

The ATA has your PD

Schedule of online sessions and support being continually updated. *See page 4.*

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ATA NEWS

April 28, 2020 | Volume 54, Number 12

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



Teenaged tribute

An Alberta student co-created this chalk drawing to honour health-care workers.

See page 7 for details and "in progress" photos.



Face-to-face is key

Remote delivery can't replace school setting.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on page 2.



Calling all Alberta teachers

Trauma expert Jody Carrington to deliver provincewide presentation.

See story on page 6.



Golden opportunity

COVID-19 disruption a chance to rethink assessment.

Read Viewpoints on page 3.



Road to learning takes unusual turn

Beaumont teacher gets creative to connect with student.

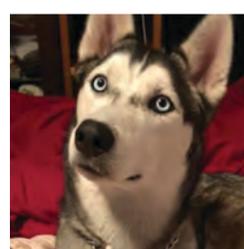
See story on page 8.



ATA renews call to repeal pension grab legislation

Failed AIMCo investment raises teachers' ire.

See story on page 6.



Making isolation more bearable

Teachers lean on furry 'colleagues' while working from home.

See page 16.

Emergency remote delivery not a substitute for learning in a school setting



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

I have often been an early adopter of technology in my teaching career. In 2003, I became the lead teacher for our school division on a program to pilot video conferencing for remote teaching.

I volunteered for video conferencing to help make the teaching of Math 31 in our school sustainable. In our small rural school, very few students enrolled, but those who did needed to have it. Bringing together students from a number of small rural schools ensured that our students would continue to have access to it — with a teacher in front of them.

I taught a small number of students in my classroom while being simultaneously broadcast into rooms in up to two other schools. Class sizes were small and the students were good independent workers, so it worked.

For those distanced students, I recognized that this format for learning was less than ideal. I was much more effective as a face-to-face instructor, but I also saw it as necessary in the situation.

Watching Alberta's teachers respond to the COVID-19 situation has reminded me of this aspect of my teaching career.

We have seen some exceptional work done by teachers across the province — and globe, for that matter — to continue learning in an unprecedented time. I have seen it directly with the efforts made by both of my kids' teachers. It is amazing to see such flexibility, adaptability and ingenuity put to work.

There will be people who look at this experiment and decide that it should become a model for ongoing systemic changes to delivering education en masse. We need to push back against this idea.

Yes, there are amazing distance learning programs and teachers across the province that are doing great work every day to deliver authentic learning. And it works very well for certain students and certain situations. But it also requires a large number of

supports and multiple opportunities for intervention; often there are ways for students to access in-person supports when required. These programs have to be very carefully assembled and, even then, they aren't a good fit for all students.

This "careful assembly" that I've described is not what is happening now. What we are doing now — and with teachers' best efforts and some amazing ingenuity — can best be described as emergency remote learning. It's really important to recognize that this is less than ideal and is not a substitute for regular in-school and in-class learning.

In-person schooling provides a number of societal benefits that cannot be replaced by virtual teaching. Learning is a relational endeavour and that is best achieved in person.

First, and most importantly, is the value of socialization. Schooling, and public education in particular, teaches students how to engage as members of a larger society. It teaches them how to respect and work with people with different talents, abilities, needs and backgrounds.

Face-to-face schooling also provides important interaction between young

people and other positive role models and empathetic adults. It is not always easy to assess emotional well-being through a computer screen, so having different adults spend time with students can help facilitate mental health or other necessary social interventions that might otherwise get missed.

Finally, we have to acknowledge that in-person schooling provides an important economic imperative for society. It is not our favourite reason as teachers, but we must acknowledge that sending students to school enables parents to more easily participate in the workforce. And despite the amount of working from home that is going on right now, we know that productivity is currently down and many parents are unable to work from home.

So even though distance learning must remain available as an important option for those students that need or benefit from it, we must resist efforts to apply distance learning models across the board. ■

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

Pandemic provides no budget relief for the ATA



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: Will the savings resulting from shutting down Alberta Teachers' Association activities during the COVID-19 pandemic offset the potential need for a fee increase?

Answer: I'm afraid not. Provincial Executive Council and staff are continuing to attempt to identify efficiencies and opportunities for cost savings that will ensure that high quality services continue to be delivered to members while containing expenses. While these efforts will hopefully allow us to present to an Annual Representative Assembly (plans for which are still in development) a budget with a lower fee requirement than originally put forward, the fact is that members will still be asked to support a fee increase.

