



Hats On!

Recognizing the importance of mental health.
See page 12.



Thank an ARA delegate

Read This ... by ATA president Greg Jeffery.
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ATA NEWS

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News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



Premier targets math scores

ATA president positive about new education minister

Read story on page 5.



CORY HARE



Student protests are scary for some

Young people are using their agency and freedom to effect change.

Read Jonathan Tegtmeyer's editorial on page 2.

Pitfalls and Precautions

Touching students is inadvisable.

See page 6.



ISTOCK

Success Stories

Dance program provides students with glimpse of professional life.

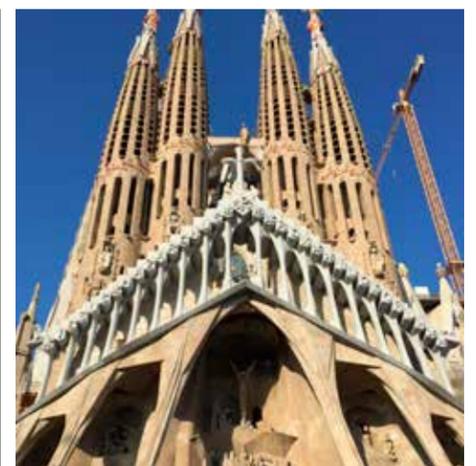
See story on page 4.



Stepping forward

Efforts underway to honour and respect diversity.

See stories on page 7.



Life abroad

Teacher exchange provides profound experience.

See story on page 8.

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WHAT'S ONLINE?

Deadline for Summer Conference registration is June 7.

Register today for Teacher Growth, Supervision, Evaluation and Practice Review Workshop.

Apply to serve on an ATA committee.

In-service program available for leadership and superintendent leadership certification.

Student protests are about student agency ... and that can be scary



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

As 10 o'clock came, I sat nervously at my desk, still unsure as to whether I would go through with it or not. It was unknown how my teacher would react.

The day before this, 3,000 students had walked out of Calgary classrooms and gathered at the MacDougall Centre to protest planned education funding cuts. The rumour running through my school (McNally) was that Edmonton's turn was next.

So there I sat, in Social 10 on the morning of Oct. 28, 1993, waiting for something to break the tension — to offer the impetus to stand up and walk out.

Then it came. A sound of commotion from down the hall, then the movement of bodies outside the classroom. Then one student stood, followed by others.

"Sorry, Ms. D," one student said on the way out. "We've got to do this."

Others joined as we walked out the door and off to the bus stop. We stepped onto LRT trains already teeming with

students. At Grandin Station, another train arrived full of kids. Eventually the teenagers took off running through the pedway toward the legislature.

Nearly 1,000 students showed up that day to share their voice and express themselves to the government.

My experience that day had a lasting, profound impact on me. The feeling of taking control, of finding your voice, of active citizenship is unmistakable.

That feeling was so remarkable because the choice was mine. I had full agency at that time — and as a 14-year-old that was rare. I did not need any adults to push me to do it and nothing any adults would have said or done would likely have stopped me.

I've also been a teacher when students walked out of class for a protest. I was pragmatic and professional about it. Students asked me what I would do, and I told them I would mark them absent. I told them that their priority should be learning, but I was quietly proud of them. I knew that they would learn something more important that day about democracy and citizenship than I could ever teach them.

I cannot help but be proud of the thousands of students who briefly walked out of class on May 3 this year to protest proposed changes to GSA legislation.

Critics have tried to undermine these students by making up false narratives about teacher control.

Some are suggesting that the students did not walk out on their own; that the protests were organised by teachers or the Association. That notion is not just absurd, it is also insulting to the students who organised and participated.

Many of those who level this criticism at teachers and the Association know full well that it is not true. Instead, they use this as an opportunity to pre-emptively undermine the professionalism of teachers and the credibility of the ATA.

But, actually, this critique is less about us (teachers) than it is about the students and those who want to control them.

The argument that students couldn't possibly organize these types of events on their own suggests they lack the agency and the capacity to do so, yet

those of us who work with students and see them using social media know full well that many possess such skills to a high degree.

And that is what this whole story is actually about — student agency, freedom of expression and freedom of association.

It's at the heart of what the students are protesting. To put it simply, the student protestors are asking for the ability to start a club in their own school, to call it what they want to call it, to be supported by the school instead of opposed, and to have the ability to attend that club without requiring parental notification. And these students are using their agency and their freedom to effect change.

That is what is truly powerful — yet dangerous to some — about these protests, which is why critics have tried to undermine these students by making up false narratives about teacher control.

Because if I am not able to control my kids and the teachers are not either, then that means the young people are in control. For some, that is too scary to think about. ■

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

Gender minorities need more protection, not less



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: What are the potential repercussions for teachers of the United Conservative Party's plan to eliminate changes contained in Bill 24?

Answer: In its election platform, the UCP proposed to replace the existing *School Act* with the *Education Act* passed by the previous Progressive Conservative government in 2014, but never put into effect.

If the government were to proceed with this plan, important provisions implemented with the passage in 2017 of Bill 24 — *An Act to Support Gay Straight Alliances* — respecting the protection of gender minorities, the operation of gay-queer straight alliances (G/QSA) and the prohibition of the disclosure of a student's membership in a G/QSA

would no longer have effect. This is because Bill 24 amended only the *School Act* and not the *Education Act*.

Unless the *Education Act* is amended, the law in these matters would then revert to the terms set out in 2014 in Bill 10 — *An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect Our Children*, which amended both the *Education Act* and the *School Act*.

At the time Bill 10 was being debated, the Association identified several areas in which the Bill 10 amendments fell short and called for new orders, regulations or legislation that would

- prevent the disclosure of a student's membership in a GSA (or similar organization established under Section 35.1 of the *Education Act*) or participation in the organization's activities to any person without the explicit prior consent of the student;
- confirm the right of the student(s) who request establishment of a GSA, or similar organization, to determine the final operational name of that organization;

- confirm the right of student members and teacher advisors to determine the purpose, activities, projects and undertakings of the GSA, or similar organization;

- protect principals and teachers who facilitate the creation or operation of a GSA, or similar organization, from employment discrimination or sanctions, formal or informal, related to their activities with the GSA, or similar organization; and

- affirm the right of denominational schools to require, as a condition of hiring or enrolment, a declaration of faith, but thereafter preclude discrimination on any protected ground, including sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Every one of these recommendations was taken up in Bill 24. Individually and collectively, the Bill 24 protections are important because they enable teachers (and other school staff) to facilitate G/QSAs while insulating them from undue pressure from parents, outside interest groups or their employer. In

addition, Bill 24 extended to school staff protection from discrimination on the basis of gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation regardless of whether they worked in public, separate or francophone schools (and indeed the bill's provisions, including that protection, also applied to private schools as well).

