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The Alberta Teachers' Association

SUMMER 2018



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 The Alberta Teachers' Association



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DENNIS THEOBALD

# LOOKING BACK AND NOW FORWARD ...

As the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the Alberta Teachers' Association move toward their conclusion, we naturally begin to turn our attention from the challenges and accomplishments of the past and toward the uncertain future of public education in Alberta, and beyond. The contributors to this edition of the *ATA Magazine* are all accomplished and passionate advocates of public education, and as they look forward from the vantage point of 2018, each advances a vision of what our education system could and should be and what must be done to get there.

Readers will note that the contributors also reflect a variety of different backgrounds and include several international perspectives. Pasi Sahlberg coined the acronym GERM to refer to the Global Education Reform Movement, and not in a complimentary way—in this edition we see evidence of an alternative, international progressive consensus on the role and future of public education.

(I spent far too much time attempting to match Pasi by coming up with a cute and catchy acronym for this, but gave up. Perhaps one of you will succeed where I have failed. Challenge issued!)

Several of the articles that follow set about examining the purpose of public education and the role it should play in our collective economic, social, cultural and political life. Craig Findlay asserts that public education should seek to “insulate students—and by extension our broader society—from the adverse affects of living in an age of acceleration and distraction.”

Among the range of possible futures identified by Stephen Murgatroyd, the one he advocates for is based on Jacques Delor’s four pillars of learning where the curriculum and the schools delivering it support “the development for all students of high levels of a range of literacies, creative and design skills, and an

ability to be resilient and adaptive.” In Murgatroyd’s preferred future, “schools become places for engagement and development, true centres for creative communities, communities of interest and communities of practice.”

Dennis Shirley provides a vision of the role of the school, contrasting it both in purpose and operation from models drawn from business and industry. He says: “schools have a different function in society than hard-drive manufacturers. Schools should produce citizens who will be stewards of the environment. They should promote civility and acceptance of differences. They should teach children to protect the weak rather than just reward the strong.”

Other writers focus on how we need to respond to current political and economic constraints that stand in the way of achieving the preferred vision. In this context, Greg Thompson and Kalervo N. Gulson point to the need to clearly understand what is meant by “public” in public education: “Around

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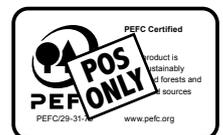
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the world a soft revolution is taking place. This revolution is focused on how governments think about the 'public' in the context of public policy, especially in the context of health and education and their public institutions.”

They go on to argue that we need to push back against a minimalist view of “public” that characterizes any type of education institution funded by government, in whole or in part, as being public, regardless of the manner in which it is governed or staffed or draws its student population.

Roar Grøttvik and Larry Booi and, for that matter, our president Greg Jeffery, take note of the important choices that will have to be made in the immediate

future and how teacher organizations must advance that progressive agenda for public education.

They bring to this issue of the magazine a sense of urgency and immediate purpose which is well expressed by Booi in his clarion call to teachers: “The profession needs to help the government find the means and courage to lead positive change. If we fail to do so, teachers will face another decade of mounting problems and frustrations, and the full promise of public education for many students will continue to be unfulfilled.”

Finally, Wilson Winnitoy, who has helped to guide the Alberta Teachers' Association's strategic planning initiatives

since 1992, grounds all this in a strategic planning frame. He asserts that at the heart of strategic planning is an assertion of agency: “We can intervene in our future. We can shape it in positive and deliberate ways. No matter how solid, seamless and relentless the forces acting on us may look, we can and will find the cracks and openings where we can create change.”

This is a powerful sentiment, eloquently expressed and so typical of Winnitoy's world view. And on that note, I conclude the Editor's Notebook with a brief expression of thanks to Wilson Winnitoy, a great friend of public education and of the Alberta Teachers' Association, as he retires from his work with us.







DENNIS  
SHIRLEY

# THE PROMISE OF THE PRESENT MOMENT

Public education won't survive in the current policy environment—and won't even deserve to survive—unless it has champions. The most important of these have to be our students and their parents. These must insist that schools are well-funded and staffed by caring and competent professionals.

But there also needs to be broad and enthusiastic support from the broader society. Entrepreneurs, intellectuals and those who are well-educated in general have an outsized impact on policy. Their support needs to be consistent, vocal, well-coordinated and aggressive.

But educators and opinion leaders are too often slow to respond to threats to democratic, local public schooling. The new euphemism used by the enemies of public education today is “disruption.” It became a new change mantra when Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen in 1997 published *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*. Christensen documented how technological giants lost out when computer engineers in their very own companies created incredibly inexpensive and efficient hard disk drives. Rather than embrace these new innovations, the companies sat on them until their very own engineers, frustrated with the lack of institutional responsiveness, departed and started phenomenally successful businesses of their own.

For Christensen, this is all great stuff. Disruption powers innovation forward. No tears should be shed for the technological behemoths whose downfall was caused by their failure to understand what was happening before their very eyes.

But schools have a different function in society than hard drive manufacturers. Schools should produce citizens who will be stewards of the environment. They should promote civility and acceptance of differences. They should teach children to protect the weak rather than just reward the strong.

To do these things, societies need civic engagement, intellectual argumentation and mutual respect. These things require careful cultivation. They are arts to be practiced. They are not disruptions to be deployed.

Alberta as a province and Canada as a nation are leaders in showing the world that public education can work in practice as well as in theory. Nowhere else do multicultural, democratically governed public schools work so well. But this is a birthright that can easily be squandered. This can happen when those inside the profession rest on their laurels, kick back and do things the way they've always been done. The birthright can also be squandered when those outside of the profession leap on every perceived shortcoming to slowly strangle

schools of the resources and moral support they need to prosper. A vicious circle of complacency on the one hand and sabotage on the other is all that is needed for public schooling to become a distant memory.

Can such things happen? Proof positive is provided by Chile, England, Sweden and parts of Australia and the U.S. These systems have fallen prey to an anachronistic ideological imperative to drive markets into every nook and cranny of their public schooling systems. To be sure, they've

high-performing systems, such as South Korea, Japan and Finland, Canada is a rich multicultural and multilingual mosaic. This makes its achievement all the more impressive. It may be that famously Canadian cultural traits of temperance, even-handedness and civility honed over generations have played important roles in providing the necessary bedrock to secure public education. These characteristics are in high demand today when bombast and bigotry have become such prominent features of the evening news in so many countries.

## The Association cannot wait for governments to make change happen.

had plenty of disruption—but it has produced inequity and social upheaval without gains in achievement. These systems provide object lessons of policy failure. Their stalled reforms will be studied by change leaders for generations to come.

For the time being, Canada has provided a striking counter-example of how things can be done. Unlike many other

I congratulate my friends and colleagues in Alberta on the first 100 years of the Alberta Teachers' Association. But now is no time for complacency. Every one of us has a role to play in protecting public education, spreading its blessings and securing its future. This work has to be more than sloganeering about curriculum transformation or more standards and accountabilities, most of which ignore the systemic obstacles to achieving equity in Alberta's increasingly large and complex classrooms.

The Association cannot wait for governments to make change happen. Organizations like the ATA have a proud tradition of leading innovation and supporting excellence through a steadfast commitment to equity. I often think back to the many successes of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement, a world-class program if there ever was one, and how it might be reconstituted to achieve progress on strategic priorities such as Indigenous education and student well-being. As well, I see the tremendous power of the Association and how it has been galvanized through international partnerships with schools and researchers in Finland, Norway, New Zealand and, soon, Iceland.

Nowhere is it written in stone that public school systems need to last forever. Now is the time to continue to step forth as proud champions of public education both in Alberta and internationally.



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*Dr. Dennis Shirley is a professor at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College and the author of The New Imperatives of Educational Change: Achievement with Integrity.*

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STEPHEN  
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# ALBERTA 2030

## Four possible futures for educational change

Public education in 2018 is already in peril. Nova Scotia has moved to abolish school boards and remove their school-based administrators from the teacher's union. British Columbia has neutered boards by ensuring that the education minister can issue directives and impose the government's own budgets and decisions. Looking to the U.S., we can already see that public education is being dismantled in favour of vouchers, competition and privatization. In Europe—where the Alberta Teachers' Association has several international partnerships—several countries are reviewing their public education investments, with some pushing decisions closer to the student (Ukraine), others enabling growing professionalism (Finland) and yet others challenging school performance and outcomes and encouraging greater competition (England).

When we try to make sense of the future, we can see four distinct scenarios or patterns, reflected in many of the experiences from ATA-supported international exchanges, research partnerships and engagements.

### **COMPETITION, PRIVATIZATION AND WINNER TAKES ALL**

One scenario sees government determining that public investment in education creates too many stakeholder conflicts and challenges, and seeks to simplify its engagement by simply flowing money through vouchers or payments that follow the student and offering outcome data to enable parental choice. This is already happening in some 26 U.S. states and is a growing conversation in other parts of the world.

This type of market-based system often takes better off and more able students out of the public school system, with schools becoming increasingly socially and culturally segregated. Such systems also divert public resources to private providers, leaving state schools with a disproportionate number of disadvantaged students and reduced budgets to support them. In Sweden, for example, when one of the private systems “collapsed,” the state was left to pick up the pieces.

Across the countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), just 12 per cent of students attend private schools that receive a significant portion of their funds from the public purse. This occurs in Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands. In Greece, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States the share of public funding for private schools is below one per cent.

The evidence provides little comfort for the champions of competition and privatization. Using Sweden as a case study, for example, it is now accepted that many claims for the system introduced in the 1980s and 1990s have not been delivered. As the OECD review of the system suggests, the system is failing to meet expectations, falling on international measures of achievement and is not producing the skills needed for Sweden's future.

This is truly a winner-takes-all scenario. Some schools will lose, and most students will struggle to secure the right performance at the right time in the right place.



## STATUS QUO WITH LESS

As austerity bites and governments seek to rationalize expenditures and “balance” budgets, education is not exempt from cuts in both direct spending in schools and capital investment. We have seen this in Alberta during the Klein era and since. The argument is that debts and deficits cannot last forever, that action must be taken, and that sacrifices are needed. Government debt in Alberta is approximately \$42 billion or 10.9 per cent of GDP – which is very low by global standards (U.S. debt is approaching 160 per cent of GDP).

The most recent report from Alberta’s auditor general, for example, shows that even when investments are made in class size reduction (\$2.7 billion since 2004) the use of these funds often does not match the intention—investment in teachers has fallen behind the growth of the student population.

Some political parties see balanced budgets as more important than future-focused investments in the skills and capacities of people and communities. They cut school budgets, freeze teacher pay, enable larger class sizes and continue to underfund key aspects of schools, especially as they relate to students with disabilities or special needs. What these parties also do is maintain the current overly bureaucratic infrastructure of public and Catholic schools and enable large central office

systems, and they do not reduce the size of departmental staffing. “Seen to be in control” is a part of this scenario.

Greece is already facing the consequences of this scenario, but so too are Spain, Italy and Portugal. Indeed, Italy’s education system has faced some of the most severe cuts—in some cases as high as 20 per cent—despite already being the OECD state with the lowest level of education spending.

Survival is the name of this game. Students who are able will prosper and do well, as they do in most school systems, but many more will fall through the cracks. Growing inequality will hurt our school systems.

## SKILLS FOR OUR FUTURE

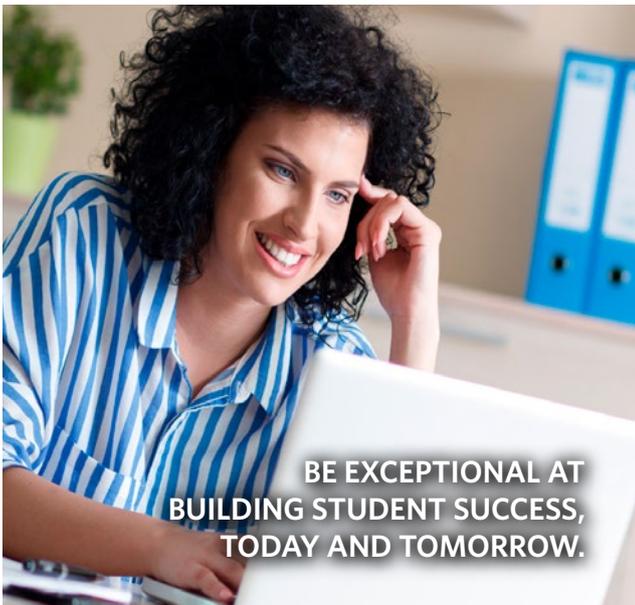
In this scenario, the education system remains largely public but is refocused on developing the skills and competencies needed to support the economy. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and coding are championed as key skills needed for the fourth industrial revolution. The idea of “education for life” and citizenship and a broad, liberal education is sacrificed for supposed economic good.

The challenge here is that we never really know what skills are needed in the new economy. For example, many technology companies like Google and Apple are more interested in creative skills, teamwork, problem solving and design thinking than in those who can code. Some of the fastest growing sectors of many economies are design-based industries (e.g. film, media, fashion, architecture) rather than traditional manufacturing or technology jobs. There are also very few examples over the last 50 years of governments accurately anticipating the skills needed for the future economy.

In our look at technical and vocational education in Finland and New Zealand, through our partnerships, we see varied approaches and governments struggling to imagine the coming economic disruptions of artificial intelligence, 3D manufacturing, nanotechnology and other disruptive technologies. Experiments with microcredentialing (e.g. New Zealand) show some promise, but traditional approaches to funding, quality assurance and assessment seem to make innovation in education difficult, and it seems remarkably difficult to break through the thinking barriers to create truly flexible and adaptive school systems.

Competency-based learning and assessment will be the key to this scenario, and some will fail to measure up to the competency standards set because they have little interest in the specific competencies others have decided are important for their future. We can already see this in some Australian school systems.

