

Feature: Teaching in an unconventional setting can be a highly rewarding adventure.

ATA Magazine

Winter issue of the ATA Magazine now available in schools.

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ATA NEWS



Meet your **BARGAINING TEAM**
See page 7.

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News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



CORY HARE

Kirsten Patmore of Lamont High School keeps an eye on the instructor as well as her reflection during a workshop on theatrical makeup at North Central Teachers' Convention on Feb. 9. See [page 12](#) for more convention coverage.



'Don't say gay'

Our law will be worse than Florida's.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on [page 2](#).



Viewpoints

Upcoming Islamic events an opportunity to celebrate diversity in schools.

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Off Script

Government should focus on real problems.

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Ceramic queen

Alberta teacher shines on CBC's *The Great Canadian Pottery Throw Down*.

[See story on page 9.](#)

Alberta's "Don't Say Gay" law will be worse than Florida's



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

"Already, our children have told us that they are afraid that they will not be able to talk about their family at school."

Dan and Brent VanTice, parents of two first-graders in Florida, were one of several complainants that sued the state of Florida over its 2022 *Parental Rights in Education* law, which explicitly banned any classroom instruction on topics of sexual orientation and gender identity in K-3 classrooms.

"We are heartbroken that our children are already feeling isolated and stigmatized by this law."

The law, dubbed the "Don't Say Gay" law has been widely panned and even sparked a fierce feud between Florida governor Ron DeSantis and central

Florida's largest employer, Disney. It was expanded in subsequent legislation to cover all grade levels.

In Alberta, a suite of policy announcements made by Premier Danielle Smith appears to be more focused on transgender youth, but make no mistake, the policies have wide-reaching impacts affecting all students, including those who identify as gay or lesbian and those who have parents and other family members that identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

The specific changes will not be known until the various pieces of legislation and regulation are introduced this fall, but already the announcement is having an effect. Like its Florida cousin, this proposed policy is not so much about the specific details. Rather, it is intended to create a chilling effect across public education that would stifle all references to sexual orientation and gender identity in schools.

In fact, we are hearing of teachers here who are already adjusting their practice as a result of this

announcement, either because they mistakenly believe the policy has been enacted or because they are feeling intimidated by the conversation surrounding the announcement from even raising topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

The proposed policy creates effectively insurmountable barriers to discussing issues related to 2SLGBTQ+ people and identities. Parental notification and opt-in approvals for any instances of formal instruction on the topics and a requirement for provincial pre-approval of all third-party resources sound like bureaucratic nightmares for already overwhelmed teachers. This, combined with the harsh searchlight placed on the issue by hostile extremists, who now feel supported by government policy, means that most teachers will simply choose to avoid the problem altogether.

So, while this policy does not place a complete ban on instruction, like Florida's did, it might as well have. The effect will be the same.

This, of course, is problematic because teachers and schools are required to create welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments. How on earth can students who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ or who come from families that have two dads or two moms feel welcome and safe if their identities are effectively erased from schools?

And in the conversation about parental rights, what is to be said about my rights as a parent who wants their children to learn about and alongside people who are different from them?

Alberta's law, like Florida's, will effectively erase all queer identities in public school. And it will do it, not through explicit legislation, but through coercion and intimidation. When I ponder the potential impact on the culture of schools and the cause of public education, my worry is that this approach will actually be much worse than a direct attack.

I welcome your comments. Contact me at jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca.

Call us any time you have an issue



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: I've just had the worst day of my teaching career, and I need to contact the Association for help. What can I expect?

Answer: Quite a few readers of this column will have, at some time during their career, been in the position you are now. Although you might be embarrassed or upset, you should never hesitate to call the Association. We are here to support you, keep you safe, help you find a way forward and ensure you are treated fairly.

To do this, we need to hear from you as soon as possible and certainly before you make any statement, undertaking or commitment that might compromise your rights and options. It is important that you call, as we will not provide advice by email. Typically, if you phone about a matter concerning your employment as a teacher, you will be forwarded to Teacher Employment Services (TES).

A brief initial conversation will confirm your membership status and contact information, then you will be referred to a duty officer on call that day. The duty officer is a member of executive staff who has knowledge and experience spanning a wide range of employment matters including benefits and leaves. Often, the duty officer will provide immediate assistance that will help you resolve your difficulties yourself. If the situation is more

complex, the duty officer or one of their colleagues will follow up. The staff in Teacher Employment Services work as a team to provide you with expert advice and see you through whatever challenges you may be facing.

What happens next is very situational. You may receive advice that will help you manage your own response. In other circumstances, you may receive representation as you deal with your employer. Some situations may require an Association representative to appear with you at a hearing, launch a grievance or support you in an appeal of the employers' suspension or termination

“ Teaching today is incredibly complex, teachers are held to extremely high standards and the job is unrelentingly visible — to the point that problems are practically inevitable. ”

of your designation or employment before the Board of Reference. We can help you access benefits, entitlements and leaves. Where necessary, we will arrange for legal representation at no cost to you.

