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The Alberta Teachers' Association

WINTER 2018



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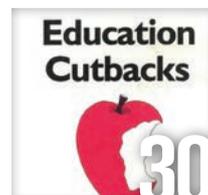
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 The Alberta Teachers' Association



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JONI
TURVILLE

INVESTING IN EDUCATION ENABLES ALL STUDENTS TO THRIVE

I believe that *my* kids are the most amazing, brilliant, special people (as parents tend to feel). When they were young, I marvelled at how unique they were, right from the day they were born. My son Brock has always been a man with a plan. He thrives on routine and clear goals, and I used to tease him that his bedroom looked like a drill sergeant had just inspected it. My daughter Jaclyn is wired completely differently. She loves to go with the flow and is adaptable and creative. Her bedroom, in comparison, perpetually looked like a bomb had just detonated. Now that both are young adults, I am able to reflect on how well they were served through their schooling experiences, despite how different they are as people and as learners.

It's not easy to teach in a large classroom where there are not only Brocks and Jaclyns, but also a multitude of other students, each with unique gifts. Alberta classrooms

today are likely to have students who are learning English as an additional language and have diverse learning styles and needs. Layer into this mix an increasing number of mental health supports that are required and you have a measure of complexity that far surpasses the reality that existed even when my own children were school aged.

This issue of the *ATA Magazine* highlights some of the most pressing challenges within the public education system: class size, inclusion, early learning and mental health, the same challenges addressed in the Pledge for Public Education campaign that the Alberta Teachers' Association is encouraging teachers, parents and other concerned citizens to support.

Among the articles that follow, Jonathan Teghtmeyer examines the importance of class size and how governments have attempted to deal with it over the years. Beginning

with Alberta's Commission on Learning (ACOL), which identified specific guidelines for class size, and ending with Alberta Education's current class size initiatives, he identifies the issues inherent in reporting class size numbers. He notes that, despite ACOL and current initiatives, a generation of students have had much larger class sizes than are optimum.

Nancy Grigg reflects on the Association's 2014 Blue Ribbon Panel Report on Inclusive Education in Alberta. She notes that since the government changed the focus from special education to inclusive education, resources are becoming more scarce and classroom complexity has been increasing. She hopes that the attention paid to inclusion in the new Teaching Quality Standard will bring renewed attention, professional development and resources to teachers in order to support inclusive education.

ATAMagazine

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A proactive approach is also necessary for success in schools, beginning with early childhood education. Cynthia Prasow notes that early intervention is key in helping students be successful throughout their schooling and in life. Though we do not often think about early intervention in concrete ways, research shows that early learning can impact high school completion rates.

Describing the increasing demands for mental health supports, David Grauwiler urges a move beyond diagnoses that produce formal interventions. He advocates for viewing schools as environments where there can be more proactive

measures to encourage mental health. He reminds us of its critical importance by stating, “without mental health, there is no health.”

Though there are challenges within the system, my teaching colleagues work miracles every day to manage the many complexities of today’s classrooms.

As I think about my kids’ journey through the public education system, I couldn’t be more proud. Brock is finishing his last year of law school at the University of Ottawa, and Jaclyn is finishing her last year of a psychology degree at the University of British Columbia. Though they still have such different personalities,

each has been able to thrive in post-secondary environments thanks to their experiences with stellar public-school teachers. I am also proud that no matter the constraints that families face—such as time and finances—every student in Alberta has access to an excellent education.

I hope our province will continue to invest in public education so that all students have the opportunity to thrive, as my own children have. I also hope this issue inspires you to reflect on how public education has served you and your loved ones, understand what challenges it currently faces and move you to take action that supports all Alberta students.







JONATHAN
TEGHTMEYER

CLASS SIZE MATTERS

I do not like to admit this often, but my smallest class ever had just two students. Trust me, this was exceptional. The class was Math 31 and only met for two hours a week compared to the normal six hours. It was essentially a tutorial, and the students were expected to complete significant amounts of work on their own time between classes.

The largest class I ever had was a Physical Education 10 class with 42 students. This was a common dichotomy for a rural high school like the one where I taught, that had to make trade-offs and sacrifices in order to provide some course variety to the students. Interestingly, the average size of those two classes was 22.

The unenviable task of school administrators is to take finite funding, manage trade-offs and create the best possible educational experience for as many students as possible. Unfortunately, these trade-offs often result in less than ideal situations for many students and classes.

Administrators often try to protect the sanctity of small class sizes. There is probably no issue in education studied in greater detail than that of class size. While some people argue that the impact is not significant and some studies exist to support those claims, the vast majority of research supports the benefits of smaller classes.

My colleague, Phil McRae, recently wrote about the research in *The Learning Team*, wherein he cited two recent comprehensive reviews of class size research that said, “all else being equal, increasing class sizes will harm student outcomes” (Schanzenbach 2014, p. 10) and “ample research has indicated that children in smaller classes achieve better outcomes” (Baker, Farrie and Sciarra 2016, p. 5). Both studies noted that class size reductions benefit vulnerable (low socio-economic status, immigrant and minority) students the most.

ALBERTA’S COMMISSION ON LEARNING

On February 4, 2002 the largest teachers strike in the history of Alberta commenced. Teacher discontent was boiling over after years of education cutbacks, (including funding cuts, lost teaching positions, lost resources and salary reductions) followed by ongoing underfunding through the 1990s. Teachers sought through collective bargaining to improve long-standing concerns about deficient classroom conditions. Large class sizes were a key concern.

The dispute was ultimately settled with two resolution mechanisms: a fair arbitration process to look at teacher compensation and an independent learning commission to examine classroom conditions and other matters affecting education Alberta. With that, Alberta’s

FROM THE REPORT

Recommendation 14: Establish and implement provincewide guidelines for average class sizes across school jurisdictions.

- Rather than set legislated limits or hard and fast rules, there should be flexibility in the size of classes.
- School jurisdictions should be expected to meet the guidelines for average class sizes across their school jurisdiction. That means the guidelines would not necessarily be met in each and every classroom but should be met on average across the school jurisdiction.
- The suggested provincial guidelines should be
 - Junior kindergarten to grade 3: 17 students
 - Grades 4 to 6: 23 students
 - Grades 7 to 9: 25 students
 - Grades 10 to 12: 27 students
- Class composition should be considered by schools in setting class size. Generally, classes with special needs students, students whose first language is not English, and vulnerable and at-risk students should be smaller than the suggested guideline. Classes should also be smaller in cases where there are safety considerations such as vocational classes.
- School jurisdictions and the province should be required to report annually on average class sizes and should be accountable for explaining whether or not the guidelines have been met.
- The province should provide adequate funding to enable school jurisdictions to meet the class size guidelines. Information on average class sizes should be included in school jurisdiction profiles and used to determine provincial funding levels.

Alberta's Commission on Learning 2003, p.8

Commission on Learning (ACOL) was established.

After conducting extensive hearings and receiving numerous submissions, the commission released its final report, *Every Child Learns. Every Child Succeeds.*, in October 2003. In the report the commission stated, “no other issue received more attention during the commission’s public consultations than the issue of class size.” The commission weighed the feedback and conducted its own thorough research on the matter.

At the time, the most recent survey from Alberta Learning (the then version of Alberta Education) showed average class sizes of 19.5 students in kindergarten, 23.2 students in Grades 1 to 6 and 25.5 students for Grades 7 to 9 (Alberta’s Commission on Learning 2003, p. 67). There were no provincial guidelines. The commission felt strongly that guidelines should be established but did not recommend “hard and fast legislated rules” (Alberta’s Commission on Learning 2003, p. 71). And so it established its now oft-cited recommendations for jurisdictionwide averages of 17 students in division one, 23 in division two, 25 in division three and 27 in division four.

The commission felt strongly that guidelines should be established but did not recommend “hard and fast legislated rules.”

The commission also had recommendations related to junior kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, supports for students with special needs and access to counselling—all things highlighted in the Association’s current Pledge for Public Education campaign.

Within two months of the report’s release, the government accepted the recommendations on class size, and in July of 2004 it introduced the Class Size Initiative, committing to an additional \$149 million in funding over the next three years to hire 2,265 teachers and reduce class sizes. It worked.

By 2008, class size averages reached their lowest point, with the average K–3 class having 18.2 students (Office of the Auditor General 2018, p. 49). The provincial averages were met for Grades 4 to 12 and almost all school jurisdictions were meeting the targets for those grades as well.

But division one remained a problem. The provincial average was still above the guideline of 17, and only about a quarter of school boards were meeting the target on a

jurisdictionwide basis. That was the best we got. After that the global recession hit, and class sizes started to increase.

HERE WE GROW AGAIN

In February 2018, Alberta's auditor general (AG) released a report entitled *Processes to Manage the Student Class Size Initiative*. The AG's office examined Alberta Education's processes related to funding, collecting data and providing oversight and accountability from the inception of the class size initiative in 2004 through to the fall of 2017.