This scenario informed some of the last Conservative government thinking and may inform key features of the current curriculum reform.



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## A DESIGNED AND FOCUSED FUTURE

The only certainty about the future is its uncertainty and lack of linearity—the future is not a straight line from the past. Acknowledging this reality, Canada has decided to become, as the Advisory Council on Economic Growth has recommended, a learning nation with new incentives for life-long learning. This will involve refocusing the work of schools on the four pillars of education<sup>1</sup>: learning to know, learning to be, learning to do and learning to live together.

In this scenario, curriculum reform focuses not on skills but on enabling these four pillars and supporting the development for all students of high levels of a range of literacies, creative and design skills and an ability to be resilient and adaptive. Rather than focusing on STEM or coding, the focus is on finding the passion and talents of each student and enabling these specific talents to grow and develop in an entrepreneurial and creative way. Schools become places for engagement and development, true centres for creative communities, communities of interest and communities of practice. The teaching profession has a great deal of freedom to shape learning according to a set of principles and general curriculum frameworks—as in

Change will occur, whether we like it or not, in part because it is inevitable, and in part because a new government in 2019, of whatever party, will need to make some tough decisions. Looking from the outside in, and our international partnerships enable this, suggests we should be articulating a clear vision for the future of our schools.

What needs to happen sooner rather than later is that investments be made to reduce class size and support special needs students. Of all the things any government can do, this would send significant messages to students, parents and teachers, show support for public education and change the agenda for government–union relations. More radical developments—ending support for charter schools, reigning in superintendent compensation, ending PATs as we know them—would also be useful signals that Alberta education is a public investment in Alberta's future.

Otherwise, there is a clear and present danger that our decision makers will drift towards an undesirable scenario. In this case, teachers and students continue to bear the burden of poor decisions and low investment; a focus

A one-size-fits-all school system rarely fits anyone.  
Creating multiple routes to school success is essential.

Finland—rather than being required to achieve hundreds of curriculum objectives that are quickly dated.

A key driver for success in this scenario is diversity as the basis for equity. A one-size-fits-all school system rarely fits anyone. Creating multiple routes to school success is essential.

This scenario focuses on building adaptive capacity in schools, recognizing and enabling teacher professionalism, facilitating experimental approaches to learning (think AISI) and innovation. Rather than seeking to control the system and centralize decision making, curriculum is a framework and schools and their teachers convert this into meaningful learning, linked to local challenges and conditions. We see this in Finland and in some other parts of the world, though it is becoming rarer.

## ALBERTA AT A CROSSROADS

It is not a stretch of the imagination to see Alberta at a crossroads between these four scenarios. We have a strong, vibrant public education system that is both highly regarded around the world and in need of change. Our curriculum change needs to happen, class size need reducing, investments need to be made in special needs education and new investment in professional development is urgently needed.

on competition, austerity, and winners and losers would send the signal that education is no different from other economic sectors: it is survival of the fittest.

With an election coming, it is critical that the profession make explicit what action it needs to see from government and what the future looks like.

---

*Dr. Stephen Murgatroyd is an expert on innovation policy and practice and is chief executive of Collaborative Media Group Inc.*

1 UNESCO. 1996. *Rethinking Education – Towards a Global Common Good?* The Delors Report. Paris: UNESCO.





LARRY  
BOOI

# COURAGE NEEDED TO LEAD POSITIVE CHANGE

Often when we think about what things might be like in the next ten years, we do so in the manner of waiting for a surprise—“I wonder what the future will bring for our classrooms?”

However, there is a far more important question that needs our attention: *What actions do we need to take in order to ensure that in the next ten years public education is strengthened and teachers are better able to meet the needs of all of their students?*

Looking back from the vantage point of 2018, it is clear that in the past decade, for far too many Alberta teachers, classroom situations have not only failed to improve, but have actually become worse. Class sizes are generally larger and classroom complexity has increased substantially, while much-needed classroom supports too often have declined rather than improved.

There was hope that things would improve when the new NDP government ended 44 years of Progressive Conservative rule in 2015, but the new government seems more focused on curriculum review and assessment rather than on changes that will make a meaningful difference in the unacceptable classroom conditions facing too many students and teachers in our province.

Unfortunately the curriculum review appears mired in an overburdened agenda focused on ramping up ill-defined “21st century competencies,” while the government seems unable or unwilling to revamp its decades-old provincial

testing and accountability regime that does little to inspire trust in the profession or build public confidence.

The big decisions about education (funding, class size and support for inclusion) are all political in nature, and over the next ten years we need to get much better at influencing political decisions through sustained engagement and mobilization of members in effective advocacy to advance positive change for all students.

In addition, we need to work with other public sector associations and unions to bring about major revenue reform so that our provincial government has the funds to revitalize public education and other public services.

Over the next decade, we need to put far more effort into shaping the future rather than merely trying to predict it or to accommodate whatever changes occur. The profession needs to help the government find the means and courage to lead positive change. If we fail to do so, teachers will face another decade of mounting problems and frustrations, and the full promise of public education for many students will continue to be unfulfilled.

---

*Larry Booi is a former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association and currently chair of Public Interest Alberta Board.*



CRAIG  
FINDLAY

# THE PRECARIOUS FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

It is hard to believe 12 years have passed since Sir Ken Robinson's TED talk (*Do Schools Kill Creativity?*) ignited a conversation about educational reform. According to his website, the video clip has been viewed by more than 40 million people in 160 countries. Robinson's central allegation—the industrial model of schooling is destroying the creative capacity of our students—resonated in many corners of the world, including here in Alberta. For many educators the dialogue exposed the widening gap between the rapidity of change in our increasingly complex society and the ability of our education systems to adapt and respond.

In this unprecedented moment in human history our ubiquitous access to the expanding internet of things affords instantaneous access to an inconceivable amount of information (and misinformation), as well as the ability to connect and collaborate with people from around the globe—a reality cultivating both incredible opportunities and immense challenges. Thomas Friedman (2016) describes our time as an “age of accelerations” and believes it is how we respond to our reality—exponential technological advancement, ongoing globalization of markets, and intensifying effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. The forces of privatization, datafication and standardization—emboldened by the very same technology—serve to intensify the threats to our public institutions. Friedman argues “... there is a mismatch between the change in pace of change and our ability to

develop learning systems, training systems, management systems, social safety nets, and government regulations that would enable citizens to get the most out of these accelerations and cushion their worst impacts” (p. 28). Our education systems must lead the response by creating confident and resilient students with the capacity to collaborate, innovate and problem solve using well developed critical and creative thinking skills.

Nurturing these skills and attributes in a society filled with the seductive distractions of the digital world is proving to be a daunting challenge. Hawn and Holden (2011, p. 27) explain “...the blitz of information from digital media can be intoxicating. For today's ‘screenagers,’ these flickering images are like bright diversions in the digital candy store. The need for them can become compulsive and often addictive.” Our education systems must strive to insulate students—and by extension our broader society—from the adverse effects of living in an age of acceleration and distraction. We must purposefully extend beyond the limits imposed by an industrial model of education and create a system intent on empowering educators and students with the means to solve the multitude of challenges in front of us.

The inspiring education movement, coupled with the visionary work of the Alberta Teachers' Association (including publications such as *Changing Landscapes* and *A Great School for All*), have enhanced the conversation and helped spawn an ATA–government partnership to





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develop new K–12 curricula. However, I am fearful that both the pace of reform and the rigidity of system assumptions continue to stand as major impediments to the change required to address the diverse needs of the children we serve. Although I have much respect for the professionals working on the design of new curricula, I worry that efforts thus far are tantamount to a reworking and reshuffling of an antiquated vision of curriculum at the expense of the creative reimagining that our predicament demands.

Undoubtedly there has been extensive and passionate discourse about the need for educational reform here in Alberta, yet our reality has remained largely resistant to substantive change. In my humble opinion, the future of public education rests on our ability to create flexible, innovative and adaptive systems. Unfortunately, if the pace of educational change over the past twelve years is indicative of our trajectory of reform, it may indeed be a precarious future for public education.

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*In his 25th year of teaching, Craig Findlay teaches social studies at Winston Churchill High School in Lethbridge. He is also currently a member of the Association's Strategic Planning Group.*



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# THE SHIFTING MEANING OF ‘THE PUBLIC’

GREG  
THOMPSON

KALERVO  
N. GULSON

Around the world a soft revolution is taking place. This revolution is focused on how governments think about the “public” in the context of public policy, especially in the context of health and education and their public institutions. Partly, we are seeing a reframing of what constitutes public interest. While the privatizing of government utilities is one obvious shift in the idea of the public and the purpose of government, these shifts are becoming very obvious in larger institutions such as health and education.

In education, the emergence of new private actors, and indeed networks of actors, work in partnership with governments through public policy. Think-tanks, not-for-profits, intergovernmental organizations, venture philanthropists, lobby groups and corporations with educational interests are just some of the actors involved in setting the policy agenda, proposing policy solutions and offering services to deliver on the promise of these policies. For example, the reliance on public-private partnerships to fund infrastructure and provide services, and the emergence of what Ball (2007) has termed the education services industry (ESI), that delivers services in schools and systems, highlight that education is an important field for profit-making by private organizations. Private interests often don’t replace governments, rather they work for them so that the state functions as a procurer and manager of these new private actors (Burch 2009). There has been a blurring of the distinction between public and private interests in education, yet many people are unaware of this shift.

One example of blurring is the emergence of “alternate provision” of public schooling. There are many reasons for this emergence, from concerns regarding education

outcomes with regards to certain disadvantaged groups; to “education for all” arguments that support the establishment of low-fee private and for-profit schools in countries like Ghana; to the school choice movement in countries like the United States and England, which has created the conditions for academy schools, free schools and charter schools. In Canada these alternative provisions include alternative schools in Toronto and charter schools in Alberta. Most forms of alternate provision involve public-private partnerships where private interests are key players. For example, education management organizations are contracted by the state to manage the day-to-day operations of some public schools. Or, in the instance of some online charter schools in the United States, hedge funds and other areas of the financial services industry invest in online schools in order to generate profits.

The shift in the work that the word *public* does in conversations about education is important to understand and think our way through. For example, in Australia, Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison recently argued that it is time for “for-profit” public schools. How is it that a for-profit school, a school that generates profits for a private entity, can be considered a public school? Partly, we think this occurs because what can empirically characterize *the public* in the imagination of policy makers has become reduced to considerations of funding alone. This is a dangerous reduction, and somewhat at odds with what may be considered the ways that *the public* is generally understood and used by teachers, parents and the wider public. One way to respond to this reduction is to reappraise the characteristics that constitute the public in public education. Our research, funded by the Australia Research Council, has found that across broad literatures, there appear to be

four main characteristics that people articulate as being definitive of some quality of public education. These are

- funding (How is the funding of educational undertakings and schooling infrastructure sourced?);
- control (Who has oversight of a school's operations, and how are they appointed?);
- organization of teachers (Who has oversight over the appointment, conditions and regulating of teachers in schools?); and
- access and openness (How do policies regarding student enrolment, parental/family choice and curriculum implementation work?).

While each of these is equally important, for a teachers' association publication, the ways that systems organize teaching is worthy of some further examination. This includes the extent of unionization of the workforce, whether teachers are employees of a school/system or act as subcontractors via an education management organization, hiring done at a local level or at a system level, and focus on teacher as professionally oriented or more consumer oriented (where the consumers are students and parents). It is not as clear-cut as saying the organization of teachers is either public or private. However, it is important to foster awareness as to how private participation in public systems can impact the mission of those systems themselves. For example,

differences in the ways systems organize teachers through unions and professional associations can have an impact on teacher affiliations, commitments, working conditions and teachers' own expectations.

In 2002, Lori McNeil's introduction to a special issue of the *American Education Research Journal* on charter schools made a salient point. The changing notion of the public can be understood as a shift in how education is valued in itself, from "a collective good" to "private goods" (McNeil 2002, p. 243). The ways that many government-funded schooling systems are now structured around autonomy and choice seem to accept this view of public education as a private good. In the same issue, Wells, Scott and Clayton (2002, p.338) argue that this represents the triumph of an aspiration for personal liberty over a commitment to equity and/or equality. This appears as a simple equation, where democracy equals "the freedom to consume and own within a capitalist society" and in education "the implication was freedom to choose schools and freedom from state regulation." These are complex issues. Hence, our final point is that it seems that understanding what we mean by *the public* when we talk about our public systems has consequences for both contemporary and future generations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is part of an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant (DP170103647). Other team members include Nicole Mockler, Anna Hogan and Bob Lingard.

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*Dr. Kalervo N. Gulson is an associate professor at the University of New South Wales, Australia. His work draws on human geography, education policy studies, and science and technology studies. His current research investigates connections between education policy, mobility and artificial intelligence.*

For a complete listing of events, consult the Conference Calendar or contact Barnett House. Telephone: 780-447-9400 in Edmonton or 1-800-232-7208 from elsewhere in Alberta. This information is also posted on the Alberta Teachers' Association website ([www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)). Prior to attending a conference or workshop please contact the sponsoring organization to confirm dates, location and contacts.

**SEPTEMBER 21-22**

STUDENT LOCAL CONFERENCE, Barnett House, Edmonton. Sponsor: the provincial ATA. Contact: Sudeep Dua, administrative officer, telephone: 780-447-9454; email: [Sudeep.Dua@ata.ab.ca](mailto:Sudeep.Dua@ata.ab.ca).