Teacher Employment Services will also provide advice to school leaders and even system administrators. We do this because school leaders are our members and it is in everyone's best interest to see that legislation, policies and processes relating to teachers' professional practice and employment are applied fairly, consistently and

correctly. If, in your role as a leader or administrator, you are facing a situation involving a teacher you supervise and are not certain how to proceed, feel free to contact us for advice. Your call may well assure you that you are proceeding properly and help you avoid unnecessary grief down the line.

I want to conclude by observing that just because you are seeking Association assistance does not mean you are an incompetent teacher or a bad person. Teaching today is incredibly complex, teachers are held to extremely high standards and the job is unrelentingly visible — to the point that problems are

practically inevitable. Let me use some illustrative math to make the point:

Ignoring supervision and extracurricular activities, a junior high school teacher might teach six classes of students a day for, say, 190 days in a school year. Those classes might have 30 students each. Let's say the teacher has two interactions with each student per class. Multiplying all that, my theoretical teacher will have 68,400 student interactions in the course of a year. Throwing in 10 interactions a day with staff, parents and community members brings the

total to around 70,300 interactions. And these interactions typically involve instantaneous decisions in dynamic, distracted, highly visible circumstances involving a variety of individuals and groups.

Now let's assume that my teacher friend gets everything completely right 99.9 percent of the time — that means that in the course of the year, they will get something wrong 70 times or at least once per week. With the high degree of scrutiny teachers are subject to in these litigious times, any one of those lapses might result in a complaint from a student, parent, colleague or employer and result in a call to the Association.

I can tell you that I have never been 99.9 percent right at any time during my career, so I appreciate your vulnerability and have nothing but sympathy for all of you out there. The Association's Teacher Employment Services should be considered then to be a form of insurance. You may not need it very frequently, if at all. But when you do, you should take comfort in knowing that your Association is here for you. We just need you to call. ■

CALL US

Edmonton/Northern Alberta:
780-447-9400

Toll free: 1-800-232-7208

Calgary/Southern Alberta:
1-800-332-1280

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



Islamic events an opportunity to celebrate diversity



VIEWPOINTS

Youssra Badr
Special to the ATA News

As the Western holiday season draws to a close for many, it marks the beginning of a significant period for others, particularly Muslim students. In the upcoming months, various important celebrations and observances are on the horizon. Acknowledging the profound impact of inclusivity in recognizing and supporting religious observances for all students, this piece aims to provide insightful information about these upcoming celebrations.

Islam is a monotheistic religion. Followers abide by the teachings of the Quran and knowledge from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). There are five pillars: fasting, praying five times a day, paying charity, pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), and the belief in one God and his Messenger. Many Muslim women choose to wear a head covering known as hijab; this modest attire symbolizes empowerment for women and adherence to religious values.

Ramadan and the Eids

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and holds significant importance for Muslims worldwide. It is a month of fasting, prayer, reflection and community. Muslims (who are able) fast from dawn to sunset, abstaining from food, drink and sinful behaviour. Beyond the physical challenge, fasting is a spiritual journey intended to cultivate self-discipline, gratitude, empathy and a deeper religious connection.

During Ramadan, Muslims engage in heightened spiritual practices, including additional prayers (Taraweeh), increased recitation of the Quran, supplication and seeking forgiveness. This month-long commitment demonstrates a profound dedication to faith and is not limited to this specific period, as Muslims may fast throughout the year on auspicious or meritorious days.

Muslims celebrate two

Eids: Eid al-Fitr (Festival of Breaking the Fast) marks the end of Ramadan, while Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) commemorates the story of the Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail. Eid al-Adha involves a symbolic sacrifice of a lamb, with a portion of the meat donated to those in need. These joyous celebrations bring together family and friends, with Muslims engaging in special prayers, visiting family, giving charity and enjoying festive meals.

Here are some practical tips for creating an inclusive environment for Muslim students and raising awareness of these important events.

Raise awareness and provide education

Promote awareness and understanding within the school community. Consider reading books about these special days, organizing information sessions, or inviting guest speakers to share about these traditions and their significance. This can help dispel misconceptions and foster a more inclusive atmosphere.

Accommodations

Recognize that fasting during Ramadan can be physically demanding. Observers wake up before sunrise and may be praying a special prayer that extends into the night (Taraweeh). Be flexible and considerate by providing options for students who may need to take a break or find a quiet space for reflection during lunchtime. Encourage

teachers to be understanding and supportive, allowing students to manage their energy levels effectively.

Scheduling

Be mindful of timing exams, assignments and physically demanding activities during Ramadan. If possible, schedule these activities in the morning as students may experience a decline in energy levels and concentration in the afternoon. Alternative timings or formats can also be considered.

Create inclusive celebrations

Acknowledge the importance of these dates by incorporating celebratory events within the school community. This could involve organizing events, decorations, or presentations that showcase the diversity of religious observances and foster a sense of unity. Honoring diversity in education involves ensuring that students see themselves represented while also offering opportunities for others to learn about varied backgrounds and perspectives.

Communication

Encourage open dialogue between educators, students and parents. Create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable discussing their religious practices or accommodations needed. This helps build understanding and empathy within the school community.