The loss of these additional protections would leave gender minority students, teachers and staff vulnerable and undermine the integrity of G/QSAs. The Association hopes to open a dialogue with the new government to ensure that schools remain welcoming and safe places for all, and the Annual Representative Assembly, which will convene on the May long weekend, will consider resolutions to affirm our purpose. ■

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



Voting day is over

Now comes the rest of the hard work of democracy



VIEWPOINTS

Joel French
Public Interest Alberta

And so Alberta's long anticipated provincial election has come and gone. United Conservative Party supporters are celebrating and progressives are dealing not only with feelings of loss, but also varying degrees of dismay about what might be ahead in the next four years.

Elections are seen by many as the defining events of democracy. Indeed, they are critical in determining the direction our governments will take us throughout their term in office. They are times when the public tends to be more engaged than usual in big conversations about where we are headed collectively and what issues should be the most important to our elected leaders.

However, there is much more to democracy than voting every four years. A healthy democracy is one where individuals and civil society groups are constantly interacting with each other and with policymakers in sustained ways to guide our collective future, acting as engaged citizens rather than simply waiting to act as voters. That is how we need to approach the next four years.

We clearly need a combination of immediate actions and long-term structural changes to protect the public interest and strengthen our democracy for years to come.

Consider Ontario's June 2018 election, where Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative party won a majority government. Progressive citizens and organizations immediately began organizing protests against Ford's plans to cut and privatize the province's public services, attack unions and dismantle environmental policies,

among other regressive directions.

I recall reading social media comments on coverage of those protests by people claiming the protestors were violating democracy by protesting the will of the newly elected government.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the worst thing citizens and civil society groups could do for democracy is sit on their hands for four years between election campaigns. A healthy democracy not only allows but requires us to engage in collective expression and decision making between elections, and that is as relevant the day after we vote as it is the day before.

Over the four weeks of Alberta's election campaign, we heard a wide variety of commitments made by political parties, and of course the ones most relevant right now are those made by the victorious UCP. But the fact that the UCP won the election does not mean Albertans need to accept any of these plans. Politicians and their parties are elected for a wide variety of reasons, and it does not mean we simply accept the attacks on public services and the public interest.

Engaging effectively in our democracy can take many different forms. It can mean actions like having rallies and other types of public protests, giving your input at government consultations or public meetings, meeting periodically with your MLA to educate them about the issues that affect you the most, and other ways of engaging different elements of government or the public in discussions about what we want to do collectively through our governments.

While these kinds of actions will

be important for all of us to engage in proactively over the next four years, we also need bigger structural changes to engagement that flow in the other direction. Our governments and elected officials need to cease token forms of engagement that rarely affect policy decisions. These so-called "consultations" more often than not are used to convince the public about the merits of predetermined policy directions, and must be replaced by something much more meaningful.

There is also a serious need for us to improve our system of voting. Our current system grossly distorts the decisions voters made on election day, leading to the UCP getting 72 per cent of the seats with only 55 per cent of the vote, the NDP getting 28 per cent of the seats with 32 per cent of the vote, and the Alberta Party winning no seats, despite winning nine per cent of the vote. This type of result is typical of our voting system, which exacerbates divisive politics and discourages co-operation and collaboration between political parties.

A strong voter turnout is a good thing and shows that many Albertans care about where our government takes the province in the future. Rather than be discouraged with the election result, progressive individuals now need to turn their energies to strengthening our democracy and to pushing our government to pursue directions that are in the public interest over the next four years.

So, let's all start today by committing to doing the hard work of democracy — to take sustained and effective actions in that direction as individuals and civil society groups while demanding that our elected officials of all political stripes make the structural changes necessary to revitalize our democracy and make it more meaningful for all Albertans. ■

Joel French is executive director of Public Interest Alberta.

YOUR VIEWS

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

On the ATA News article re: class size being a top issue

Melissa Campbell

The issue of class size for K-12 and the desperate need for E.A. supports are especially important issues in our K-3 classrooms. If earlier supports are provided for our students, we can catch a variety of needs before the gap widens and grows into a much bigger problem. Support is desperately needed in all areas (social, emotional, behavioural, academic and inclusive education). Our world is changing and we must be the ones who adapt and support the students. To make a difference in education we need to support our students in every way possible! Let's pray the government recognizes the need to take action for our students and that there is special consideration of socio-economic disadvantages and their impact on student learning too. All students should have fair and equitable access to education. Visit a variety of schools and actually see what is going on at ground level. This would be a meaningful start!

On the ATA News article "Kenney pledges to rein in discovery learning"

Kathy Bell

Did I miss something in my 25 years of teaching? What the heck is discovery math?

Jacque Hedges Harrison

And ... so it begins ... taught for 30 years in the public system ... the pendulum swings, then it swings again. The best teachers take the best practices and incorporate what works best for their students. We don't need to throw the baby out with the bath water. Just find the balance that works.

Dan Grassick

The real math crisis concerns the number of students, teachers and classes.

Lori Karoly Szmul

Interesting that the PC government gave us the last curriculum ... the one that caused the "decline."

Cherra-Lynne Olthof

Excellent. Remove all references of discovery math from the curriculum. Aaaaaaand DONE! 'Cause the term "discovery math" appears zero times.

Tami Smith

Actually, the current curriculum we teach was implemented by the previous Conservative government. Have a look at the updated curriculum online. It's available for everyone to see and study.

Letters to the editor: We welcome letters to the editor. Please limit your submission to 300 words. Only letters bearing a first and last name, address and daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. Teachers are also asked to indicate where and what they teach. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Email managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.



FOR THE RECORD

This is as close to an education emergency as anything that I could imagine.

- Premier Jason Kenney explaining that his top priority in education is to stop the rapid decline in math proficiency.

Dancing like a pro

Annual festival provides glimpse of professional dance world

SUCCESS STORIES

Janelle Ferrara
Special to the ATA News

The annual Eastside Dance Festival brings together more than 300 students from 11 schools from both the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School District. The event was created eight years ago to foster positive relationships and community among potentially at-risk youth and to provide dance opportunities for underprivileged students in the city of Calgary.

"The Eastside Dance Festival has given me and the dance team the opportunity to perform on professional stages—an opportunity that we might not have received outside of Dance Team," says CBE student Prianka Kataria.

During a two-day workshop series, students take classes from a variety of professionals at Decidedly Jazz Danceworks and experience what it is like to be a young professional dancer. Throughout the workshop series, students build connections and friendships among themselves while also making connections with working professional artists and companies.

The program is free or low cost for students. Local companies provide students with class instruction as well as bursaries and scholarships to some of the most promising dancers, allowing students to continue pursuing dance outside of school.