**OCTOBER 11-13**

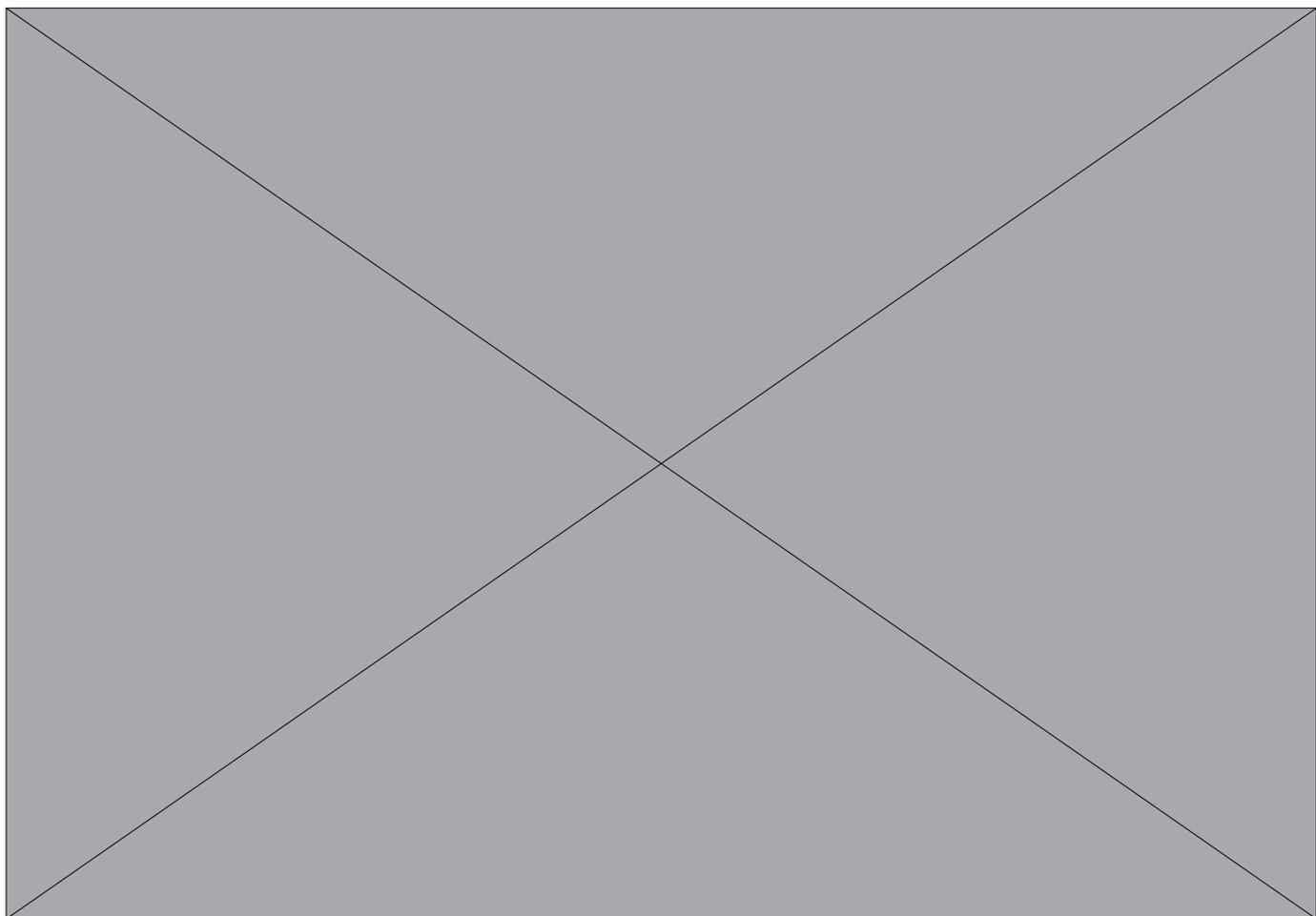
COUNCIL FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE, Coast Canmore Hotel, Canmore. Theme: Celebrating the Challenges. Sponsor(s): Council for Inclusive Education and the provincial ATA. Contact: Darci Fulton, conference director: [fultond@shaw.ca](mailto:fultond@shaw.ca).

**OCTOBER 19-20**

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE COUNCIL JOINT CONFERENCE, Delta Radison Hotels, Edmonton. Theme: 2018 Geeks Unite 2.0. Sponsor(s): Mathematics and Science councils and the provincial ATA. Website: <https://event-wizard.com/events/GeeksUniteMathScience2/>. Contact: Jennifer Hogg, registrar: [MCATAregistrar@shaw.ca](mailto:MCATAregistrar@shaw.ca).

**OCTOBER 26-27**

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS CONFERENCE, Radisson Hotel Edmonton South, Edmonton. Sponsor: the provincial ATA. Contact: Keith Hadden, executive staff officer, SARO; telephone: 403-265-2672; email: [keith.hadden@ata.ab.ca](mailto:keith.hadden@ata.ab.ca) or Doreen Link, administrative officer, SARO; telephone: 780-265-2672; email: [doreen.link@ata.ab.ca](mailto:doreen.link@ata.ab.ca).



# FUTURE GAZING

When you think about the central role of public education in contributing to the future of Alberta in the next ten years, what potential promise do you see? What potential perils?

Here are answers from a cross-section of Alberta leaders.



*When I wrote some years ago about the constitutional origins of Alberta's public and separate schools<sup>1</sup>, I had no idea that this example of a great political compromise which made their establishment as a comprehensive public education system possible would be even more significant today. That's because times are now truly perilous for democracies—certainly for the one south of us—due to a loss of that*

*ability to compromise, to listen respectfully to the views of others in the public arena, to cherish wisdom, discernment, competence, merit and diversity over the narrow-mindedness with which manipulators of public discourse are tearing our societies apart.*

*What does the ability to compromise in the public arena, as exemplified in our school system, have to do with shaping public education in the next 10 years? As one of the diminishing number of surviving institutions in traditional democracies committed to giving all its members breathing room to grow and to be themselves, while cherishing the right of others to be different selves, public education is vital to combatting those who would have it otherwise.*

*In short, the very framework of our public schools embodies a time-tested bulwark against the dark forces now menacingly unleashed in the world. Every day, teachers in those schools pass on the values we need to survive into the future. More than ever, they deserve our sustained and wholehearted support.*

## **Sandra M. Anderson**

Labour and privacy lawyer, counsel for the ATA (retired), former Calgary Board of Education trustee chair



*Our public education system has a critical role to play in the future of Alberta. Schools, teachers*

*and the education system in general are essential to growing the leaders that will shape Alberta's tomorrow and allow our province to continue to thrive.*

*I believe investing in youth is a direct investment in our collective future. Specifically, education plays a key role in developing critical, independent thinking, fostering a strong work ethic, building community spirit and citizenship, and a culture of collaboration—all of which have the potential to have a lasting, positive impact on Alberta both socially and economically.*

*Engaged, healthy young people become contributing adults, and quality education is the foundation on which they can build, create, innovate and continually learn in order to advance themselves and our province.*

*Conversely, if we aren't giving our young people this supportive foundation we are doing them and ourselves a huge disservice, and we will be faced with the consequences of having Albertans ill prepared to meet the demands of a dynamic marketplace and a disruptive economy.*

## **Kelly Blackshaw**

Business development leader, Inliv Inc.  
Vice-chair, Alberta Sport Connection  
Member of the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame



*I am hard-pressed to think of even one important influencer who is not stating, with assurance, that we are entering a period of dramatic and disruptive change. What do we do? How can we face this unknown future?*

*In Alberta, our resource base will continue to provide a foundation, but it is not enough. Our only hope is in building a human resource pool that is skilled, adaptable and cognitively in tune with the ambiguity of a changing world. We also need to recognize that we are not alone, nor are we ahead of others, but instead that we are entering this uncertain world with intense regional, national and global competition.*

*We need to be running like mad just to be in the race. Truly, our only hope is to build massive human resource capacity through our public education system. More than at any other time in Alberta's entire history, we need to be intentional and purposeful in building and leveraging our public education system to create, not be handed, our future.*

*Passive followership is at best risky. Bold leadership that promotes an abundance of collaboration, communication, entrepreneurial thinking and ethical leadership will ensure a flexible and adaptable human resource base that will generate a valuable contribution in a changing world.*

## **Jim Dewald**

Dean, Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, S M. 2005. "Venerable Rights: Constitutionalizing Alberta's Schools, 1869–1905." In *Forging Alberta's Constitutional Framework*, ed R Connors and J Law, 61–102. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press.



*Alberta is truly at a crossroads when it comes to education policy in the province. Increasingly, through the marketization of education, Alberta is drifting away from the true principles of universal public education: to create intelligent, engaged, inquiring and diverse citizens who are able to participate and protect a strong democracy, irrespective of their socio-economic status, faith, ability or culture.*

*Public schools are the practicums for all the discovery, acceptance and innovation every society requires to thrive. However, it is relatively easy for Albertans to take this foundational democratic muscle for granted. Throughout the past few decades, prosperity has blinded us to the slow boil by which privatization has, by design, undermined our public system. If we can recommit and redefine public education as a foundational, democratic muscle that must be cared for, exercised and challenged, one that is equitable and accessible to all children, we will be investing in a diverse, multi-talented, resilient future for Alberta.*

*Alberta has a unique opportunity now to learn from other systems, to build a system rooted in equity. It is an opportunity to chart a different course for Alberta students away from the structures and ways of the past. This vision must be based on those fundamental principles of equitable public education, and then fiercely protected.*

**Barbara Silva**

Communication director, Support Our Schools



*In the next ten years, public education will play a critical role in contributing to the future of Alberta. The entrepreneurs needed to promote growth and keep Alberta in the forefront of desirable places to live are being inspired by their teachers today. The leaders of tomorrow will be fostered by the opportunities presented to them in their school careers. The community-minded stewards of our future will*

*be created in classrooms across Alberta.*

*The power of education to inspire and create critical thinkers can be enhanced by integrating the arts throughout the curriculum. With a focus on truth and reconciliation starting in our school systems, the arts are necessary to maintain cultural heritage. The arts provide a path for students to connect with each other and the world beyond their classrooms.*

*In an article on [ascd.org](http://ascd.org) about arts-based education entitled "A Vision for the Future of Education," the authors state, "Rather than provide simply a break for minds, we envision that the arts can help form minds," and that "arts-based education can offer specific practices for accomplishing the central goals of education."*

*As Alberta Education strives to provide learning that is equitable, inclusive and accessible, promoting creativity will enable teachers and students to engage in impactful, lasting and meaningful experiences.*

**Liana Wheeldon**

Executive director, Arts Council Wood Buffalo



*I'm a pediatrician and sports medicine physician, and a father who (along with my wife) raised two sons and a daughter in Alberta. They benefitted immeasurably from 12 years of public education, and I'm proud that, as responsible adults, they now look after themselves and their loved ones, and contribute positively to society.*

*When I think about the future of public education in our province, I consider it from the perspective of a physician and the unique position we're in, as physician leaders, to influence and improve the health of school communities. Five years ago, in partnership with Ever Active Schools, we started doing just that when we introduced the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) Youth Run Club. Now in place in almost 500 schools throughout the province, the Youth Run Club follows a comprehensive school health approach, supporting student well-being through physical activity, healthy eating, and positive, inclusive social environments.*

*Ideally, 10 years down the road, I see programs such as the AMA Youth Run Club having played a vital role in improving the health of Alberta's young adults and their families, as they continue the healthy habits they learned in school.*

**Neil Cooper, MD**

President, Alberta Medical Association



*Public education is instrumental in our journey towards reconciliation and a renewed relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Alberta.*

*The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has created an incredible amount of awareness about the history and legacy of the residential school system in Canada. The*

*commission continues to have a profound impact on many and has provoked a huge momentum to engage in First Nations, Métis and Inuit education, culture and language, prompting many personal and professional commitments towards reconciliation.*

*While this new awareness and engagement hold much promise, it is crucial that the education system foster and develop relationships with local Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers, cultural advisors, families and communities. Without positive and effective relationships built on trust and understanding, the authenticity and integrity of our learning about Indigenous education will be in peril.*

*Many teachers have already started the journey towards reconciliation and have contributed toward positive change. Teachers need to continue to embrace opportunities to learn about multiple Indigenous perspectives and experiences, and continue to ask questions to support learning for everyone. We also need to continue to inspire others to engage in Indigenous education, culture and language to maintain the authenticity and integrity of our elders and knowledge keepers as we move toward changes in professional practice, standards and curriculum.*

**Melissa Purcell**

Executive staff officer, Indigenous education, Alberta Teachers' Association



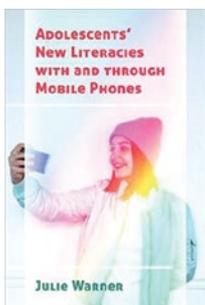
SANDRA ANDERSON

# LIBRARY HAS PLENTY OF FUTURE-FOCUSED RESOURCES

In keeping with this issue's theme, we are highlighting some of the recent library additions that are focused on technology trends and preparing for a new future. If you would like to borrow any of these titles or something on another topic, please remember that our library pays for shipping both ways so there is never any cost for using our collection.

To borrow materials, you need to create an account through the login link on our library website (<http://library.teachers.ab.ca>) and then let us know what titles you would like to borrow. We do our best to mail materials out to you on the day you request them. Please contact us at 1-800-232-7208 or [library@ata.ab.ca](mailto:library@ata.ab.ca) if you have questions or need support in creating your library account.

## BOOKS

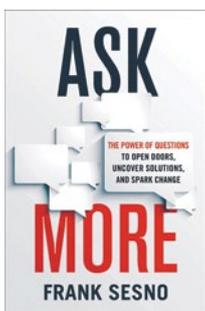


### Adolescents' New Literacies with and through Mobile Phones

Warner, J. 2017. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing (808.0420712 W282)

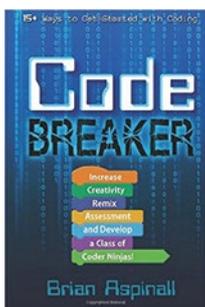
Literacy practices for teens have changed radically with the spread of mobile phones. Never before have teenagers been so focused on literacy practices—connected to their smartphones day and night, they have written more text than any other

generation of teenagers before them. Author Julie Warner examines how teens are composing text and images on social media and then considers what this means for the future of formal literacy instruction and practice.