The data contained in the report showed the rapid climb in class sizes from 2008 to 2015. The report noted that the government, at the request of school boards that found it burdensome to report class size data, changed reporting requirements and allowed boards to simply post the jurisdictionwide average for each grade group. It also highlighted how funding was restructured in 2010–11 to provide an equal per pupil allocation instead of targeted funding to reduce large class sizes.

By 2017–18, the government had spent \$2.7 billion on the class size initiative, but the number of jurisdictions meeting the targets was actually lower than when the program began.

The AG's office concluded that class size funding had essentially become another layer of base instructional funding. It recommended that Alberta Education should develop an action plan and improve processes to monitor and report on the initiative, and if that did not happen then "the department



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FROM THE REPORT

Conclusion

Because of the significance of the findings described below, we conclude that the Department of Education did not, in all significant respects, have effective processes as of July 2017 to define the desired results of the Class Size Initiative, to develop an action plan to achieve those results, and to measure, monitor and report on the initiative. Based on our audit findings, it appears the department has, over time, converted Class Size Initiative funding to additional base instruction funding.

Office of the Auditor General 2018, p.2

will continue to invest money without knowing if it is effectively achieving the desired results of the initiative” (Office of the Auditor General 2018, p. 47).

THE PROBLEM WITH AVERAGES

The AG also stated that the use of averages “obscures the actual number of classes that have not met the ACOL suggested targets” (Office of the Auditor General 2018, p. 47). This was a point of contention for teachers going back to the original ACOL recommendations from 2003.

The AG also stated that the use of averages “obscures the actual number of classes that have not met the ACOL suggested targets.”

Edmonton Journal reporter Janet French wanted to know the reality of large class sizes in Alberta. After months of extensive research, the *Journal* published a week-long series of articles examining the situation. Using freedom of information requests, French obtained hard data from six Alberta school jurisdictions (two in each of Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer). The finding: more than 85 per cent of K–3 classes in these districts were oversized.

French’s investigation found a Grade 10 math class with 45 students, a Grade 11 science class with 47 students and a junior high physical education class with 67. In Red Deer, one Grade 5 class had 37 students in it.

Edmonton Public had 457 classes with between 36 and 40 kids and Red Deer Catholic had three classes in division one with 35 or more students.

The obscurity created by using averages was undeniable. As a result of this reporting, the Government of Alberta posted the full set of data with every class size in every school in the province from 2004 through 2018 on its open data portal (open.alberta.ca).

An internal analysis of the data by an economist employed by the Alberta Teachers’ Association highlights the K–3 problem. Eighty per cent of division one classes are above the ACOL recommendation and, on average, the oversized classes are nearly 30 per cent larger than the recommendation. In total, nearly 17,000 Alberta division one classrooms are oversized by more than 20 per cent. In higher grades, 11,000 classes are 20 per cent larger than recommended.

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PROVINCIAL CLASS SIZE AVERAGES

Grades	2002	2003	2008	2014	2017
K	19.5	21.7	18.2	20.2	20.2
1-3	23.2				
4-6		23.9	21.2	22.7	22.8
7-9	25	24.9	22.4	23.4	23.5
10-12		24.9	21.8	23.3	23.2

Sources: Alberta’s Commission on Learning and the Office of the Auditor General of Alberta

combined the number of oversized classes and the degree to which they are oversized. The resulting metric has jumped substantially between 2008–09 and 2015–16.

CONCLUSION

Sixteen years have passed since Alberta’s largest ever teachers strike, and the biggest issue in that dispute, class size in Alberta’s schools, is as bad as ever. Teachers, and their supportive parents, were taking a principled stand to protect the quality of education for Alberta’s students. Unfortunately those students never got to enjoy the small class sizes they were promised. The students that were entering kindergarten in 2002 are now graduating from university, and a generation of children have missed out on the benefits of small classes.

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NANCY
GRIGG

INCLUSIVE MODEL NEEDS NEW LIFE

In my years at the University of Lethbridge, I have had the very great privilege to teach and supervise preservice teachers. I love my job. I will admit, however, that my favourite day of our students' journey is their very first day—orientation day. Students are so excited, albeit with a fair dose of naiveté and apprehension, as they start their B.Ed. program.

My second favourite day is the convocation ceremony. Watching students proudly march across the stage to the cheers and applause of their family and friends warms my heart. Our graduates are full-fledged teachers by this point, and have earned the right to join one of the most important professions in our society. Still, their confidence and eagerness are mixed with a healthy sense of trepidation and anxiety about what the future holds.

I must admit that I am also somewhat apprehensive as our new graduates join a profession that is both incredibly important, but also very demanding and complex. While I have great confidence that preservice teachers are mastering the skills and knowledge necessary to start their careers, those teachers who are currently in the field tell us about the daunting (or impossible) demands that are placed on them that make teaching increasingly difficult.

Teachers strive to the point of exhaustion to best address the needs of their students, regardless of what those needs

may be. A typical classroom today will have a wide scope of students with cognitive delays, learning disabilities, ADHD and behavioural challenges, as well as those who find themselves on the autism spectrum, or perhaps even those who are gifted and talented.

In addition, we also see students who have survived traumatizing escapes from war zones, speak neither French nor English, have mental health difficulties and so many other mediating influences. And simultaneously, teachers also confront unpredictable policies and initiatives (Inspiring Education, curriculum redesign, high school flexibility, new teaching quality standards, student learner assessments), lack of appropriate funding and lack of access to necessary specialists.

Almost a decade ago, Alberta Education moved away from special education to an inclusive model. There was great optimism for this new view of education, as reflected in the *Setting the Direction Framework*, when the government approved the principles underlying the inclusive mode. More importantly, the government pledged to “develop detailed implementation and transition plans for the short, medium and longer term . . . in the context of available resources and in consultation with partners and stakeholders” (Alberta Education 2010a, p. 2).

And then there was silence.



A myriad of concerns arose across the province, which prompted the Alberta Teachers' Association to strike the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools. The resulting report was delivered in 2014, and in the intervening years, some important recommendations have been implemented. But there is much work to be done. In fact, despite ever-increasing needs, teachers and

being made in this area.” and “I hope the information makes it to the people who could do something to make change happen.” They also wanted to communicate that the inclusive model was struggling: only 14 per cent of respondents indicated that inclusion had a positive effect on teaching and learning in their classrooms, compared with 61 per cent in 2007.

It is estimated that 30 to 40 per cent of new teachers in Alberta leave the profession *within five years*.

school districts have not seen more resources materialize in schools, but have instead seen a reduction in those supports.

Comments gathered by the Blue Ribbon Panel's survey revealed how much teachers wanted to be heard: “Thank you for doing this survey. This is a critical issue that is impacting education and is being ignored or dealt with in a very superficial way. The questions you asked will hopefully put teacher voices into the discussions/decisions

And sadly, it is estimated that 30 to 40 per cent of new teachers in Alberta leave the profession *within five years*. (Shulyakovskaya 2018).

WELCOME CHANGE

One welcome change, which can be seen in the newly developed Teaching Quality Standard, includes a standard focus on inclusive education:

Establishing Inclusive Learning

Environments. A teacher establishes, promotes and sustains inclusive learning environments where diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe.

Beginning in September 2019, all new teachers must meet the revised standard in order to obtain certification in Alberta (note that teachers who already possess an Alberta teaching certificate will *not* need to recertify when the revised standards are introduced). And, it should be noted, the standards are not just for teachers. For the first time, Alberta Education has also described competencies for the Leadership Quality Standard for school and jurisdiction leaders as well as the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard. The ATA has praised the development of the three standards, as it underlines the skills and knowledge that teachers *and* leaders will need to build a truly inclusive system.

The Teaching Quality Standard will provide a framework for the preparation and professional growth of all teachers. In order to ensure that new teachers are able to achieve this standard, Alberta post-secondary institutions have a two-year period to implement appropriate courses and curriculum that will prepare students for inclusive environments. In addition to what preservice teachers are offered, I believe that certificated teachers currently working in Alberta should be able to access professional development that will facilitate the development of inclusive learning environments.

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Inspiring Education (Alberta Education 2010b, p. 21) envisioned a future where “learners’ differing needs, cultures and abilities are respected and valued within inclusive learning environments.” To date, there is little evidence that this envisioned future has been implemented successfully. My hope is that the new Teaching Quality Standard will do more than simply breathe new life into the rhetoric of an inclusive school model, but with it will come the resources and professional development needed to make this model a daily reality in schools.

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LET'S MAKE KINDERGARTEN COUNT

In Alberta, a majority of children will begin their formal schooling in a kindergarten setting. Most kindergartens are half day but some full-day kindergartens are also available. It should be noted, however, that mandatory schooling for children in Alberta begins when they are six, entering Grade 1. Kindergarten in Alberta, surprising as it may be, is not mandatory. In this paper, I refer to early learning as kindergarten for children who range in age from four-and-a-half to five-and-a-half.

Early learning should form the base of our education system and accordingly appropriate resources should be allocated to building a strong foundation for the future success of young children.

