

ATA Magazine

The Alberta Teachers' Association

SPRING 2019

DOWN & OUT IN TULSA

Oklahoma provides a cautionary tale
of education underfunding

THE REAL POWER OF CHOICE

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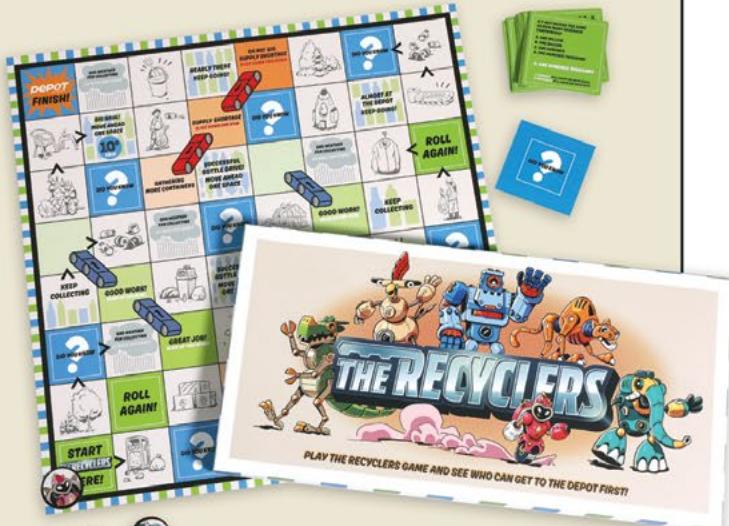
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JONI
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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

PRESERVING EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY REQUIRES OUR ACTION

I was flying home from Toronto a number of years ago when a friend who was sitting in a different part of the plane met two extraordinary people. John and Dandy were two brothers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who were coming to live in Canada after living in a refugee camp in Uganda. My friend spent the whole trip finding out about their story and excitedly sharing what life was like in Edmonton. I met the group at the end of the jetway and we chatted before they were met by people from Immigration Canada to begin their new life. Having promised to stay in touch with them, my friend not only kept her promise, but has been an integral part of their lives over the past four years. I have stayed in touch with them as well.

Fast forward to summer, 2017. John's wife and children, with whom he had briefly reunited in the refugee camp before he started his

new life, were finally scheduled to arrive in Canada. A band of new friends all gathered to greet them at the Edmonton International Airport. It was one of the most beautiful and amazing moments I have ever witnessed—the guttural, primal sound of a man finally seeing his wife and children for the first time in years, and in his new country. It moved everyone to tears. This new family had a new home, a new province and a new extended family. They also had access to Alberta's world-renowned public education system.

That all people in Alberta, including newcomers to the province, have access to exceptional public education is a result of many years of struggle. In this issue, contributors Gordon Thomas and Maggie Shane describe some of the historical elements that have led to the excellent system we have in place today. We cannot become

complacent, however, as both Russell Cobb and David Berliner note.

The situation in the United States could be considered the canary in the coal mine for education in Alberta. As Cobb describes in his article "Down and Out in Tulsa," the gradual erosion of support and funding for public education led to a breaking point at which Oklahoma teachers marched to the state capital until government officials listened.

In a Q&A entitled "The Fight For Public Education Is a Fight For Democracy," Berliner notes that systems of vouchers and private schools lead to an educational apartheid in which schools can discriminate on the basis of income, race, or religion and can create homogenous cohorts that are unprepared for diversity in society.

What we have in Alberta is something to be treasured.

ATA Magazine

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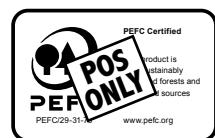
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■ EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK ■

Contributor Mark Yurick recalls his time as principal of a large Edmonton middle school where the diversity of students was not seen as undesirable but rather an occasion to celebrate sameness—humanity—while recognizing and celebrating differences. There is always room for improvement, however. In the article, “The Real Power of Choice,” participants in the Finland-Alberta partnership advance their belief that the elements of flexibility

within Finnish schools should be considered in our province as high school redesign initiatives continue.

Now back to our two brothers from the Congo. In the past few months, both John and Dandy have become Canadian citizens. They are both employed and are active in their communities. They also volunteer to help others who are new to Canada. Their beautiful children are already thriving within

Alberta’s public school system and will, no doubt, be productive, valuable citizens.

The struggle for public education has been a long one ... and it's not over. We cannot take for granted the outstanding system we have come to know. We must be prepared to take action to keep our public education system and our democracy strong.







RUSSELL
COBB

DOWN AND OUT IN TULSA

Oklahoma provides a cautionary tale of education underfunding

It is a truism that Alberta is the Texas of Canada. A close look at U.S. states with Alberta-like traits, however, reveals a much closer parallel. From a cowboy culture, to a strong oil and gas industry, to a population of around four million, to a strong Indigenous heritage, it is Oklahoma, not Texas, that is Alberta's American doppelganger. Like Alberta, Oklahoma has seen its share of boom and bust cycles since the discovery of oil and gas. Unlike Alberta, though, Oklahoma is in the midst of completely man-made education disaster. The state provides a cautionary tale for what can happen when education funding takes a back seat to tax cuts.

One quarter of the state's school districts have reduced the school week to four days. This has forced working-class parents into a difficult bind, as they decide whether to spend extra money on day care or stay home from work. The state has led the nation in cuts to education for four years in a row. More than one billion dollars in funding has disappeared in recent years as education took a 23.6 per cent hit from the state budget between 2008 and 2015. Due to decades-old textbooks, crumbling infrastructure and a lack of school buses, schools are in a downward spiral. Teachers have left the state en masse, ushering in a wave of uncertified "emergency" teachers.

Teachers had rumbled about the situation privately for years. Governor Mary Fallin came into office in 2011 pledging tax breaks for the oil and gas industry, ostensibly

to spur more growth. But then oil prices declined, drillers cut back, and the trickle-down effect never materialized. The Gross Production Tax, already at a low seven per cent, was slashed to between three to one per cent, depending on the age of the well. State coffers were hit hard. Not only education, but state parks, prisons, health care and the highway patrol all took hits.

Oklahoma Policy Institute Director David Blatt calls this vicious cycle of revenue decline and tax breaks "death by a thousand cuts." It took a few years for the impact to be felt, but when it came, the entire public school system reeled. Teachers took third or fourth jobs. Some went to neighbouring states, where salaries were anywhere from ten to twenty per cent higher. Others became disenchanted with teaching and left the profession entirely. Starting employees with no post-secondary education learned they could earn more at the local QuikTrip convenience store than they could as certified teachers with a four-year degree.

Shelby Eagan, an elementary school teacher on Tulsa's working-class east side, decided she had had enough by 2016.

"I can't imagine a future in a place that won't fund basic education," she said. "I loved Oklahoma, but at a certain point, you have to think about your own prospects."

Eagan came to Tulsa on the Teach for America program in 2013, in which students promise to teach short-term at an

underprivileged school to have their debt forgiven. It was an adventure that made her fall in love with second-graders. She spent her free time giving dance lessons to kids in the community and shopping for students.

"I found I could get pants for five dollars at Walmart," she said. "I had very little money, but many of the immigrant students had one pair of pants."

Another teacher from El Reno held back tears as she recounted having to move back into her parents' house with two children. Ten, then eleven, years passed without a pay raise for teachers. Oklahoma fell to 49th out of 50 states in teacher pay ("thank God for Mississippi," became a part of teachers' dark humour repertoire). Finally, on that twelfth year, the rumbling from below turned into a movement.

Alberto Morejon, a Stillwater history teacher, remembers watching a teacher uprising in West Virginia that won major concessions from lawmakers. Oklahoma is an "at-will" state, meaning employers have the right to fire employees for anything short of age, race, religion or

(teachers, administrators, support personnel) threw their hats in the ring during the primary in spring 2018. Curiously, not all teachers running for office were liberal Democrats. About half were actually Republicans, who felt their party had finally gone too far for tax breaks. During the primaries, the educators eliminated all but five of the incumbent politicians who had opposed their demands.

It seemed like the hour of the teachers had arrived in a state in which Donald Trump had won every single county. Leading up to the mid-terms in November, there was talk of a "blue wave" in Republican strongholds like Oklahoma, Arizona, Kentucky and West Virginia.

Many teachers, parents and students seemed crestfallen as a supposedly tight race between a pro-education Democratic governor hopeful and his Republican rival turned out to be a blowout. In an election that was supposed to be a referendum on education, the results were mixed at best. There were some bright spots, with a few teachers winning seats over incumbents. The teacher walkout mobilized a demoralized profession, instilled new hope in young people

Many teachers, parents and students seemed crestfallen as a supposedly tight race between a pro-education Democratic governor hopeful and his Republican rival turned out to be a blowout.

gender. A call to walk off the job was risky. Morejon looked around for a Facebook group to discuss a West Virginia-style intervention. He couldn't find anything. Then, in March, he posted something on Facebook about a possible walkout, expecting maybe a few dozen people to support the idea. Morejon's post went viral and within ten days, 65,000 Oklahoma teachers pledged their support.

School districts from hundreds of miles from Oklahoma City created walking groups, taking over highways to march to the state capital. When the teachers arrived, they met legislators who were clearly unprepared to deal with them. Tensions between the governor, legislators and the teachers ran high. Governor Fallin promised a meager pay raise, but shut down all talk about funding for new infrastructure or new programs. Teachers countered that Oklahoma needed to fully fund education, not just throw a bone to teachers. Fallin told the media that the teachers were "behaving like teenagers who want a new car." Another legislator said, "I won't vote for another stinkin' measure when they're acting the way they're acting."

Public sentiment held in favour of the striking teachers. Many educators saw an opportunity to jump into politics themselves. More than 100 education professionals

and demonstrated the importance of public education to a polarized electorate. It could not, however, flip an entire state from one party to another.

The single biggest surprise nationwide on election night happened right in America's heartland, in a suburban Oklahoma City district, where Kendra Horn, a Democrat no one gave a chance at winning, won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives by beating a Trump-supporting incumbent. It was a shocker to those who followed Washington politics. At one point, Horn was given an eight per cent chance of winning, but she pushed on, avoiding talk about Trump and emphasizing the importance of education. The national media called Horn's win a shocker, but Horn had an easy explanation.

"What we were hearing about was not the president," she said. "It was about education."

Dr. Russell Cobb is a writer and professor in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. His research and teaching emphasizes narrative explorations of identity, especially in the context of the Americas.



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Gary Smith,
Assistant Principal,
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"I have left a will intention to ensure a fund is created after I am gone to continue to help children learn."

Jackie Fuga,
Physical Education Specialist,
Hillcrest School

"Sport and fitness was important to both me and my brother. I am pleased to continue to promote his legacy through the David Fuga Memorial Fund."