**Ask More: The Power of Questions to Open Doors, Uncover Solutions, and Spark Change**  
Seno, F. 2017. New York, NY: Amacom (650.1 S493)

Drawing on many real-life examples, author Frank Seno shows that asking good questions is a skill that leads to great success in many occupations. He presents ideas for learning how to question in a methodical way that can stimulate conversation and breakthroughs.



### Code Breaker: Increase Creativity, Remix Assessment, and Develop a Class of Coder Ninjas!

Aspinall, B. 2017. San Diego, CA: Dave Burgess Consulting, Inc. (004.083 A841)

To be ready for their futures, students need to develop their skills in creativity, collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, and communicating. Using real-life examples, Brian Aspinall demonstrates how to encourage students to develop

these skills while having students solve coding challenges.

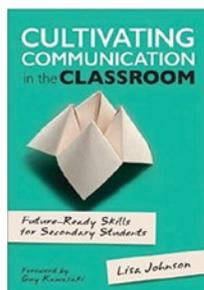


### Computers and the Future of Skill Demand

OECD. 2017. Paris, FR: OECD Publishing (370.1 O28 2017)

Most employees in OECD countries use literacy, numeracy and problem solving with computers every day. OECD researchers tested the skill levels of workers against that of

artificial intelligence. Disturbingly, the research shows that artificial intelligence replicates these skills at the proficiency level of most adults in the workforce, and only 13 per cent of workers use these skills at a level that is clearly higher than a computer's level.



### Cultivating Communication in the Classroom: Future-Ready Skills for Secondary Students

Johnson, L. 2017. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press (302.23 J67)

One of the most important skills that students will need to meet the future is communication skills. To succeed in post-secondary education and in the workplace, high school students

now need to learn communication skills in any medium. Author Lisa Johnson brings together advice from industry professionals and expert educators in this engaging and useful book.

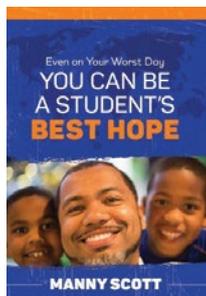


### Empower: What Happens When Students Own Their Learning?

Spencer, J. and A.J. Juliani. 2017. San Diego, CA: Impress (371.102 S745)

The unintended consequence of education is often the destruction of creativity through pressure to conform. By high school, many students are playing the game of school—being compliant to ensure

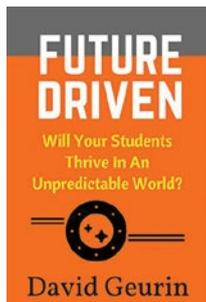
success rather than taking risks and standing out. The authors argue that the role of educators is not to prepare students for a known future, but to help students prepare for anything their future might hold. An intriguing read for everyone involved in education today.



**Even On Your Worst Day, You Can Be a Student's Best Hope**

Scott, M. 2017. Alexandria, VA: ASCD (370.154 S428)

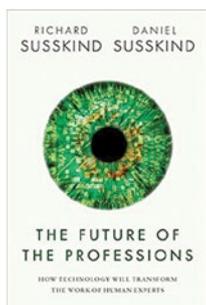
There is so much pressure on educators every day to reach, support and motivate every student. The task can be overwhelming. Having experienced a difficult childhood himself and having spoken to many children currently growing up in similar circumstances, author Manny Scott points out that even on your worst day as a teacher, you are still helping students onto a path towards a more positive future.



**Future Driven: Will Your Students Thrive in an Unpredictable World?**

Geurin, D. 2017. Bolivar, MO: Author (371.102 G395)

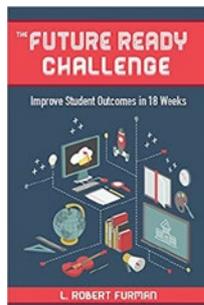
Two decades ago, we thought that the education system understood how it needed to change for 21st century learning. Now as we complete the second decade of this century, the only thing about the future that is predictable is that change will be constant and the pace of change will accelerate. Author David Geurin discusses ways that teachers can better engage students in their learning and develop their adaptability.



**The Future of the Professions: How Technology Will Transform the Work of Human Experts**

Susskind, R. E. and D. Susskind. 2015. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press (650.1 S964)

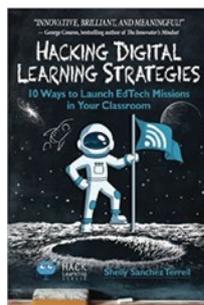
Looking into the future, authors Richard and Daniel Susskind see that improving artificial intelligence will surpass the expertise of doctors, lawyers, tax advisors, architects and even teachers. They predict an impending decline in the human role in these professions but believe that human work will shift to other roles such as para-professionals, craftspeople, process analysts, system engineers and even specialist “empathizers.” A disturbing but necessary read about where our future may be heading.



**Future-Ready Challenge: Improve Student Outcomes in 18 Weeks**

Furman, L. R. 2017. Portland, OR: ISTE (370.154 F986)

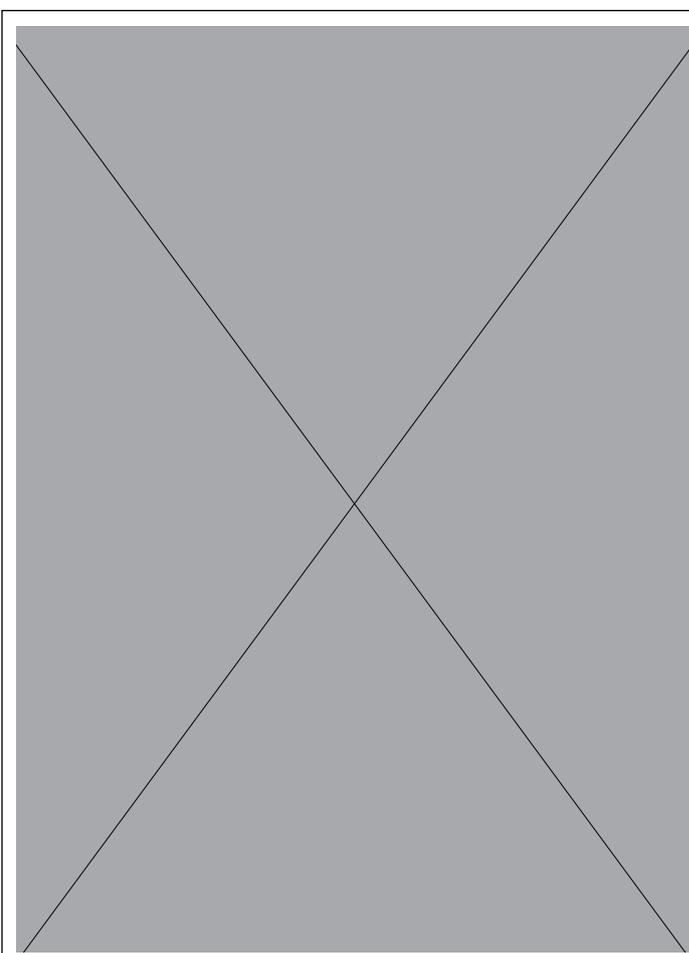
Incorporating new millennium skills into an already existing curriculum is challenging. Author Robert Furman presents 18 challenges for teachers to incorporate into each week’s teaching plan. His focus is on easily adding 21st century skill development into each week of the semester.



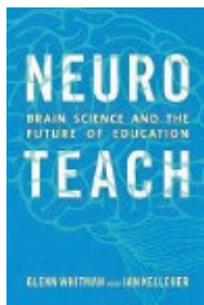
**Hacking Digital Learning Strategies: 10 Ways to Launch EdTech Missions in Your Classroom**

Terrell, S. S. 2017. Cleveland, OH: Times 10 Publications (020 T325)

Social media is a problematic topic for teachers—it distracts students and most students use it without adult guidance. Shelley Sanchez Terrell presents 10 ideas for teaching students to use social media



more thoughtfully and for the public good. An excellent read for teachers who want to incorporate exciting new projects in their classrooms.



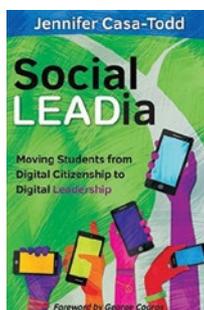
**Neuroteach: Brain Science and the Future of Education**  
Whitman, G. 2016. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield (612.8233 W614)  
What we are learning about the brain is revolutionizing what we know about learning potential and the possibilities of the human future. Whitman looks at how the newest knowledge from neuroscience can be applied by teachers into all aspects of teaching.

**No Fear Coding: Computational Thinking across the Curriculum**  
Williams, H. 2017. Portland, OR: ISTE (004.071 W723)  
Explaining why coding is an important skill for students, Heidi Williams gives teachers useful ideas for getting started with computational thinking activities in all parts of the K–5 curriculum. She discusses useful technology tools and other teacher resources for coding.



**Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future**  
Ford, M. 2015. New York, NY: Basic Books (331.137042 F699)  
Will there be jobs in the future? It sounds like a ludicrous question but with the rise of automation and artificial intelligence, it's not just low-skill jobs that may disappear. Many highly skilled workers such as doctors and lawyers will face replacement

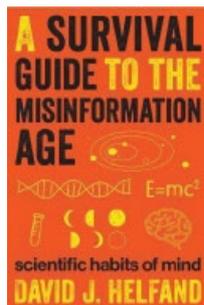
by robots as well. How will the economy function if most people are unemployed? In this well-researched book, Martin Ford examines a future that challenges us to reimagine the world.



**Social LEADia: Moving Students from Digital Citizenship to Digital Leadership**  
Casa-Todd, J. 2017. San Diego, CA: Dave Burgess Consulting (658.8 C334)  
Here's a new interview question that employers ask, "What social media networks are you on, and what will I learn about you if I go there?" That question asked to a 15-year-old girl is the spark that inspired this book.

Author Jennifer Casa-Todd questions our focus on teaching digital safety over digital engagement. She points out that

students using social media to engage in larger dialogues will learn that their voice has impact and that they can influence change and people outside of their schools.



**A Survival Guide to the Misinformation Age: Scientific Habits of Mind**  
Helfand, D.J. 2016. New York, NY: Columbia University Press (500 H474)  
Scientific literacy is the key to dismantling the rising misinformation that spreads online to our news shows and print media. The myths spread by climate change deniers and antivaxxers were

based in poor science but are now clung to despite being disproven by scientific research. This book is a challenging but interesting read for all those interested in science.

## TECHNOLOGY



### 3Doodler Start: Designed for Younger Creators

WobblesWorks, Inc. 2017. Boston, MA: Wobbleworks, Inc. (3DOO 2)  
This 3D printing pen is specifically designed for younger children (8+). Unlike the standard Doodler, this version has no hot parts and uses low heat plastic to prevent burns. It ships to you with 10 filaments for trying out its capabilities.

### Cue the Cleverbot

Wonder Workshop. 2017. San Mateo, CA: Wonder Workshop (CUE 1)  
Cue is the newest robot from the creators of Dash and Dot. This robot is aimed at older children (11-plus) as lots of texting through the app is required to interact with Cue. The big change from Dash and Dot is that this robot comes with four different personalities, or avatars as Wonder calls them, each with a distinct attitude, voice and in different genders. Unfortunately, only one is free to use. The others are only available through in-app purchases.

## DVDS AND STREAMING VIDEO

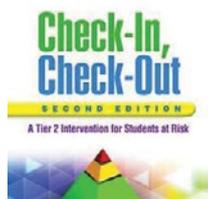
### Streaming video

When you login to the ATA Library homepage (<http://library.teachers.ab.ca>), you have access to two collections of streaming videos: McIntyre Media and Streaming Video by DeWitt. You will see the links to the collections in the Other Resources box in the lower left corner of our site. We offer access to dozens of education videos through this service.

**Active Participation: Getting Them All Involved (Elementary and Secondary Editions)**

Archer, A. 2014. Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest Publishing. 327 min. (AV ACT and AV ACT 2)

Learn to engage ALL students in your classroom with the active participation strategies demonstrated in this fun and informative series. Both editions of this kit come with 4 DVDs and a CD of session handouts.

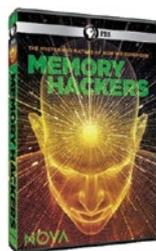


**Check In, Check Out: A Tier 2 Intervention for Students at Risk**

Hawken, L. S., and K. Breen. 2017. 2nd edition. New York, NY: Guilford Publications. 27 min. (AV CHE)

This behaviour education system is a widely used Tier 2 intervention for the

10 to 15 per cent of K–12 students who exhibit chronic, mild behaviour problems. The professional development DVD provides training for teachers and other school personnel in how to effectively support positive behaviour throughout the day.



**Memory Hackers: The Mysterious Nature of How We Remember**

Strachan, A. L. 2016. Arlington, VA : PBS Distribution. 60 min. (AV MEM)

Using new techniques and technology, neuroscientists examine the physical mechanisms of memory and how it can be manipulated and changed.