Early in my career, I taught kindergarten and grades 1 to 3 in a variety of settings. Now, as I work with preservice teachers, I continue to spend time volunteering in preschool classrooms and observing the children. Throughout all of this I have thought about, and continue to think about, issues in education that impact our next generation of adults.

During a recent visit to a kindergarten classroom, I watched a very experienced teacher read the short story *How Full is Your Bucket?* by Tom Rath and Mary Reemeyer.

Following the story, the teacher posed a question to the children: "What do you do to fill someone's bucket; to make them happy or do a special deed for someone?" Many hands went up. Most children responded with typical answers that included helping their mom set the table, give their baby sister a toy to play with, get ready by themselves.

However, my attention was caught by a little girl who was off to one side, totally unfocused and disengaged from the story, and her behaviour was extremely distracting. Not only was she fidgeting during the time the story was read, but every so often she would call out in a loud voice about something not at all related to the discussion. Finally, the teaching assistant took her out of the class for a walk.

My attention was also drawn to another child who raised his hand and answered in an angry tone, "I wouldn't do anything for my brother!" The teacher, nonplussed by this response, rephrased the question to probe further. However, the child was adamant that he would not do anything for his brother! It then became evident that his big brother had walked him to class, given him a hug goodbye and in response, the little brother in kindergarten hit him in the back. This child continued his angry stance and finally the teacher moved on but summed it up by suggesting to the child to think about ways that he could fill his brother's bucket.

These observations illustrated some of the diverse needs of children in a classroom setting and the challenges teachers face to ensure all students receive attention and support.

As the children listened to the story they were learning to focus, extend their attention spans, consider different perspectives, listen to their classmates, take turns, share ideas, socialize and build on concepts. They also learned values by

children with learning needs and improve their future learning. The earlier that issues are identified, the better the outcome will be.

The importance of early learning cannot be overstated, as this is the critical time for children to build on their knowledge and be exposed to many experiences that will positively impact their brain development, cognitive,

Planning for early learning includes planning rich, meaningful learning experiences through a play-based environment.

understanding what it means to help other people and do good deeds. It was evident during this brief observation that several children required additional support.

Kindergarten is an optimal time to identify children who may be struggling with social issues, anxiety, stress and, of course, academic issues. Early intervention can help

physical, emotional, social and cultural development. These are the formative years. That is the importance of early learning.

Planning for early learning includes planning rich, meaningful learning experiences through a play-based environment. We know that play impacts and promotes brain development and, according to Stuart Brown (2009), “play, which is more prevalent during the periods of most rapid brain development after birth (childhood), seems to continue the process of neural evolution, taking it even one step farther. Play also promotes the creation of new connections that didn’t exist before, new connections between neurons and between disparate brain centers.”

Inculcating values at a young age is so important to children, and kindergarten provides a steep learning curve for children who are ready to absorb important moral concepts and understandings when provided with appropriate role models. Children in kindergarten are learning from each other through observations, conversations and socialization. The wise teacher in kindergarten sets the tone and stage for children to learn to share, interact in an appropriate manner and build character through many activities and discussions that are fostered. Equally important is the literacy and mathematical development that occurs in kindergarten, including oral and written communication, comprehension and critical thinking.

Fraser Mustard, who has done extensive research in early childhood and the development of the brain, strongly supports early learning experiences for all children. In his article, “Early Childhood Development and the Brain—The Base for Health, Learning and Behaviour Throughout Life” (2003), he cites the High/Scope study that states: “At ages 18 to 20, the children given the preschool program showed better school performance, better employment and fewer behaviour problems such as teenage pregnancies and criminal activities.” Mustard also noted Case’s work in mathematics that preschool

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is a critical time and “Case (1999) has speculated that if this sensitive period of development is missed, it may be difficult for the individual to do complex mathematics later in life.”

We know that we want to increase the number of students who graduate from high school, yet the support at the secondary level is only one part of the solution. The focus of government, school jurisdictions, community and parents should be to provide support in a variety of ways in the early years to build the foundation for learning to then increase the number of students completing high school.

Identifying and addressing the needs of the early learner can be most successful if we have in place teachers who are educated in early childhood and are well versed in child development. We need to ensure that universities provincewide offer programs in early childhood education and that schools and school jurisdictions employ educators specializing in early learning to work with our early years’ students.

To make the early years count, it is imperative to have qualified early childhood educators in the classroom who are able to plan appropriate learning experiences and assess the individual needs of the children, who often arrive with many diverse abilities. Educators need to create meaningful and complex learning environments that engage children in holistic, interdisciplinary and integrative approaches to learning.

Children are our future. To ensure that future is bright, we have a responsibility to provide them with quality early learning opportunities—with resources, teachers, parents and community working together. This our challenge.

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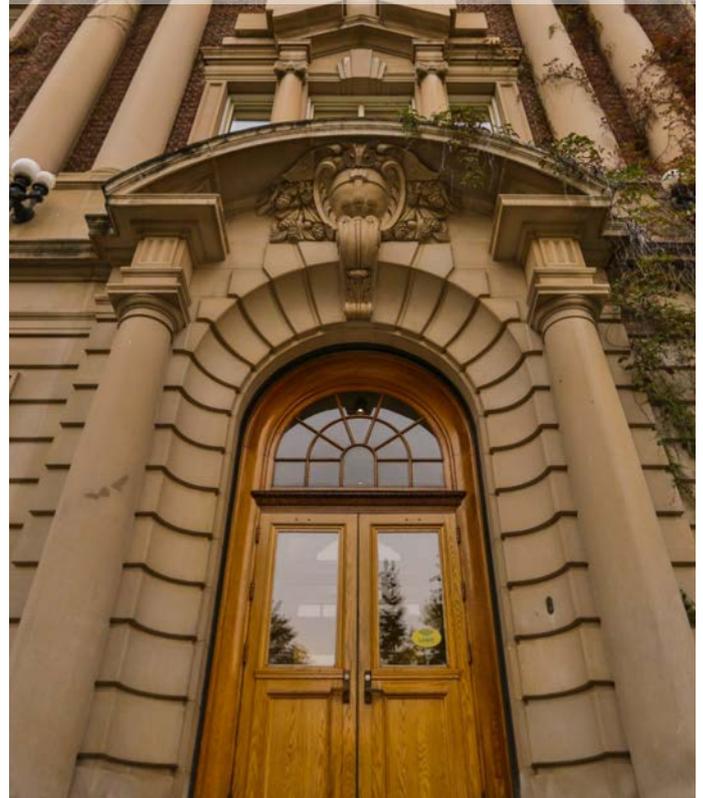
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Cynthia Prasow is the director of student experiences in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary.

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JANUARY 24-25

TEACHER GROWTH SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION, Calgary Plaza Hotel Conference Centre. Sponsor: the provincial ATA. Contact: Keith Hadden, associate coordinator, Member Services, telephone: 403-265-2672; email: mssaro@ata.ab.ca.

FEBRUARY 7-8

NORTH CENTRAL TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Shaw Conference Centre, Westin Hotel and offsite venues, Edmonton. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/North Central Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://www.mynctca.com>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Pam Arnason, president, NCTCA; email: president@nctca.ab.ca.

FEBRUARY 14-15

CALGARY CITY TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Telus Convention Centre, Hyatt Regency Hotel and offsite venues, Calgary. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/Calgary City Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://www.cctca.com>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Darren Moroz, president, CCTCA; email: cctcapresident@gmail.com.

FEBRUARY 14-15

NORTHEAST TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Edmonton. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/Northeast Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://netca.teachers.ab.ca>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Adrienne Sprecker, president, NETCA; email: adrienne.sprecker@nlsd.ab.ca.

FEBRUARY 21-22

PALLISER DISTRICT TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Telus Convention Centre and Hyatt Regency Hotel, Calgary. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/Palliser District Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://www.pdtca.org>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Andrea Craigie, president, PDTCA; email: president@pdtca.org.

FEBRUARY 21-22

SOUTH WESTERN ALBERTA TEACHERS' CONVENTION, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/South Western Alberta Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://www.swatca.ca>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Nicole Kusick, president, SWATCA; email: president@swatca.ca.

FEBRUARY 21-22

SOUTHEASTERN ALBERTA TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Medicine Hat College, Medicine Hat. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/Southeastern Alberta Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://www.seatca.ca>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Tim Johnson, president, SEATCA; email: tibon007@gmail.com.

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 1

GREATER EDMONTON TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Shaw Conference Centre, Westin Hotel and offsite venues, Edmonton. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://www.getca.com>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Lloyd Bloomfield, president, GETCA; email: president@getca.com.

MARCH 7-8

CENTRAL EAST ALBERTA TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/Central East Alberta Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://www.ceatca.teachers.ab.ca>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Jim Allan, president, CEATCA; email: jjallen@telus.net.

MARCH 7-8

MIGHTY PEACE TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Grande Prairie Composite High School and Peace Wapiti Academy, Grande Prairie. Sponsor(s): the provincial ATA/Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention Association. Website: <http://mptca.teachers.ab.ca>. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer, telephone: 780-447-9487; email: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Chantal Gallant, president, MPTCA; email: mptcpresident@gmail.com.