Greetings

In observance of Ramadan, it is customary to extend warm wishes by saying Ramadan

Mubarak, Ramadan Kareem or Happy Ramadan. Similarly, when celebrating Eid, it is customary to offer greetings such as Eid Mubarak, Eid Saeed or Happy Eid.

Respect religious observances

Be respectful of students who attend special prayers or celebrations during school hours. Consider allowing excused absences for religious observances and provide a supportive atmosphere that acknowledges and respects diverse religious practices.

Inclusive materials

Ensure that educational materials, including textbooks and resources, reflect a diverse range of cultures and religions. This promotes a more inclusive learning environment and helps all students feel represented and valued.

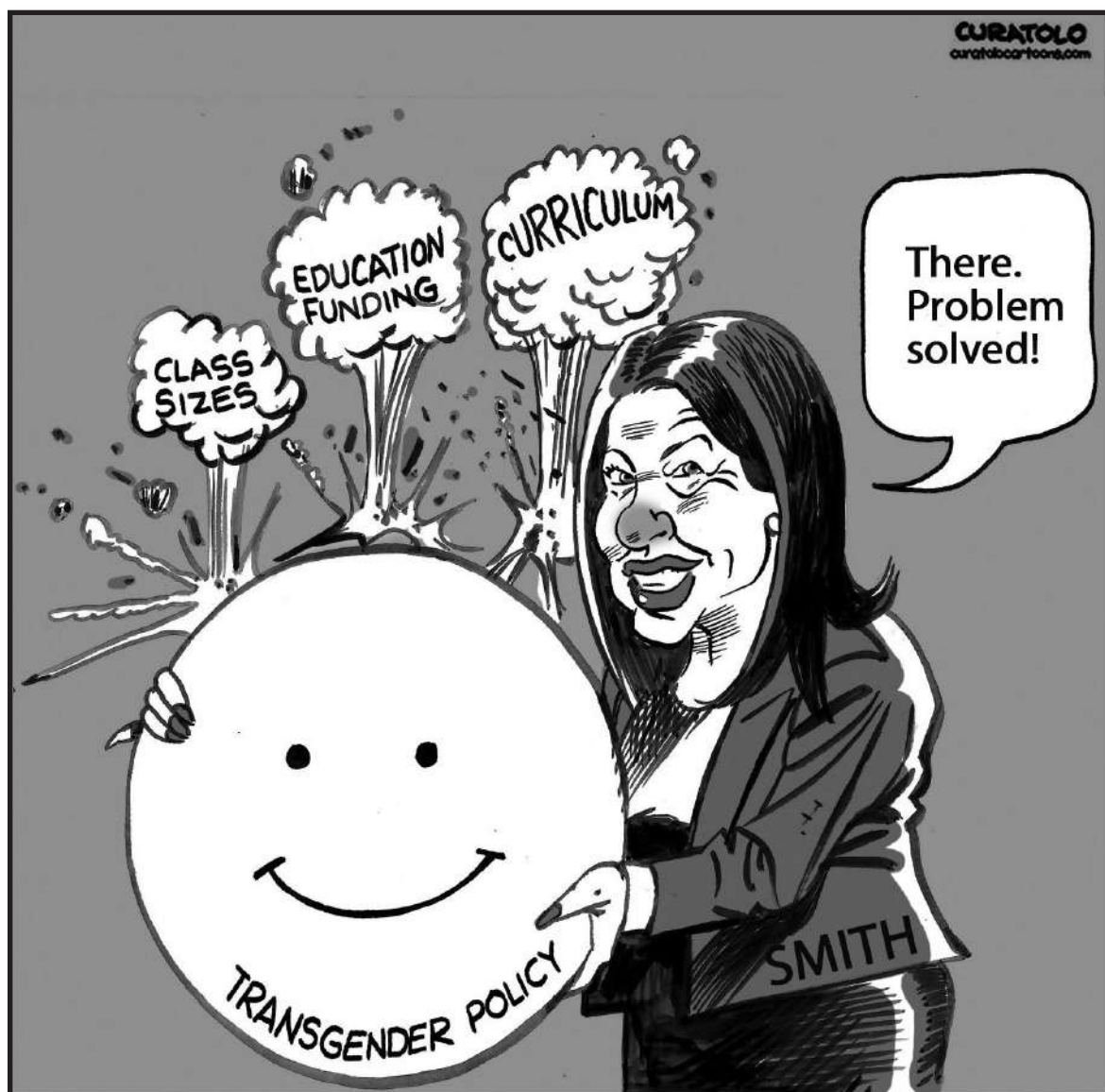
Beyond being an ethical responsibility, supporting students in this way provides an opportunity to foster a more inclusive and understanding educational community. By raising awareness, educating and implementing practical accommodations, teachers and school leaders contribute to a positive and supportive environment that respects diversity and ensures that students of all backgrounds feel acknowledged, accepted and valued.

A former member of the ATA's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee, Youssra Badr currently serves on the Teacher Education and Certification Committee.

2024 DATES

Ramadan	March 10
Eid al-Fitr	April 9 or 10
Eid al-Adha	June 17

These dates shift yearly based on the Islamic calendar.