"Being a part of the Eastside Dance Festival really helps build relationships with so many people that also love to dance and share the same passion. I have learned so much about dance and performance that I would not have had access to outside of school," says dance student Tavneet Gill.

From the moment they step into the theatre, students begin working through staging, blocking, technical and dress rehearsals. They then complete the professional process with one final performance at the University of Calgary's School of Creative and Performing Arts. The experience allows students to be immersed in the culture of fine and performing arts, build an understanding of potential careers within this sector and gain awareness of the potential to continue their dance education in university.

"When I joined dance team, I improved my dance skills and made connections that would last forever," says Chantelle Anderson-Hailar. "I don't know what I would do without my team and this opportunity to perform." ■

Janelle Ferrara is a dance and phys-ed teacher at Crossing Park School in Calgary.



"I have learned so much about dance and performance that I would not have had access to outside of school."

—Tavneet Gill, Eastside Dance Festival participant



PHOTOS SUPPLIED

The Eastside Dance Festival enables Calgary high school students to sample the life of a professional dancer. In existence for eight years, the program involves more than 300 students from both the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School District.

Follow the Eastside Dance Festival on Instagram @eastsideanceyy.

Former ATA table officers to receive honorary memberships

ATA News Staff

Frank Bruseker and Alexandra Jurisic will both receive the Alberta Teachers' Association's most distinguished award of honorary membership at this year's Annual Representative Assembly in Edmonton.

Honorary membership is reserved for individuals who have given meritorious service to the teaching profession or to the advancement of education.

Frank Bruseker

Frank Bruseker's dedication to teachers, the teaching profession and public education are well known. In 1979, he began a teaching career with the Calgary Board of Education, which was occasionally disrupted by successful forays into politics. He taught for 10 years before winning the race for MLA for Calgary North West with an education-focused platform. From 1989 to 1997, Bruseker was known as a "relentless and ferocious critic" in the Alberta legislature and a "major thorn in the side" of then premier Ralph Klein.

After his run as an MLA, Bruseker returned to teaching and got involved in Association politics. He was elected to Provincial Executive Council, serving as Calgary City district representative for two terms (1999–2003) and ATA president for three terms (2003–2009). Bruseker was credited with securing the five-year deal that saw a permanent solution to the long-standing issue of the \$2.1 billion unfunded liability of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund.

Bruseker was elected as vice-president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, a responsibility he held from 2008 to 2012 in addition to his role of past president of the ATA, a position he held from 2009 to 2013.

In 2013, Bruseker was elected

president of the Calgary Public Teachers Local No. 38, a post he held for the four years before he retired.

He is known as a staunch advocate for public education, a defender of teachers' rights and a true guardian of the profession.

Alexandra Jurisic

Alexandra Jurisic began teaching with the Calgary Catholic School Division in 1991, after nine years with the Calgary Board of Education. She left her indelible mark on not only her students, but her school, local and the Association. Jurisic served as president of Calgary Catholic Local No. 55 for 11 years (2001–2007 and 2013–2017). She was elected to Provincial Executive Council (PEC) in 2007 and served one term as ATA vice-president. For that term, she was a member of the team that resolved the long-standing unfunded liability issue with the teachers' pension.

Throughout her teaching career, Jurisic was an outspoken and exceptionally dedicated member of the Association. She was involved with numerous provincial committees and councils: the Council for School Leadership, the Second Languages and Intercultural Council, and the Committee on Superintendents, to name a few. She was a fixture at the Annual Representatives Assembly and an active participant at the Banff Summer Conference.

Jurisic died in March of 2018. She was a diligent advocate for all students, especially the most vulnerable. Her colleagues describe her as someone who consistently acted with grace, composure, compassion and integrity.

The presentation of honorary membership to Alexandra Jurisic and Frank Bruseker will take place during the morning session of ARA on Saturday, May 18th. ■

Former minister to receive Public Education Award

ATA News Staff

This year's Public Education Award, to be presented by the ATA at the Annual Representative Assembly in Edmonton on the May long weekend, will be posthumously awarded to former MLA and education minister Gene Zwozdesky.

The award is offered occasionally to an individual or a group that has given outstanding support to public education in Alberta other than through teaching.

Zwozdesky was elected as a Liberal MLA in 1993 and joined the Progressive Conservatives in 1998. Zwozdesky held a number of cabinet posts over the years, including education in 2005. Although his

time in the post was brief, he immediately focused on crucial relationship building between the ministry and the Alberta Teachers' Association. Shortly after being named education minister, Zwozdesky spoke to the ATA News about the importance of the arts in education.

"It's not only my own familiarity with the arts that drives my passion, but it is the proven research ... that clearly substantiates how important the arts are to educating the whole child," he said. "The arts teach children from a very young age to develop self-confidence and to express themselves ... you're not just regurgitating facts."

Zwozdesky died on Jan. 6, 2019. His wife, Christine Zwozdesky, will be accepting the award on his behalf. ■

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Success Stories is a new feature in the ATA News that enables teachers to share their successes with their colleagues. To submit an idea or an article about a new program or approach that you've instituted, please contact managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

STORIES AND PHOTOS WANTED

If something newsworthy is going on in your school, district or local, please let us know. We will also consider articles, photos and cartoons.

Please email tips and submissions to managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.





CORY HARE

Premier Jason Kenney addresses media following the swearing in of his new cabinet on April 30. Education Minister Adriana LaGrange is pictured fourth from the left.

ATA president feeling positive about new education minister

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

Alberta Teachers' Association president Greg Jeffery has a positive feeling about the province's new education minister Adriana LaGrange.

"I've already had a call from the new minister of education and the lines of communication are open," Jeffery said, "but she's going to need to hit the ground running. It's helpful to have someone with experience in the education sector coming in as the new minister."

LaGrange was sworn in on Tuesday, April 30 along with Premier Jason Kenney and the rest of his UCP cabinet. The first-time MLA for Red Deer North is one of seven women appointed to the 22-member cabinet and is Alberta's first female education minister since 1986, when Nancy Betkowski held that office under the Don Getty government.

From 2007 to 2018, LaGrange served as a trustee for the Red Deer Catholic School Division. In 2015 she was elected president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association and in 2017 became vice-president of the Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association. She holds a diploma in rehabilitative studies and has been the owner/operator of Grangedale Farms in Red Deer for more than 35 years.

"Special interest group"

The ATA heavily criticized the UCP's

education platform during the election campaign. Following the swearing in ceremony, Kenney was asked what impact this criticism may have on his government's future relationship with the Association.

"We are always willing to work with special interest groups," Kenney said, "but for us, the most important stakeholders in education are students and parents."

Kenney maintained that parents know better than politicians what's in the best interest for their kids.

"That's why one of the fundamental values of the United Conservative Party and this government will be our belief in school choice," says Kenney, "That is something the ATA has a long opposition to."