DAVID
GRAUWILER

MENTAL HEALTH: A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

You and I are part of a changing landscape related to mental health in our communities. Many of us remember the covert language of our parents regarding mental health challenges. There was the neighbour who “had a nervous breakdown” and the family member who was “peculiar.” It seems that we are surrounded on all sides by the growing awareness that mental health belongs to all of us. Today we hear our kids refer to depression and anxiety as a part of their lived experience, and we are reminded on a daily basis that without mental health there is no health.

Mental health is not as simple as drawing a line between those with a diagnosis and those without one. Mental health has been described as a continuum that spans from languishing to flourishing. Discussions around mental health identify that while someone may or may not have a diagnosis, their mental health can be “stuck” and far from flourishing. Those things that contribute to individual “flourishing” are better understood when we think in terms of better mental health. Rather than an “illness focus” mental health is “...a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community” (World Health Organization 2014).

It comes as no surprise that schools are communities within the community. Made up of students, teachers and

nonteaching staff, they are workplaces and learning spaces with a complex mix of social networks. Understanding the permeability of the school community with the community at large is essential in building a better understanding of the role of the school in the development of positive mental health. While school does not constitute the entirety of our lives, it does constitute a significant portion of awake time for all members of the school community. Students spend a third of their waking hours in school. Teachers and nonteaching staff spend even more time in the workplace than students. Because of this, mental health must be supported in school as part of our “whole” lives.

STRUGGLING ON A DAILY BASIS

The discussion of mental health in schools often turns to a focus on clinical interventions and the cohort of therapists, psychologists and other helping professionals. While there is an important role for this type of work, it is critical to keep in mind that clinical supports and interventions are focused on the highest and most obvious needs. Within the school community it is clear that, “In severe cases, they (mental illnesses) prevent students from regularly attending class, but more often students simply struggle with these problems on a daily basis, leading to further social and academic functioning concerns” (SBMHSA Consortium 2013, p.1). Many children and youth with mental health problems will not receive intervention. “Most children will not receive treatment for mental health difficulties” (Offord et al. 1987; Rohde, Lewinsohn and Seeley 1991; Waddell, et al. 2013 in SBMHSA Consortium 2013, p.1).



This brings into focus the need to think beyond interventions and supports for those students who are diagnosed. While the needs of these students are important, they are the ones finding support while others languish with compromised but undiagnosed mental health issues.

Child and youth mental health problems are prevalent. That being said, adult mental health problems are also prevalent, with more than one in five adults experiencing a mental health challenge at any given time (Mental Health Commission of Canada 2013). Seen through the lens of social and emotional well-being, classrooms, schools and communities become optimal environments for promoting, modelling and encouraging mental health.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL SUPPORTS

With a broader understanding of the needs of students, teachers and non-teaching staff, a number of activities and approaches can support flourishing mental health. These include paying attention to the built environment as workplace and classroom. Are there open spaces that welcome reflection and rest? Are there spaces with natural light and daily opportunities to go outside?

A more holistic view of mental health includes weaving health, well-being and mindfulness into the ordinary activities of the day. Do teachers and nonteaching staff use opportunities to model positive approaches to well-being for all community members?

Recently, attention has been focused on our uneasy relationships with technology. A good deal has been said about the overexposure students have to blue light technology. The reality is that students, teachers and non-teaching staff all may be overexposed, unrested and possibly addicted to their “smart” technology.

Not surprisingly, research shows that too much technology use diminishes our mental and physical health, our relationships and more (Lee et al. 2014). As a society we have not adapted to the rapid onslaught and implications of being connected 24/7. Disconnecting and relating face to face may be one of the most needed skills for us to build together.

Finding the right balance between formal and informal supports seems to be the challenge we will face as we navigate a more open dialogue and experience related to mental health. Formal supports such as mental



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health capacity builders, clinicians and therapists are engaged as part of broader activities of education, early intervention and health promotion. Strategies that recognize the pervasiveness of mental illness among adults and minors can make space for those who do not have a diagnosis but still need support when they find their mental health is compromised. Informal supports find their home in all aspects of community life and every realm of curricula. Healthy organizational culture, recognition and reward as well as civility and respect build an inclusive community that supports the many who may be having a bad day, facing a crisis, or simply need a safe place to restore mental health and resiliency.

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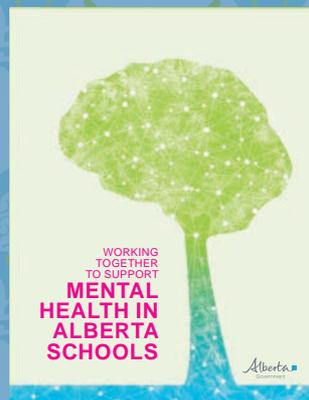
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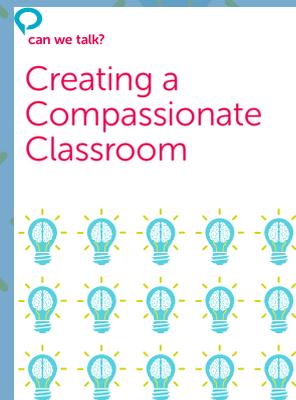
David Grauwiler is executive director of the Alberta division of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Resources

The following documents provide more information on creating environments that support mental health.



Available at <https://education.alberta.ca>



Available at www.teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > Publications (scroll down to "Teacher Resources" heading)

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FROM THE BOOKSHELVES

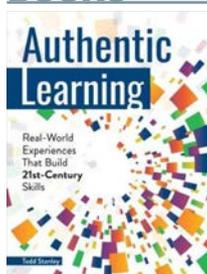
SUGGESTED READING (AND VIEWING)

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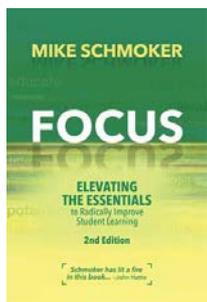


Authentic Learning: Real-World Experiences that Build 21st Century Skills

Stanley, T. 2018. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press (370.1523 S789)

Authentic learning is a teaching method that encourages students to use what they learn to develop a useful product. Learning is tied directly to real-world needs. This book focuses on

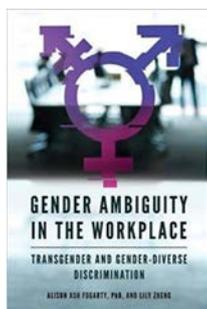
different strategies that teachers using this method can try: project based, problem based, inquiry and simulations.



Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning

Schmoker, M. 2nd edition. 2018. Alexandria, VA: ASCD (371.102 S348)

Examining the systemic reasons that educational change fails, author Mike Schmoker argues that focusing our limited resources on a few evidence-based practices in education would allow for dramatic changes in student learning.

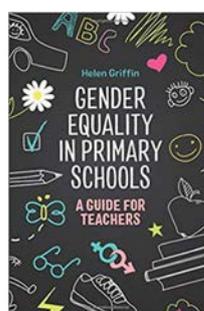


Gender Ambiguity in the Workplace: Transgender and Gender Diverse Discrimination

Fogarty, A. and L. Zheng. 2018. Santa Monica, CA: Praeger (331.5 F665)

The advocacy of parents for their transgender children has raised the visibility of the transgender community generally. This is a double-edged sword for a community

that has traditionally “passed” as cisgender. Now employers are considering employee policies in a new light. This book offers leaders best-practice strategies for minimizing discrimination and establishing inclusive workplaces.

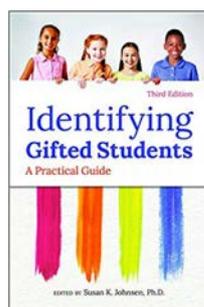


Gender Equality in Primary Schools: A Guide for Teachers

Griffin, H. 2018. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (379.26 G851)

Recognizing the need to address gender stereotyping and gender-based violence in our culture, author Helen Griffin created this hands-on guide for teachers that includes lesson plans, case studies and a framework for

developing gender equality in the classroom for all genders.



Identifying Gifted Students: A Practical Guide

Johnsen, S. K. (ed.) 3rd edition. 2018. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press (305.9089083 J65)

This book offers research-based recommendations for developing methods of identifying gifted students and assessing the effectiveness of a school's assessment procedures. Special consideration is given to

identifying missed populations such as students from disadvantaged backgrounds, minorities and those with learning disabilities.

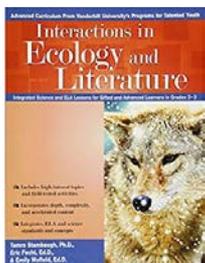


Inclusion: Diversity, the New Workplace, and the Will to Change

Brown, J. 2016. Hartford, CT: Publish Your Purpose Press (658.3 B878)

We talk a lot about inclusion in our classrooms but what about our workplaces? Jennifer Brown challenges organizations to begin the difficult change of creating an inclusive culture that values and

acknowledges employees' diverse backgrounds.