YOUR VIEWS

ON FACEBOOK

On Palliser teachers authorizing a strike vote

Natalie Blackburn Oliphant
Solidarity 🇺🇸

Angela Grinde Handbury
👍👍

Nicole Gatner
Proud of these teachers for standing up for themselves and each other.

Emily Amanda
👍👍 good for them 👍👍

On CTF announcing a new resource: *Speak Truth to Power: Youth Defenders for Human Rights*

Krista Dawn

So glad kids still have good teachers to turn to like this. Our kids deserve to be happy and have basic health care rights.

FOR THE RECORD

“ These policies are a distraction from other issues that are happening right now. ”

– ATA president Jason Schilling commenting on the Alberta Transgender Policy announced by Premier Danielle Smith. See *Off Script* on [page 5](#).

Class size data indicate a system under strain

Edmonton Public teachers feeling the impact of large, complex classes

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Staff

The latest class size data from Edmonton Public Schools confirms what many already knew — that the student population within the division is large and complex.

On Jan. 23, the division's board of trustees received a report that captured class sizes, as well as students with exceptionalities and with English as an additional language. The report breaks down the average class size across grades and subject categories, and reveals both some stability and some increases in class size and complexity.

"This data reflects a snapshot in time," superintendent Darryl Robertson told the board, noting that the report captured how many students were enrolled as of Sept. 30. He advised that since the time of reporting, some classes had been split,

adjusted or otherwise resourced, referencing the high numbers for Div IV (grades 10–12) in particular.

Div IV has seen a notable increase over the past three years. In 2023/24, about half of Div IV classes had more than 30 students, with the largest class having 56 students. The division attributes the larger classes partly to space pressures.

How many is too many?

Grades	ACOL recommendation for average class size	Edmonton Public Schools	
		Average number of students, 2023/24	Biggest class, 2023/24
K–3	17	22.5	37
Grades 4–6	23	23.4	42
Grades 7–9	25	26.3	46
High school	27	28.3	56

Robertson cited Lillian Osborne High School as an example of a school in the division that is over 100 per cent capacity, which restricts their ability to split classes when course enrollment is high. He added that school officials do their best to accommodate the scheduling needs of students to ensure students can graduate with the courses they need.

"For some of our high schools, they don't have another classroom," Robertson told the board, "So they're trying to accommodate ... a kid needs Biology 30, they need Biology 30 ... so they're having to nudge up those class sizes to accommodate the needs of kids to a reasonable level."

Though the trend upward primarily affects Div IV, the grades that have been relatively stable over the past three years remain at or beyond the high end of Alberta's Commission on Learning (ACOL) recommendations.

SYSTEM UNDER STRAIN
continued on page 5



Many teachers continue to report that class size and complexity are major issues.

ISTOCK

Class size and complexity continue to vex teachers

Karen Gill
ATA News Staff

Growing class sizes, diverse student needs, chronic underfunding and little to no support. Teachers are feeling the strain, it is becoming unsustainable and students are paying the price.

These are the takeaway messages from the ATA's latest pulse survey of members.

"The survey tells the tale of what our members are facing in our classrooms — increasing class size and classroom complexities compounded with a decrease in supports and resources for students," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

Conducted in December, the survey showed that 62 per cent of teachers have seen their class size increase this year, and four in 10 teachers have 30 or more students in their classroom. The largest class size reported was more than 50 students.

"With the large number of students, often the physical space of the classroom does not allow me to walk to students," reported one survey respondent.

The survey also showed teachers are not getting the

support they need for students with special needs. Half of teachers surveyed felt their requests for supports such as speech, occupational and physical therapy will go unanswered this school year.

"Our schools have become agents of social services. Teachers are carrying the entire load. We are parents, counsellors, coaches and everything else," wrote one respondent.

Other overarching themes found in the survey include a lack of prep time, post-pandemic challenges, moral distress, burnout, adapting to a new curriculum with little guidance, and a lack of respect from government bodies and school administrators.

"Our class sizes keep getting larger. We are getting more students with significant needs with little or no support," wrote a survey respondent. "I love what I do, but it is stressful accommodating these needs and learning a new curriculum. I rarely get a break in a day because of supervision and running programs for students. I'm worried I am going to burn out."

Schilling said the government needs to respond to these concerns by properly funding for inclusion and population growth, as well as working with the Association on curriculum implementation.

"School boards also need to look at the supports they are providing for the students and staff, specifically addressing the needs of our students with diverse needs," he added.

Recommended solutions

The survey report provides five professional recommendations for long-term solutions.

1. Reduce class sizes.
2. Enhance supports and resources.
3. Strengthen teacher support systems.
4. Facilitate effective curriculum implementation.
5. Improve communications and respect.

The implementation of the above recommendations will take collaboration from government, school leaders and the ATA, Schilling said.

"It will be the work of Provincial Executive Council and locals to advocate on all levels of senior leadership to make changes, and I have already had several conversations with the government on these issues and continue to push for more funding to support our students." ■

SYSTEM UNDER STRAIN

continued from page 4

Kids in a classroom

Two teachers in the division, Karlee Hren and Jonathan Hemphill, share that their experiences are not fully captured by the numbers. Both have more than the averages cited in the report, both in terms of class size and exceptionalities or students learning a second language.

