Journey through the night to explore stars, wildlife, and the cosmos.
- SAVING NATURE’S SYMPHONY**
with Ben Mirin

April 12, 2027 | 10:15am

Discover how animal sounds help scientists understand our planet.

Each presentation includes a post-show Q&A.
- Jack Singer Concert Hall, Werklund Centre



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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.

ATA honours top bachelor of education graduates



ATA News Staff

For more than seven decades, Alberta Teachers’ Association gold medals in education have been presented to graduating bachelor of education students who have demonstrated the highest overall general proficiency in their coursework and field experience programs. At convocation ceremonies held last spring, education graduates at 12 postsecondary institutions received the medals. ■

Recipients of the 2026 ATA Gold Medals in Education

Ambrose University ATA Gold Medal in Education	Kelsey Brown
Concordia University of Edmonton ATA Gold Medal in Education	Sarah Wahl
Mount Royal University ATA Gold Medal in Education	Maggie Jugovic
Medicine Hat College ATA Gold Medal in Education	Ashlyn Hawley
Red Deer Polytechnic ATA Gold Medal in Education	Laura Abraham
St. Mary’s University ATA Gold Medal in Education	Kerry McCutcheon
The King’s University ATA Gold Medal in Education	Lauryn Draker
University of Calgary Clarence Sansom Gold Medal	Stacey Kokot
University of Alberta Milton Ezra LaZerte Gold Medal	Andrea Young
Campus Saint-Jean Marie-Louise Brugeyroux Gold Medal	Annika Marie Starcheski
Northwestern Polytechnic ATA Gold Medal in Education	Ashley Sakundiak
University of Lethbridge William Aberhart Gold Medal	Ashwak Ahmad

No medal was presented at Keyano in 2026, as it graduates BEd students every two years.



Sudeep Dua

SUPPLIED

Association mourns passing of esteemed colleague

Cory Hare
ATA News Staff

Staff of the Alberta Teachers’ Association are mourning the loss of colleague Sudeep Dua, 47, who succumbed to a brief illness on September 28.

An incredibly hard worker, Dua was a person who colleagues knew they could always count on, and who never seemed to have an unkind word to say about anyone, said Sean Brown, coordinator of Teacher Employment Membership Support (TEMS).

“Sudeep was one of those rare people who made everyone around her feel valued and appreciated. She brought extraordinary kindness, warmth and dedication to the TEMS team,” Brown said.

Dua joined the Association’s professional staff in 2017 as an administrative officer in the former Member Services program area. She served in several roles during her Association career, most recently as

manager of membership support in the TEMS program area.

“She cared deeply about her colleagues, treasured her friendships and believed wholeheartedly in the mission of the Alberta Teachers’ Association,” Brown said. “But more than anything, Sudeep was simply a wonderful person. We were fortunate to work alongside her, and even more fortunate to call her our friend.”

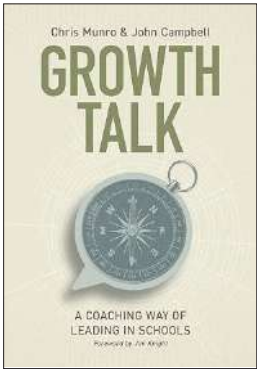
Born in India and raised in Edmonton since age nine, Dua loved beach vacations, 1990s Bollywood movies and shopping, particularly for earrings and shoes. She also believed strongly in helping others. She gave blood regularly and dreamed of one day building an animal shelter in India to care for animals in need.

“She believed in following the rules, in a just society and in the importance of a strong social safety net for those who were struggling or less fortunate,” her obituary states.

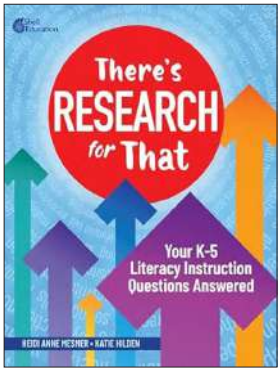
Dua was extremely dedicated to her family, including her husband and two children. ■

CHECK ME OUT!