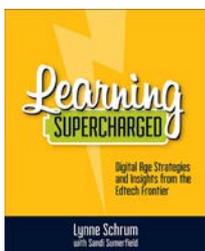


Interactions in Ecology and Literature: Integrated Science and ELA Lessons for Gifted and Advanced Learners in Grades 2-3

Stambaugh, T. et al. 2018. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press (371.953 S783)

Although aimed at an American audience, this book has ideas for Canadian teachers who are

interested in challenging their advanced learners. It integrates fictional and informative texts. Student research questions include whether animals should be kept in zoos and whether humans should intervene in species overpopulation.

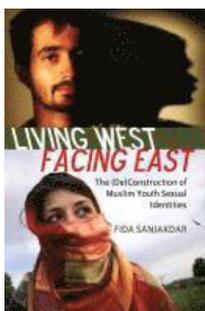


Learning Supercharged: Digital Age Strategies and Insights from the Edtech Frontier

Schrum, L. and S. Sumerfield. 2018. Portland, OR: ISTE (371.33 S377)

In this engaging new book, the authors discuss new technological trends and include stories from

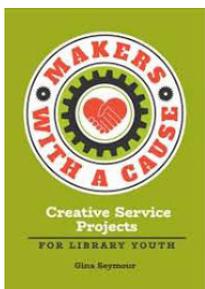
teachers about how they implemented these trends in the classroom and what challenges they had to overcome. Topics include digital citizenship, personalized learning, coding, robotics, makerspaces, gamification and open educational resources.



Living West, Facing East: The (De) Construction of Muslim Youth Sexualities

Sanjakdar, F. 2011. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing (306.708 S225)

This unique book addresses the difficulty that teachers face in teaching sexuality education that is Islamically inclusive while addressing western curricular requirements.

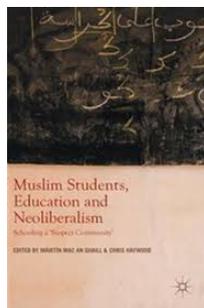


Makers with a Cause: Creative Service Projects for Library Youth

Seymour, G. 2018. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited (025.5 S251)

Makerspaces and school libraries are a perfect match. Adding service projects to the mix takes this synergy up to another level as it infuses another learning element into the

already bustling learning that takes place in a makerspace. Seymour shares dozens of replicable project ideas that can be easily integrated into projects in your makerspace.



Muslim Students, Education and Neoliberalism: Schooling a 'Suspect Community'

Mac An Ghaill, M. and C. Haywood (eds.). 2017. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan (292 G411)

In this book, writers address a wide range of topics about the recent educational experiences of Muslim students across many countries including Canada, China, Turkey and Germany.

The authors consider the different ways that this is impacting Muslim students and their places in non-Muslim cultures.

Passionate Learners: How to Engage and Empower Your Students

Ripp, P. 2nd Edition. 2016. New York, NY: Routledge (371.102 R593)

Student engagement can be one of the hardest nuts to crack in education. Dragging an unwilling student to the learning trough is bound to create even more resistance. So how

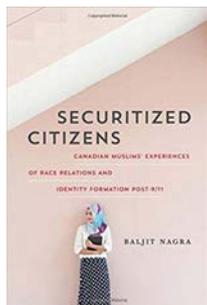
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Annette ten Cate. *Hold On!* 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

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can teachers turn a student's resistance into engagement? Author Pernille Ripp discusses a myriad of small changes teachers can make to provide an exciting learning environment that is sure to engage students.



Securitized Citizens: Canadian Muslims' Experiences of Race Relations and Identity Formation Post-9/11

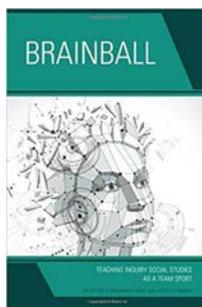
Nagra, B. 2017. Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press (305.6970971 N152)

Based on interviews with 50 young Muslims in Vancouver and Toronto, this book examines the tensions of belonging and exclusion experienced by Canadian Muslims. A great read

for teachers who want to understand the perspectives of their Muslim students and the unique challenges they face.

EBOOKS

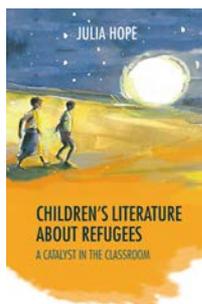
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Brainball: Teaching Inquiry and Social Studies as a Team Sport

Kolis, M. et al. 2018. Lanham, MD:

Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Gamifying a social studies class into a team sport requires a huge shift in perspective. Luckily, the authors of this book are ready to guide teachers through this shift seamlessly by sharing exactly how they have shifted their own classrooms. A very interesting read!

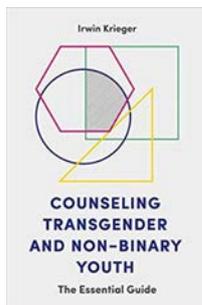


Children's Literature about Refugees: A Catalyst in the Classroom

Hope, J. 2017. London, UK : UCL Institute of Education Press

Using children's books about refugees has two positive effects in the classroom: it validates the experiences of refugee students themselves, and it helps their peers understand their new classmates. This book offers teachers

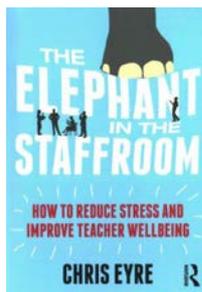
insights into the many great children's books that can be used in the classroom on this topic as well as ideas for how to use these resources in teaching.



Counseling Transgender and Non-Binary Youth: The Essential Guide

Krieger, I. 2017. London, UK : Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Focused on adolescent youth, this book offers counsellors ideas for helping transgender students deal with the mental and physical challenges of puberty.



The Elephant in the Staffroom: How to Reduce Stress and Improve Teacher Wellbeing

Eyre, C. 2017. New York, NY: Routledge.

This easy-to-read book gives teachers 40 great but easy suggestions for improving their well-being. Just dip into the issue that speaks to you the most and you will find great ideas for coping, addressing and resolving the problem.

Attention Grade 4 Teachers!

Classroom Agriculture Program

Register for a **FREE** one hour presentation on agriculture.

CAP is an in-class presentation that complements the grade four curriculum.

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- * The food they eat and where it comes from
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Registration deadline is December 21, 2018.
Register online at www.classroomagriculture.com.

Classroom Agriculture Program

Programs are offered based on volunteer availability. All classes registered before the deadline will receive activity booklets and a teacher's resource kit. Over 23,000 students enjoyed the program last year.

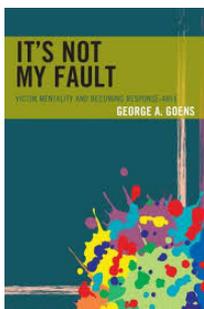
CAP is endorsed by the Ministers of Education, Agriculture and Forestry.



Happy Class: The Practical Guide to Classroom Management

Sage, J. 2017. Lanham, MD : Rowman and Littlefield Publishers
 One of the top reasons that teachers leave the classroom is problems with classroom management. In this book, Sage gives new and experienced teachers practical advice about managing a classroom effectively. From the physical set up

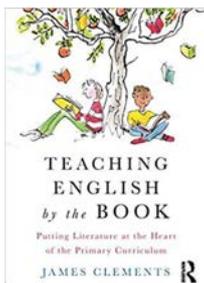
of a class to positively addressing problem behaviour, the many useful insights are aimed at developing a happy class for both teachers and students.



It's Not My Fault : Victim Mentality and Becoming Response-able

Goens, G. A. 2017. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers
 Teachers have long observed the increasing trend of the victim mentality in students. Children are being couched from taking responsibility for themselves by helicopter parenting. Author George Goens discusses ways that teachers

can help children break free of this mindset and embrace taking responsibility for their failures and successes.



Teaching English by the Book: Putting Literature at the Heart of the Primary Curriculum

Clements, J. 2018. Abingdon, UK: Routledge
 Most teachers are likely to agree with author James Clements that great books and wonderful poems should be at the centre of the language arts curriculum.

However, demands to teach reading, grammar, spelling, writing and punctuation often put such thoughts in the “nice to have” category rather than on the “must do” list. Clements provides teachers with ideas for integrating inspiring texts across all elements of the language arts curriculum to engage students in all aspects of learning the art of literature.

TECHNOLOGY



KIBO 21 Bit Kit

KinderLab Robotics. 2017. Boston, MA: KinderLab Robotics (KIB 1 and KIB 2)

This strange-looking but sturdy robot has been developed for younger children.

Students build the robot out of simple functioning pieces and can program actions using coloured blocks that are read in the front barcode reader.

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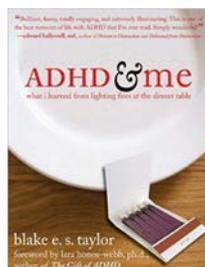
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VIDEOS



ADHD and Me

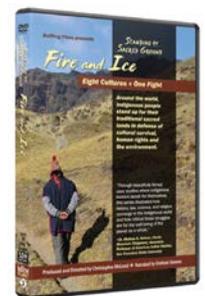
Brenner, R. 2017. London, UK: BBC TWO (AV ADH)
This film documents the perspective of a late-diagnosed British comedian on ADHD as he explores the scientific understanding of this disorder, its origins, its benefits and possible treatments.