Jeffery disagreed.

"The Association has always supported choice; however, we don't always support public funding for some choices. We believe in private schools, but we don't believe in public funding for them."

Jeffery added that the UCP's plans to lift the cap on charter schools could also open the door for further privatization of Alberta's education system.

Jeffery also took issue with the Association being labelled a special interest group.

"That is one of the first things I plan to address with Minister LaGrange. It's a sensitive term for us because we are far, far more than what one would classify as a special interest group."

Kenney also singled out math scores

as a priority for his government, calling them "as close to an education emergency" as he could imagine. Kenney claims they are setting our future generations up for failure.

Jeffery, however, has faith in Alberta's math scores.

"I was reading in the *Ottawa Citizen* how Alberta's results are still the highest in the country," Jeffery said. "Everyone still looks toward Alberta as a model for an education system."

Jeffery conceded that some jurisdictions may have seen recent improvement but dismisses that as "teaching to the test" or the grooming of particular students to write the international standardized tests.

"I'm quite comfortable with the high standard that still exists in Alberta," he said.

Teacher autonomy

Kenney also vowed to return to the tried and true teaching methods that provide positive outcomes in math and reading.

"We will be moving very quickly to repeal the ministerial order which made discovery-inquiry learning the norm in the system," he said.

Jeffery countered that teachers have always had the autonomy to use the best methods of instruction based on the student's needs ... and that is going to continue.

"Discovery math is not a curricular thing. It is a pedagogical thing. There may be instances where teachers will

still use it but know that it's not required. That just increases the concept of teacher autonomy, which we wholeheartedly support," he said.

So how does the ATA president feel about the next four years?

"I think the statement I'll make at this time is ... so far, so good. Right now it certainly seems to be more positive than we had anticipated."

The first sitting of the UCP government will take place on May 21. A provincial budget isn't expected until early fall.

Following the swearing-in of his new cabinet, Kenney fielded a variety of media questions. Here are the two questions posed by the ATA News, along with Kenney's complete answers.

The Alberta Teachers' Association has been critical of some aspects of the UCP's education platform. Given this, to what extent are you willing to work with teachers to address their concerns?

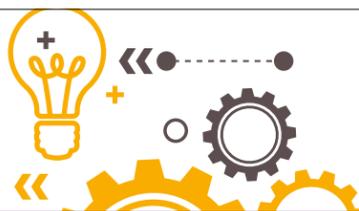
"We are always willing to work with special interest groups, including the Alberta Teachers' Association, but for us the most important stakeholders in education are students and parents.

NEW MINISTER continued on page 6



This...

from ATA president Greg Jeffery



Thank your ARA delegate today

The May long weekend is coming and to me that means only one thing: it's ARA time.

ARA is our acronym for Annual Representative Assembly, which is ATA-speak for annual general meeting. More than 450 delegates representing our 55 locals (plus one special local – the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association) across the province will be gathering to hear from our new minister, congratulate our award winners, debate policy and set next year's budget. Who could ask for anything more?

I am never disappointed when the weather is not up to expectations. Well, maybe a little because I don't get lunch on a patio, but that's a bit petty. I have enjoyed many ARAs and, in fact, this year will be my 30th anniversary. To save you all the Google search, the gift is pearl and the flower is lily. I can't imagine doing anything else for this extended weekend.

My memories include events quite different than we have today. ARA used to be three-and-a-half days long and was held during the Edmonton or Calgary spring break, alternating

yearly. Every year had a banquet and many social events. My local always had a pool on when the budget debate would adjourn. It always began with a skit from the Parkland contingent. The budget is always debated into the evening of the second-last day of the assembly. One year, I was very confident of my prediction of 8:32 p.m. until we reached that time and were not even finished the first program area. While the debate was invigorating and lively, I was very tired when it was finally passed at 1:23 a.m.

There are many memorable debates and even more memorable people from those 30 assemblies, and they are too numerous to mention here. The teachers that take part in this event are so dedicated to our profession that there was hardly a squawk when we moved it to the May long weekend. While this might not be for you, please be grateful and maybe even thank someone who is doing this work for all of us. It doesn't even have to be pearls or lilies. ■

NEW MINISTER

continued from page 5

As I've always said, we believe that parents know better than politicians what's in the best interests of their kids and that's why one of the fundamental values of the United Conservative Party and this government will be our belief in school choice. That is something that the ATA has a long history of opposition to and so on issues like school choice we will have to agree to disagree.

I respect our teachers enormously — my dad was a teacher, we have teachers in our caucus and we have a minister of education, Adriana LaGrange, who has served for several years as chair of a school board and as president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, so we're coming to that table with a minister who understands the challenges with real depth and with a platform that speaks to improving outcomes for Alberta students.

We already indicated during the election period that we're willing to take a half-step back on a couple of our campaign proposals, including the 50-50 split on diploma exams and renewal on Grade 3 PAT tests.

We heard expressions of concern from parents and teachers so I think we said that we'll take a step back and consult. I think that's an indication of good faith with which we will approach educational change."

What is your top priority in education?

"Top priority is getting math scores turned around, stopping the rapid decline in math proficiency which is setting a lot of our young Albertans up for failure in the future. This is as close to an education emergency as anything that I could imagine, where you've had a waterfall in terms of Alberta students' math proficiency in standardized tests.

So with respect to curriculum reform and everything ... we will be moving very quickly to repeal the ministerial order which made discovery-inquiry learning the norm in the system. We want to empower our schools to return to tried, true and tested teaching methods that get better outcomes in math and reading." ■

Touching students is a bad idea



PITFALLS AND PRECAUTIONS

Cory Schoffer
ATA Secretary to Professional Conduct Committees

Pitfalls and Precautions is a series that aims to educate teachers on professional conduct issues by highlighting situations addressed by the ATA Professional Conduct Committee.

At a recent hearing of the Professional Conduct Committee, a teacher was charged with inappropriately touching several students over multiple years.

The hearing committee heard that the teacher, who taught in an upper-elementary class, routinely targeted selected female students and began cultivating relationships with those students whereby he showed significant favouritism. The teacher's favoured students were granted access and privileges (such as free time on the class computer) that other students didn't receive. Witnesses testified that the students selected for this favoured treatment were always individual girls, and also that girls in general were treated better than boys in the teacher's class. The committee also heard that the teacher would escalate the interaction

to include massaging students on the neck, back and shoulders. On some occasions, the teacher's contact with students included reaching under their shirts to touch their breasts. Some students were invited and encouraged to sit on the teacher's lap.

Students who testified had experienced varying levels of trauma as a result of the teacher's behaviour. For most, their trauma hit them later, as they gained increased awareness of the inappropriateness of the behaviour they had been subjected to in elementary school.