Grade 5 teacher Hren has 28 students in her class, while Grade 4 teacher Hemphill has 29. This is five and six more students, respectively, than the recommended average of 23 for a Div II class.

"I haven't had 23 students for years," Hren says, "and I know many colleagues experiencing the same."

It is not only the number of students that creates challenges in attending to each student's needs, but also the complex needs of students.

"Composition is so important," Hemphill says, "because students with higher needs, students who require supports, will require more time and attention, creating less time for other students."

Like Hemphill, Hren works with students with varying needs and abilities. She often finds herself feeling like a doctor trying to attend to 28 patients with pressing individual needs all at once, triaging as best she can.

"I'm just running," she says. "Teachers, the board, schools — they are doing their best, but the students deserve better."

Data is key

Upon receiving the report on class size, board trustee Marcia Hole commended division staff for their work.

"I'm so glad that the division continues to report this data as a way of being accountable and transparent on a topic that can be hot for families and for students and for staff," said Hole.

Echoing this sentiment, both Hren and Hemphill acknowledge the importance of gathering data that reflect the complexities in the classroom and that can move the conversation forward.

"I applaud the division for continuing to collect data," Hemphill says, "We need detailed data to inform the decisions that need to be made."

The Government of Alberta stopped collecting class size data nearly five years ago, in 2019, when data was showing years of unprecedented growth in Alberta class sizes.

ATA president Jason Schilling sees value in class size and complexity data being collected across the province to support conversations around education funding.

"The government needs to take seriously the needs of teachers, students and parents," Schilling said. "One way the government can better address the reality in our schools across Alberta is to once again start collecting class size data from all school authorities in Alberta." ■

99% support for Red Deer Catholic strike vote

ATA News Staff

Red Deer Catholic teachers have voted overwhelmingly in favour of authorizing a strike vote.

At a Feb. 15 meeting attended by about three-quarters of members, more than 99 per cent of attendees voted in favour of authorizing the Alberta Teachers' Association to hold a strike vote. The result sends a strong and clear message to school board bargainers to return to negotiations and to move off of their contract-stripping proposal, said local president Sara Lambert.

"Teachers are clearly upset with their employer right now," Lambert said. "They are incensed that the board's only proposal in bargaining so far would strip away longstanding provisions from the collective agreement and they are demanding to be treated with respect."

Only five of 61 school boards in the province have not settled for the current term of bargaining, which extends back to September of 2020. Lambert says teachers are looking for improvements on issues related to substitute teachers and school administrators. The solutions being proposed are low cost and consistent with provisions that exist in most teacher agreements elsewhere.

"The board wants to strip out professional development provisions and remove up to 20 members from the agreement. They have made negotiations adversarial and antagonizing when a deal could easily be reached," Lambert said. "This is about fairness and respect, and right now it looks like the board has neither to offer to its teachers."

Teacher negotiators have told the board it needs to return to bargaining with an intent to listen and to move toward a settlement or they will ask the mediator to initiate the two-week cooling off period. After those two weeks lapse, the ATA would be in a position to hold a vote of members to go on strike.

The Red Deer Catholic School Division employs approximately 700 contracted and substitute teachers in Catholic schools in Red Deer, Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail and Olds.

Collective bargaining for teachers in Alberta is a two-phase process where matters of significant cost and broad impact are negotiated at a central table, followed by local negotiations between individual school divisions and ATA bargaining units on other, more locally specific, matters. ■



Government should focus on real problems

When I was a kid and I had a cut or scrape, my dad used to put this red medicine on the wound to make it heal faster. I don't know what it was called, nor do I think they even make it anymore — I mean it was the 70s after all. My grandmother had a similar bottle which I believe she'd had since the early 50s. Regardless, the ointment often hurt more than the actual cut or scrape. I remember pleading with my dad not to use it. In order to get me to cooperate, he would often use various distractions to draw my attention away from the impending earth-shattering sting.

This last week and a half reminds me of those moments. The Premier announced that the government intends to introduce legislation around gender identity that will infringe on the rights of our most vulnerable students and their families. The outrage has been swift, widespread and entirely warranted. Organization after organization, including the Alberta Teachers' Association, has come out against this policy direction with a

common criticism about the harm it will do and the lack of consultation.

One resounding criticism and question I have heard repeatedly is, what exactly is the problem the government is trying to solve? I have yet to hear a substantial response from the Premier, nor have I heard an exhaustive list of organizations she consulted while developing the policy.

Another thing I hear repeatedly is how these policies are a distraction from other issues that are happening right now. The ATA's latest pulse survey tells the tale of what our members are facing in our classrooms — increasing class size and classroom complexities compounded with a decrease in supports and resources for students. The government is failing to address those concerns and the calls for adequate funding for inclusion and growth.

Though it is extremely vital that we stand up for the rights of our most vulnerable students, we cannot let the government distract us once again from the issues that are also plaguing our classrooms across the province. ■

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

Palliser teachers authorize strike vote

ATA News Staff

In a firm stance against what they perceive as an ultimatum from school board bargainers, Palliser teachers have voted decisively to pursue a strike vote.