Awake: A Dream From Standing Rock

Dewey, M. et al. 2017. Oley, PA: Bull Frog Films. 89 min (AV AWA)
The protest at Standing Rock drew the world's attention in 2016 as the Standing Rock Sioux tribe took on the Army Corps of Engineers in a bid to protect their only source of water from an oil pipeline that was to cross the river. The three sections

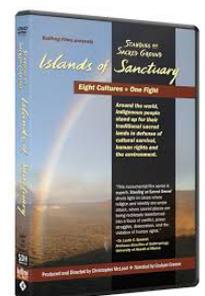
of the film tell the story of the protest from the view of each of three filmmakers who were there.



Fire and Ice. Standing on Sacred Ground: Eight Cultures, One Fight, Part 3

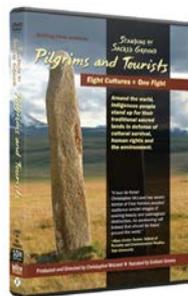
McLeod, C. 2013. Oley, PA: Bull Frog Films. 57 min. (AE ISL)
In the first documentary on this DVD, scientists confirm that traditional agricultural practices benefit the soil and the yields of crops in Ethiopia. These practices are part of the traditional spiritual practices of Ethiopians, which conflict with

the westernized agriculture practices of neighbouring Evangelical Christians. In the second documentary, Q'eros farmers in Peru struggle to adapt Indigenous agriculture to the effects of modern climate change.



Islands of Sanctuary. Standing on Sacred Ground: Eight Cultures, One Fight, Part 4

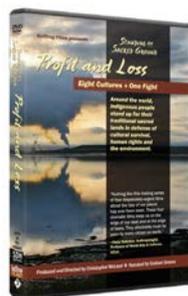
McLeod, C. 2013. Oley, PA: Bull Frog Films. 57 min. (AE ISL)
This DVD contains two documentaries that examine the struggles of Native Hawaiians and Aboriginal Australians to protect and rehabilitate their sacred spaces from colonial uses.



Pilgrims and Tourists. Standing on Sacred Ground: Eight Cultures, One Fight, Part 1

McLeod, C. 2013. Oley, PA: Bull Frog Films. 57 min. (AE PIL)

In the first film, the filmmakers document the determination of Indigenous peoples in Russia to protect a World Heritage Site. In the second documentary, the traditional life of the Winnemem Wintu is documented.



Profit and Loss. Standing on Sacred Ground: Eight Cultures, One Fight, Part 2

McLeod, C. 2013. Oley, PA: Bull Frog Films. 57 min. (AE ISL)

Two documentaries look at the struggles of Indigenous people in Alberta and Papua New Guinea to raise environmental concerns about industrial developments that are championed by cultures of consumption.

LIVRES EN FRANÇAIS/FRENCH BOOKS

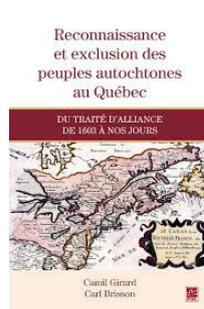


Harry Potter à l'école des sciences morales et politiques

Milner, Jean-Claude. 2014. Paris, FRA : Presses Universitaires de France (791 M659)

Plus personne ou presque ne peut s'imaginer qu'il rencontre le « phénomène Harry Potter » pour la première fois. En elle-même, l'ampleur du succès de la création de J. K. Rowling soulève une question : si tant de jeunes gens

s'enthousiasmaient pour les romans et les films, était-il vraisemblable qu'il y soit question seulement de sorciers et de magie? Le récit potterien a pris deux formes, soit les romans et les films. Les films, sur lesquels l'accent est mis dans cet ouvrage, facilitent l'analyse et permettent de tirer les leçons d'une œuvre qui parle à la fois de politique et de morale.

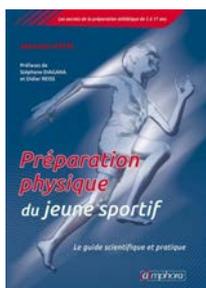


Reconnaissance et exclusion des peuples autochtones au Québec : du Traité d'alliance de 1603 à nos jours

Girard, Camil et Carl Brisson. 2018. Québec, QC : Presses de l'Université Laval (971.2004 G517)

De l'alliance de 1603 à la Proclamation royale de 1763, les peuples autochtones sont reconnus comme des alliés, partenaires du commerce, ou pour

leur participation aux guerres de l'Empire. Avec la création du Canada en 1867 s'amorce la mise en place d'une politique canadienne donnant lieu à une série de lois discriminatoires qui aboutissent, en 1876, à la Loi sur les indiens du Canada. Cette loi, comme une camisole de force, en vient à qualifier pour disqualifier les Autochtones sur le plan de la reconnaissance tant politique que juridique. Il faudra attendre plusieurs années pour que s'amorce la déconstruction de ce système de discrimination systémique.



Préparation physique du jeune sportif : le guide scientifique et pratique

Ratel, Sébastien. 2018. Paris, FRA : @mphora (796 R233)

Les jeunes sportifs sont de plus en plus exposés à des charges de travail élevées au cours de leur parcours sportif. La programmation et les conditions de l'entraînement doivent donc

être de plus en plus finement ajustées en fonction du profil de l'enfant. L'objectif de cet ouvrage est d'apporter à tous ceux qui interviennent auprès des enfants ou des adolescents des connaissances scientifiques, techniques et pratiques qui permettront une meilleure préparation physique des jeunes sportifs, afin qu'ils puissent devenir de potentiels champions!

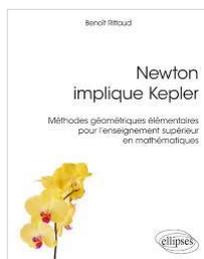


30 activités pour devenir un as des cartes mentales

Lachaud, Stéphanie Eleaume. 2018. Paris, FRA : Eyrolles (370.152 L136)

Qu'est-ce qu'une carte mentale? À quoi ça sert? Comment la lire? Quelles sont les étapes pour la concevoir? Les 30 activités

que propose cet ouvrage ont comme objectif le développement de sept compétences permettant de concevoir soi-même des cartes mentales : lire une carte; restituer une carte mentale à l'oral ou par écrit; identifier une idée principale; identifier des mots-clés; compléter une carte mentale; mémoriser grâce aux images; et illustrer. Que l'objectif soit de réviser avec plaisir, d'apprendre plus facilement ou de mémoriser plus efficacement, ce cahier d'activités agrémenté de très jolies illustrations vous livre tous les secrets des cartes mentales.



Newton implique Kepler

Rittaud, Benoît. 2017. Paris, FRA : Ellipses (510 R613)

Cet ouvrage s'intéresse à différents outils mathématiques fondamentaux en utilisant l'élégante perspective de la géométrie classique. Il s'adresse donc, entre autres, aux enseignants désireux de varier la présentation de leurs

cours. En plus de proposer des exercices corrigés, chaque chapitre accorde une large place aux applications, telles que la musique ou la mécanique. En posant des questions volontairement simples sur notre perception visuelle de quelques objets courants en géométrie, l'auteur porte un regard neuf sur des concepts connus.



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ADVANCING THE CAUSE

Public education campaigns through the years

MAGGIE SHANE

Since 1935 and the passing of *The Teaching Profession Act*, the Alberta Teachers' Association has had the statutory and professional obligation to promote public education. And from the advent of today's visual culture, the Association has launched several campaigns to engage the public in support every student's right to learn in a fully-funded, supportive, innovative, school under the guidance of professional, certificated teachers who partner with parents and educational stakeholders. Although the styles and emphases have changed with the times, there remains a sustained theme of seeking what's best for children.

Here is a review of some of the Association's campaigns.

Education Cutbacks



One Bite Too Many

1987

One Bite Too Many

This campaign was designed to encourage teachers and citizens to lobby the provincial government to provide predictable, stable funding for public schools as it was believed that Premier Don Getty was considering funding education with the Alberta Heritage Trust Fund.

The apple, seen as a wholesome and enduring symbol of education, was adopted and ATA locals were encouraged to incorporate the symbol into their local campaign materials. The slogan—One Bite Too Many—was considered memorable, on point, and effective in communicating the urgent need for sustainable funding.

The campaign was supported through the collection of data from teachers on the impacts of funding cuts on their classrooms and teachers from across Alberta worked through their locals to take the campaign message to their MLAs and school boards. St. Paul Local teachers even presented the minister with a basket of apples. The general spirit of the campaign was positive and upbeat. The campaign was also effective, as further education cuts were put in abeyance.

Know more

Facts, figures, myths and realities about the importance of Public Education and the impact of the planned cuts and changes.