The teacher was found guilty of five charges of unprofessional conduct. The teacher was deemed to have failed to treat students with dignity and respect. The teacher was declared ineligible for Association membership for two years, and a recommendation was made to the minister of education to suspend the teacher's teaching certificate for a two-year period.

Teachers are strongly encouraged not to make physical contact with students, regardless of age or grade level. ■

Council resolutions focus on equity and human rights

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held May 2-3, 2019, at Barnett House in Edmonton

1. Approved, for submission to the 2019 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), resolutions resolving that

(1) school authorities should collaborate with the Association to develop and implement policies requiring parents to disclose to teachers and other staff when a student has been provided a surveillance device and governing the use of such devices in schools;

(2) the Government of Alberta should ensure that changes in legislation respecting education do not diminish the protection provided to teachers and other school authority employees against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression;

(3) the Government of Alberta should ensure that changes in legislation respecting education do not diminish the right or ability of students to establish and name gay-straight/queer-straight alliances in their schools;

(4) the Government of Alberta should ensure that changes in legislation

respecting education do not diminish the right and ability of individual students to determine if and how their membership or participation in the activities of a gay-straight/queer-straight alliance in their schools is disclosed to other persons;

(5) the Government of Alberta should increase education grant rates on an ongoing basis to compensate for the effects of past and future general inflation and specific cost increases affecting the operations and infrastructure needs of public, separate and francophone school authorities;

(6) the Government of Alberta should increase education funding to public, separate and francophone school authorities to fully fund increases in enrolment;

(7) the Government of Alberta should engage the Association, school boards, superintendents, parents and the public in the development of a rural education strategy to ensure that students in rural areas continue to have access to high-quality education opportunities provided by public, separate and francophone school authorities;

(8) the Government of Alberta should engage the Association, school boards, superintendents, parents and the public in the development of an inclusive education strategy to ensure that students with exceptionalities and their teachers are provided with appropriate supports;

(9) the Government of Alberta should engage the Association, school boards, superintendents, parents and the public in the development of a class size reduction strategy to ensure that class sizes support optimal teaching and learning;

(10) the Government of Alberta should expand school nutrition programs to ensure that all students who are economically disadvantaged are well fed and ready to learn; and

(11) any new policy implemented by the Government of Alberta concerning teacher evaluation should respect teacher professionalism and comport with the philosophy and direction of the Teaching Quality Standard (2019), Alberta's Teacher Growth Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5 and section 4(b)(vii) of the *Teaching Profession Act*.

2. Directed the president to use his best efforts to have a meeting with the minister of education and the president-elect before the end of June.

3. Approved for submission to the 2019 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), a budget resolution to increase the Member Services staff complement by one FTE executive staff officer, effective in the 2019/20 school year.

4. In accordance with 31(2) of the *Teaching Profession Act*, approved an extension to the 120-day hearing time period for one outstanding case of alleged unprofessional conduct.

5. Approved amendments to the Administrative Guidelines to establish rules with respect to personal cellular mobility/data charges on Association-paid data plans; protocols with respect to displaying flags in Provincial Executive Council chambers and at other locations as determined by Council; and procedures for Association corps members, consultants and Provincial Executive Council members to claim child care costs during the performance of their duties to support the work of the Association.

6. Received the report of a hearing committee, which found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for vacating the teacher's classroom, thus failing to treat pupils with dignity and respect, and failing to leave lesson plans for the substitute teacher, thus failing to act in a manner which maintains the honour and dignity of the profession. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of one letter of severe reprimand to encompass both charges, a fine of \$200 related to charge one and a fine of \$450 related to charge two.

7. Approved Council committee and representation assignments for 2019/20.

8. Approved provision of notice of motion for the September Council meeting that Provincial Executive Council form an ad hoc committee to address the PEC election process. ■



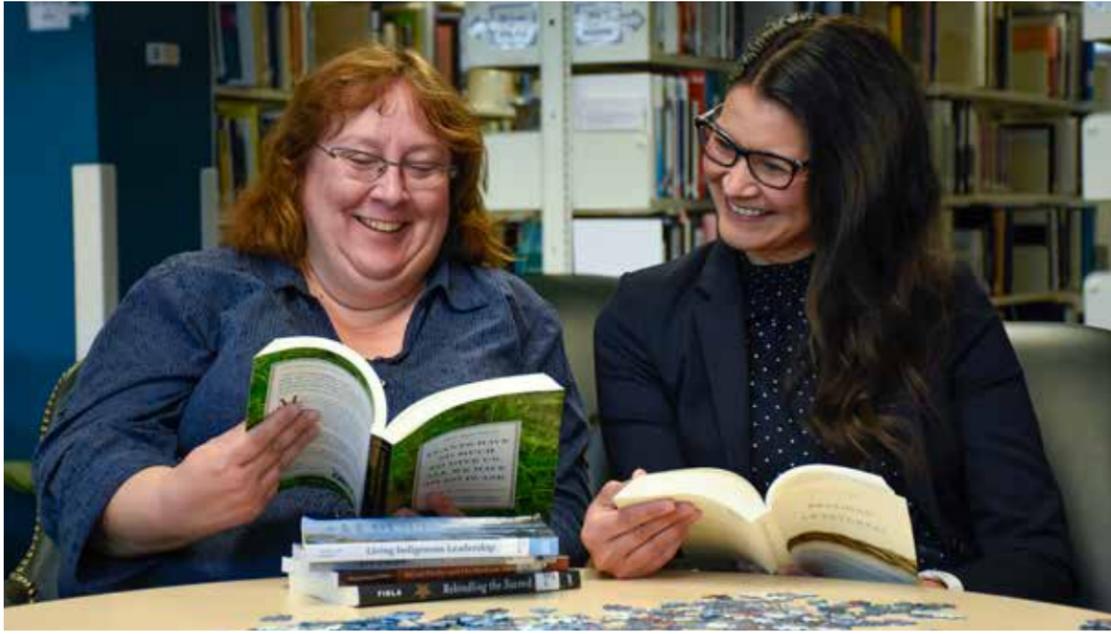
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We want to hear about news in your school, district or local.

Please email managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.



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CORY HARE

ATA librarian Sandra Anderson (left) and staff officer Melissa Purcell peruse some books that are filed under subject classifications that have been revised to remove words that may be offensive to Indigenous peoples.

ATA library embraces respect for Indigenous people

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

The ATA library has broken with tradition in an effort to take a bold step toward truth and reconciliation.

Library staff recently finished “decolonizing” the catalogue by replacing any terms or subject classifications that may be considered offensive to Indigenous peoples.

“It’s not something that’s on everybody’s radar,” says ATA librarian Sandra Anderson, “and certainly the Indigenous community has far bigger fish to fry than how things are organized in the library catalogue. But as a librarian, it’s one of the things that I can do to meet the obligations of truth and reconciliation.”