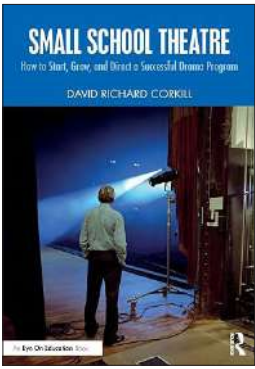
Some of the ATA Library’s newest reads:



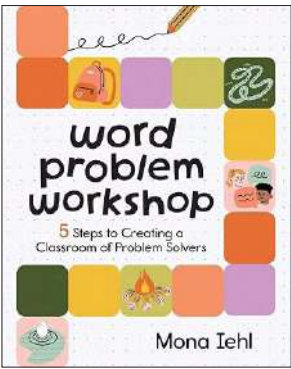
Growth Talk: A Coaching Way of Leading in Schools by Chris Munro and John Campbell



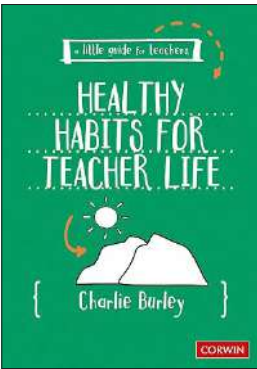
There’s Research for That: Your K–5 Literacy Instruction Questions Answered by Heidi Anne Mesmer and Katie Hilden-Clouse



Small School Theatre: How to Start, Grow, and Direct a Successful Drama Program by David Richard Corkill



Word Problem Workshop: 5 Steps to Creating a Classroom of Problem Solvers by Mona Iehl



Little Guide for Teachers: Healthy Habits for Teacher Life by Charlie Burley

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





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INFORMATION SESSIONS | JANUARY 2027

We would love to meet you there. Pre-registration is required.

20 JAN

CALGARY

23 JAN

VANCOUVER

28 JAN

EDMONTON



Scan to register

Register by December 10, 2026 to confirm your attendance.

Further details will be shared with registered guests by email.

To apply for any of these roles, please visit www.cisabudhabi.com/careers for more information or email recruitment@cisabudhabi.com.



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What teachers should know about Covid-19 vaccinations

ATA News Staff

Alberta teachers are eligible for a provincially funded COVID-19 vaccine through Primary Care Alberta. The Government of Alberta has outlined the processes for booking a vaccination appointment at a public health centre and for receiving the vaccine at a pharmacy. The Alberta Teachers' Association is sharing this information so members know how to access the vaccine, should they wish to receive it, and what steps to take if they are billed in error.

Check out the full Worth Knowing on accessing the free voluntary Covid-19 vaccination for teachers at <https://abteach.cc/wk-covid>.

If you have questions about your personal employment situation or need support navigating these steps, please contact Teacher Employment Membership Support at 1-800-232-7208.



Dominica Foundation Teaching Opportunity

International Teaching with the IT for Dominica Foundation

The IT for Dominica Foundation is now accepting applications from talented Alberta educators interested in teaching in the Commonwealth of Dominica in July 2027. For over 25 years, the IT for Dominica Summer Institute has empowered Dominican teachers by offering innovative information technology (IT) in education courses to support their professional growth.

As an ATA member, this is your chance to share your deep expertise in integrating IT into K-12 classrooms, while immersing yourself in a rich cultural exchange. If you're a flexible, dedicated team player with a passion for making a global impact, this opportunity is for you!

More information may be found at: <http://www.ITforDominica.com>

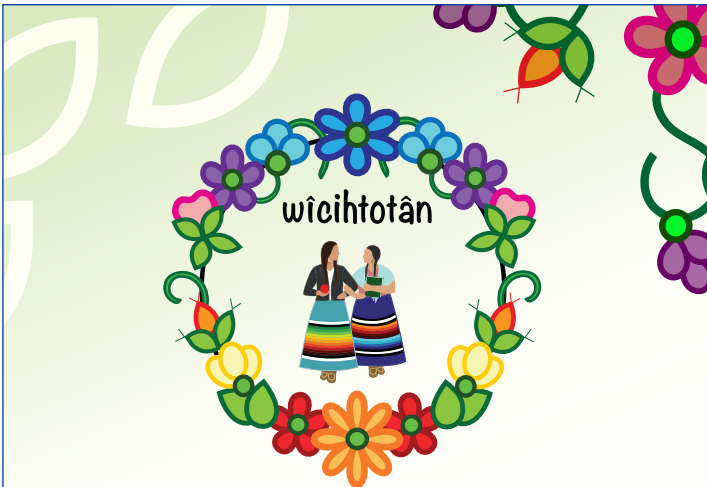
We look forward to your application by November 15, 2026:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ITfDApply2027>



An ATA International Cooperation Program

COOR-61 d-1 2026-09



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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

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

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Want to run for Provincial Executive Council?



ATA 2027
PEC Election

Nominate
a candidate

Nominations are now open!

Nomination Deadline is January 13, 2027.