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THE REAL POWER OF CHOICE

Visit to Finland provides valuable lessons

Winston Churchill High School in Lethbridge is one of five Alberta schools selected to take part in FinAl 2.0, the second iteration of the Alberta Teachers' Association's Finland-Alberta International Partnership. The first travel leg of the three-year exchange partnership took place October 5 to 12, 2018.

Our high school was matched with Joensuun Yhteiskoulu Lukio (upper secondary school) in Joensuu, a beautiful city located in the southeastern part of Finland (approximately 50 kilometres from the Russian border). We were also fortunate to visit the wonderful staff and students of Mutalan Koulu, an elementary school within the city.

Our Finnish experience catalyzed conversation and reflection about the power of choice. Much of contemporary discourse about choice in education is dominated by voices calling for increased parental choice. This reality is perhaps distracting from dialogue around what could be a more important modality of choice: student choice. Although curriculum reform is well under way in Alberta, perhaps a window of time remains with which to reimagine the structure and function of our secondary schools as a means

of crafting opportunities for more meaningful educational choice for our students.

The first leg of our Finnish partnership uncovered a system with a large degree of student choice, one resulting in a secondary education structure that appears to nurture student independence, ownership of learning and increased levels of engagement.

During our time in Finland, the concept of student choice resonated with us on many levels. Student independence in terms of selecting and planning courses in Finnish upper secondary schools was similar to university or college in Alberta. Although there are compulsory courses in Finland, students have many elective course choices. Students are expected to complete 75 courses in order to matriculate, but many of those can be chosen to align with students' interests and passions. For example, students must take three mandatory history courses, but may choose additional courses based on their interest in the subject matter. In our partner school, there are nine additional elective history courses to choose from, but students may choose to take no extra history courses and instead fill their timetables with



A contingent of Canadian and Finnish teachers explore Koli National Park in Finland. Pictured are (L-R): Mika Muukkonen, Craig Findlay, Omar Kadir, Tracy Wong, Carey Rowntree and Risto Kilpeläinen.

subjects they find more engaging. Furthermore, the open-ended nature of the Finnish curriculum structure affords teachers the freedom to design elective courses. One of our new colleagues—a history teacher—designed his own elective courses based on personal interests, passions and areas of expertise.

Finnish students may take more than 30 courses in a given year, whereas the average student in Alberta would complete eight or fewer.

INTENSE INQUIRY

As opposed to the dual semester system that's common in Alberta high schools, the upper secondary school year in Finland is divided into five "periods." As a result, students in Finland engage with a course of study for a relatively short seven-week period, which includes time for final assessments. This organizational structure encourages more focused learning in shorter, more intensive periods of student inquiry. Finnish students may take more than 30 courses in a given year, whereas the average student in Alberta would complete eight or fewer. This increase in the amount of choice appears to offer Finnish students more opportunity to navigate their

own learning journey and design a path that's best suited for their skills and aptitudes.

Furthermore, the relatively short duration of classes allows Finnish students more opportunity to recover from failure. Although we often espouse the importance of failure as an

opportunity to learn and grow, the rigid and standardized structure of the Alberta high school system does not efficiently support the sentiment.

In the final stages of upper secondary school, Finnish students write a set of relatively high-stakes matriculation exams. However, unlike our diploma examinations, Finnish exams provide choice within the framework of the final assessments. In addition to some compulsory exams, students can choose examinations in areas that best match their competencies. The tests are designed predominantly as open-ended written responses—quite different from the multiple-choice format that dominates most of Alberta's standardized testing regime.

Teachers told us that students will often choose to take four years to complete matriculation, with the final year focused on preparation for exams. As a result of the short duration of courses, and the possibility of extending the time to complete upper secondary schooling, the system embeds more freedom for students to choose the best path for their success.

The ultimate level of choice comes at the age of fifteen when students can choose to go to vocational school or pursue studies in a more traditional academic upper secondary school. It is important to note that both choices are equally respected in Finnish society. It could be argued that students who are given this choice will naturally self-select a learning environment in which they will feel most comfortable and confident. Despite having "streams" of curricula, secondary school in Alberta attempts to funnel the vast majority of students through a largely academic system defined by traditional subject areas, one with which many students have a difficult time engaging. The net effect of the Finnish system is to place students in learning environments best suited to match personal interests and aptitudes. We were struck by the mature behaviour of the students we observed. The principal of our partner school made it clear that there were very few disciplinary problems at the school, and our experience led us to believe this reality is linked to the personal responsibility of students empowered by choice.



The independence and choice given to adolescents in Finland is buoyed by layers of support. Students are responsible for building their upper secondary timetable, but the choices are monitored and checked by counsellors and teachers to ensure they are on track for matriculation. Furthermore, choice always comes with the ability to change course—between academic and vocational paths at the upper secondary and even post-secondary level.

FOUNDATION OF TRUST

While enjoying some Finnish hospitality one evening in a Helsinki pub, we met a 23-year-old man who shared his educational journey. He chose to go the vocational route but was now attending Eastern Finland University on a more academic track to become an engineer. Although we were told it is not common to change paths in such a manner, the choice to do so has been carefully woven into the system's fabric.

There is a great deal of trust in the Finnish education system, beginning with trust in the choices students are empowered to make. We also see great trust in the teachers and the profession writ large, trust in the administrators and the school community, and trust in the overall system goal of protecting and promoting the

collective interest and well-being of Finnish society.

In Alberta, many feel that trust in our education system is often overshadowed by a demand for accountability. Our Finnish partners told us there is no simple Finnish translation for the word “accountability;” the word they use instead is “responsibility.” Parents generally share an inherent trust in schools and educators to immerse their children in a learning experience that represents societal norms and shared values that enhance and support their collective future. Student choice in learning at the upper secondary level reflects the social construct of meeting shared expectations for all, while at the same time, providing individuals with the opportunity to pursue the passions and visions of their own future. The motivation for learning becomes highly personal and builds on an intrinsic satisfaction from positively contributing to a Finnish society that is valued and respected.

Carey Rowntree is the principal, Tracy Wong is a vice-principal, and Craig Findlay and Omar Kadir are teachers at Winston Churchill High School in Lethbridge.

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THE FIGHT FOR **PUBLIC EDUCATION** IS A FIGHT FOR **DEMOCRACY**

Thoughts from education author and researcher David Berliner



DAVID BERLINER



"There is an enormous (and depressing) resonance in the authors' observations about most of the factors undermining public education in the United States when compared to Alberta," Booie wrote. "The circumstances and threats may be more developed and pernicious in the United States, but they tend to be differences in degree rather than in kind."

In keeping with this issue's theme, the *ATA Magazine* recruited Berliner to comment on the current state of public education.

In your book, you speak to private schools "defeating the goals of a democratic society." How do you see that playing out today?

The more you segregate society, by having the wealthy and the poor rarely meet—through both housing policies and through private schools that pick their students—the less likely you can have a thriving democracy. A thriving democracy means that advantages (good jobs, good housing, good schools, violence-free communities, good medical care) are open to all. It should be talent developed in our public schools, not wealth, that brings about adult achievements. To not nurture talent among the lower classes is antidemocratic, and so terribly wasteful of the untapped potential in so many societies.

In the book you state that charter schools are basically private schools. Are there any circumstances that lend themselves to charter schools being publicly funded?

I am not anticharter. If a group of educators in a public school district think they can do a better job of educating in their community, let them try! Industry has its skunk works: employees working on the side, on projects they think will pay off for the company, but not mainstream for the company. Apple and Google are both famous for that.

A charter is a skunk work. It should be governed by the local school board that charters it. Thus, it stays *inside* the democratic system of governance we have worked so hard to establish and preserve. A charter should never be profit making—schooling is a public good not a private one. What we want is for creative educational alternatives to traditional schools to be tried out. We seek schools that educate all our children, not exclusionary schools that bar kids because they are poor, English language learners,

David Berliner has long been seen as one of the top educational researchers in the United States as well as one of its foremost defenders of public education.

His most recent book is *50 Myths and Lies that Threaten America's Public Schools*. Co-authored with Gene V. Glass and students, the book is a comprehensive and provocative look at modern education reform, explaining how the perceived failure of the public education system is actually a myth that has been created and perpetuated by political and economic interests that stand to gain from the system's destruction.

In a review published in the *ATA Magazine* in 2015, former ATA president Larry Booie stated that the book has considerable relevance to Alberta.

low performers, not Christian (as in North Carolina) and so forth. In this way charters can become the incubators of creative educational responses to our rapidly changing modern society.

Some public districts in Alberta have adopted a choice model with open boundaries and alternative programs based on language, religion, method of instruction, or specialized

My hesitation, of course, is the danger of overspecialization for kids too young to know enough to be boxed in, even if they say they want that. The young hockey fanatic or budding physicist may not make the NHL, or could end up deciding to become a stand-up comedian—and then what? Have they lost anything by specializing so young? I come down on the side of building generalists while kids are young and specializing when a kid is older.

To not nurture talent among the lower classes is antidemocratic, and so terribly wasteful of the untapped potential in so many societies.

athletic programs like hockey or baseball academies. What are your thoughts on this type of model within a publicly funded system with democratically elected trustees?

See my response to question three—I am mostly positive about this, except for support of religious schools—but the U.S. and Canada differ on this, given our different roots.

It's been said that the choice model of education can eventually lead to "educational apartheid." Do you agree or disagree and why?

It does lead to apartheid. The U.S. has housing policies that give us an apartheid-lite system. Not the apartheid of South Africa, but an apartheid system based on the affordability of housing. Only in some rural towns are income groups mixed in schools. And that is because they don't have so many neighbourhood schools. The neighbourhood school in the U.S. is killing us because our urban neighbourhoods are segregated by income and also by race and ethnicity.

The problem is that cohorts—the kids you go to school with—matter a lot. A general rule of thumb, not solidly backed by research but sensible nonetheless, is that schools where the poverty rates go above 40 per cent have a lot more difficulty getting high achievement than schools where poverty rates are under 40 per cent.

Choice schools that discriminate on [the basis of] income, or race or neighbourhood are likely to have more homogenous cohorts, and that can make a big difference in the lives of kids. It's the difference between a school having a college-going culture or a jock culture, or a culture based on respect for teachers or an oppositional culture, a culture with a lot, or with very few absences.

Schools that pick the “best” kids/the easiest-to-teach kids, as charters in the U.S. do, leave the public schools with greater numbers of the more difficult-to-teach kids. That leads to school norms that may be more difficult to overcome. Cohorts matter!

WE'VE GOT ART TO SHARE

Image credit: Philip Kanwischer, *Leave*, 2018.