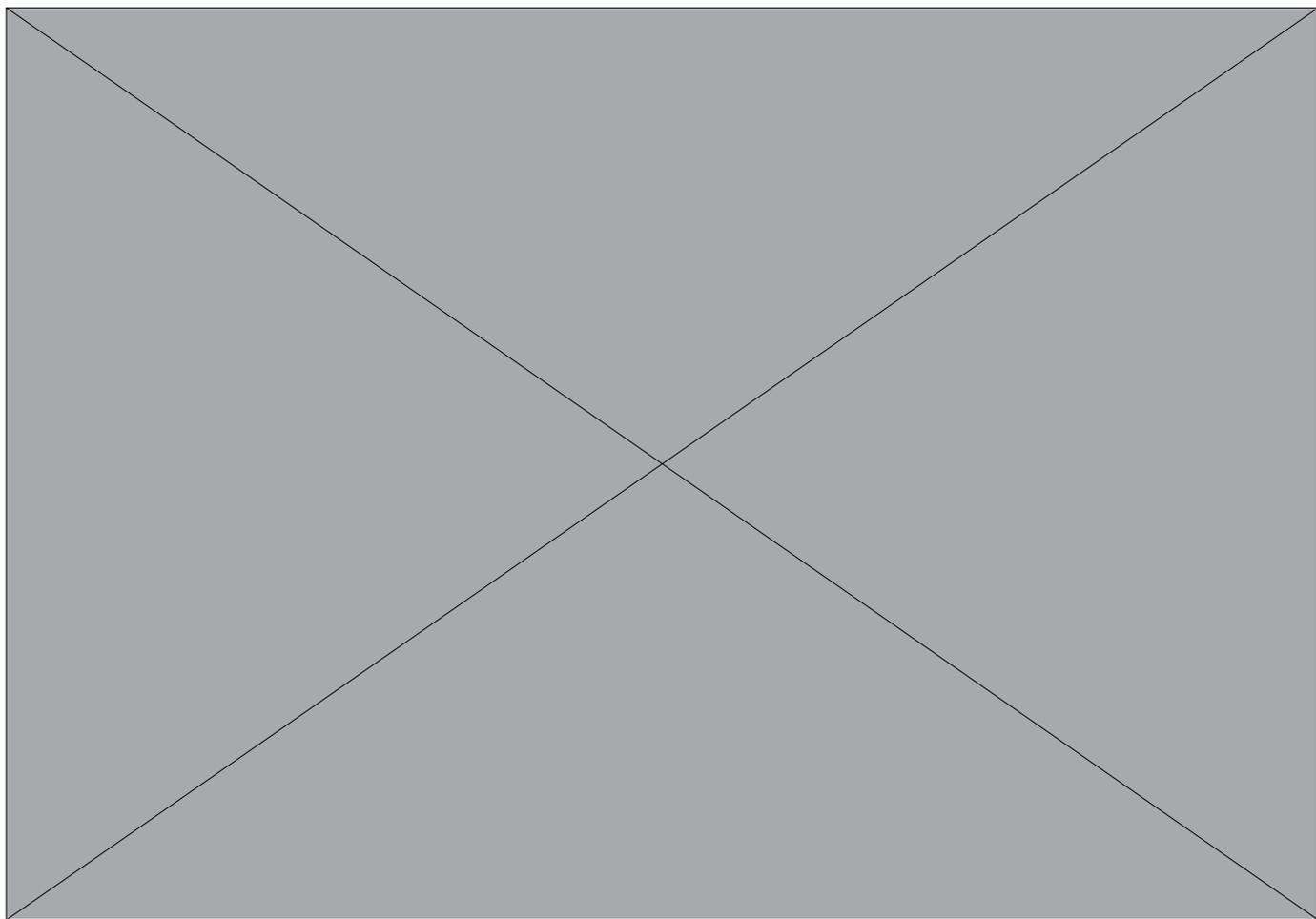
Implications such as the removal of phobias and the implantation of new memories are considered.

**FRENCH BOOKS/LIVRES EN FRANÇAIS**

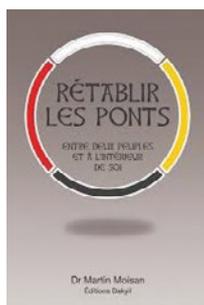
**Adolescents dépendants ou à risque de le devenir : Pratiques d'interventions prometteuses**

Laventure, Myriam, Natacha Brunelle, Karine Bertrand et Mathilde Garneau. 2017. Québec, QC : Les Presses de l'Université Laval (371.9 L399)

Les interventions en dépendance auprès des adolescents dépendants ou à risque de le devenir sont de plus en



plus nombreuses et diversifiées. Que ce soit pour de la prévention, de l'intervention ciblée ou de la réadaptation, les intervenants, les gestionnaires et les chercheurs de plusieurs régions mettent en place de nouvelles pratiques pour favoriser la motivation à adopter des habitudes de vie plus saines. Le présent ouvrage collectif se veut un reflet de la diversité de ces pratiques prometteuses adaptées aux nombreux besoins de cette jeune clientèle et de l'engagement des acteurs de l'intervention auprès des adolescents dépendants ou à risque de le devenir.



### Rétablir les ponts entre deux peuples et à l'intérieur de soi

Dr Moisan, Martin. 2016. Montréal, QC : Éditions Dakyil (371 829 M714)

Cet ouvrage est né d'un désir de réconciliation entre les Autochtones et le peuple québécois. Un des objectifs est de rétablir des ponts afin que, de part et d'autre, un lien d'entraide et de fraternité soit davantage présent, au-

delà des préjugés et des différences de cultures. Comment peut-on aller de l'avant et s'enrichir mutuellement? Il est notamment question de fierté, autant pour les Autochtones que pour le peuple québécois, ce qui pourrait aider à retrouver une identité, non seulement sur le plan culturel, mais aussi sur le plan humain, afin de briser des barrières individuelles et collectives.



### Usages créatifs du numérique pour l'apprentissage au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle

Romero, Margarida, Benjamin Lille, et Azeneth Patiño. 2017. Québec, QC : Presses de l'Université du Québec (371,3 R763)

Les usages du numérique à l'école sont diversifiés. Si certains de ces usages n'apportent pas de plus-values pédagogiques, d'autres permettent

aux élèves de s'engager dans des processus de cocréation. Le présent ouvrage apporte un éclairage sur les approches créatives du numérique en enseignement et sur leur potentiel et leur contribution à l'éducation personnelle, sociale et professionnelle des citoyens du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle.



### Initiation au sketchnote : Le guide illustré de la prise de notes visuelles

Rohde, Mike. 2016. Paris, FRA : Éditions Eyrolles (651,74 R737)

Dans ce manuel rédigé par le fondateur du concept de sketchnote, Mike Rohde livre tous les secrets de cette approche innovante et créative de prise de notes

visuelles. La technique consiste à mettre à profit nos compétences visuelles naturelles afin de « capturer » des idées et de remplacer petit à petit la prise de notes basée uniquement sur du texte pour adopter une approche globale bien plus visuelle et mettre les grandes idées (d'un cours/d'une réunion/d'une conférence, etc.) en valeur en trouvant un juste équilibre entre dessins/illustrations, notes minimalistes, icônes, lettrages et autres éléments visuels.



### Esprit scientifique, esprit critique : Un projet pédagogique pour l'école primaire

Zimmermann, Gabrielle, Elena Pasquinelli et Mathieu Farina. 2017. Paris, FRA : Éditions Le Pommier (510 Z74)

Mieux comprendre notre monde, éviter de nous précipiter vers des

conclusions hâtives ou de rester enfermés dans nos opinions... sont des défis au quotidien. Et ce d'autant plus qu'à notre époque, nous sommes confrontés à une profusion d'informations... C'est dans ce contexte que la Fondation La main à la pâte a développé le projet « Esprit scientifique, esprit critique ». Ce projet thématique propose aux élèves et aux enseignants d'affûter leurs outils pour comprendre le monde : en observant bien, en testant juste, en apprenant à soupeser l'information et à s'y appuyer pour argumenter.

# COMPLETE OUR SURVEY AND ENTER TO WIN \$100

The Alberta Teachers' Association invites members to participate in the following survey about the *ATA Magazine*. Responses will help shape the publication in the years ahead. Survey participants are eligible to enter a draw for a \$100 gift card from the retailer of their choice. To enter include your name and contact information at the end of the survey.

Survey deadline: July 16, 2018

An online version of this survey is also available at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/atamagazine](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/atamagazine)

## 1. Which of the following most accurately reflects your interest in the *ATA Magazine*?

- I look forward to reading every issue.
- When I have time, I flip through the pages and read articles that catch my eye.
- I read it when a colleague notes something of interest.
- I have no interest in the magazine at all.



## 2. On average, how long do you spend reading an issue of the *ATA Magazine*?

- No time
- A few minutes
- More than 5 minutes but less than 15 minutes
- 15 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour

## 3. What format do you typically use to read the *ATA Magazine*?

- Print
- Online
- Both print and online
- Neither

## 4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The <i>ATA Magazine</i> gives me a positive impression of the Alberta Teachers' Association.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The <i>ATA Magazine</i> makes me feel connected to the teaching profession.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The <i>ATA Magazine</i> helps me understand issues in education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The <i>ATA Magazine</i> provides me with the level of confidence I need to discuss education issues in a knowledgeable manner with my colleagues, parents and other members of the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Articles in the <i>ATA Magazine</i> are an appropriate/comfortable length.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The layout and design of the <i>ATA Magazine</i> are appealing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The content of the <i>ATA Magazine</i> is interesting, informative and engaging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 5. Please rate the extent to which you enjoy reading/viewing various content in the *ATA Magazine*:

	Very much	A fair amount	Some	A little	Not at all	I don't know
Editor's Notebook	<input type="radio"/>					
From the President column	<input type="radio"/>					
The Secretary Reports column	<input type="radio"/>					
Academic essays on current education issues	<input type="radio"/>					
Magazine-style feature articles on current education issues	<input type="radio"/>					
Research Roundup	<input type="radio"/>					
Teacher Wares	<input type="radio"/>					
Calendar	<input type="radio"/>					
ATA library resource listings	<input type="radio"/>					

## 6. What other types of content would you like to see included in the *ATA Magazine*?

7. Issues of the *ATA Magazine* are usually built around a specific theme related to public education and/or the Alberta Teachers' Association. For example, recent issues have focused on leadership, wellness, ATA history, curriculum and assessment. What topics would you like to see addressed in future issues of the publication?

8. In general, what magazines and/or periodicals do you read regularly?

9. Please list any other comments you would like to share.

I am a ... (check all that apply)

- Teacher
- School-based administrator
- School jurisdiction leader
- Government official/employee
- Academic
- Retired/life member
- Other (please specify)

My age is ...

- Under 34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

My gender is ...

My community is ...

- Calgary or surrounding area
- Edmonton or surrounding area
- Fort McMurray
- Grande Prairie
- Lethbridge
- Medicine Hat
- Red Deer
- Other city or large town
- Small town or rural

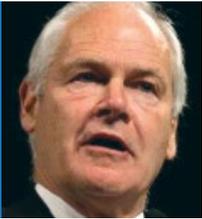
Name:

Email:

This information will be used only for the purposes of the draw and will not be used elsewhere or provided to other parties.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Completed paper surveys can be sent to associate editor Cory Hare.

Email: [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca) | Fax: 780-455-6481 | Mail: 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, AB, T5N 2R1



PAUL  
GOULTER

# NEW HOPE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND

Aotearoa (the Maori name for New Zealand) is in the enviable position of having a new progressive Labour-led government, which means we have had a lot of positive changes in education in a short space of time. Our experience in some ways parallels the hopes Alberta teachers had three years ago when the NDP formed the government. As I consider our partnership with the Alberta Teachers' Association and schools in your province, I offer the following as a reflection of what our new government has done to effect positive change, but just as importantly, what our teachers and their organization are collectively doing to continually hold the government to account to create a great school for all New Zealand students.

Achieved with the help of our highly motivated members, many of the wins for our union, NZEI Te Riu Roa, started under the previous National government, which was hell-bent on privatizing education and running a neoliberal agenda. I am pleased to say that we (in collaboration with our colleagues at the PPTA—the secondary school teacher union—principals groups and other allies), were able to get a lot of traction in the past two years.

Under National, we stopped the introduction of bulk funding of schools and centres (including teacher salaries), thanks to an unprecedented turnout of NZEI and PPTA members at joint meetings around the country. We made our voices heard and the government backed down.

Throughout the nine years of the previous government, our members stood strong in their opposition to the introduction of charter schools and national standards, a narrow, test-

driven regime that limited the curriculum and stifled teaching and learning.

Among the very first acts of the new government late last year were the ditching of charter schools and national standards. It was a cause of great celebration in the sector. Schools are now free to focus on the broad curriculum, and any of the 10 existing charter schools that wish to continue operating will need to meet the requirements to be absorbed into the state system.

The government is now looking to develop a 30-year plan for education—a cross-party initiative free of the political interference that inevitably goes with the three-yearly cycle of elections. Summits will soon be held to get input from everyone who has an interest in quality public education.

We will be heavily involved in this work and want to keep the child at the centre. Not only is this important for any changes to education, but this also resonates with our communities, parents and other allies.

We are also working hard on two campaigns, one of which is *Kua tae te wā — It's Time*.

It's timely and important. There is a crisis in education in our country. Schools and early childhood centres are scrambling for qualified teachers. Teacher trainee establishments report a 40 per cent drop in people applying to be teachers over the past six years, and many teachers cannot afford to live in some of our more expensive cities. Teachers and principals are burning out, stressed and



dealing with increasing numbers of children with additional learning and behavioural needs.

They need a pay jolt to keep them in teaching, but they also need more time to teach and lead, and more resources for children with additional learning and behavioural needs. The campaign is addressing all these issues.

The solution needs to be sustainable not only to keep teachers in our schools but for children to have the education they deserve.

hope for progress, it will take some years to address the myriad problems we face.

At the same time we have a three-pronged pay equity campaign underway for some of our lowest paid workers in education.

We are in various stages of claim development and mediation for members working in three areas: support staff (teacher aides and administrators), early childhood staff and Ministry

## While we hope for progress, it will take some years to address the myriad problems we face.

The government has acknowledged the issues the schooling sector faces and the urgent need to take bold steps to turn the situation around. However, solutions will not be cheap and other public services have also been desperately underfunded over the past 10 years. We will be closely watching the government's budget announcement in May, and while we

of Education itinerant staff such as education support workers. In all these areas, the workforce is largely women, and they have suffered pay injustices for too long.