Visit teachers.ab.ca for more information.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

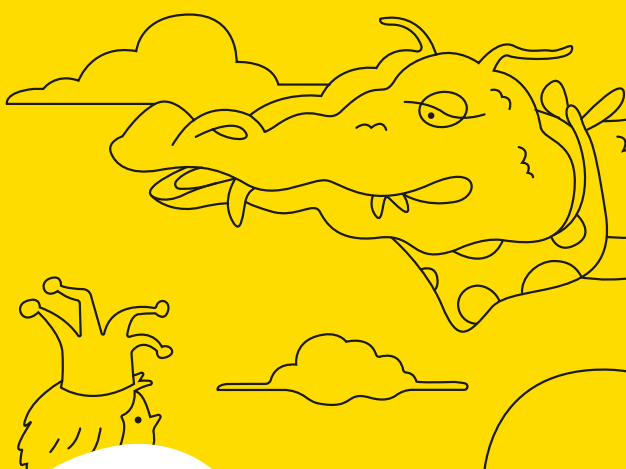


TEMS-4-2-2 2026-10

popquiz!

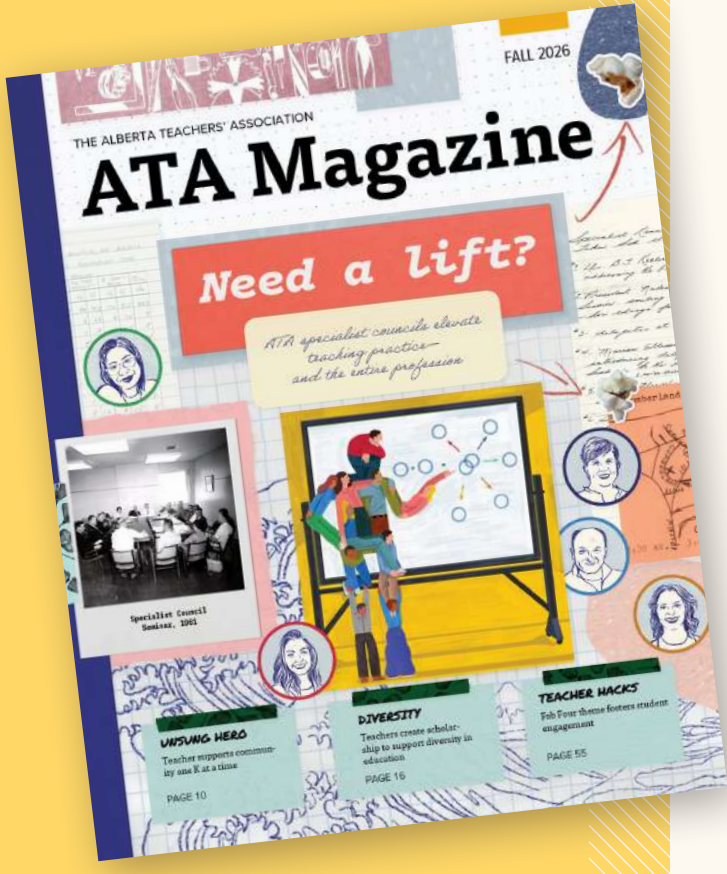
Mystery Message

Remove three letters from each word group to reveal the mystery children's book.



TYRHEE KMPAWPER
LBOQAG EPWRINCMESS

Fall issue arriving in schools in October.





The Alberta Teachers' Association

IN THIS ISSUE:

Feature
Need a lift?

ATA specialist councils elevate teaching practice—and the entire profession.

Unsung Hero
Daylan Wizniuk: Running for a cause

Wellness
Teacher bladder: When nature calls but teachers can't answer

Research Insights
Teachers lead the call for human boundaries around anthropomorphic AI

In Profile
Edmonton teacher charts her own path as a trombone player and band leader

Teacher Hacks
Beatles-themed lessons make learning fun and memorable

Most Memorable Lesson
Sometimes a major moment is actually minor

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



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Media Literacy Week

October 26-30

Teachers can access resources, including plug-and-play video lessons, in the Media Literacy Week Teachers' Hub at mediasmarts.ca/mlw-teachers-hub.



How can I address algorithms and artificial intelligence in the classroom? How can students trust what they see online? Is the house hippo real (if you know, you know)?

The last week of October is the 21st annual Media Literacy Week, an opportunity for teachers, parents and communities to support students' understanding of and ability to navigate digital spaces. Hosted nationwide by MediaSmarts, the week promotes digital literacy and encourages everyone to build the skills required to think critically about what we see online.



On the horizon

Find materials, lesson plans and more related to upcoming holidays and observances in the ATA library guides at <https://abteach.cc/libguides>.

- OCT: Women's History Month
- NOV. 8: Indigenous Veterans' Day
- NOV. 8: Diwali
- NOV. 11: Remembrance Day
- DEC. 4-12: Hanukkah
- DEC. 25: Christmas