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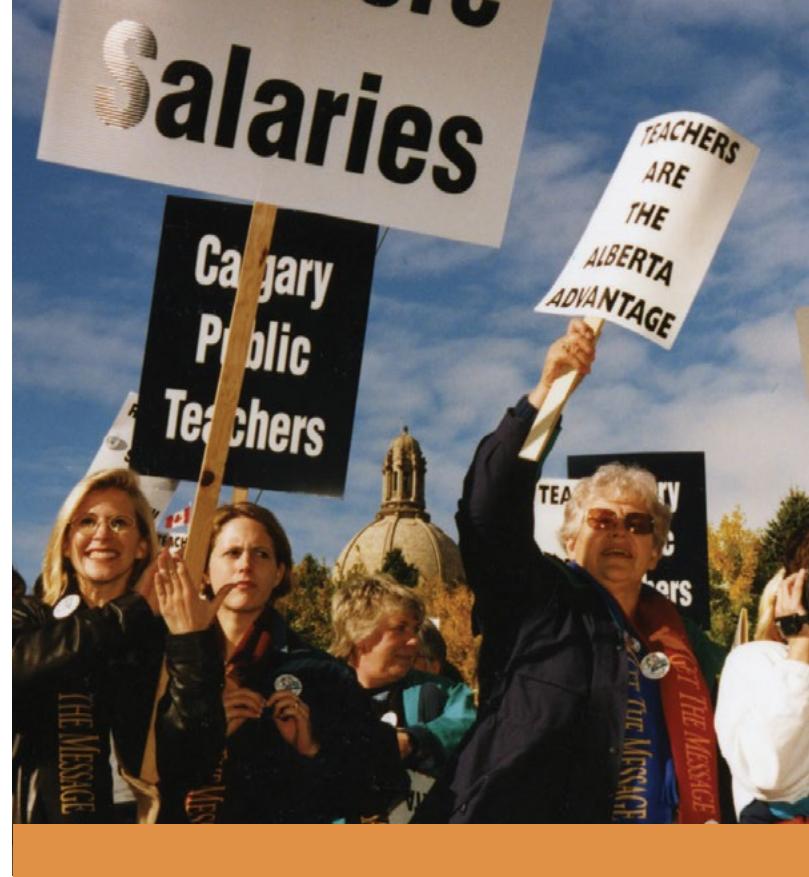
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Given that the “choice model” makes so much sense to some people at a superficial level, in spite of the research, how should advocates of public education respond?

Fight for choice only within districts—controlled by elected school boards, so democratic standards apply, and forbid profit making. Schooling should be a public enterprise to enhance the public good—no different than the reasons we publicly fund police and firefighters, both of which are under public scrutiny and control.

What specific actions can individual teachers take to stand up for public education?

Organize, vote, fight, walk out, and do it *not* for wages or for benefits—*do it to save your democracy!* Democracies are fragile. In mere months precious parts of democracies can be lost—think of Germany in the 20s and 30s. Think of Hungary and the U.S. now. What you want to do is preserve all the things that promote democracies and not those that lead to oligarchies, the real danger facing us in my country, and yours.



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TEACHERS: THE CHAMPIONS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Public education has faced significant challenges over Alberta's 113 years. In those times, Alberta's teachers have taken up the mantle of leadership to promote the cause of public education and preserve this foundational institution.

AN ALLIANCE IS BORN

The Alberta Teachers' Alliance was born out of concern for sustainable public education in Alberta. Before the ATA's founding, public education was at best a hit or miss affair. Each town's ratepayers contributed to a local school board, so there were more than 2,600 school boards. Standardization was lacking in curriculum, teaching contracts, school inspections and even the length of the school year. Schools opened or closed at the whim of the board. Teachers, qualified or not, were often hired or fired solely due to local political squabbles.

This dearth of leadership, collective effort and professional voice prompted like-minded educators to advocate for professional status. In this way, teachers could bring professional vision, collaboration and collegiality into a partnership with government to produce a first-rate public education system. From 1921 until 1935, the United Farmers of Alberta formed the government. Under premiers Herbert Greenfield, John Edward Brownlee and Richard Gavin Reid there was but one minister of education, the formidable Perrin Baker. Baker and the ATA's John Walker

Barnett worked together—often in concert, occasionally in cacophony—to construct a teaching profession for Alberta and its students.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR—PUBLIC EDUCATION AT RISK

Upon the enactment of *The Teaching Profession Act* in 1935 and important amendments thereto in 1936, the original Alberta Teachers' Alliance gave way to a worthy successor, the Alberta Teachers' Association. In the 21 years between the World Wars, Alberta teachers had built their organization into a mature and ever strengthening voice for public education.

In 1939, the Second World War called young men and women from their classrooms to take up military service. A teacher shortage threatened the stability and efficacy of public education precisely as teachers worked to bolster active, democratic citizenship in students. Teachers' efforts were seen as vital, not only to the war effort, but to the longed-for period of recovery to follow.

The ATA and government undertook cooperative action to address the wartime teacher shortage and preserve the public education system. A new teaching certificate, the Junior Certificate for High Schools, came into being as a result of this cooperation. It required post-secondary training, and it licensed the certificate holder to teach Grades 7–11 for an initial period of three years.



Proud to
be a
Teacher

way Teachers say
DUCATION WORKS...
when adequately funded.

Stu
sh

GET THE MESSAGE

Trained and qualified educators remained at the head of wartime classrooms just as those classrooms and school houses were coping with an influx of new students. British school children were arriving in Alberta; young people evacuated from the relentless bombings and imminent threat of death and destruction by frantic parents and a British government preparing to operate in exile. Alberta teachers asked themselves how public education could help care for and support these children.

The stakes could not have been higher. Teachers answered the call to service in their classrooms, on the battlefields, in the Red Cross, and in every benevolent organization dedicated to the relief of human suffering borne of the war. Teachers found their common ground, put aside differences of politics or philosophy and united in the face of great calamity for their profession and, most importantly, for public education and their students.

THE BOOMERS ARRIVE—AND ALL FALLS BEFORE THEM

Sometimes challenges to public education arrive in waves. By 1950, the enormous influx of five-year-old baby boomers were poised to enter Alberta's public education system. Their arrival was a socially seismic event and a challenge to the capacity of that system on every front. In sum, the Social Credit government now under Premier Ernest Manning (1943–1968) could not build schools or hire teachers quickly enough to meet the demand. Class sizes were enormous, classes became more complex, resources were stretched and yet the kids kept coming!

Class sizes were enormous, classes became more complex, resources were stretched and yet the kids kept coming!

Public education struggled to deliver on its promise of equal access to education for all Alberta students. The grand brick school facades of the 1920s were too impractical and time-consuming to build and, besides, they were far too expensive. The school experience was, for some students, shiny and new.

In his book *Born At The Right Time*, author Doug Oram describes this experience from the viewpoint of a school-aged child.

It was exciting to start in a brand new school. The blackboards weren't black at all, but green! The room was lighter and more colourful than those in the old school. The desks were new, light-coloured, Formica-topped, and unblemished by decades of predecessors' minor acts of vandalism. It was fun to have a playground filled with the latest in slides or

swings. If the playground wasn't ready and was still largely mud, that was fun too.

This challenge to public education went beyond new buildings and playgrounds. Rapidly expanding a profession while maintaining high professional standards precipitated a huge uptick in professional development efforts. The Association responded in that decade with proactive, far-reaching initiatives including the creation of specialist councils (councils of collaborating subject-expert teachers). Specialist councils immediately began establishing conferences, workshops and opportunities for teachers to advance their professional practice.

In addition, teachers began to organize and publicly raise their collective voice on the importance of public education. The boomer years saw teachers undertake important, effective and always nonpartisan advocacy and public awareness campaigns. Meetings with the Ministry of Education were ongoing and routine. Cooperation underpinned these meetings, but teachers remained resolute in their commitment to providing their students the best possible public education.

ECONOMIC THREATS TO PUBLIC EDUCATION

Reliable and adequate funding for public education has been a perennial threat to the viability of Alberta's public education system since the province was founded. However, funding emerged as a profound crisis in the mid-1980s and into the early 1990s. In 1992, matters came to a head during Premier Ralph Klein's administration.

Having achieved the premiership on the promise of fiscal restraint, Klein enacted severe cuts to public education and health care. Teachers responded with public advocacy campaigns and concerted study of the issues surrounding the impact of funding cuts.

By 1997 teachers felt it was time for historic action. On World Teachers' Day that year the teachers of Alberta came together en masse to express their collective commitment to public education. On that day, more than 15,000 teachers gathered on the grounds of the Alberta legislature and demanded restored and renewed government support for public education. Unprecedented and powerful, the event was a watershed moment in the history of public education in Alberta.

Maggie Shane is the ATA's archivist.



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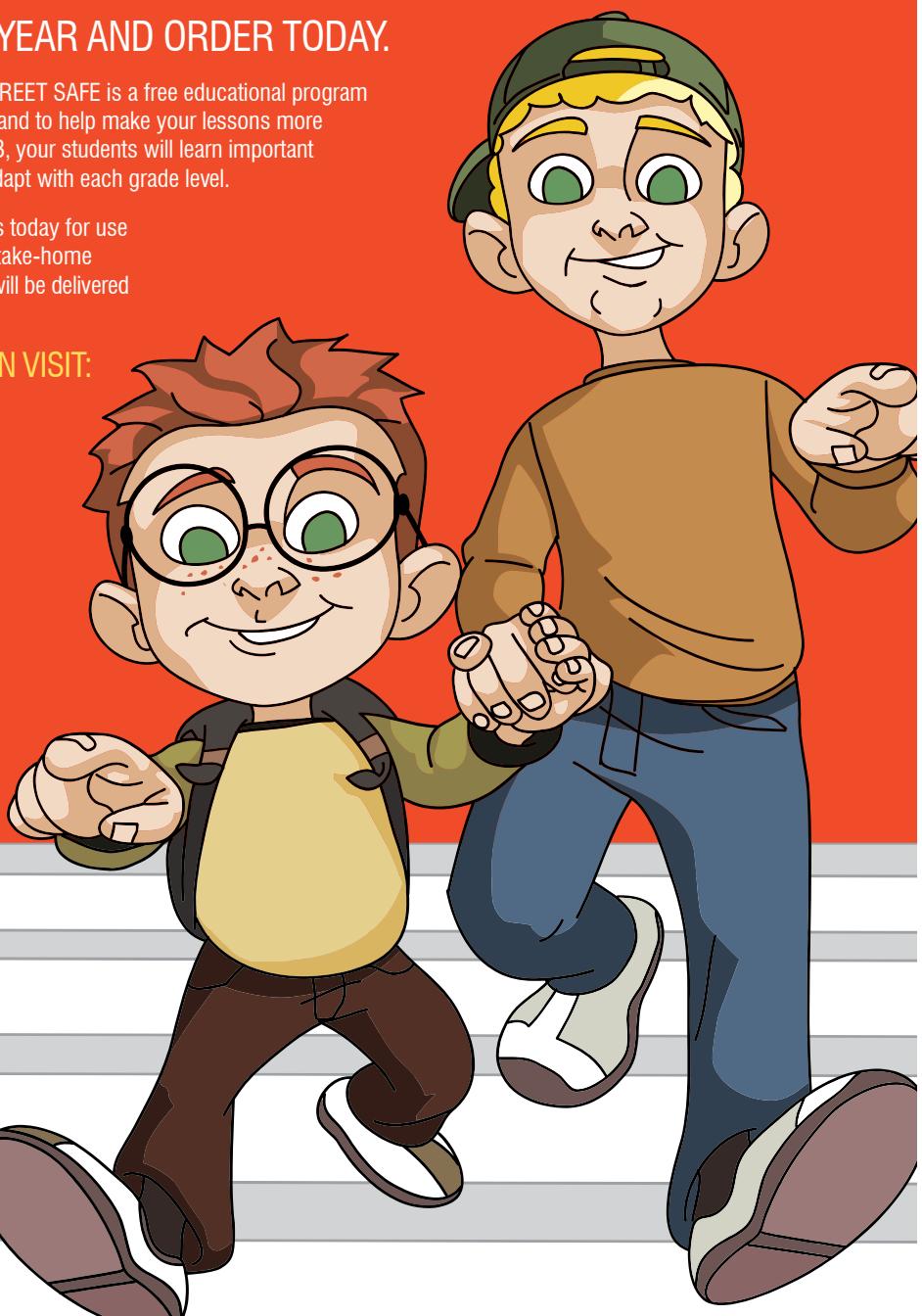
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MARK
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CELEBRATING SAMENESS WHILE RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCE

My journey as principal at Hardisty School

One of the greatest strengths of a public education system is the ability to bring together students with diverse needs and provide them with an education that acknowledges their uniqueness in a setting that is welcoming and accepting. I witnessed this strength first-hand as principal of Hardisty School in southeast Edmonton.

Before I relate my experience at Hardisty, let me begin my tale years earlier in the late 1990s when, during my doctoral studies, I took a course from the late Dr. Ted Aoki. In addition to being a world-renowned curriculum scholar, Dr. Aoki was a fabulous person, one of those who made you feel important in his presence by valuing what you thought and said. He was a world-class scholar and teacher who cared more about what you learned than what he knew.

In his class one day we were discussing the concept of diversity in Canadian society. I can remember Dr. Aoki putting forth the notion that perhaps we should celebrate the “good sameness” of our human brothers and sisters while recognizing the differences that allow for the wonderful mosaic we call humanity. He used the metaphor of a quilt, in which our “good sameness” was the backing, the batting and the binding that served as the foundation for the brightly coloured, perhaps differently shaped squares that together would represent a beautiful piece. He wondered what might happen if more communities focused on the “we” rather than

the “they.” Little did I know in the moment how much that afternoon helped shape my thinking for the path ahead. It was many years later that I was appointed to be principal of Hardisty School which, in its heyday, had housed just under one thousand students. When I came on board, the school was struggling to maintain sustainable enrolment. Most of the residents in the surrounding neighbourhood had grown children who had attended the school. While there was some turnover to younger families, it was occurring at a slow rate.

As a result, Edmonton Public Schools decided to augment neighbourhood enrolment by designating the school as a site for the Logos Alternative Christian Program. In addition to the junior high students from the neighbourhood who were enrolled in grades 7–9, those in the Logos program were in grades 4–9. Each group comprised approximately half of the school population.

When I arrived, the Logos Alternative Christian Program was in its second year at the school and in the district. In fact, this was the first time the district had ventured into offering a faith-based program. While my colleagues had made significant progress in the first year, at the onset of my tenure it became apparent that the school was still in the process of building community within the dynamic created by housing multiple (and at first glance, different) programs in the same building.

MAKING THE QUILT

As I look back, there were some very important pieces that provided the “backing, batting and binding” that served as a strong foundation. These included

- **Strong organizational structures**

We were part of Edmonton Public Schools, which had well-defined procedures and practices. We were “Hardisty School,” which allowed us to work effectively with the Logos board and our parent community. Their roles were clearly defined and they did them well. Also, all our students, regardless of which program they were in, were taught using the required Alberta curriculum. Our students participated in all of the district and provincial assessment initiatives and higher level administrative functions, such as developing our school plan and budget for approval. Our results were presented to our trustees, who represented all programs in the school.

- **A supportive, caring and committed community**

There was, as author Robert Fulgham would describe it, “a right good will” to make things work. The parents of students in the Logos program seemed to be pleased that their children were able to take the program within a public school setting, and the parents of the students who lived in the area were pleased to have the population of the school increased as a result of adding the additional programs to keep the school viable.

Enter Aoki. We made a conscious effort to celebrate sameness while recognizing the diversity or differences. The sameness we had at Hardisty was just as it is at all schools—parents want the best for their children, teachers want their students to be successful and school communities want to be good places for all to be. How then to move forward?

First, we adjusted the physical space. In the previous year the school had been organized into the Logos wing and the regular wing, perhaps contributing to the “we and they” feeling. We changed that to locating all the junior high students in the same area of the school, organized more by subject than by program. This allowed for more collaboration for our teachers and more connection for our students.

Having a large school building, we were fortunate to have an area for our grade 4–6 classes that was related more to age than program. Regardless of program, you were a student at Hardisty. Although this change required a bit of a transition at first, we started to see a decrease of the “they” mentality among our school community.

Second, we decided to look at ourselves through four frames: our school as a community, our students as learners, our parents as partners and our staff as professionals. Although perhaps simplistic, we started to look at our processes and practices through each or all of these lenses. We shared these with our students and parents and began to frame our conversations around them. This provided the opportunity for our school community to move the work forward in a cohesive manner in a way that made sense.

My time at Hardisty was like the line in the John Denver song
“some days were diamonds, days were stones.”

- **A committed staff**

Due to the transition of the Logos program into the school, half of the teaching staff was new to the school. Among the other half, some had been teaching at the school for many years. When I arrived, it became very clear to me that every person was strongly committed to the school’s success.

FITTING THE PIECES

Even with the strong foundation that was in place, it became apparent to me that, if we were going to end up with the beautiful quilt that we wanted, we would need to become a more cohesive school community. Although people treated each other with high degrees of respect, I observed that the school’s identity was centred on whether one was in the “Logos” or “regular” program both as a student, a parent or a teacher. How, then, to achieve the goal of everyone feeling part of Hardisty School first and foremost?

Third, we weren’t afraid to recognize and accommodate the differences. We were a school community that had different programs housed within it—of course there would be differences evident between the programs. These were recognized as appropriate, carefully considering that there should be no perception of privilege or exclusion.

As with life at any other school, my time at Hardisty was like the line in the John Denver song “some days were diamonds, some days were stones.” That’s the wonder of life in a 4–9 school. However, we celebrated the good things and dealt with the challenges as a community, not from the perspective of the “Logos” or the “regular” programming, not as “we and they” but simply as “we.”

Dr. Mark Yurick is a former coordinator of the Professional Development program area of the Alberta Teachers’ Association.

■ CALENDAR ■

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

MARCH 7-8

Central East Alberta Teachers Convention, Edmonton Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton. Sponsors: the Central East Alberta Teachers' Convention Association and the provincial ATA. Website: <https://www.ceatca.teachers.ab.ca>. Contact: Jim Allan, president, CEATCA, at jyallen@telus.net.

MARCH 7-8

Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention, Grande Prairie Composite High School and Peace Wapiti Academy, Grande Prairie. Sponsors: the Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention Association and the provincial ATA. Website: <http://mptca.teachers.ab.ca>. Contact: Chantal Gallant, president, MPTCA, atmptcpresident@gmail.com.

MARCH 11-15

Substitute Teachers Appreciation Week, Sponsors: the provincial ATA. Contact: Keith Hadden, executive staff officer, SARO. Email: keith.hadden@ata.ab.ca. Phone: 403-265-2672.

MARCH 14-15

Central Alberta Teachers Convention, Hunting Hills and Notre Dame High School, Red Deer. Sponsors: the Central Alberta Teachers' Convention Association and the provincial ATA. Website: <https://www.mycatca.com>. Contact: David Martin, president, CATCA, at teacher.david.martin@gmail.com.

APRIL 11-12

Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Conference, Barnett House, Edmonton. Sponsor: the provincial ATA. Contact: Cheryl O'Brien, administrative officer, Professional Development. Email: cheryl.obrien@ata.ab.ca. Phone: 780-447-9468.

APRIL 25-27

Middle Years Council Conference, Banff. Sponsors: Middle Years Council and the provincial ATA. Contact: Chris McCullough, conference director, at chris.mccullough.teacher@gmail.com.

MAY 9-11

Health and Physical Education Council Conference, Red Deer College, Red Deer. Theme: Life's a Journey ... Let it be Active. Sponsors: Health and Physical Education Council and the provincial ATA. Website: www.hpec.ab.ca. Contact: Jodi Harding-Kuriger, conference codirector, at jodi.harding@gmail.com or Jonathan Mauro, conference codirector, at jonathan.mauro@rdcrs.ca.



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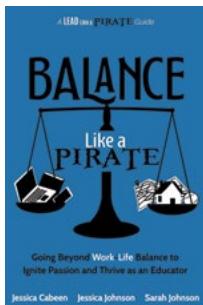
FROM THE BOOKSHELVES

PLENTY OF VARIETY FOR YOUR TEACHING GARDEN

Welcome to our spring column of From the Bookshelves. I have tried to include a little something for everyone in this edition, so hopefully you'll find something here that will take hold and grow in your teaching garden.

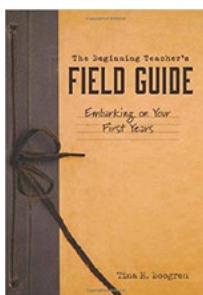
Please remember that all of these resources can be shipped to either your home or your school, and our library pays for the return shipping. No matter where you are in the province, you get free service from your ATA library. If you don't see anything here that sparks your fire, email me at library@ata.ab.ca and tell me about a topic that excites you. I'm always happy to do research for teachers.

BOOKS



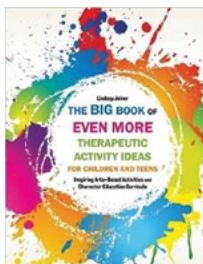
Balance Like a Pirate: Going Beyond Work-Life Balance to Ignite Passion and Thrive as an Educator

Cabeen, J. et al. 2018. San Diego, CA: Dave Burgess Consulting (370 C114) Like the other books in this series, this one discusses how to engage passionately without worrying about drowning. Admitting that balance is a myth, the authors discuss paring away "shoulds" to focus on what really matters to you.



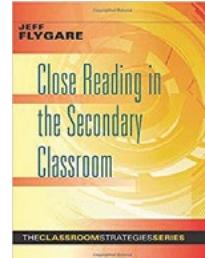
The Beginning Teacher's Field Guide: Embarking on Your First Years

Boogren, T. H. 2018. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree (371.102 B724) As with any big change in life, there are six stages to the process of living through that change: anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection and second anticipation. Author Tina Boogren offers new teachers classroom strategies and self-care practices that have been tailored to each of these stages.