We have been negotiating with the ministry for a year to get a pay equity settlement for approximately 400 support workers employed directly by the ministry. Frustration is growing at how the ministry is dragging its heels, in sharp contrast to the positive noises being made about pay equity by government ministers.

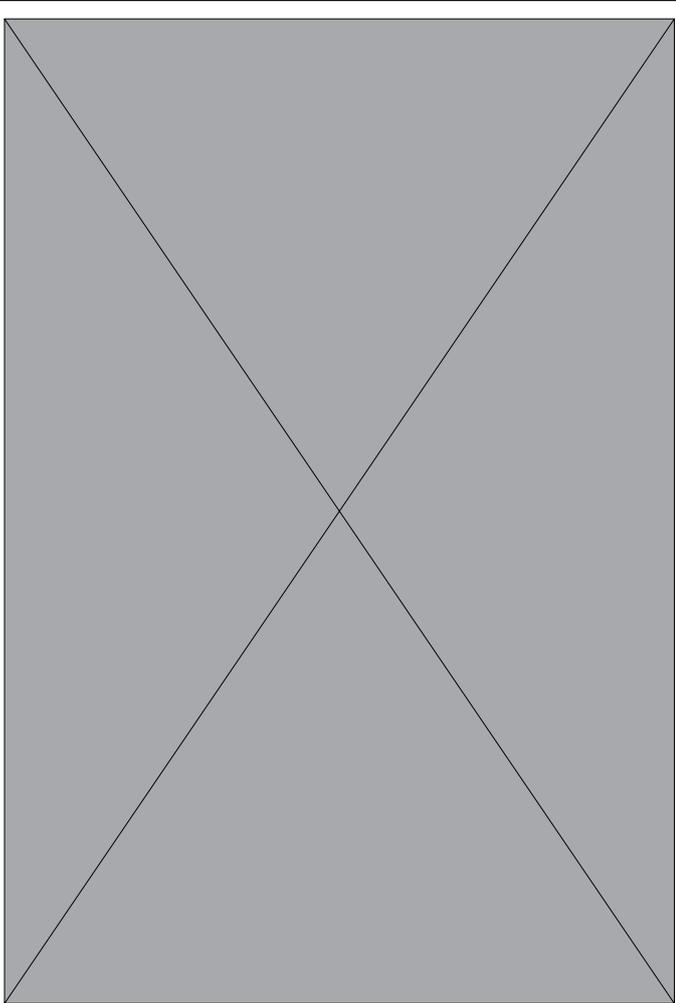
A return to court is likely, which would not be a good look for the government because the pay equity campaign is popular with the public. It has a large groundswell of support from the community, especially parents, who talk about the value of these people who are teaching and supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

Pay equity issues are prominent at the moment, with various sectors involved in claims for their female-dominated workforces. Last year, 55,000 aged-care workers won a \$2 billion government-funded pay equity settlement. The breakthrough has given hope to thousands of workers, and rest home carer Kristine Bartlett was recently named Kiwibank 2018 New Zealander of the Year for her work in leading the campaign.

So we are carving out some deep tracks, and it definitely feels that we are on a roll. Our members are behind us, our allies are on board, we have a sympathetic government and the collective agreements are up for negotiation soon. We are confident we will make more progress this year. We share with our Alberta colleagues and their association a commitment to ensure the future is not something that will just happen. Keeping our two progressive governments on track is the work ahead for both New Zealand and Alberta teachers and the strategic promise of the present moment.

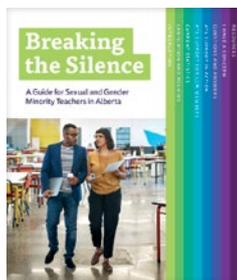
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*Paul Goulter is national secretary of NZEI Te Riu Roa in New Zealand.*



## NEW ATA PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

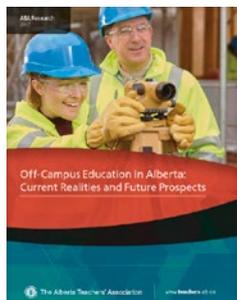
Check out the latest publications from the Alberta Teachers' Association. To order your copy of the Association's newest publications, email [distribution@ata.ab.ca](mailto:distribution@ata.ab.ca).



### *Breaking the Silence: A Guide for Sexual and Gender Minority Teachers in Alberta*

The Alberta Teacher's Association is committed to fostering understanding and acceptance of sexual and gender minority (SGM) teachers and works to protect the conditions of professional practice for all

members. This guide was written to help break the silence that still surrounds the experiences of SGM teachers in schools. It is a source of information and support for SGM teachers who have questions or concerns about matters related to their employment. (PD-80-40 2018 04)



### *Off-Campus Education in Alberta: Current Realities and Future Prospects*

This study explores select off-campus coordinators' (OCCs) responses to questions about their employment experiences, administrative responsibilities and working conditions. The report raises awareness about the important role of OCCs and

emphasizes their often inconsistent and nonformalized positions in Alberta schools.

(COOR-101-14, 2017 12, 64 pp)

## SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT AVAILABLE TO BOOK

The 3% Project is a sustainability project that mobilizes one million Canadian youth (three per cent of Canada) through five national tours across 600 schools. It provides youth-friendly and holistic education on climate change and empowers youth to take action today on solving climate change in their local communities. The project is targeted towards students in grades 8 to 12, is free of charge to schools, and involves a school assembly, workshop and mentorship program.

The project's on-the-road team will be returning to Alberta in October 2018 and is now booking schools for this second tour. More information is available from the Foundation for Environmental Stewardship (FES) at [www.fesplanet.org](http://www.fesplanet.org).

## RESPECTFUL SCHOOLS ONLINE TOOLKIT

A new online toolkit is available to help teachers and principals create respectful school learning environments through human rights education.

Developed by the Alberta Teachers' Association in collaboration with various partners, the Respectful Schools Online Toolkit provides curriculum-related activities, lesson plans and resources that help teachers demonstrate concepts like fairness, equity and inclusion.

The toolkit was developed due to a 2015 amendment to the *School Act* that added a requirement that school boards, students and parents contribute to a "welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging."

The toolkit contains resources, articles and real-world best practices related to human rights and human rights education. It's available on the ATA website at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) >News and Info>Announcements.

## INFUSE THE ORC INTO YOUR CURRICULUM

The Online Reference Centre (ORC) is a collection of \$1.4 million worth of resources that can be accessed through [LearnAlberta.ca](http://LearnAlberta.ca). The ORC makes it easier than ever for teachers to incorporate digital resources that support inquiry-based research and information literacy skills into their curriculum planning.

ORC resources support all grades from K–12 and cover a wide variety of subject areas including mathematics, sciences, computer sciences, human geography, psychology and art. Materials are also applicable for students in IB and AP programs and for those learning in a language other than English.

Using the ORC will not only support inquiry projects, it will also teach your students necessary information literacy skills by providing them with high-quality, professionally vetted, curricular-aligned resources—and the benefits do not stop there! Interactive features such as text-to-speech, text translation, text highlighting, text prediction and embedded dictionaries/thesauruses level the playing field for classrooms of diverse learners. Many of the ORC resources allow students to share articles through social media, subscribe to RSS feeds and download articles to MP3.

To help teachers learn about the features and benefits of the resources, the ORC has developed a robust website that provides just-in-time support for teachers ([www.onlinereferencecentre.ca](http://www.onlinereferencecentre.ca)).





ROAR  
GRØTTVIK

# PUBLIC EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS

We all know that good, free and equal education for all is under pressure, for many reasons. Technological developments make it possible to produce huge amounts of data, which in education is used as a superficial measure for the quality and results of the education system. These datasets have fostered a reductionist view of education in political circles, in the press and in parts of the public where education is expected to produce results in numerical form. Reducing the results of education to numbers on a scale has also opened possibilities for competition and, therefore, also for commercialization of all parts of the education system. All of this contributes to rob the teaching profession of its core mission, which is to make professional judgements about how teaching and learning should be done with the unique children and pupils teachers are responsible for.

How can we defend the core values in education and of the profession? First of all, we must protect and uphold the core ethical values of the profession, which is to give the highest priority to the interests of the learners. We must give the children and the pupils an even better learning experience by strengthening their inner motivation by reducing the value of test results, by giving the pupils a variety of learning situations and a feeling of learning together with a whole learning community.

We must work to change the general top-down culture that characterizes the whole education system from the minister to children in early learning and pupils in the classroom.

This will be an enormous task in the next few years, one for which we must take responsibility together, as a professional community, nationally and internationally. We can succeed only if we work together because there are enormous opponents, especially “Big Money.” We can succeed in this fight only if we learn from each other. If we cooperate with the pupils, the parents and the local communities, we can find the strength to avoid the distractions of the culture of testing and rankings. This is one of the lessons we have learned from our three-year partnership with Alberta and

Ontario schools (NORCAN) as we connect schools in an effort to foster equity in subjects such as mathematics.

We need new ideas, and we need to analyze our practices from the outside. One way of doing this is through collaboration networks. National and international networks of students, teachers and school leaders have proven to be strong drivers for a change of culture in and around educational institutions. Such projects generate ideas, experiments, new roles, new relations and they give the participants new positions from which they can evaluate their own practice and their need for new knowledge and competence. It gives parents and the local communities the chance to actively take part in the work. And we can use the new technology actively to reach our goals, both as instruments for learning and as instruments for communication.

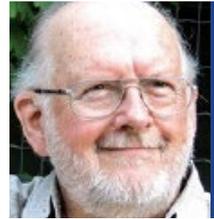
The teaching profession must set itself in the driver’s seat of this cultural struggle for the soul of education that is quickly coming our way. Our organizations, both the ATA in Alberta and the Union of Education Norway (UEN), are the only representative organizations for the teaching profession in our jurisdictions. Therefore, it is up to us to lead the work. We need to build strong international partnerships. But we also need to build a strong coalition with the students and their parents and the local communities. We need to help our students develop a strong voice, both in relation to what is happening in the classroom, but also to give them a voice in the political debate about the future of our education system. This cultural struggle is really about what kind of community we would like our children to grow up in.

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*Roar Grøttvik is a political advisor to the elected leadership of the Union of Education Norway, the dominant teacher union in Norway. He is a member and representative of the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD, and a member of the NORCAN partnership between schools in Norway, Alberta and Ontario.*



WILSON  
WINNITTOY



# THE TWO QUESTIONS AT THE HEART OF STRATEGIC THINKING

From English teacher to strategic planner; how did that happen? What was the journey from pondering Hamlet's "we defy augury" to getting into the augury game myself? It mostly happened in the Calgary public school system and was always about learning, sometimes very steep learning.

At the beginning of September 1963, I was a newbie standing at the back of the gymnasium at Henry Wise Wood Senior High. It was the school opening assembly. As the principal read out my home room class list, a dapper, otherwise composed and obviously seasoned colleague on my right began muttering under his breath. It seemed that, in his view, I had been handed a crate of bad eggs with whom to begin my career, and he took me aside to share some advice. I was grateful. I not only survived, but found I liked teaching, and many of the bad eggs turned out to be rather good ones once I got to know them. And the advice helped.

A few lines above I used the word career. Back then I believed that stable and predictable careers existed and that I should have a plan. I decided that I would like to become an English department head, with maybe a successful textbook or two along the way. That did not happen. Over the coming years I was to learn that I would not have a career as much as *be had* by one, a rather interesting, challenging and unpredictable one as it turned out, for which I am grateful to the Calgary Board of Education. We call them career paths now; expect choices and surprises.

I liked exploring the power of poetic language with my students. We grappled with the idea that poetry doesn't have to have verses and rhymes. "Well then, what is it?" they asked. Not the time or place for a poetry lesson here, but ...

Perhaps these were signals, with the benefit of hindsight, that my journey would take me toward the kind of thinking we call strategic planning. It could be that my 1960s idea of a career turned into a personal and professional process of coming to grips with change and uncertainty, and the pitfalls of linear thinking. And it could be that working with imagery and symbolism and discerning layers of meaning and disentangling ambiguity was, who knew, part of my early preparation to be a strategic planner.

## THE PROBLEM WITH PLANNING

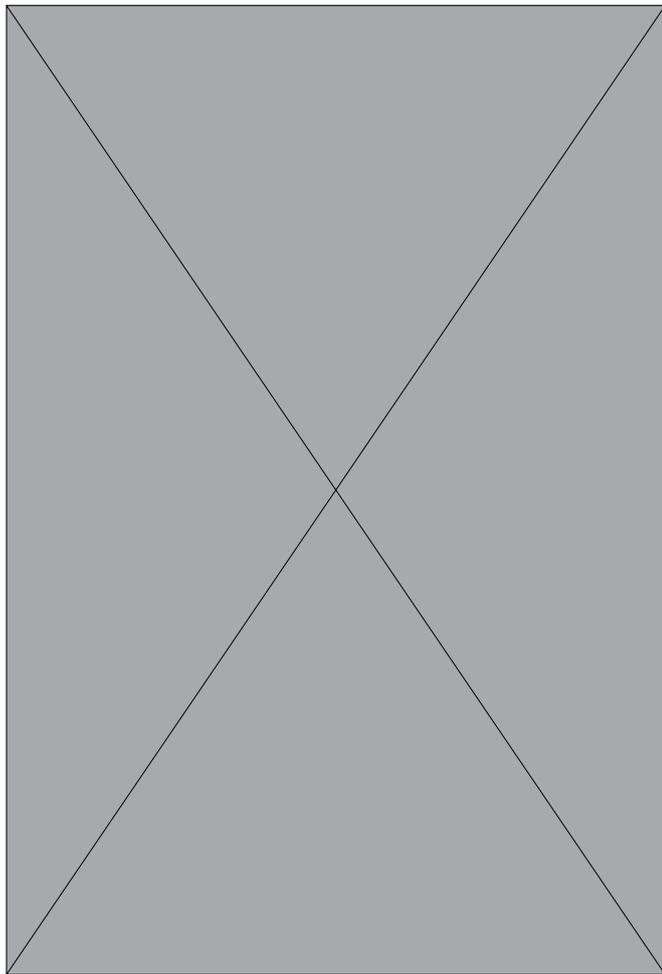
In 1968 I left the classroom for a two-year appointment at the romantically titled central office, the place we hardened staffroom types referred to dismissively as "downtown." I should have spoken more sweetly of it. I did not know that my two-year appointment would extend to more than 30 years. Perhaps I needed the extra time to get it right.