At a Feb. 12 meeting attended by more than three-quarters of its members, teachers voted 92 per cent in favour of authorizing the Alberta Teachers' Association to seek a government-supervised strike vote. This move followed the rejection of the school board's latest offer in local bargaining by the same voting margin.

"Palliser negotiators said there would be no bargaining table to come back to if teachers rejected their offer. It was a threat that our teachers did not take kindly to, and they strongly voted that offer down. At the end of the day, it offered no noticeable improvements over the status quo," said Palliser local president Natalie Townshend.

Critical issues for Palliser members include substitute teacher recruitment

and retention challenges and fair compensation for teachers in colony schools. Despite the school board's assertions of no substitute teacher availability issues, Townshend insists otherwise.

"We are expecting over 400 teacher days this year where teaching positions will go unfilled. When this happens, classes are combined and teachers are pulled away from doing work to prepare for lessons. Sub shortages have a real, significant impact on the quality of education students receive."

Furthermore, Townshend highlighted that teacher bargainers have proposed solutions to these issues that are both low cost and consistent with settlements achieved in other school divisions across the southern region of the province.

She stressed the urgency for school board bargainers to return to the negotiating table, warning that if no progress is made, the ATA will be compelled to seek alternative avenues.

"If the board refuses to negotiate, we have no other options left." ■



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 Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

2024 gotcha! PHOTO CONTEST



The ATA News invites you to get your camera out and start shooting those award-winning photographs.

1st place: \$200 2nd place: \$100 3rd place: \$50

GOTCHA! Contest rules

- 1 Photos taken by active and associate ATA members of education- or school-related activities are eligible. (Hint: photos depicting action are best.)
- 2 Entries must be submitted by the member who took the photos.
- 3 Photos taken between Sept. 1, 2023 and May 15, 2024, are eligible.
- 4 Please email photos to cory.hare@ata.ab.ca. Entries must be received by 5 p.m. on May 15, 2024.
- 5 Each entry must be accompanied by a description of the activity; the names (if possible) of the people in the photo; the date when the photo was taken; and the photographer's name, school and contact information.
- 6 Cash prizes will be awarded to entrants whose photos place in the top three, as follows: first place, \$200; second place, \$100; and third place, \$50.
- 7 Each winner will also receive a certificate of merit, as will those receiving honourable mention.
- 8 Up to 20 additional entries may be selected for an award of honourable mention.
- 9 Each entrant may submit up to five photos but no entrant can win more than one top-three prize.
- 10 A panel of individuals with photography, publishing and teaching experience will judge the entries. The decision of the judges is final.
- 11 Winning photographs will be published in the ATA News.
- 12 Photos submitted for the contest may be published in the ATA News, the ATA Magazine or other Association publications.
- 13 Please read carefully. Failure to comply with any of these rules may result in disqualification.

Get snapping and good luck!

COMM-65-1 2024-02



Want to Serve on a CTF/FCE Advisory Committee?

Each year, the Association is eligible to submit nominations for the CTF/FCE advisory committees. Committees seeking nominations for 2024/25 are the following:

Apply today!

Application deadline
April 10, 2024

- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on French as a First Language
- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on Diversity and Human Rights
- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education
- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on the Status of Women
- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on the Teaching Profession

All active and associate members of the Alberta Teachers' Association are eligible for the positions. Members must hold the highest level of membership available to them.



All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that Association committees undertake. If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

Find more details and application information on the ATA website

COMM-162-11 2024-01

CALLING ALL MEMBERS

Apply to serve on an ATA committee!

The committees

To assist it in the business of the Association, Provincial Executive Council maintains committees that address topics of concern to teachers and carry out various aspects of the Association's affairs. Each year, a number of practising teachers are selected to serve on Association committees as well as to represent the Association on boards and committees of other organizations and provincial bodies.

The commitment

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

The term for each of these positions begins July 1, 2024. Standing committee positions are generally three years in length. Travel and incidental costs, as well as release time, are covered to enable committee members to attend meetings.

Check out the list of opportunities and application information on the ATA website.

The deadline for applications is April 10.

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



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

If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

COMM-209 2024-01

CENTRAL TABLE BARGAINING COMMITTEE (CTBC)

Meet your BARGAINING TEAM



Peter MacKay

CTBC chair

Acts as joint spokesperson for the committee

Provides overall committee leadership

Provides updates to Provincial Executive Council

Bargaining experience and training

- Third round (6 years) on CTBC, second round (4 years) as chair
- 13 years local bargaining experience
- Roles included chair of the Economic Policy Committee and the Negotiating Sub Committee
- ATA Teacher Welfare Education Certificate Program, level 1 and 2

Teaching experience

- 27 years
- Peace River School Division/Grande Prairie Catholic School Division
- Principal
- Classroom support/special education teacher
- Career and academic counselor
- Junior/senior high humanities teacher

ATA experience

- 23 years
- ATA vice-president
- District representative, North West
- Local president, Grande Prairie and District Catholic Teachers Local No. 42
- Strategic Planning Group
- School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee
- Curriculum Committee
- Indigenous Education Committee