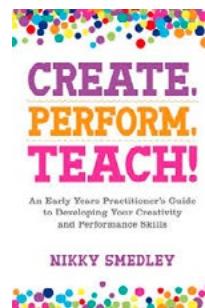
The Big Book of Even More Therapeutic Activity Ideas for Children and Teens: Inspiring Arts-Based Activities and Character Education Curricula

Joiner, L. 2016. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (618.9289 J74) This book has great projects and lesson plans that teachers can use to unleash creativity, teach social and positive thinking skills, and strategies to overcome anger and anxiety.



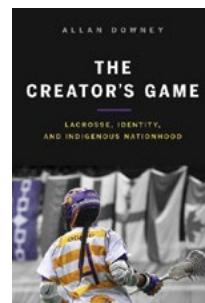
Close Reading in the Secondary Classroom

Flygare, J. 2018. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research (372.4 F648) Defining close reading as a way to drill down into a text to develop a deep understanding of the author's work, author Jeff Flygare provides teachers with strategies for guiding students through the development of these reading skills.



Create, Perform, Teach!: An Early Years Practitioner's Guide to Developing Your Creativity and Performance Skills

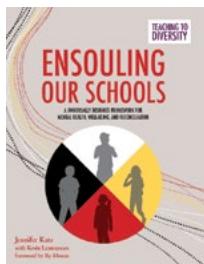
Smedley, N. 2018. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (372.21 S637) Engaging with your students is one of the most important skills a teacher can learn. This concise guide provides some great ideas for upping your game in an early years classroom.



The Creator's Game: Lacrosse, Identity and Indigenous Nationhood

Downey, A. 2018. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press (796.36208 D748) Seen as a gift from the Creator by Indigenous people's, lacrosse was appropriated by white settlers and into the Canadian national identity. It was later reclaimed by Indigenous communities and played as a resistance to acculturation. The history of lacrosse is really a history of settler/Indigenous relations in Canada.

■ FROM THE BOOKSHELVES ■



Ensouling Our Schools: A Universally Designed Framework for Mental Health, Well-Being, and Reconciliation

Katz, J. 2018. Winnipeg, MB: Portland and Main (371.90460971 K18)

Only one-fifth of students with mental health issues will receive any kind of help with those problems.

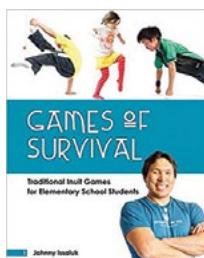
Understanding that learning cannot

take place until the emotional and social needs of students are met, the authors provide useful ideas for creating the nurturing environments that children need.

Experience Inquiry: 5 Powerful Strategies, 50 Practical Experiences

Mitchell, K. L. 2019. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press (371.3 M681)

In this great hands-on manual, Kimberly Mitchell gives teachers examples of how to do practical inquiry and then a chance to actually practice what she explains. She includes self-surveys to check for understanding and provides excellent tools.



Games of Survival: Traditional Inuit Games for Elementary Students

Issaluk, J. 2012. Iqaluit, NU: Inhabit Media (9781927095218)

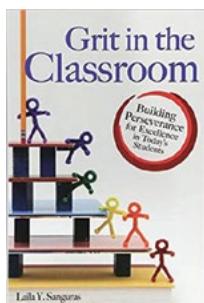
Introducing traditional Indigenous games to a physical education class is a great way to add more Indigenous content into your curriculum.

The book is written for teachers of elementary students but many of these games could also be introduced in high school as they require a significant amount of fitness to master.

Gift of Sports: Indigenous Ceremonial Dimensions of the Games We Love

Arnold, P. P. 2012. San Francisco, CA: Cognella, Inc. (7986 A757)

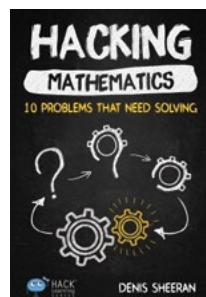
An interesting look at the religious origins of sports and the spiritual elements that continue in sports to this day.



Grit in the Classroom: Building Perseverance for Excellence in Today's Students

Sanguras, L. Y. 2017. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press (371.102 S225)

Grit is the thing that makes us not give up, and it is one of the most important ingredients for lifelong success. Laila Sanguras examines strategies for helping students build their determination and grit capacities.

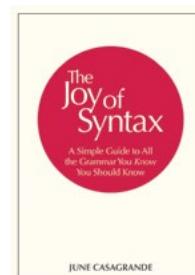


Hacking Mathematics:

10 Problems that Need Solving

Sheeran, D. 2018. Highland Heights, OH: Times 10 Publications (510 S539)

Author Denis Sheeran promises to show teachers how to create relevant math connections for students, use homework effectively while reducing anxiety about it, connect with a global community of math educators and provide meaningful feedback. Does he succeed? Borrow this book and let us know!



Joy of Syntax: A Simple Guide to All the Grammar You Know You Should Know

Casagrande, J. 2018. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press (372.6 C335)

In this mercifully brief tome (sorry grammar geeks), readers will find clear and concise answers to all of the grammar questions their students could possibly throw at them.

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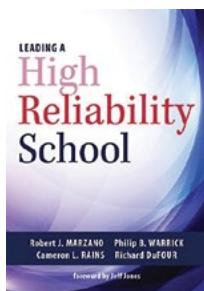
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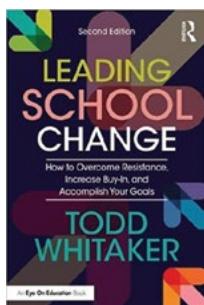
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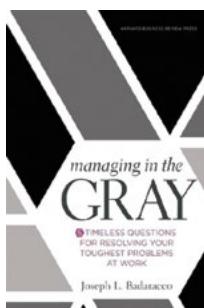
Leading a High Reliability School

Marzano, R. et al. 2018. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree (371.207 M393)
Leading a whole-school transformation to high reliability requires professional learning communities argues Robert Marzano and his co-authors. They discuss how administrators can make their schools into safe, supportive and collaborative environments that support effective teaching in all classes.



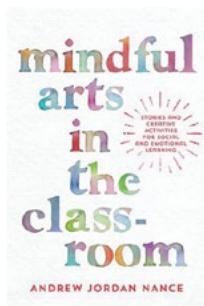
Leading School Change: How to Overcome Resistance, Increase Buy-In, and Accomplish Your Goals

Whitaker, T. 2018. New York, NY: Routledge (371.2011 W578)
Become a better leader by implementing new methods of interacting with staff and managing projects that help you accomplish meaningful school change. Todd Whitaker offers readers a quick guide to rethinking how you approach change in your school.



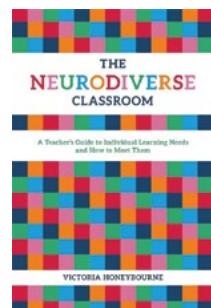
Managing in the Gray: 5 Timeless Questions for Resolving Your Toughest Problems at Work

Badaracco, J. L. 2016. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press (658.403 B132)
The hardest decisions are those in the grey—that have no clear right answer. Joseph Badaracco shares a useful technique for making the best decision when there is no correct one.



Mindful Arts in the Classroom: Stories and Creative Activities for Social and Emotional Learning

Nance, A. J. 2018. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press (370.1534 N176)
Author Andrew Nance has created a 21-lesson curriculum using easy-to-lead exercises for young students from kindergarten to grade 3. He shows how teachers can use storytelling, theatre games and drawing to strengthen children's social and emotional learning in the classroom.



The Neurodiverse Classroom: A Teacher's Guide to Individual Learning Needs and How to Meet Them

Honeybourne, V. 2018. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (37.92 H772)
Acknowledging that neurodiversity in the classroom is a significant challenge for teachers, Honeybourne offers practical ideas for using simple tools to meet the needs of many neurodiverse learners at one time.

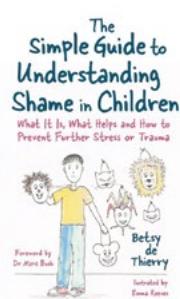


Redskins: Insult and Brand

King, C. R. 2016. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press (970.00497 K52)

Have you ever wondered why American sports teams use tribal names or insults about Indigenous peoples as their brands? This thoughtful book examines the disturbing history of the name used

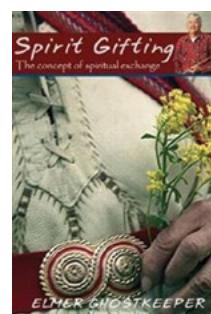
by Washington's National Football League team and why the league defends the name. Author C. Richard King also discusses the relationship between mainstream American culture and Indigenous peoples.



The Simple Guide to Understanding Shame in Children: What It Is, What Helps, and How to Prevent Further Stress or Trauma

De Thierry, B. 2019. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (362.50 T436)

Looking at how shame becomes a poison in children's minds, author Betsy de Thierry provides teachers with a deeper understanding of the toxic effects of shame and how to help students build their esteem to overcome the effects of shame.



Spirit Gifting: The Concept of Spiritual Exchange

Ghostkeeper, E. 2007. Raymond, AB: Writing on Stone Press (971.00497 G411)
Writing in an engaging way, Elmer Ghostkeeper introduces readers to the Métis worldview and explains how exchange is understood in Métis culture. An excellent short read for anyone who wishes to learn more about Métis in Canada.



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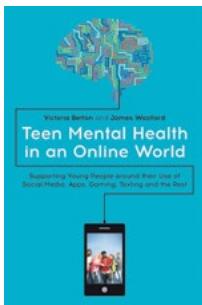
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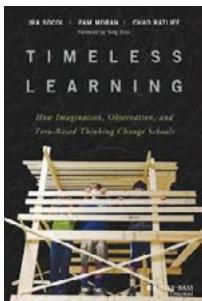


Teen Mental Health in an Online World: Supporting Young People around their Use of Social Media, Apps, Gaming, Texting and the Rest

Betton V. and J. Woollard. 2019. London: UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (362.20835 B565)

More and more research is showing concerning results about mental health and excessive screen time use. Balance is important but so

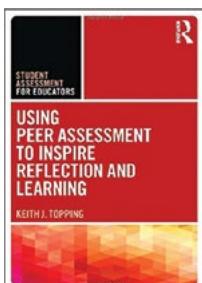
is engaging with the online world in a way that fosters creativity rather than mindless consumption. Authors Victoria Betton and James Woollard demonstrate ways that teachers can encourage teens to use social media in ways that support their mental health and well-being.



Timeless Learning: How Imagination, Observation, and Zero-Based Thinking Change Schools

Socol, I. et al. 2018. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (371.207 S678)

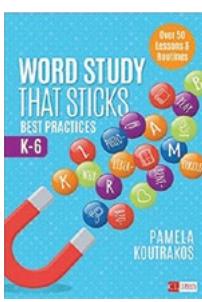
Arguing that standardization kills the joy in education, the authors discuss ways that teachers can help kids retain their enthusiasm for learning and excitement for active participation throughout their education.