Increasingly my job titles had the word "planning" in them: "educational planning," "corporate planning." What was going on? Our school system, like many other organizations, was leaving the old world of administration and entering the new world of management. In the old world, having a plan meant knowing the culture and "how we usually do things

around here,” with maybe a nod to any new twists on old problems. The magic words were certainty and predictability.

In the new world, we were preparing reports on alternative schools, sex education, drug education, school discipline and employee burnout. Change and complexity were increasing as evidenced by frequent references to turbulence and white water. Management consultants appeared and suggested we should improve our research and planning by, well, actually doing more of it. We began to do comprehensive long-term plans that were meant to be more integrated with a clearer picture of multi-year outcomes. But there was a problem.

Plans should not be answers in search of a question, desperately trying to connect with the world that has spawned them. It turned out that the time it took to create five-year and seven-year plans began to exceed the validity of the assumptions and problem definitions that had launched them. Their half-lives of relevance shortened as the time to debate and approve them lengthened. These plans and their long lists of recommendations trudged off to live in dark and quiet spaces at the back of filing cabinets. Words such as adaptiveness, resilience and organizational learning began to adorn the spines of management texts. And just in time, along came strategic planning, and my career turned another corner.



Enough history. In 1992, I was invited to join the ATA’s newly formed Strategic Planning Group (SPG). The ATA already had a track record of moving beyond linear into anticipatory planning. The SPG brought very good people to the planning table to do important work. What did I bring to that table?

I have a two-word definition I like to work with. Strategic planning is “against fatalism.”<sup>1</sup> The soul of brevity, you might think: a two-word definition. But some explanation is required.

First of all, when an organization decides to think forward strategically, a fundamental decision has been made. That decision is a declaration, “We can intervene in our future. We can shape it in positive and deliberate ways. No matter how solid, seamless and relentless the forces acting on us may look, we can and will find the cracks and openings where we can create change.”

## CO-CREATING CHANGE

Truly intervening in the future should not be confused with just getting better at anticipating threats and girding up the organizational loins to deal with them. The result is only a more strategic version of fatalism. “Yup, the same stuff keeps comin’ round, but now we’re really prepared.” The strategic thinking decision signals that the organization is committed to a long-term organizationwide effort to learn about and shape its future in profound and enduring ways.

More than that, the decision declares that the organization will not work just internally, but will step out into the world as a cocreator of change. The operating environment is a source of learning and the locale in which enduring change will be created. Working outside the organizational boundary as well as inside is how the merry-go-round of reacting to threats and issues begins to be changed to fruitful engagement with opportunities and a positive influence on the interplay between the organization and its environment.

Secondly, the decision to think strategically commits the organization to a new discipline of learning in two significant areas that are defined by these questions:

- What kind of future do we want?
- What kind of world will we be creating it in?

Answering the first question requires the organization to express its ideals, values and beliefs. It should look at its history, policies, commitments and stands it has taken on important issues. It should talk to lots of people, internal and external. It should wordsmith and road test carefully; language so often falls short or misrepresents. The result should be a vivid depiction of the preferred

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Michel Godet for these words, which appeared in his book *Scenarios and Strategic Management*, Butterworth Scientific, UK, 1987, pg.3.

future, sometimes called a vision statement. It should not be an elevator speech, a silly term that only made sense when elevators were hand-cranked and took a long time to get to the top floor. But it should be kept brief. Hint: if you like telling people about it with only a slightly crazed look in your eyes, you've probably done a good job.

Answering the second question requires the organization to study its environment to see what forces are at work and how they are unfolding through time. Scanning news and events to discern trends is great organizational learning. It also helps us understand that although we may have different perspectives, we see essentially the same world out there and by putting our heads together, we can decipher the changes. The result will likely be some sort of statement of trends or meta-narratives that describes the road we are all on. If you share this work, people will want to come to your meetings. Hint: mild stimulants help; order extra coffee and doughnuts.

## LEARNING LEADS TO INFLUENCE

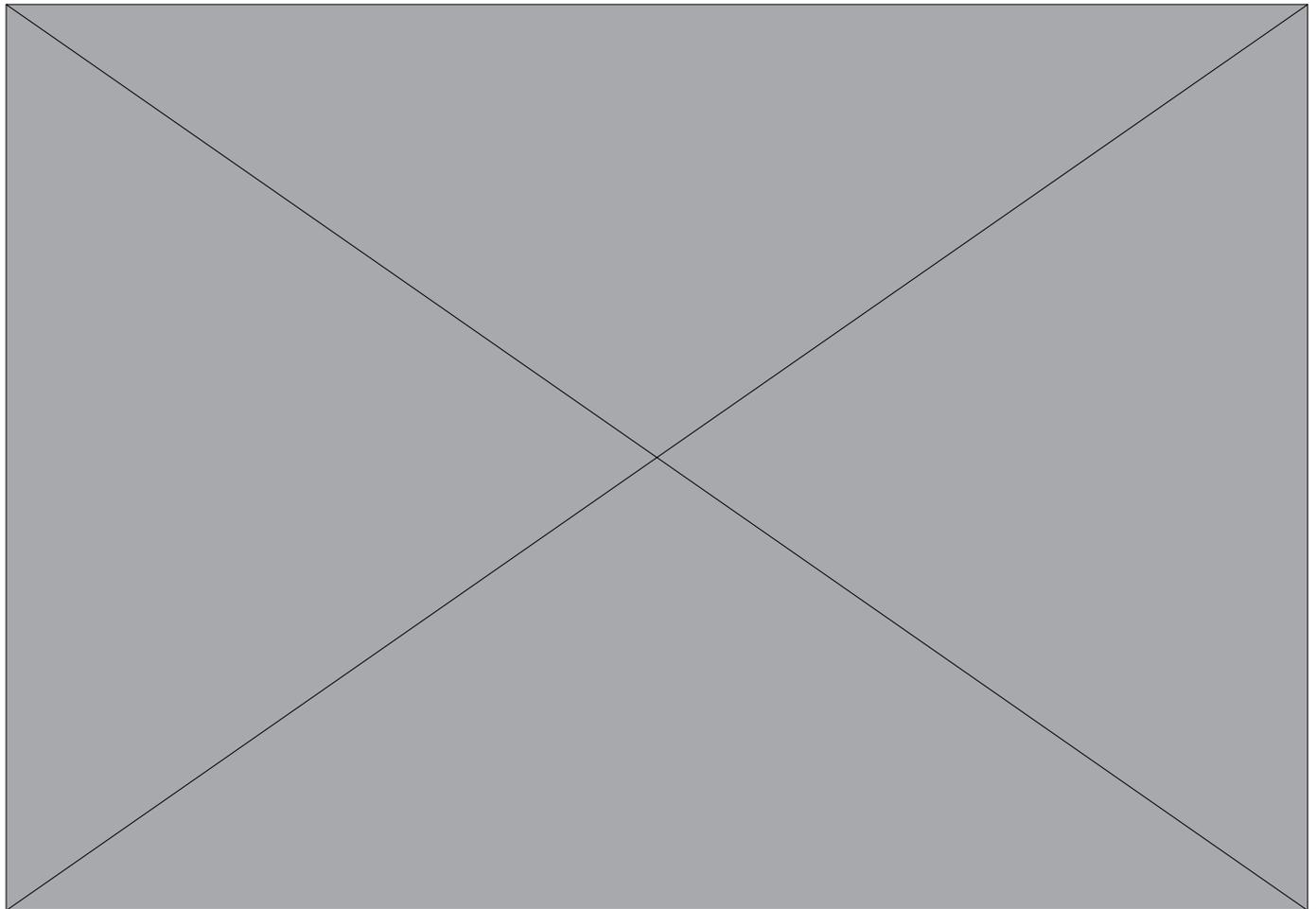
There are bags of tools and techniques. Other forms of learning such as scenarios can be very useful. But they ultimately feed the two questions I have described above. If you don't know what you want or the kind of world you will journey through to get there, actions will disappoint. The

culmination will be a plan, probably called a strategic plan, with papa, mama and baby bear-sized outcomes covering the next three to five years of the organization's life. Yes, some of the paperwork may trudge off to live in dark and quiet spaces at the back of filing cabinets, but if the learning has been done well, the plan will be influential and will change the life of the organization as well as the lives touched by it.

This has happened with strategic planning at the ATA and it has been a privilege to be a part of it. Alberta teachers can rest assured that their professional organization is anticipating change, not just reacting to it, and is ensuring the futurity of its policies and decisions.

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J-C  
COUTURE

## THE INCOMPETENCY OF HOPE

*“Il futuro ha un cuore antico.”  
(The future has an ancient heart.)*

—Carlo Levi (1956)

There is a bittersweet irony as I write this, my last column, in an issue whose theme focuses on the future forces shaping public education. I am wrapping up 20 years with the Alberta Teachers’ Association, preceded by an equal amount of time as a classroom teacher. In many respects this has been four decades working through the recognition that teaching has always been about foresight, described by Parker Palmer as the call for teachers to engage daily with their students on the question, “what does it mean to listen to a voice before it is spoken” (Palmer 2017, 47). The labour of teaching remains enigmatic and unfinished as students present, along with their teachers, as unfinished selves.

Parker Palmer’s imperative of “listening to a voice before it is spoken” represents an equally enigmatic and compelling invitation to consider the years ahead through the lens of the Association’s research efforts and its international partnerships. Driven by the Association’s strategic plan, the networks of schools and researchers initiated by the “great school for all” framework (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2012) now reaches across the globe to include New Zealand, Finland, Iceland and Norway.

- Globally, the transfer of public assets to private “edupreneurs” is increasingly evident in schools with the commercialization of educational products and services in areas such as learning resources, growing “big data” analytics infrastructures, and classroom assessment tools. Meanwhile, here in Alberta, class sizes continue to rise while growing numbers of students with special needs go unsupported.
- The teaching profession itself is challenged by efforts across the OECD to standardize practice and reduce teaching and learning to a set of so-called “transparent” practice competencies. All of this risks the conflation of standards with standardization.
- Developments in artificial intelligence are only beginning to be understood in terms of efforts to instrumentalize assessment practices and diminish the role of professional judgment.

One of the most significant challenges ahead remains the growing influence of international large-scale assessments (ILSAs) and global learning metrics (GLMs) that are increasingly shaping the reform agendas of governments and elite policy brokers. The growing data architectures of the OECD members are being used to legitimize a variety of often contradictory and paradoxical “educational policy reform agendas” (Fischman, Topper and Silova 2017, 10). The consequences here in Alberta are very real. For example,

One of the most significant challenges ahead remains the growing influence of international large-scale assessments and global learning metrics.

These partnerships and the global challenges in which they’ve been engaged were recently reviewed by a panel of researchers brought together by the Association at the Twin Peaks international summit held in Banff in April 2018:

- Austerity (framed as “doing more with less”) and resistance to reforming outdated test-based accountability regimes sit in stark contrast to policy pronouncements from the OECD and education ministries, including Alberta’s, promoting bold and innovative educational change through a “future ready” curriculum.

while the profession has been assured that we are not assessing competencies in the new programs of study, the risk is that the recently launched OECD Global Competency Framework will confuse and distract efforts at curriculum redevelopment. By assessing global competencies in the PISA 2018 program, Alberta will further implicate itself in the culture of competitive comparison that inevitably leads to an effort to “rank up” among OECD education ministries (Sorensen 2017). As two of our international research partners argue, the misguided effort to assess global competencies on large-scale assessments such as PISA fails to recognize “that there is no such object as ‘global

competence’ that we can empirically validate—leading us to the problem of ‘dynamic nominalism’—that the international assessment invents global competence as a physical object that will then influence education systems across the globe” (Rutkowski and Thompson 2018).

The challenges we face—environmental collapse including climate change, automation of work, deskilling of jobs, increasing population—demand a different kind of response from our governments than the framing of education as the development of human capital. As with any policy aspiration, the focus on global competencies is typical of most policy making: to achieve “visions of education and the imaginary futures that nations seek to make reality” (Zhao and Gearin 2018). Yet, as with all visions, the potential is to create both dreams and nightmares.

Time and again our international partnerships have demonstrated the need to articulate the case for a recommitment to a values-based school system that seeks a just, resilient and vibrant civil society. This was reinforced in the international partnership network at a major summit in Reykjavik, Iceland in October 2017. Titled *More Than Your Evidence*, the summit brought together an international research team of experts, school leaders and teachers from Iceland, Norway, Alberta and Finland, along with 20 former high school students from the Association’s FINAL and NORCAN partnerships, to consider the impacts of the experiences of being involved in school development efforts through the international partnership initiatives. With their high school experiences behind them and the benefit of two to three years in post-secondary education or the workforce, the youth participants offered their perspectives on the benefits of being involved as leaders in educational change. The issues young people discussed ranged from precarious employment, student debt load, environmental collapse and growing psycho-social issues.