Most libraries use a classification system developed by the U.S. Library of Congress, which uses the phrase “Indians of North America” to refer to Indigenous peoples. Because the Library of Congress has shown little interest in changing its classification terms, Canadian libraries have moved to alter this set of headings and offensive language independently. Normally, libraries do not make such changes because

of the desire to keep cataloguing consistent throughout the system, but when Anderson discovered the University of Manitoba had already developed an outline for the alterations, she was on board.

“There’s no point to delay doing it. Once I found out that schema was already developed ... boom! It’s time to change,” she said.

Anderson says she has also implemented an Indigenous perspective in the catalogue.

“For instance, when we have a book on traditional plant use, we would typically put that under ethnobotany and maybe medicinal plants,” says Anderson. “Now we also put it under traditional medicine and traditional knowledge.”

Anderson said library staff have also used “Indigenous” to replace words like “Indian”, “native” and “Aboriginal” in content descriptions.

Melissa Purcell, the ATA staff officer for Indigenous education, applauds the changes.

“I’m very excited that our ATA library took their own initiative to take a look at the current system in place and work toward decolonizing it,” says Purcell. “Somebody didn’t tell them to do it.”

Both Purcell and Anderson believe the changes need to go much further than just titles and classifications.

“I’m kind of excited to see that we, within the Association and the ATA library, are role modeling for other folks some changes they can make within their own spaces,” Purcell said.

Not the first time

This isn’t the first time the ATA library has deviated from the Library of Congress classification system. They’ve already changed many labels used to describe the LGBTQ community. Anderson says the term “homosexual” has been removed and replaced it with “gay man” or “lesbian.” She also discovered that both the LGBTQ and Indigenous peoples categories were severely lacking in content.

“Both of those collections went from being a few books to now being really robust collections with hundreds of books,” says Anderson. “I think it’s fantastic! I’m really excited because I think it’s well overdue. Knowing there are things I can do to rectify very small injustices ... it’s part of culture having to change and I’m really happy to be able to do my bit.”

New flags honour past and present

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

Three new flags are now displayed alongside the Canadian and Albertan flags in the Provincial Executive Council (PEC) chambers. The Treaty 6 flag, Métis flag and Franco-Alberta flag have added their colours and culture to the room.

“This is long overdue. I support what the flags represent. As a professional association, it’s important for us to have that symbol in a public environment, whether it’s in the auditorium or in the PEC chambers,” said Brian Andrais, associate executive secretary of the Alberta Teachers’ Association.

“As a professional association, it’s important for us to have that symbol in a public environment, whether it’s in the auditorium or in the PEC chambers.”

— Brian Andrais, ATA associate executive secretary

Indigenous flags

The Treaty 6 and Métis flags were presented at last year’s ARA by two Indigenous executive members of Edmonton Public Schools Local No. 37. Local president Heather Quinn said the presentation was the result of conversations within the local as to why the ATA only flies the Canadian standard outside Barnett House.

“We thought that we could gift those flags to the Association in the hopes that they could be put in PEC chambers in the spirit of honouring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations,” Quinn said.

When Treaty 6 was affirmed between First Nations and the Crown in 1876, each of the chiefs who signed the agreement were given a medallion and a Union Jack flag. These two symbols, along with the affirmation year, compose the flag.

The Métis flag consists of a white infinity sign on a blue field. The infinity symbol represents the faith that the Métis culture will live on forever. It can also be interpreted as two conjoined circles that signify the joining of the European (mainly French) and the First Nations cultures. The local rounded out its presentation to the Association with a Canadian and an Albertan flag.



CORY HARE

The Treaty 6 flag is one of several now displayed in PEC chambers at Barnett House in honour of Alberta’s history.

Franco-Alberta flag

The addition of the Indigenous flags to the PEC chambers inspired another cultural group to follow suit.

“When we saw the Métis flag and the Treaty 6 flag over there, we really thought the Franco-Alberta flag should be there as well,” said Eric Cloutier, president of L’Unité Local No. 24.

Created in 1982 and officially recognized in 2017, the Franco-Alberta flag consists of a fleur-de-lys in the upper left corner, which represents French Quebec, and the wild rose in the bottom right corner, to represent Alberta. They are separated by bands of white and blue to symbolize the provincial waters and roads travelled by Francophone colonists and explorers.

Cloutier presented the flag to PEC in December, and a unanimous vote was held to add it to the chambers. Cloutier says the ATA has really embraced francophone teachers over the past few years.

“We have more and more services in French without having to ask for them,” says Cloutier. “To have the flag there is a symbol that we are part of the Association. This was important for us. I was proud to do it.”

Changes

Some of the main changes to subject headings are as follows:

Old language	New language
Indians of North America	Indigenous Peoples — Canada
	Indigenous Peoples — United States
Indian Woman	Indigenous Woman
Indian Youth	Indigenous Youth
Indians of North America — Homosexuals	Indigenous Peoples — Two Spirit
Indians of North America — Transsexuals	Indigenous Peoples — Two Spirit
Cree Indians	Cree Tribes
Canadian Literature	Canadian Literature — Indigenous Authors
Indians in Literature	Indigenous Peoples In Literature



SUPPLIED

Alberta teacher Adena Lowry (right) shared many meaningful moments with exchange partner Sandra Pla Garzon. Each teacher spent two weeks visiting the other's home and experiencing life abroad.

Short-term exchange provides profound experience

COMMENTARY

Adena Lowry
Special to the ATA News

I gained a friend. An unforgettable friend. For 20 days we spent almost all of our waking hours together. We hardly even had time to email each other before I arrived in her country. She didn't even know what I looked like when I arrived at the airport. From the first night, the first walk, the first silence, we connected. We had so much in common and we didn't even know it yet.

I didn't just arrive in Spain – I landed straight into her life. I woke up the first morning and I instantly became her shadow. We jumped onto the back of her motorcycle and rode along the streets of Barcelona. She showed me the best parts of her city, the most famous views, the beauty of the blue sea and the sand in my toes. Moreover, she allowed me to see the personal areas of her life, the places of her dreams, the areas where her love grows.

Every day was incredible. Every day carried a surprise. She had the gift of observance. She listened to the excitement in my voice, she heard what was important to me and moved on these things. Everything I had on my list to do, we did, and then some. No day was

the same. From art galleries, to hiking mountaintops, to visiting churches, fancy restaurants and off-the-grid beaches. Each day, a new adventure.

We walked everywhere, from one end of Barcelona to the other. When we walked, we talked.

No subject was off limits. Explaining our lives, our customs, our cultures, our world views and our experiences. We shared our most prized possession, our time.