Using Peer Assessment to Inspire Reflection and Learning

Topping, K. J. 2018. London, UK: Routledge (370.711 T678)

Peer assessment can be a powerful learning tool but is difficult to implement effectively in the classroom. Author Keith Topping has created a useful guide for introducing peer assessment across many grades and subjects.



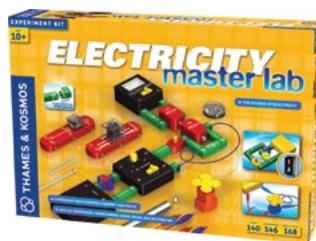
Word Study That Sticks: Best Practices K-6

Koutrakos, P. 2019. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Literacy. (372.465 K88) Ready to add joy, inquiry and active exploration to your word studies?

In this well-illustrated, engaging book you will find clear lesson plans, strategies and workarounds for including word studies in a whole new way. A highly recommended book!

MAKER KITS

Didn't know that our library will loan you technology kits? You're not alone! This is a library secret we are doing our best to share with teachers, but we need your help to get the word out. From 3D printing pens to drones to robots, we have the newest technology for you to test out before deciding if it's right for your classroom makerspace. Below is a list of some of our newest additions to this collection.



Electricity Master Lab

Thames Kosmos. 2018. Providence, RI: Thames Kosmos (EML 1)

This science kit explores more than 100 experiments of direct and alternating current.

Accompanied by a 96-page manual, this easy-to-use kit will spark great ideas for your science class.



Holy Stone Drone

Holy Stone. 2017. US: Holy Stone (DRO 1)

Best used outside where it can navigate through a GPS system, this drone will fly for 15 minutes between charges, take video and return to a programmed home

base when the battery is low. Teachers should read all the enclosed documentation about drone laws in Canada before flying this machine.



Oculus Go Standalone Virtual Reality Headset

Oculus. 2018. Menlo Park, CA: Oculus (OC 1)

Oculus Go is a virtual reality headset that does not require a constant connection to other technology to work. Users can download apps or movies to watch in the amazingly submersive headset.



Rainbow Easi-Scope

TTS. 2018. London, UK: TTS (RES 1)

Small, egg-shaped magnifying cameras for younger students allow children to explore

everyday objects with 54x magnification. The cameras hook up easily to PC computers and allow children to take pictures or make movies of the objects they are exploring.



Tuff-Cam 2

TTS. 2018. London, UK: TTS (TUF 1)

This child-friendly and sturdy camera can be used to take pictures or record film clips with audio. It features 14MB picture quality, a two-inch video screen, easy-to-understand buttons, and a flat base to support stop-motion animation projects.

FRENCH BOOKS/LIVRES EN FRANÇAIS

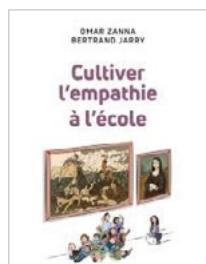


Les diplômes des activités physiques et sportives : psychologie, pédagogie et santé du sportif

Martin-Krumm, Charles. 2016. Paris, FRA : Dunod (796 M381)

Conçu pour ceux qui se destinent aux métiers liés aux activités physiques et sportives, cet ouvrage aborde les problématiques propres au suivi

du sportif : psychologie, santé, nutrition, performance, dont l'articulation est essentielle dans le travail des futurs professionnels du sport.



Cultiver l'empathie à l'école

Zanna, Omar et Bertrand Jarry. 2018. Paris, FRA : Dunod (303.327 Z32)

La première partie de cet ouvrage retrace la genèse d'un questionnement au sujet de l'intérêt d'une éducation – par les corps en mouvement – à l'empathie à l'école. La seconde, plus tournée vers l'action, expose des mises en œuvre

concrètes à l'adresse des adultes qui ont le souci d'une relation pédagogique bienveillante.



Nos garçons en danger! École, santé, maturité. Pourquoi c'est plus compliqué pour eux et comment les aider

Clerget, Stéphane. 2015. Paris, FRA : Flammarion (158.15 C629)

Pas si simple d'élever son fils dans un contexte d'égalité entre les sexes, de surfeminisation du personnel éducatif, de recomposition familiale généralisant le retrait de la figure paternelle... La physiologie et le caractère naturel de

nos garçons les prédisposent plus que les filles aux maladies d'apprentissage et aux comportements à risques. Ce livre passionnant, écrit par un des meilleurs spécialistes de

l'enfance, alerte sur ce qui pourrait devenir un grave problème éducatif.

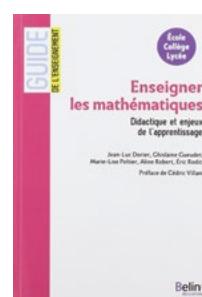


L'école face à la violence : décrire, expliquer, agir

Debarbieux, Éric. 2016. Paris, FRA : Armand Colin (371.7 D286)

Une approche objective de la violence à l'école est plus que jamais nécessaire. Il ne s'agit pas d'être naïfs mais bien de poser les questions essentielles et d'y répondre d'après la recherche scientifique.

Ce livre rassemble les contributions des meilleurs chercheurs internationaux sur la violence scolaire. Autant de questions vives, en France, comme à l'étranger dont les réponses s'appuient sur des recherches solides, pour ne pas céder aux simplismes dangereux.



Enseigner les mathématiques : didactique et enjeux de l'apprentissage

Dorier, Jean-Luc, Ghislaine Gueudet, Marie-Lise Peltier, Aline Robert et Éric Roditi. 2018. Paris, FRA : Belin Éducation (510 D693)

Cet ouvrage fait le point sur les difficultés de l'enseignement des mathématiques et apporte des réponses associant la sociologie, la psychologie, la psychanalyse, les neurosciences et la didactique. Riches en exemples tirés de situations de classe, cet ouvrage s'impose comme une référence pour les enseignants et les futurs enseignants.



Parler de religion en classe

Clerc, Sébastien et Yves Michaud. 2018. Paris, FRA : Belin Éducation (292 S443)

Dans ce livre d'un genre nouveau s'installe au fil des pages un dialogue entre un enseignant et un philosophe sur la question de la religion. Le premier, tout en consignant au jour le jour son expérience de terrain, livre les méthodes et astuces qu'il a progressivement mises en place, tandis que le second apporte un cadre de réflexion à la myriade de notions abordées et donne son regard républicain sur les manifestations actuelles du fait religieux.



GORDON
THOMAS

ENSURING COLLEGIALITY AND SOLIDARITY

How teachers are governed really makes a difference

Since the formation of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance (the forerunner of the Alberta Teachers' Association) in 1918, the teachers' organization has been focused on both the economic needs and the professional advancement of the teaching profession. The organization was established for certificate holders (as opposed to the moribund Alberta Education Association, from which the Alliance was created, which included members of the legislative assembly, clergy, trustees and other education do-gooders). The Alliance founders were very clear—it would be a professional organization, not a glee club for pedagogical spectators. And from its beginning, the organization has focused on the fullest range of teachers' professional and economic needs.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Alliance called for significant improvements to members' economic welfare, including a legislated minimum salary and security of tenure. In 1932, the Alliance ratified a declaration of principles underlying members' professional ethics, advancing the Code of Honour that had been approved at the 1918 annual meeting.

In 1935, under a government led by the United Farmers Association, the Alberta legislature passed the *Teaching Profession Act*, which recognized the Alberta Teachers' Association as the official voice of certificate holders, granting authority to represent the teaching profession. The following year, the new Social Credit government amended

the act to require automatic membership of teachers and to grant the Association the authority to discipline members—all teachers employed by public and separate school boards were now required by law to be members, subject to professional discipline.

In the 1940s, the Association expanded its authority in collective bargaining (through formal means or voluntary recognition) and collective agreements were established between school boards and the Association. While labour action was very rare, teachers across the province, in solidarity, supported teachers who were affected by such action. The Association also took over responsibility for teachers' conventions, focusing on improving professional practice.

Extensive discussions were undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s to grant the Association full self-governance, including the authority to bestow teaching certificates, but an agreement was elusive. However, the government did grant the Association the authority to police the competence of teachers, and the *Teaching Profession Act* was amended in 2004. The *Practice Review Bylaws* were approved in 2007 and came into effect in 2009.

Given school board consolidation, centralized funding by government and the loss of school board taxation authority, the government passed the *Public Education Collective Bargaining*



Act in 2015, recognizing the Association as the bargaining agent for teachers employed by school boards and establishing the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) as the representative of school boards for central table bargaining.

Today, the Association has both “union” and “professional” functions, consistent with the *Teaching Profession Act*, but that doesn’t mean that the core structure of the teaching profession hasn’t been challenged over the years. In 1981,

there was a focus on how teachers were evaluated and on the Association’s dual role of representing teachers and also disciplining them. In 1985, a provincial commission established to review the Keegstra debacle recommended that the Association’s union and professional regulatory functions be split. Teachers did not respond kindly to this further intervention into the profession’s governance and the government chose not to act on the proposals. In the 1990s, Innisfail–Sylvan Lake MLA Gary Severtson brought forward private members’ bills to end the Association’s

Advancing teachers’ economic needs is in the profession’s self interest; addressing professional needs is in the collective interest of the profession and the public.

Education Minister David King proposed breaking up the Association, separating the union and professional regulatory functions. There was an outcry from teachers and the proposal was dropped. When the teaching practices of James Keegstra came to light (the Eckville teacher taught students that the Holocaust had not happened),

“dual function” and in 2014 Education Minister Jeff Johnson created the Task Force on Teaching Excellence, which also threatened to break up the Association.

WHO SHOULD BELONG?

The Association’s membership has also been attacked at various times throughout the organization’s history. In the 1950s and 1960s, some school boards regularly proposed to remove principals from the bargaining unit. And in the 1990s, Edmonton Public sought an order from the Alberta Labour Relations Board to remove principals from the bargaining unit on the basis that they were management employees. The Alberta Court of Appeal ultimately resolved the matter by determining that the legislature intended that principals be a part of the Association. In 2003, Alberta’s Commission on Learning called for the removal of principals and central office teachers from the Association. In 2004, the *Teaching Profession Act* was amended to allow central office teachers to elect their membership status, but government did not act on the commission’s recommendation to remove principals from the Association.

Since its very inception, the Association has sought to advance the economic needs of teachers and to meet the professional needs of teachers. Advancing teachers’ economic needs is in the profession’s self interest; addressing professional needs is in the collective interest of the profession and the public. Why is it so important to maintain a teachers’ organization with these “dual functions”? Why is a unified profession so important?