Wallin (in press) sees many of the psycho-social issues young people encounter within the broader contexts of making meaning in the age of the Anthropocene, where there is “no longer any more room for nature,” where it has been projected that up to 50 per cent of all animal species will face extinction by midcentury. In Wallin’s view, young people today are living at a nexus point in history where tectonic shifts related to looming environmental collapse are being satiated by an almost relentless “exploitative cheapening of life” through the “re-enchanted world” of video games such as *Pokémon GO*, and where screen time is increasingly pushing out the messy materiality of the community and civil society.

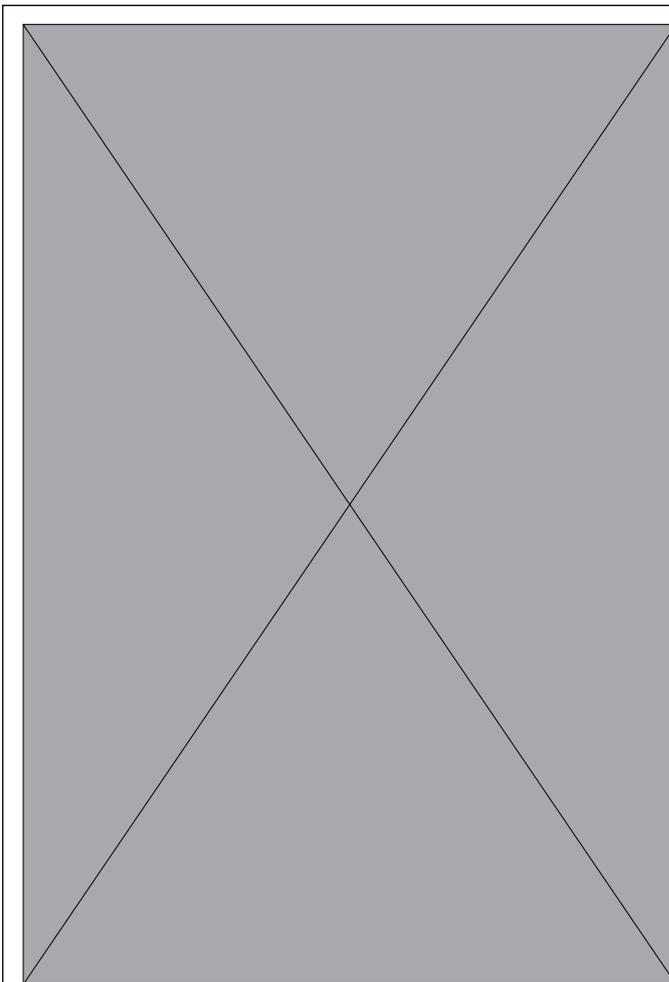
Moving beyond the OECD’s global competency framework being constructed by policy makers to “rank up” through data

infrastructures, we need to attend to the growing body of scholarship and work such as the *More Than Your Evidence* summit by inviting students and teachers to offer their conceptions of well-being and wellness in ways that are often disruptive and destabilizing of the status quo.

To allow teachers’ care for students to be replaced by the hollowed-out ciphers of GLM rankings dressed in the guise of competencies—all mobilized by the attenuated global metrics of data dashboards and “ranking up”—is to silence what good teachers have always aspired to do: nurture other people’s children.

I am reminded from one of the most influential scholars of our present generation, Bill Pinar, that perhaps Alberta’s future is one that acknowledges that “education is a private engagement in a public world for the redemption of both (Pinar cited in Block 2001, 37).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a full treatment see William F. Pinar, “The Problem with Curriculum and Pedagogy.”



At a recent meeting of our New Zealand school partners grappling with the assaults on public education, a principal called for teachers and school leaders “to move beyond seeing hope as a form of optimistic moaning.” While critique of and resistance to the global forces of datafication and neoliberal reforms are important, teachers and their organizations must offer concrete examples of how positive change can be driven by networks of schools committed to a great school for all. The continued support by Alberta teachers for the international network of students, teachers, school leaders and researchers will offer both hope and possibility as a different story than one told by the OECD and the culture of competitive comparison.

Perhaps it is time for teachers to rekindle the invitation from 30 years ago in Madeline Grumet’s (1988) invocation in *Bitter Milk*:

Our silence certifies ‘the system’ and we become complicit with theorists and teachers who repudiate the intimacy of nurture in their own histories and in their work in education (p. xvi).

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DENNIS  
THEOBALD

## THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND THE UTOPIAN TRAP

I was walking with my son in an older neighbourhood in Edmonton when we came across a school building, sitting, like a castle or cathedral complete with tower and battlements, among modest wood frame houses, some built in the first decades of the last century. Andrew observed, rather sadly, the contrast between the school now in front of us and the ones currently under construction: “There was a time when schools were built in brick and stone to last a hundred years ... you wonder what they were thinking.” It’s a good question to ask as the Alberta Teachers’ Association enters its second century.

Old King Edward School and those like it that can be found in cities and towns across Alberta were a material expression of a community’s belief in the central importance of education and confidence in the future. The builders of those schools lived in an imperfect world and yet persevered in the belief that things could be better, at least for their children, and that public education would be the vehicle for progress. Even though school structures today are built to last decades rather than a century, these beliefs continue to drive the demands that are placed on public education.

And those demands can be onerous: we expect our schools to be more safe, more gentle, more nurturing, more inclusive, more meritocratic, more egalitarian, more rational, more responsive, more anticipatory, more interesting, more stimulating and more virtuous in every respect than the larger community within which they are rooted. Our schools are expected to be, in microcosm,

a model of what we say we would want our society to be. This is the utopian vision of education and its role in creating the future.

It is also a trap.

Here is the problem: utopian perfection is by its nature unattainable and the utopian vision imposes upon public education unrealistic expectations about what schools can achieve. Public education’s imperfections are then perceived as failures of the system and of teachers. In the minds of many, the critical question then becomes, who can we hold accountable, or, more directly, who can we blame?

The utopian vision also poses a particular danger in that it can far too easily be used to advance a future that is singular, uncompromising and ultimately corrosive. We have the legacy of residential schools to prove that what was originally conceived of in grand utopian terms by persons of power and influence visited immense suffering on children, their descendants and their communities.

Finally, it is a consequence of this utopian vision of public education that there is a tendency popular in political circles and among opinion leaders to “educationalize” various social and economic ills. Even as public education is excoriated for its apparent failures, the expectation is that education will ultimately deliver the grand solution at some point in the future. This provides a ready made excuse to not actually do anything in the present to

meaningfully confront real problems. It doesn’t help that even the most expensive and sweeping investment in education is cheaper than the most minimal attempt to deal with the hard consequences associated with entrenched income inequality, systematic racism, diminished competitiveness and individual alienation. Public education is, for too many politicians, what alcohol is to Homer Simpson: the cause of—and solution to—all of life’s problems.

We can escape this utopian trap. Let’s start by recognizing that many of the demands made on schools are often fundamentally unreasonable, and then let’s give our schools a break. As we consider the future, we need to be realistic and grounded. We need to understand that while there is much good that can be done, there are limits to what public education and teachers can achieve in and for the world.

It is deeply and tragically ironic that the majestic school building that Andrew and I were looking at and that embodied so much optimism for the future was dedicated in 1913. Less than a year later, the guns of August would sound and the future would never be the same. Still, more than a century later, the school resounded with play, laughter, conversation and learning. There is some redemption in that.



GREG  
JEFFERY

## TEACHERS NEED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

*“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,”*

We often hear these days that education is at a crossroads. This I believe is certainly true, and the divergence is one of political ideology. The choices are a strengthened public system versus one of parental choice, as a thinly veiled disguise for privatization.

As an example of the strengthened public system, let’s look at Finland. Teachers there are highly respected, professional and work with a great deal of autonomy. Competition to become a teacher in Finland is fierce. Only seven per cent of the applicants to the five-year masters program for primary education are accepted.

Why is that? Teacher autonomy, localized curriculum and students given time to learn continually produce world-leading results. This circular model makes the Finnish system the envy of most of the world.

*“And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could”*

Long I stood. We have certainly stood long enough and will undoubtedly be faced with a choice in Alberta in the near future. While there is not yet formal policy adopted by the opposition, we have heard statements about full funding for private schools. In my estimation, that is a large step down one of the diverging roads — not my choice of road, however.

Public education remains the great equalizer and needs protection from those who would replace it as a matter of convenience and cost savings. All our children deserve an education that allows them to be the best they can be and to strive for anything that they can dream.

As teachers we know that learning does not take place without relationships, and perhaps the fight to preserve our highly regarded system in Alberta begins with us. We need to speak to friends, the

to choose the path that moves towards a strong, vibrant, universal model for the greater public good.

*“Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I ever should come back.”*

If the wrong road is chosen, economic realities would suggest that there is no return. The wrong path taken because of financial concern sets up a situation where the cost to re-create what we have would be prohibitive. It is much more economical to maintain and enhance than to rebuild. If our present system is what we want, then we cannot let it get away. The fight for the future of public education will be ours.

*“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,”*

It would be easy to decide that the threat is not that great, that what I’ve described here is hyperbole. While that is indeed possible, it is a risk far too great to take. When future Albertans look back to

Public education remains the great equalizer and needs protection from those who would replace it as a matter of convenience and cost savings.

Let’s compare this with the U.S. The Teach for America program takes post-secondary students from many different disciplines, gives them a five-week pedagogy program in the summer and then places them into low-income schools as the teacher of record. Couple this with an education secretary who favours vouchers, choice and charter schools, and it is easy to see the reasons for lack of respect in the American public school system. This is a design for public school failure.

parents of our students, politicians and any others we can think of about the importance of maintaining a vibrant public education system for future generations in our province. If the next election is decided on economic factors alone, the value of what we have built will be buried by the debate over the bottom line. Public good has value and we need to teach that to the electorate of Alberta.

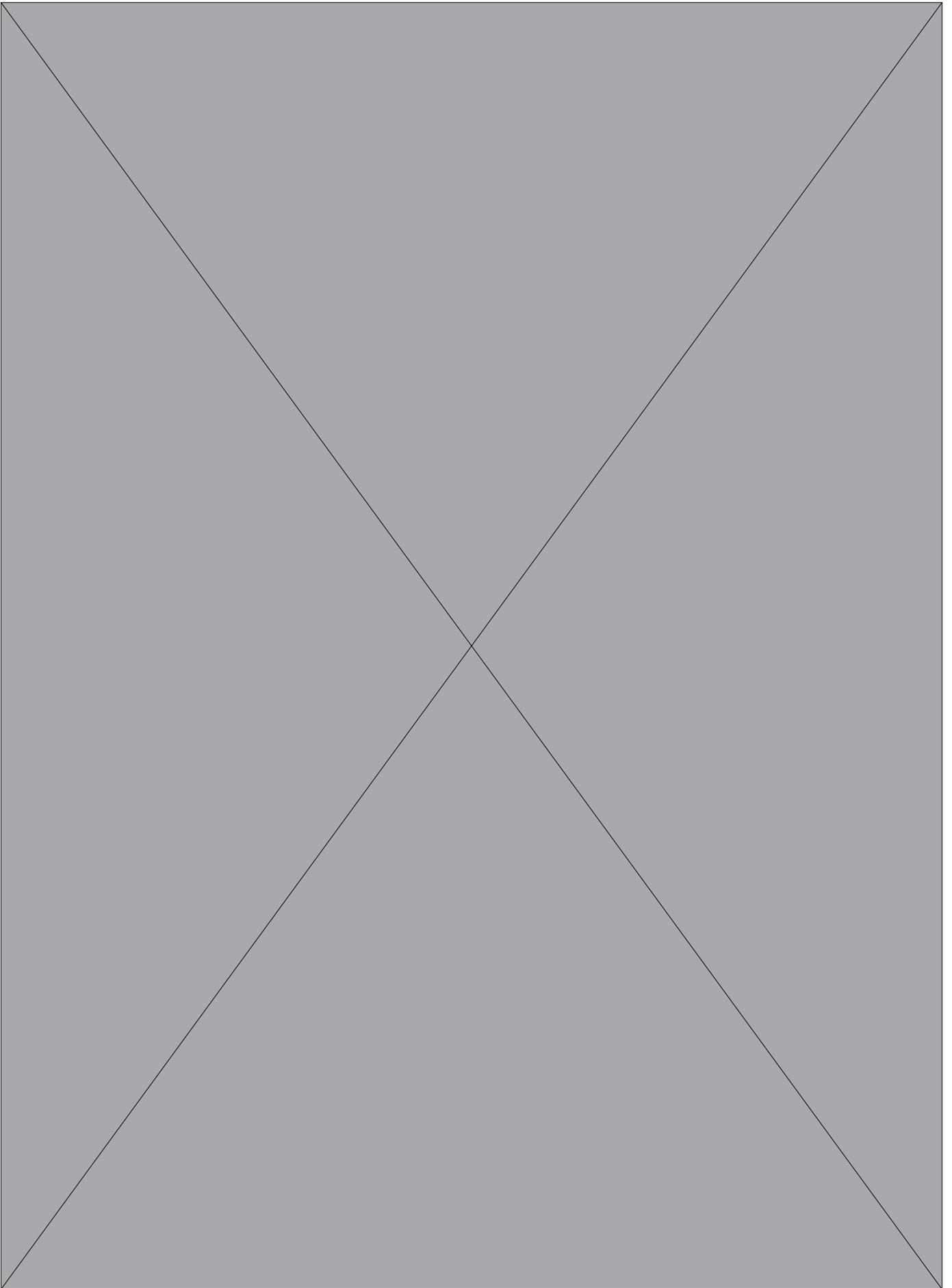
While the diverging roads do not lead directly to Finland or to the U.S., I want

our time in history it must be with a feeling of pride and of relief that Alberta teachers led the charge to maintain one of the best systems on the planet. Once again teachers will have helped shape the future and our province ... and its citizens will be the better for it.

We as teachers have always made a difference, and now should not be an exception.

*“And that has made all the difference.”<sup>1</sup>*

1 Quotes from “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, 1920



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