Sean Brown

Chief negotiator

Joint spokesperson for the committee

Main expert on bargaining practice and strategy

Expert in labour relations

Bargaining experience and training

- Fourth round (8 years) on CTBC
- 25 years local bargaining experience
- 14 years on Teacher Welfare Committee and Negotiating Sub Committee Chair, 7 years as chair
- Advanced labour relations certificate, Queen's University

Teaching experience

- 22 years
- Greater St. Albert Roman Catholic Schools/Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools
- Vice-principal
- Elementary and junior high, grades 2-9

ATA experience

- 9 years as ATA staff
- ATA associate coordinator, collective bargaining
- Executive staff officer, ATA Teacher Employment Services
- 21 years as ATA volunteer
- District representative, Edmonton District
- Local president – Greater St. Albert Catholic
- Local vice-president – Greater St. Albert Catholic
- Chair of Policy Advisory Committee – Greater St. Albert Catholic
- Teacher Welfare Services Committee
- Economic Consultant



Rick Kremp

CTBC member

Bargaining experience and training

- First round on CTBC
- PEC Negotiating Sub Committee (negotiates with ATA executive staff)

Teaching experience

- 15 years
- Parkland School Division
- Physics, general science teacher

ATA experience

- 7 years
- District representative, Central North
- Local president, Parkland Teachers' Local No. 10
- Diversity, Equity, Human Rights Committee (current chair)
- Curriculum Committee
- Finance Committee
- North Central Teachers Convention Association
- Political Engagement Committee
- Professional Conduct Committee



Heather McCaig

CTBC member

Bargaining experience and training

- Third round on CTBC

Teaching experience

- 28 years
- Prairie Rose School Division
- Various grades and subjects, elementary to high school

ATA and related experience

- 26 years
- District representative, South East
- Local president, Medicine Hat No. 1
- ATA economic consultant
- Communications, Advocacy and Public Education Committee
- Curriculum Committee
- Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee
- Lethbridge Area Field Experiences Committee
- Political Engagement Committee
- Teachers' Pension Plan Board
- University of Lethbridge Faculty of Education Teacher Education Advisory Committee



Allison Scott Davies

CTBC member

Bargaining experience and training

- First round on CTBC
- Labour School, Alberta Federation of Labour

Teaching experience

- 24 years
- Christ the Redeemer School Division & Calgary Separate School District
- Primarily secondary English language arts, ELL and diverse learning

ATA and related experience

- 15 years
- District representative, Calgary City
- Communications, Advocacy and Public Education Committee
- Women in Leadership Committee
- Alberta School Learning Commons Council
- English as a Second Language Council
- Local vice-president, communications officer, political engagement officer
- Women in Leadership Committee
- Teacher Welfare Committee
- Teacher Advisory Committee
- Council of School Reps



Brice Unland

CTBC member

Bargaining experience and training

- First round on CTBC
- 3 years local bargaining experience
- Teacher Welfare negotiation training

Teaching experience

- 18 years
- Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools
- Mostly high school social studies and computer science teacher

ATA experience

- 18 years
- District representative, Central South
- Local president, Red Deer Catholic Local No. 80
- Teacher Welfare Committee (2 years as chair)
- Negotiating Sub Committee
- Professional Conduct Committee
- School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee



Robert Mazzotta

Designee from ATA executive secretary

Bargaining experience and training

- Labour relations certificate, Queens University
- ATA negotiator for agreements with professional and support staff

Teaching experience

- 17 years
- Edmonton School Division
- Staff consultant in human resources
- Assistant principal
- Curriculum coordinator
- Elementary/junior high, English and French immersion teacher

ATA experience

- 16 years on staff
- Associate executive secretary/deputy chief executive officer
- Co-ordinator, Member Services/Teacher Employment Services
- Executive staff officer, Teacher Employment Services (formerly Member Services)

What is CTBC?

Bargaining for Alberta teachers is conducted by the Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC). This seven-person committee is composed of five members selected from Provincial Executive Council and two members of ATA staff.

Who does what?

CTBC members

- Provide the perspective of field members

Designee from ATA executive secretary

- Provides the perspective of the provincial Association

Bargaining Basics

To learn about the teacher bargaining process, view the Bargaining Basics video series.

Visit the ATA's YouTube channel at: [youtube.com/albertateachers](https://www.youtube.com/albertateachers) and look for the Bargaining Basics playlist.

Or scan this QR code to go directly to the Bargaining Basics playlist.





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mjlafrance15@gmail.com

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Pottery talent propels teacher to televised throw down

ATA News Staff

A teacher from Olds is making a name for herself as a competition show star after an appearance on *The Great Canadian Pottery Throw Down*.

Renu Mathew teaches art, ceramics, cosmetology and edible arts at Olds High School and is appearing on the CBC show during an eight-week run that began on Feb. 8. Each episode features two challenges that are critiqued and rated by expert judges. At the end of each episode, one contestant is named potter of the week and another is selected to leave the competition. Only three make it to the finale, with one taking home the championship trophy.

"The best part of the experience for me was 100 per cent the connections," Mathew said. "To be a potter you have to be pretty used to failure and being humble. Going in, [I felt] those are going to be the kind of people I can relate to. I was right."