How teachers are governed really does make a difference. While many teachers’ organizations maintain functions relating to both union and professional roles, some do not (and the initial choice isn’t one that teachers’ organizations always get to make). Governments in British Columbia and Ontario removed principals from the teachers’ organizations and gutted the organizations of professional functions, transforming them into pure trade unions.

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Professional regulatory functions were transferred to a college of teachers, paid for by teachers. This shift effectively replaced collegial relations across the profession with management-labour relations—principals and central office teachers were now management and classroom teachers were labour.

For more than a century, the Association has sought full responsibility for the governance of the teaching profession. Key to this is a commitment to separate the union and professional regulatory functions within a single organization and to ensure that the latter responsibilities always respect the public interest. It makes sense that both professional and union functions exist together. It is a reality of a teacher's work every day. Teachers are professionals, but they cannot be self-employed. So they work in a union environment, side by side with other union members, utilizing collegial relations.

For the teaching profession, the strongest possible structure is one in which all certificate holders are members of the Association, with all their various roles effectively represented in governance. This creates the greatest capacity to “row together” to help every student meet their full potential. Such a structure maximizes collegial relations and places the greatest emphasis on supporting each classroom teacher to meet each student's learning needs.

A unified profession collapses when it is recast into a traditional management-union structure. Collegial relations disappear and are replaced with management-labour relations. Central office staff and principals direct teachers and teachers do as they are told. Issues are resolved through the grievance process in the collective agreement. Filing grievances with the principal becomes a regular pastime.



So now is the time to expand the Association's professional regulatory functions, not to remove them. The profession should be fully self-governing. The Association's membership should be all certificate holders in Alberta, and the Association should be granted the right to issue teaching certificates. Teachers in various roles (e.g., classroom teachers, principals, central office teachers, superintendents, others) should be effectively represented in the governance of the profession. And remember, the profession includes teachers employed in faculties of education, government and private schools. A fully unified profession maximizes collegial relations and minimizes management-labour relations, and the structure best supports professional practice.

As in many things, it works best when we all stick together and support one another to achieve our core work as members of the teaching profession: meeting each student's learning needs.

Dr. Gordon Thomas served on the Association's executive staff from 1984 to 2018, including service as executive secretary from 2003 to 2018. He has studied how teachers are governed in education systems all over the world.

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EDUCATION AND ASSURANCE

Albertans are the beneficiaries of a world-renowned public education system that has evolved over decades. It is a system often studied by other countries seeking to navigate the many complexities of preparing children and youth for a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous future.

Of particular interest to international researchers studying our public education system is our historic commitment to equity in Alberta, and the fact that we consistently rank among the top performers globally when compared to other private and public education systems.

Excellence within any education system is only ever achieved through a commitment to equity built on public confidence achieved through democratic structures and trust in the teaching profession, classrooms and schools that are confident and competent in their ability to respond daily to the complex needs of a diverse student population. The public's confidence and trust in our education system have come to be known as "public assurance," a characteristic built over time—daily in every school, and throughout the school year in the public interactions and news that engage the general public.

There is always a danger that civil societies can become ambivalent to their public systems (e.g., education, health care) and, in doing so, fall prey to the illusion of the permanence and stability of these strong, common spaces. Public education is fragile and depends on the support of all citizens, many of whom may no longer have children in K–12 schools. Ensuring that all of the Alberta public

- curriculum renewal, including rewriting the entire K–12 program of studies;
- enhanced supports for early learning;
- high school flexibility initiatives that broaden the purposes of education;
- new legislation and commitments to making schools safe, inclusive and nurturing environments for all students; and
- an ambitious program of school infrastructure development.

As all of these structures underpinning the education system are renewed, the Association has been advocating for new approaches to public assurance that are more responsive to the growing diversity and complexity of Alberta classrooms. The current accountability framework, established in 1995, has become a mechanism of compliance for school board planning and reporting, with the monitoring mechanisms and measurement instruments delivering little value to the public and Alberta teachers as they work to support diverse student learning or foster more equitable and inclusive classrooms across Alberta. A new model of public assurance must be committed to bringing forward the best of the accountability structures of the past, such as the Teaching Quality Standards, into more responsive approaches that will enhance greater public assurance in the future.

The fundamental purpose of public assurance is to engage Albertans in an ongoing conversation that will create confidence and trust that the shared commitments and actions within the system are responsive and achievable, and accomplish the goals of education.

Public education is fragile and depends on the support of all citizens, many of whom may no longer have children in K–12 schools.

has confidence and trust (i.e., assurance) in the efforts of our public education system is important, especially at this historical moment when we are facing a period of significant educational change and development on a number of fronts, including

- new practice standards for teachers, school leaders and superintendents;

Alberta teachers know that public assurance is attained through an interplay between actions that occur daily in the education system and provincial supports that play out over the school year. Examples of daily actions are the various interactions that naturally take place involving teachers, students, parents, principals and superintendents. Examples of provincial supports that are necessary for public assurance are class-size funding, inclusion supports and school infrastructure.

To initiate this concept of public assurance, the Association has proposed a new framework that's based on research and that could replace old accountability structures. This new framework contains five domains for public assurance that are unique but interconnected.

FIVE DOMAINS FOR PUBLIC ASSURANCE

1. Student experiences

Students' interactions with friends, their participation in sports/activities and their home life

2. Teaching and learning

Teachers, schools and the school system

3. System supports

Equitable distribution of the resources needed to ensure optimum learning

4. Governance

Processes by which policy leaders at the provincial, municipal and school authority level make decisions and monitor implementation

5. Responding to local and societal context

Response by schools and communities to the distinct needs and interests of their students

To make this new model work, a variety of illustrative elements and actions would need to be agreed upon (and jointly communicated) by the education partners so that the public would know the system is working together for assurance.

In this entire dialogue, the public must make certain that senior policy makers engage regularly with Albertans, and the government with key education partners, thus avoiding the risk of moving forward with simplistic or narrow bureaucratic responses to the velocity of change and the growing complexity of our society and education system.

As this conversation on public assurance in our public education system evolves, the profession will need to engage in the research on public assurance and further reflect on the differences between standards and standardization; the impact of public trust and confidence on assurance in an age when "truth" seems to be constantly shifting; the importance of equity within a society (excellent education systems achieved through equity); what is accepted as evidence (measuring what matters); and the difference between accountability and the need for teachers and principals to have the ability to respond within more complex and diverse communities. For example, in terms of standards, standardization and trust, below are two questions that I have been pondering:

- *Is the public assured that their K–12 education system is of high quality only if it is defined by high levels of standardization (low trust)?*

- *Is the public assured that their K–12 education system is of high quality only if it is defined by low levels of standardization (high trust)?*

In conclusion, the success of any new model of assurance will depend on its ability to build support and confidence among the public that the entire education system can meet the learning needs of all students, and that this system is committed to helping each student reach their potential. Public assurance happens not by measuring what is easy to assess, but by measuring and reporting on what society deeply values.

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

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NEW PUBLICATION CELEBRATES INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE



Sharing Histories, Cultures and World Views

In June 2016, a stakeholder group that included the Alberta Teachers' Association signed the **Joint Commitment to Indigenous Languages** to ensure that all students learn about the histories, cultures and world views of Indigenous peoples.

The Alberta Teachers' Association has begun to fulfill its commitment by establishing the **Walking Together Education for Reconciliation Professional Learning Project**.

www.teachers.ab.ca @walkingtogetherata #ATAindigenous

The latest release in the ATA's Stepping Stones series is entitled *Indigenous Language Diversity and Revitalization*.

Along with a summary of the different languages that have been spoken in Canada for thousands of years, the document outlines that Indigenous languages are at risk of extinction and the efforts that are underway to revitalize them.

The Stepping Stones series consists of 13 documents, with several still in development. They're part of the ATA's Walking Together project, which strives to connect Alberta's teachers with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge required as part of the new Teaching Quality Standard.

Downloadable PDF versions of the Stepping Stones summaries, as well as a full list of Indigenous education professional development materials, are available to teachers on the ATA website at www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Indigenous Education and Walking Together.

TEACHERS SOUGHT FOR STUDY

The Canadian Teachers' Federation is sponsoring a study on the shortage of teachers in French-language schools in minority settings. The study is being conducted by a University of Ottawa research team under the leadership of Phyllis Dalley, Ph.D.

The research team wishes to interview people who, in the first five years of their career, have chosen to leave permanent teaching positions in minority settings as well as those who have chosen to stay.

Who can participate?

- Any teacher who has been in a teaching (permanent or on track to become permanent) position in a minority French-language school for fewer than five years.
- Any teacher who has left the French-language school system during his or her first five years of teaching to go work for an English-language school (immersion, FSL, other).
- Any teacher who has left the teaching profession during his or her first five years of teaching.

Participants will be asked to take part in an individual Skype interview which will last from 30 to 120 minutes, depending on their availability. Please note that participation is purely voluntary. Anything participants say to the researcher and her team will be kept strictly confidential. The identity of participants will not be disclosed under any circumstances.

To volunteer or request more information, contact project manager Josée Lebel at educavenir@uottawa.ca.

ENSEIGNANTS RECHERCHÉS POUR PARTICIPER À UNE ÉTUDE

La Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants commandite une étude sur la pénurie d'enseignants dans les écoles de langue française en contexte minoritaire. Cette étude est menée par une équipe de recherche de l'Université d'Ottawa qui travaille sous la direction de Phyllis Dalley, Ph. D.

L'équipe de recherche souhaite interviewer tant des personnes qui ont fait le choix de quitter un poste permanent en enseignement en contexte minoritaire que des personnes qui ont fait le choix d'y rester au cours des cinq premières années de leur carrière.

Qui peut participer

- Toute enseignante ou enseignant occupant un poste d'enseignement (permanent ou en voie de permanence) dans une école de langue française en contexte minoritaire depuis moins de cinq ans.
- Toute enseignante ou enseignant ayant quitté le système scolaire francophone au cours de ses cinq premières années d'enseignement pour travailler dans une école de langue anglaise (immersion, FLS, autre poste).
- Toute personne ayant quitté la profession enseignante au cours de ses cinq premières années d'enseignement.

Ce que cela implique

Les personnes seront invitées à participer, par Skype, à un entretien individuel d'une durée de 30 à 120 minutes, selon leur disponibilité. Leur participation est entièrement volontaire.

Toute communication avec la chercheure et son équipe restera strictement confidentielle. L'identité des personnes participantes ne sera divulguée en aucun cas.

Qui contacter pour en savoir plus ou pour participer :

Josée Lebel
Gestionnaire de projet
educavenir@uottawa.ca

2LEARN HIGHLIGHTS ON TOPICS



Every year, the United Nations chooses to promote particular events or topics, to raise awareness and encourage action to support these issues. In 2019, the UN has chosen to celebrate and encourage learning about the periodic table of chemical elements and Indigenous languages. 2Learn has created two special editions to help teachers find educational resources about these topics.