Speak up for Public Education!
Before it's too late!
What Alberta will be like in the future is being defined by cuts and changes to Public Education today.
Please photocopy this pamphlet and pass it along.

Know more

Call 1-800-567-KNOW
and we'll do our best to answer questions you have about the importance of Public Education.
In Edmonton, call 454-6001.



We're the Alberta Teachers' Association
This pamphlet was created by people educated in Alberta.

1993

Know More

In 1992 Ralph Klein was elected premier and immediately responded to the prevailing economic conditions in Alberta by embarking on a program of deep cuts to provincial spending that directly and negatively impacted education and health care. Classroom conditions became subject to market accountability measures and charter schools were promoted as incubators of educational innovations. These measures combined to erode public education in Alberta.

The Association's 1993 campaign worked to educate Albertans on the state of public education. Teachers faced a five per cent wage rollback. Class sizes expanded dramatically. Essential resources and supports dried up.

The campaign invited Albertans to call an information hotline with questions about how cuts would impact their child's education. Comments received were most often about saving public education. The campaign worked to maintain a positive message, empowering Albertans with the information required to make informed decisions.

Real

The Teaching Profession
Evaluation and A

PUBLIC EDUCATION... building a strong democracy

2 Another Piece of the Puzzle

On private school funding

In an interview, John Ralston Saul was asked "What are your thoughts on the public versus the private school systems?" His full response was as follows:



PUBLIC EDUCATION... building a strong democracy

134 Another Piece of the Puzzle

Pupil-teacher ratios— a comparison

The US Department of Education recently released early estimates of pupil-teacher ratios for the various states. Added to that list is the average pupil-teacher ratio for Alberta as released by the Alberta School Boards Association for 1998/99.

1. Maine	13.0	18. Texas	15.3	35. Maryland	16.9
2. Vermont	13.1	19. Louisiana	15.4	36. Alaska	17.1
3. New Jersey	13.9	20. Wisconsin	15.4	37. Indiana	17.1
4. Massachusetts	14.1	21. New Hampshire	15.6	38. Tennessee	17.1
5. New York	14.2	22. Montana	15.8	39. Idaho	17.4
6. West Virginia	14.2	23. Georgia	16.0	40. District of Columbia	17.5
7. Wyoming	14.2	24. Kentucky	16.0	41. Hawaii	17.8
8. Nebraska	14.4	25. North Carolina	16.1	42. Colorado	17.9
9. Rhode Island	14.4	26. Minnesota	16.3	43. Alberta	18.1
10. North Dakota	14.5	27. Alabama	16.4	44. Florida	18.1
11. Virginia	14.7	28. Illinois	16.5	45. Nevada	18.5
12. Iowa	14.9	29. New Mexico	16.6	46. Michigan	18.8
13. Kansas	14.9	30. Ohio	16.6	47. Arizona	19.7
14. Missouri	14.9	31. Mississippi	16.8	48. Oregon	19.9

PUBLIC EDUCATION... building a strong democracy

22 Another Piece of the Puzzle

Class size revisited

An advertisement appeared in the *St Albert Gazette* in early September for Queen Margaret's School on Vancouver Island. The advertisement attracted attention because, in promoting the school, it mentions "its small class sizes and picturesque 27 acre campus offer a nurturing, stimulating and safe learning environment." There, again, is that red herring, that myth about "class size." If class size has no impact, why would this advertisement include it as a selling point?

1997

Another Piece of the Puzzle

Public Education . . . Building A Strong Democracy

Over the course of the 1997-1998 school year, the Association continued to provide Albertans with information on conditions within public schools and on topics related to education. A series of 138 news releases (that's 15 in each school-year month) on the theme of Building a Strong Democracy provided information on topics from the costs of education, to computer use in schools, to teacher improvement and tax revenues.

Learning First

Profession's View of Student Assessment,
Accountability for the 21st Century

Issues in Education, Number 7

2009

Real Learning First

By 2009 the Association was keen to begin conversations about valuing and promoting students' real, deep, meaningful learning. The Real Learning First campaign aimed to generate a public dialogue among teachers, parents and educational partners respecting the need for real learning assessment rather than grade level of achievement or standardized tests such as the Provincial Achievement Test.

Wide-ranging and enduring, the Real Learning First initiative involved publications, public messaging, research and public seminars. It was supported by national and international partnerships and extensive research.

2010

The Future: It's Why Teachers Teach

Public education is grounded in the present but is continually looking to the future. In 2010, the Association's main public campaign urged Albertans to consider that future through a series of powerful images of contemporary kids.

The message was clear. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders, tradespeople and professionals and teachers shape these futures every day.

Maggie Shane is the ATA's archivist.





PHIL
MCRAE

THE RESEARCH BEHIND CLASS SIZE AND KINDERGARTEN

Thousands of Albertans have already signed the pledge for public education, and in doing so affirmed their support for small class sizes, fully-funded junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs, supports for students with exceptionalities, and access for all students to a teacher certificated school counsellor in their school. Behind this pledge sits a solid body of important research that frames the rationale for supporting these directions so that we can keep our education system world class and support each and every one of our Alberta children and youth as they begin their formal schooling and then move towards high school graduation.

To provide a glimpse into the body of research underpinning this pledge, what follows are brief summaries of the academic literature that supports the common-sense directions for two of the pledges: keeping class size small and promoting junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs. These research briefs also are available on the Association website—under Education Research—with more sources for further reading and key strategic considerations.

RESEARCH ON CLASS SIZE

Research shows that smaller class sizes allow for higher levels of student engagement, increased time with the curriculum, and more opportunities for teachers to focus on the individual needs and interests of students in the classroom. It also illustrates that class size is indeed an

1. “Class size is an important determinant of student outcomes, and one that can be directly determined by policy. All else being equal, increasing class sizes will harm student outcomes.”
2. “The evidence suggests that increasing class size will harm not only children’s test scores in the short run, but also their long-run human capital formation. Money saved today by increasing class sizes will result in more substantial social and educational costs in the future.”
3. “The payoff from class-size reduction is greater for low-income and minority children, while any increases in class size will likely be most harmful to these populations.”
4. “Policymakers should carefully weigh the efficacy of class-size policy against other potential uses of funds. While lower class size has a demonstrable cost, it may prove the more cost-effective policy overall.”

In 2003 the Alberta Commission on Learning (ACOL) made significant policy recommendations regarding class size: kindergarten through Grade 3 should, on average, be 17 students or less; Grades 4 through 6 should have 23 students or less; Grades 7 through 9 should have 25 students or less; and high school should have 27 students or less.

Alberta class size data from 2018, released by the Department of Education, clearly shows that the

Money saved today by increasing class sizes will result in more substantial social and educational costs in the future.

important determinant of student outcomes, ranging from test scores to broader life outcomes.

Four key recommendations have emerged from a comprehensive review of major class size research by Diane Schanzenbach (2014):

education system in Alberta has failed to achieve those targets. In Alberta in 2017–18, 80.39% of division one (kindergarten through Grade 3) are larger than their ACOL targets. On average division one classes are 29.41% over their target, with the effects especially pronounced in large urban boards.

RESEARCH ON JUNIOR AND FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

In terms of the research on the efficacy of full-day kindergarten (FDK), a growing body of research shows that in the short term, the positive effects of FDK include gains in socio-emotional growth, enhanced linguistic and academic progress, better attendance and stronger skills in mathematical literacy as children progress into Grade 1.

Heagle, et al. (2017, 979) pointed out that “for many children, the kindergarten years form a bridge from the free-play settings of early childhood education to the academic rigours of the grade one classroom.” This implies that, while it may be tempting for policymakers to increase the amount of academic content taught in FDK, this could be to the detriment of the development of the whole child and, therefore, their academic progress.

It becomes more difficult to ascertain whether FDK continues to hold advantageous results for students after the early grades. Longitudinal studies have been conducted on this question, but the results are mixed.

In Alberta, the 2003 Alberta Commission on Learning (ACOL) recommended that FDK be implemented by Alberta school boards. While the Alberta government accepted this recommendation, it has never been fully implemented due to a lack of funding. The findings of the 2014 Alberta Early Childhood Development (ECD) Mapping Project help illustrate why the ACOL recommendations should be fully implemented.

The ECD Mapping Project was a large-scale study, with more than 70,000 Alberta kindergarten students being assessed using the early development instrument (EDI). EDI measures five dimensions of childhood development: (1) physical health and well-being, (2) social components, (3) emotional maturity, (4) language and cognitive development, and (5) communication skills and general knowledge. The findings of this study are sobering. The “most striking result is that 46.4 per cent—less than half—of kindergarten children are developing appropriately in all five areas of development” (Alberta Government/ECD Mapping Project 2014, 9).

Furthermore, Alberta kindergarten children, when compared to other Canadian kindergarten children, lag behind and experience higher levels of greater difficulty in one or more of the five dimensions of development. The ECD Mapping Project findings make it clear that early intervention and additional supports for all children and families are sorely needed.

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Dr. Phil McRae is the associate coordinator of research for the Alberta Teachers’ Association.