We spoke about our differences and similarities, expressed our concerns and our fears. We laughed. We understood. Most of all, we accepted each other. I could open up. I could explain my heart, my passion, my cares. We listened as we both spoke as mothers, teachers, friends, daughters and wives. Her life passed around us as we toured her city.

A few weeks later, she entered my life. We continued to walk and talk. We talked like old friends. We asked about our hearts, about our doubts. We shared as if we had known each other for years. It seemed as natural as can be. Our conversations became deeper, understanding became stronger, connections grew more substantial.

Her experiences in Canada were surprising. We visited our vast open spaces and our mountain areas. She was amazed with our beauty, our nature,

our wild animals and our riches. I was reminded how fortunate I am to live here. She showed me how exciting our country can be. She spent each day dis-

The difference between travel and exchange is the feeling of living in someone else's life.

covering my country with me. The time together showed me how much I take for granted, from family to work to my personal time.

She also reignited my awareness of caring for the environment. Most importantly, she impressed upon me my need to continue learning, specifically, to increase my knowledge of languages and world events.

The experience was a beautiful moment. The difference between travel and exchange is the feeling of living in someone else's life. I became more than a tourist, more than a visitor and more than an individual. I became part of her family and community. ■

Adena Lowry teaches at Strathcona Christian Academy in Sherwood Park. For two weeks this spring she hosted Sandra Pla Garzon, a teacher at Institut Monserrat School in Barcelona, as part of an exchange program administered by the ATA.

ATA Specialist Councils

Enhance teaching practices
Support learning in Alberta

21+ reasons to
connect with the
ATA's 21 specialist
councils

Specialist council
memberships provide

- Venues for exchanging ideas and teaching tips
- Subject-based support and learning
- Special interest or learner group support
- Opportunities to influence the development of curricula, assessments and resources
- Insight into the newest teaching approaches
- Research and practical strategies to support your practice
- Powerful advocacy
- Communities of practice
- High-quality periodicals and publications
- Professional development by teachers for teachers
- Local and regional events
- Access to research grants and professional learning bursaries
- Support for school-based collaboration
- Support in all stages of practice
- Leadership-skill development
- Volunteer opportunities to expand your skill bank
- Current information on educational issues
- Connections with postsecondary and ministry representatives
- Opportunities to network with peers
- A means to contribute to the profession
- Access to excellent conferences
- Web resources and informal mentors
- Affiliation with national and international teacher groups

Visit www.teachers.ab.ca
for more information.

Experience of a lifetime

The Alberta Teachers' Association administers a variety of short- and long-term exchange opportunities for teachers and administrators. The program is taking applications until June 21 for short-term exchanges to Spain. For more information, visit www.teachers.ab.ca > Public Education > Student & Teacher Exchanges.

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Next Deadline Thursday, May 16, 2019, 4 p.m. (publication date May 28, 2019)

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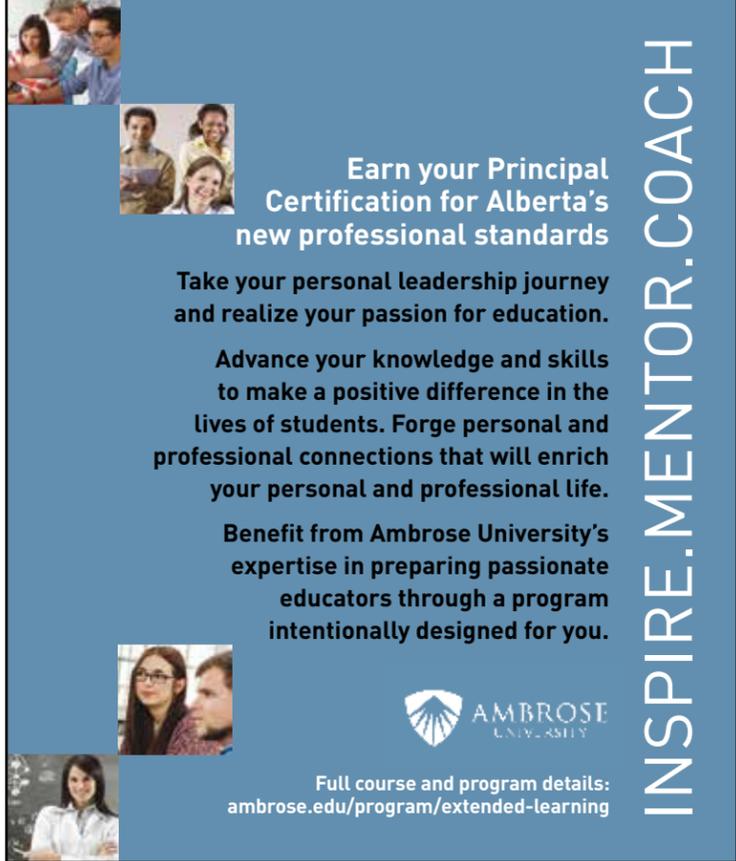
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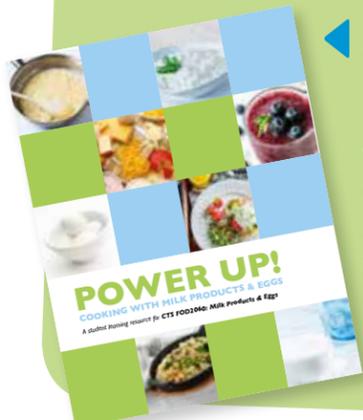
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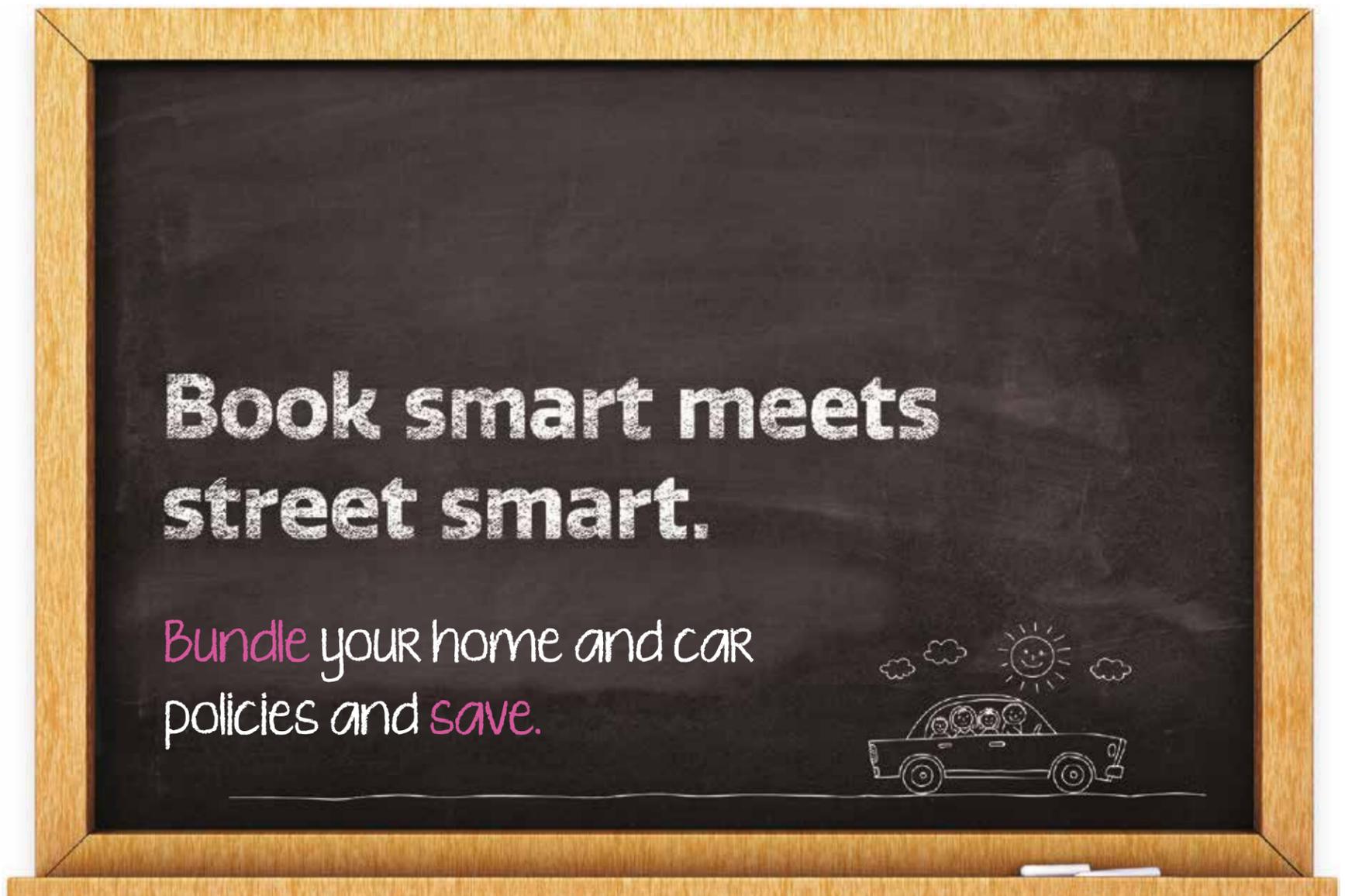
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The ATA Educational Trust