2Learn's feature page about the Year of the Periodic Table is filled with engaging resources, including interactive periodic tables, the history of the table's development, videos and teaching ideas. There are also several resources about the chemical elements.

The Year of Indigenous Languages special edition will have resources about the year's celebrations, along with content about Indigenous languages in Canada and Alberta.

Visit 2Learn.ca or the 2Learn index of special editions at <http://www.2learn.ca/speds.aspx>, to find the featured pages about the Year of the Periodic Table and the Year of Indigenous Languages. The index page also has an excellent collection of feature pages on other topics of interest to Alberta educators.

Follow 2Learn on social media to get updates about the latest resources.

EXPLORE SPACE WITH REAL SCIENTISTS

A new space program connects school classrooms with active scientists via online conference calls. Open to Grades 4–12, the program enables students to ask questions and hear scientists talk about their work. The sessions are free for teachers and their classes in Canada, and the sponsoring organization is especially interested in reaching more remote communities. The program also supports sessions for all-girl classes to speak with female astronomers and engineers.

The program is called Canadian Youth Exploring Space and is offered by the Friends of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria, BC.

More information is available at <https://thecentreoftheuniverse.net/canyes/>.

AWARD RECOGNIZES EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING HISTORY

Each year, Canada's History Society recognizes six teachers for innovative approaches to teaching Canadian history. The 2019 recipients will receive the following:

- An individual cash prize of \$2,500;
- A \$1,000 cash prize for the recipient's school; and
- A trip for two to Ottawa to attend an awards ceremony and celebration dinner.

If you or a teacher you know makes history come to life in the classroom, submit a nomination or apply online today! Applications are due April 1.

More information is available at CanadasHistory.ca/GGAward. Questions can be directed to Joanna Dawson at jdawson@canadashistory.ca or 204-988-9300 x.225.

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ATA MAGAZINE ■ SPRING 2019

37

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WHEN IDEAS CROSS BORDERS

The case of charter schools in Alberta

One of the challenges inherent to living in Canada is the proximity of the United States, which has over the last century been the most economically and culturally dominant nation on the planet. Its influence is felt particularly strongly across the world's longest undefended border and permeates every aspect of Canadian life.

As international neighbours go, Canada could have done much worse than the United States, and I do not count myself among those who espouse knee-jerk anti-Americanism when defining their identity as Canadians. But I do recognize that many aspects of the American identity and public life are unique and may not be applicable in the Canadian context. I am especially concerned when policy solutions in education are decontextualized and imported from the United States.

adoption of the charter school model there, reflected the neo-liberal assumption that competition among schools would realize for education the same benefits attributed to competition in the marketplace: greater innovation, enhanced product choice and a winnowing out of unproductive or inefficient providers. Charter schools would operate free from the constraints imposed by school boards, onerous state regulation or the presence of teacher unions. Competition, the promoters of charter schools argued, would improve performance in charter schools and ultimately in the public school system. For the most part, this is still the case that is made for supporting publicly funded charter schools.

While there is a degree of variation across states and school districts, American charter schools generally receive funding comparable to that provided to public schools and are

was that it provided a mechanism for resegregating schools and for diverting public funds to support the education of children from comparatively privileged backgrounds in largely private contexts, even as funding for public schools remained moribund or declined. Charter schools, then, have contributed to the hollowing out of public schools, particularly in urban areas.

What brought the government of Alberta to import the charter model to our province in 1994? Much of the impetus came from a perceived lack of education choice in Calgary. Unlike the Edmonton public school board, the Calgary Board of Education in the 1990s had been slow off the mark to offer a wide range of alternative programs within its schools. Furthermore, lack of funding for new school construction had left newly established neighbourhoods in the rapidly growing city without public schools.

I personally regard Alberta's continued support for charter schools as something of an annoyance.

We have some direct experience with this going back to the mid 1990s. At that time, Alberta had passed legislation unique in Canada enabling the creation of publicly funded charter schools, reflecting a political emphasis on increasing school choice in the province.

The school choice agenda in the United States, and the widespread

free to access additional revenue from commercial interests or from additional tuition fees. As the model has evolved, it now attracts the attention of would-be entrepreneurs who view education as an untapped trillion-dollar opportunity.

One of the unstated and less attractive reasons for the success of charter schools in the urban American context

These factors contributed to a demand for private and charter schools that aligned with the ideological preferences of the Klein government and with the policies being promoted by neo-liberal interest groups such as the Fraser Institute. Even at the time they were introduced to the province, it was clear that charter schools were an ideological solution to a limited

problem that could and should have been solved within the public system.

However, when it came to implementing this solution, the Alberta government was careful to constrain the potential expansion of charter schools in the province and sought to ensure that they would remain firmly within the mainstream: the number of charter schools was capped and they were not allowed to operate for profit; they were required to teach the provincial program of studies and administer provincially mandated examinations; and they were required to employ certificated teachers.

In the end, charter schools in Alberta differed from public schools in only three respects:

- They had a unique program or pedagogical emphasis (although alternative programs in public schools often have similar programming and approaches).
- They were not subject to popularly elected board governance.
- Their teachers were prohibited from having active membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association (although staff in several were organized and are represented as associate members, with the ATA acting as their bargaining agent).

I personally regard Alberta's continued support for charter schools as something of an annoyance (the assumption that denying teachers full access to the protection, services and professional development offered by the Association makes them better at their jobs is, frankly, insulting).

However, I also recognize that when bringing this model across the border, policy-makers at least attempted to ensure that charter schools

would reflect the critical values, principles and context of Alberta's school system. To borrow from the Hippocratic Oath, they tried to make sure that implementing the model would do no harm.

That is important. As Jacques Delors observes "Choosing a type of education means choosing a type of society. In all countries, such choices call for extensive public debate, based on an accurate evaluation of education systems."¹

¹ Learning: The Treasure Within, UNESCO, 1996.

We have much to learn from the American experience in education, both positive and negative. We also have different lessons to learn from further afield. But we must guard against the simplistic importation and wholesale implementation of policy solutions from abroad. Above all, we must proceed from a firm understanding of our values as a society and of what role we intend our education system to play in realizing those values.

The ATA's latest communications campaign in support of public education employs the image of canned sardines to bring attention to the issue of class sizes.





GREG
JEFFERY

■ FROM THE PRESIDENT ■

EQUITY IS THE HALLMARK OF OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

Over the past 100 years our public education system here in Alberta has been referred to as “the great equalizer.” All students of the public system, which in Alberta includes Catholic and francophone education, have been provided opportunities to dream and the chance to work to achieve their dreams.

Our system has evolved to be one of the most comprehensive in the country and possibly around the world. In this issue, David Berliner writes about reasons that other areas of the world push for charter and private schools, but that is not the case here in Alberta. By providing many varied options within the public system, we take away the arguments that some of the wealthy use as a disguise for the segregation of their children. From academic academies to schools focused on sport or language, Alberta’s public education system provides children from all socio-economic backgrounds an environment where they can learn together and create bonds that will help blur the class lines of family income and power.

We have seen where jurisdictions that go the other way, towards privatization and charter schools, have weakened public schools through lack of government support until they flirt with no longer being a viable option. I’ll share an example from my own experience in my community of Fort Saskatchewan.

The Fort is the location of the western Canada operations of Dow Chemical, which regularly moves its executives around. One

of the transfer locations is Houston, Texas. When families that have been transferred to Houston are being shown their new surroundings, the schools that are toured are private, as the starved-for-funds public schools are not considered viable options for children of engineers or project managers. The split is often around racial lines, and students are denied the opportunity to experience diversity as they would here in Alberta.

Also in this issue, Russell Cobb, a professor at the University of Alberta, shares the Oklahoma example of how boom-and-bust oil cycles affect government budgets across the board. This is a very familiar story for us in Alberta, and we need to heed the lessons that Oklahomans learned in a very hard way. Teachers in this predominantly Republican state stood up and changed the thinking in areas of the state that were strongholds for market models—truly a lesson for us as we move forward. We have long argued for stable funding to buffer us from the cyclical nature of world resource markets. The advocacy group Public Interest Alberta has an entire campaign on revenue reform to address the inequities of our present model. We are not alone, but we must be prepared to commit to the struggle.

One of the by-products of a market system in education is that of managerial models. School leaders are seen to be not instructional leaders but “bosses,” keeping budgets and employees in line. The perceived economies of one-size-fits-all take away from teacher autonomy in the classroom and create winners and losers among our students.

Our association has advocated for increased professionalism for teachers,

and will continue to do so. It makes us stronger. While we are already one of the most recognized teacher organizations on the planet in terms of professional functions, there are still gains to be made in the areas of certification and universal membership. We serve our students best when we, as professionals, make the educational decisions for the kids in our classrooms.

Gains that have been made or moved toward in the last two years strengthen our position as one of the leading jurisdictions worldwide. We have not rested on our laurels and, working with government, have three new practice standards to insure high-quality teaching and learning. We are also well down the road of one of the most comprehensive rewrites of curriculum in history. This long overdue work has been in partnership with the ministry and has involved input from more than 300 Alberta teachers as well as post-secondary academics and ministry officials. The rollout will be at a pace that works for classroom teachers, beginning with voluntary field testing.

Public assurance will be monitored throughout the process but must evolve from standardized testing to a belief that what we have in Alberta is high-quality public education delivered by the most professional teaching force on the planet. Assurance relates to trust, and we must continue to nurture and grow that public trust in the work we do as we prepare for one of the most significant elections in the history of our province. There is much to be done and the stakes are high, but I believe we are up to the task.



DREAMING OF RETIREMENT?

Start actively planning for it instead!

Are you reaching the point in your career where you can see the horizon? Is retirement only five to ten years away? It's exciting to start imagining your life when it isn't governed by the bell, whether that's travelling in January, sleeping in, or just enjoying a hot cup of coffee while sitting down! There are also more practical things you can do to set yourself up for all that you wish to achieve in retirement.

AFTER AGE FIFTY, YOU SHOULD:



Attend an ARTA presentation at your local Teachers' Convention, or attend a pre-retirement seminar.

Re-examine your financial goals; adjust your savings and other investments to meet them. There are great book recommendations to help you do so on arta.net/wellness/economic-wellness/

Book a pension interview with ATRF. Continue to monitor their annual statements, as well as Government of Canada OAS and CPP estimates.

Establish or maintain personal hobbies. The Edvantage program offers discounts on activities, gym memberships, and more!

Get a complete physical. Staying healthy is important for a long, vibrant life. Join the ARTA Wellness Challenge this spring!

Created by teachers, for teachers, the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association (ARTA) supports an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-centred services, advocacy, wellness and leadership. ARTA provides services to its members including one of the best voluntary Retiree Benefits Plans in Canada, insurance, wellness information and activities, retirement planning, scholarship awards as well as travel plans, social activities and other benefits.

Active teachers are eligible to join and access all 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 retired to begin accessing all of the information ARTA has to offer. Speak to ARTA's member support team to learn more.





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