DENNIS
THEOBALD

THERE WE GO AROUSING PEOPLE AGAIN

I suspect if Premier William Aberhart had it all to do over again, he would not have included among the legislated objects of the Alberta Teachers' Association a call "to arouse and increase public interest in the importance of education and public knowledge of the aims of education, financial support for education, and other education matters." [*Teaching Profession Act*, Section 4(c)]

Now Bible Bill, as former principal of Crescent Heights High School in Calgary, was nothing if not a champion of teachers, and in his first mandate was personally responsible for passage of the act that established the ATA as the professional organization representing all teachers in the province's public and separate schools. But he was also a politician, and as such, he would probably have some latent guilt over what he inflicted upon successive provincial governments.

For, as ATA archivist Margaret Shane illustrates in her collection of previous public relations campaigns

Well, probably never: Our schools today are serving a greater diversity of students than ever before. A greater number of students and proportion of the population are being educated to a higher standard than ever before. And our public education system is having to operate within conditions of greater social, cultural and economic complexity than ever before. Given these realities, the demands being placed upon students, teachers and schools have continued to increase and the resources, of all sorts, available to meet those demands have not kept pace. As a consequence, the critical needs of students are not being met.

In response, teachers are continuing to arouse public attention to their students' cause. And I'll be the first to admit we aren't being subtle about it. In October, the Association dropped a steel monument weighing five metric tonnes and standing five metres tall on the grounds of the Alberta legislature. It is composed of seven silhouettes of the faces of real students, and through the negative space in between, the iconic dome of the legislature comes into view. The monument is a daily

education is not some abstraction — it is ultimately about flesh-and-blood students and their teachers, some with chipped front teeth who are named Jackson; some who are discovering their identity and passions; some who need to be reminded that, in their all-too-crowded classroom, it's time to listen.

And finally there is the Pledge for Public Education, around which this issue of the *ATA Magazine* is structured. Paging through articles highlighting the significance of early learning in developing the full potential of the child, the difference that reducing class size can make on students' experiences of learning and teachers' professional practice, the critical importance of mental health and emotional well-being, and the challenge and promise of inclusive education, I expect that you will be aroused to action by at least one of these.

Your responsibility, then, is to make the effort to make a difference by arousing in others awareness of the importance of the issues and calling

Your responsibility is to make the effort to make a difference by arousing in others awareness of the importance of the issues.

(on page 30 of this issue of the *ATA Magazine*), over the course of decades, the Association has taken to "arousing" the public to a degree that has discomfited ministers of education and governments of all political stripes. Our continuing activities have led some to ask, rather unkindly, "When will teachers ever be satisfied?"

reminder to members of the legislative assembly of the critical importance of public education and the role it plays in building up this province and preparing citizens to be active participants in our democracy.

Continuing on the theme, our Faces of Education advertising campaign reminds Albertans that public

them to action together with you and your colleagues across Alberta.

So take the pledge. Promote the pledge. And remember the pledge as you engage in active citizenship in the months ahead of us.



GREG
JEFFERY

LET'S REMEMBER THE PAST AND TAKE ACTION NOW

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

A quote from 19th-century Spanish philosopher George Santayana seems an appropriate place to start when discussing our Pledge for Public Education. French author Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr gave us “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” Or how about Yogi Berra’s “déjà vu all over again?”

At first blush these quotes seem disheartening, but while they were generated in my thoughts here today as I read the other articles in this issue, the further I read the more encouraged I became. Because we reluctantly accept the cyclical nature of educational change, we then also must acknowledge the same circle of response to the various iterations of change. Let’s look at each of the pledge statements on its own.

I believe all students should be able to learn in small-sized classes.

The recommendation that we most often use to support this statement comes from the Alberta Commission on Learning of 2003. The gains we made were eroded by the Alberta revenue cycles and so the need to push back is a regular one. Many others are now joining this argument.

I believe all students with special learning needs should receive the supports and resources they require for success.

While Alberta’s model for inclusion has only been in place since 2012, the need for support for students with exceptionalities goes back much

further than that. The increasing complexity of the inclusionary classroom, adding in refugee children and many more ELL students, is a more recent phenomenon that adds to the firmness of our resolve on this statement.

I believe all students should have the opportunity to benefit from fully funded junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs.

Readiness to learn and having an equitable model for education are concepts near and dear to Alberta teachers. Early intervention allows our students to get the most from their educational experience and helps teachers to do their best work. We are beginning to see models that speak to this initiative—success breeds success.

I believe all students should have access to a teacher-certificated school counsellor in their school.

Our partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, which goes back more than 10 years, demonstrates teacher commitment to this statement. While we have made significant progress on reducing the stigma attached to issues of mental health, the access to services at the school level remains woefully inadequate in many areas of the province. Partners are taking up the call on this item, and it is heartening to know we are not alone.

So where is the good news in all of this? I believe it resides in the overt demonstration that we, as a profession, will not give up on issues that are important to the well-being of the students in our charge. This pledge allows teachers to stand up

for these primary needs that are lacking in our educational system and invites all Albertans to lend their voices to the cause of improving public education for all citizens of the province.

It is one more way of saying “teachers want what students need.” Please engage in the campaign so that, because we remember, and we take action, we may not be condemned to repeat the inadequacies of the past.

DIGITAL LITERACY WITH 2LEARN



Digital literacy has been a key topic of interest for 2Learn since the organization's beginnings. One of 2Learn's first goals in the late 1990s was to help Alberta teachers confidently navigate the new landscape of educational resources. In 2018, the main collection of curated digital literacy resources can be found in Your Digital Presence at

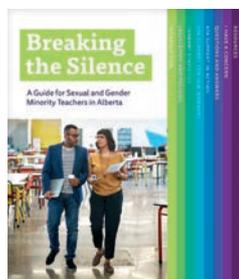
www.2learn.ca/ydp. This website contains resources, including lesson plans, research and media, that relate directly to teaching students about digital life skills.

In the Digital Citizenship section, there are articles about digital citizenship and digital footprints, as well as digital literacy lesson plans for each grade level. The Copyright and Teaching section of Your Digital Presence includes valuable resources about the basics of copyright (specifically in relation to the work of educators and students), understanding Creative Commons and other open-use multimedia resources.

The last section focuses on Engaging in a Digital World. This section includes lesson plans and media about consumerism, cyberbullying, online safety, privacy, social media, and visual literacy. The media literacy resources are particularly topical, as are the research resources, which include lesson planning ideas about effective search strategies and authenticating online information.

Visit 2Learn's "Your Digital Presence" at www.2learn.ca/ydp to find ideas for integrating digital literacy into lesson planning and class discussions.

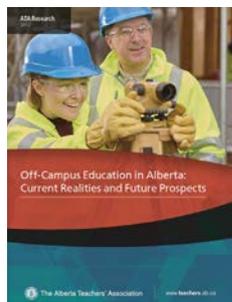
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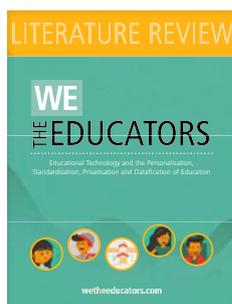
Breaking the Silence: A Guide for Sexual and Gender Minority Teachers in Alberta
The Alberta Teacher's Association is committed to fostering understanding and acceptance of sexual and gender minority (SGM) teachers and works to protect the conditions of professional practice for all members. This guide 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)



We The Educators
This literature review works to provide a balanced view of the standardisation, personalisation and privatisation of learning to inform an analysis of the converging fields of educational technology and datafication. It is part of a larger project, "We the Educators" (www.wetheeducators.com), which brings the concepts explored in this research to life through video animation in English, French and Spanish. (COOR-124, 2017 04, 20 pp)

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 at respectfulschools.ca.



DREAMING OF RETIREMENT?

Start actively planning for it instead!

It's wonderful to picture yourself lying on a beach with a good novel, rather than reading a children's book to a captive audience in a classroom. Or travelling to Europe without a gaggle of teenagers to keep track of. But there are also more practical things you can think about to set yourself up for all that you wish to achieve in retirement.

BEFORE AGE FIFTY, YOU SHOULD:



Check your ATRF annual plan member statements for accuracy. **Make sure your beneficiary information is correct.**

Obtain adequate insurance protection (health, life, home, and automobile). TW Insurance offers fantastic rates and a dedicated team exclusively for ARTA members!

Calculate your retirement income estimate on the Government of Canada website: www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/retirement-income-calculator.html

Review an estate plan with your attorney. Make a will. The Edvantage program offers discounted estate planning for ARTA members!

The Alberta Retired Teachers' Association (ARTA) supports an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-centred services, advocacy, communication, wellness and leadership. ARTA provides services to its members including insurance, wellness information and activities, retirement planning, technology information, scholarship awards as well as travel plans, social activities and other benefits.

Active teachers are eligible to join and access all that ARTA has to offer, as long as you've contributed to an ATRF pension for at least five years. You don't have to be age 55 or retired in order to join! Speak to someone on ARTA's member services team to learn more.





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