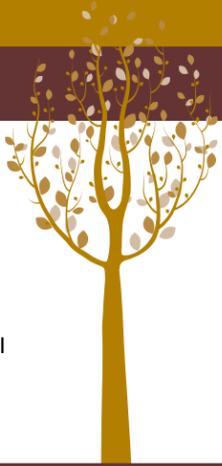
Supporting teachers' professional learning

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- **\$600** grants to help teachers with attending a conference, workshop, seminar, institute or symposium; and
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Grant application deadline: September 30

www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Programs and Services > Grants, Awards and Scholarships > ATA Educational Trust



AR-ETF-25c 2019-05



Walking Together **ATA Indigenous Education Award**

The purpose of this award is to recognize projects, programs, events or activities organized by a local association to promote Indigenous education.

DEADLINE TO APPLY JUNE 1, 2019

For more information, visit www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Indigenous Education and Walking Together



The Alberta Teachers' Association

PD-WT-34a-1 2019 05



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Hats On! for Mental Health

Teachers and students across Alberta donned hats of all shapes and sizes for Hats On! for Mental Health Day on May 1. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of good mental health.

Information on mental health and classroom resources is available at <http://canwetalk.ca>.



PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Youth mental health quiz

This quiz is designed to help identify whether a young person might have a mental health issue that requires attention. Remember that everyone experiences some hard times or bad days, but if any of these symptoms affect a student's ability to function well and enjoy life over a period of time longer than two or three weeks, the student needs help.

Have you...

- had low self-esteem, felt worthless, rejected, helpless or hopeless?
- had a major lack of energy or interest in daily activities?
- suddenly become very quiet or withdrawn?
- had a significant decline in your school performance?
- had trouble concentrating or thinking clearly?
- had repeated sudden outbursts of anger or emotion over relatively small things?
- experienced serious eating or sleeping problems?
- had a noticeable decline in personal hygiene?
- felt that you were being watched or persecuted by others?
- had very negative thoughts, blamed yourself for things you cannot control or considered suicide?
- been cutting, burning or doing other self-injury?
- been hearing voices or seeing things that others do not?

If you are concerned that you might have a mental health issue that requires attention, contact a health care professional for a diagnosis.

Find balance

In today's fast-paced world, most people know that maintaining a balanced life can be difficult, but that balance is important for sustaining good health.

Perceptions about health are changing. The World Health Organization now defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Within this context, fostering our mental health every day, not just when we are feeling pressured or unwell, is an important factor in our overall well-being.

Characteristics of good mental health include

The ability to enjoy life

Enjoying life can come from simple things such as focusing on the positive aspects of life and accepting that some things can't be changed.

Flexibility

Flexibility comes from a sense that change is a fact of life. Accepting other points of view helps one adapt and make the most of life.

Self-actualization

Make a plan to use your best abilities to enhance your life. Above all, value yourself and believe you're worth caring for, and then model this behaviour.

Balance

A balanced life usually comes from the realization that there are many facets to life that are important and deserve attention.

Resilience

Life can be full of tough times. One simple way to build resilience is to encourage yourself and others to learn from difficult times.

Finding support, whether that be in family members, friends, co-workers, a psychologist or a community group, is essential to maintaining your mental health and managing a mental illness.



ATA library resources

The following resources are available through the ATA library catalogue:

- *Making Space for Learning: Trauma-Informed Practice in Schools*
- *The Effect of Community Traumatic Events on Student Achievement: Evidence from the Beltway Sniper Attacks*
- *Poor Mental Health: The Links Between Child Poverty and Mental Health Problems*
- *Access Denied: A Teenager's Path Through the Mental Health System*
- *Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators*
- *Children's Mental Health: Priorities for Improving Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services in England*
- *Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience*
- *Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide to Fostering Self-Regulation in Young Students*
- *Reading and Expressive Writing with Traumatized Children, Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers*
- *Working with Children with Sexual Behavior Problems*
- *Expressive Arts Interventions for School Counsellors*
- *Supporting and Educating Traumatized Students: A Guide for School-Based Professionals*
- *Best Practices in School-based Suicide Prevention: A Comprehensive Approach*
- *Working with Children and Youth with Complex Needs: 20 Skills to Build Resilience*