Televised competition is not new to Mathew. In 2020 she made it all the way to the finale of the Food Network's *Great Chocolate Showdown*. She said her most recent experience was more enjoyable, as the absence of a cash prize made it collaborative rather than competitive.

"I did not feel stressed, it was like a holiday compared to the *Great Chocolate Showdown*," Mathew said. "Being a teacher in that environment was really satisfying and lovely and helped me connect with the other potters."

Because the show is in the midst of its run, Mathew isn't allowed to reveal the results. New episodes are available for viewing every Thursday.



Art and ceramics teacher Renu Mathew is appearing on the current season of CBC's *The Great Canadian Pottery Throw Down*. CBC

Long-time passion

Mathew discovered a love for ceramics under the guidance of an amazing teacher while attending high school in Fort McMurray. She went on to specialize in sculpture while earning a bachelor of fine arts degree. After earning an education degree, she continued pursuing her passion for sculpture, working with clay and inspiring the next generation of artists.

During the pandemic, Mathew discovered the UK version of *The Great Pottery Throwdown*, a show that became a lifeline for her. This newfound inspiration, coupled with her experience on the *Great Chocolate Showdown*, led her to apply for the Canadian edition of the pottery competition.

To celebrate the first episode, which paid tribute to the contestants'

hometowns, Renu hosted a community watch party for Olds.

"We had 150 people attend, students did demos, kids tried it out, people were selling their ceramics," she said.

There are plans to have a watch party every Thursday during the show's run. Mathew's appearance on the show has led to minor celebrity status around town.

"In Olds, I get recognized," Mathew

said. "It's so nice, and it's fun. It's a cute feeling."

The connections Mathew made on the show even prompted an opportunity for her to work on ceramic sculptures at an art centre in Moncton during the summer. She said her experience is a reminder to everyone to embrace their authentic self and follow their passions.

"Take a chance, why not?" she said. "Life is short—that's how I live." ■

Designing Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms from K-12

A workshop with Toby J. Karten

April 12, 2023 | 9 am - 4:30 pm | Fantasyland Hotel, Edmonton | \$210

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TALENT

February 20, 2024 | Volume 58, Number 9

It's convention time



Teacher-oriented wares are a key part of any convention.



Michelle Lamble (L) and Mary Ann Bussiere of Muriel Martin School in St. Albert check out the resources available at the trade show.



Jessie Coulson of Barrhead Composite High School enjoys a hands-on art session.

TIPS FOR FIRST-TIMERS

What's a tip, trick or hack you can share with a teacher attending their first convention?

✓ Remember to network.

Merry Dechamplain

✓ Make sure you have a water bottle, good shoes that you can walk in and don't wear a lot of big heavy stuff. Allow time for the trade fair too.

Sharon Bourdeau

✓ Wear really comfortable shoes.

Chris McLean-Sleger

✓ Keep a list of the PD you attend and add this to it.

Jessaurus Herbivore

✓ I always chose topics I knew little about. Sessions in my own field often had so much introductory material that I learned very little that was new to me.

Gail McBride

✓ Take part in at least one wellness activity.

Natalie Blackburn Oliphant

✓ Volunteer as a session host for a topic that interests you. You can get free food!

Brenna Toblan

✓ Treat yourself to a nice lunch!

Karen Lin Nielsen

✓ Plan your day. Go to sessions that are useful to you now.

Nedra Dreyer

Responses gathered via social media.

PHOTOS: CORY HARE



Peter Banconpernelle of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory in Tofield shows off a red-tailed hawk. The observatory offers school presentations that are tied to the curriculum of any grade.



Retired drama teacher Gail Whiteford demonstrates some of the basics of theatrical makeup during a session called "Makeup on a Mini-Budget."

Convention(al) wisdom

We visited North Central Teachers' Convention in Edmonton and asked: What is your go-to tip for a successful teachers' convention?



I go with 15 minutes both ways. If there's a session I want to go to, I always try to get there 15 minutes early. If I don't feel engaged by a session 15 minutes in, that's when I tend to head out. Usually you still have time to find a different one.

Jeff Crawford, H.W. Pickup Junior High School, Drayton Valley



Always start with a keynote in the morning on Thursday and branch out from there. Find something that sparks your interest and get there early. The more you come to convention, the more specialized you want to do your sessions.

Kyle Hazlehurst, Fultonvale Junior High School, Sherwood Park



I generally look for sessions that are going to mesh with things I want to do in my classroom this year.

Li Ayuen, École Park Élémentaire, Fort Saskatchewan



Co-ordinate with colleagues. [Connect] with each other to debrief the great sessions that you went to and create that collegiality. Be willing to switch and be willing to meet and discuss those things.

Dawn Kissel, Memorial Composite High School, Stony Plain



The biggest thing is to come prepared. Go through the schedule and make sure that the sessions you're going to actually work for you, not just academically. There's a lot of good sessions [on] wellness."

Nayfe Choucair, École Park Élémentaire, Fort Saskatchewan



Have someone drive you.

Choose sessions you're curious about, not necessarily that speak to your teaching practice. Always have a backup.

Khristy Devos, Jocelyn Scott, Latasha Friestad, F.R. Haythorne Junior High School, Sherwood Park