This may come as a bit of a surprise given that members will be aware of major Association events, such as the Professional Development Area Conference and the Teacher Welfare Area Conference, having been cancelled in response to recommendations made by the chief medical officer of

health to limit in-person gatherings. Other events are likely to be similarly affected. However, these cancellations are occurring only after about 70 per cent of Association's annual expenses have been accrued and paid out.

Also, in normal times, these events and other "discretionary" activities account for only about 30 per cent of the Association's total expenditures over the course of the entire year. The other 70 per cent of Association expenditures are relatively inelastic, relating to salaries, fixed costs, transfers to subgroups, financing, taxes, building operations and maintenance, and the like. These expenditures cannot easily be reduced and the resulting bills need to be paid despite the unprecedented circumstances facing us, the province, the country and, indeed, the world.

The reality is that teachers are continuing to teach, even though students are not attending classes, and so the Association is continuing to provide support and services to its members.

The Teacher Welfare and Member Services program areas are having to deal with entirely unprecedented problems and are managing increased calls for assistance with matters involving collective agreements, employment relations, benefits, pensions, terminations, and occupational health and safety.

Staff involved in the Association's professional regulatory function are continuing to respond to matters involving teachers' professional conduct. As covered elsewhere in this issue, the Professional Development program area has pivoted to providing an extensive range of professional learning opportunities for teachers that are relevant to their current circumstances using innovative media and approaches.

Staff of the Government program area are involved in ongoing representation with the provincial education ministry and other stakeholder groups in the education sector while continuing their core communications and research functions as well as supporting operations.

So the Association's work continues for and on behalf of teachers, even if much of it is being carried out from the basements, spare bedrooms and kitchen tables of staff scattered around Edmonton and Calgary and around the province. Expenses continue to be incurred.

Ultimately, though, the need for a fee increase has relatively little to do with the expenditure side of the financial statements. Instead it is driven by the projected impact of a reduction in teacher numbers. When the budget proposals were being developed for consideration by members and their

locals, they reflected a potential decrease of 1,500 full-time equivalent teaching positions with a resulting impact on revenues approaching \$2 million.

Since those initial projections were made, the financial position of school boards is appearing to be even more grim than originally projected, with the province making real and substantial cuts in education funding. We must, therefore, begin considering scenarios that are even more bleak.

Association finance staff, senior leadership, elected officers and council continue to monitor and respond to the situation, and we will have a better sense of the demands being made upon us, and the resources available to meet those demands, over the next few months.

This is one reason why we must all continue our advocacy work with elected politicians and in the community to press for adequate education funding, but in the end it is secondary. The more immediate and important reason for such advocacy is to preserve the very fabric of public education and to maintain the capacity of schools and teachers to provide high-quality teaching and learning for Alberta's students. ■

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



YOUR VIEWS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Great words during challenging time

Re: "We will get through this together: An open letter to teachers from ATA president Jason Schilling," ATA News, April 7, 2020

Jason,

Thank you for your words. This letter you wrote to us is one of the best I've read. Sincerely. Great words given to us during these challenging times. Thank you very much!!

Gil Lavigne

Teacher, Svend Hansen School, Edmonton

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

On news of AIMCo's recent \$4 billion loss

Janet Wees

This was not due to volatility of the market. It was, as said, "a wrong-way bet." Talk to Greg Meeker, former chair of ATRF, about this. He says that \$4 billion is gone, gone, gone. AIMCo has admitted this and basically has said their risk management group did not understand the risk. Seems like a colossal miscommunication with board, executive and risk group.

Gwen Schamber

The decision to place our pension with another company was not our decision. The individual who made this decision without our input needs to be held accountable. Our union needs to protect us and our pension money.

Mary Lynn Maher

How do we not have more control of our own money?

Gerry Enns

We cannot let this government force our pension to be managed by an agency that does not understand derivative risk and is not overseen by a competent executive team or board. The news of this \$4B loss sickens me.

Sarah Geisler

There has got to be a way for ATA to team up with LAPP and the other pension plans that have been hijacked to create some major noise.

Wendy Thompson

This is absolutely not acceptable. We need to stand up and have our concerns forwarded to MLAs to reverse Bill 22.

Elaine Merriman

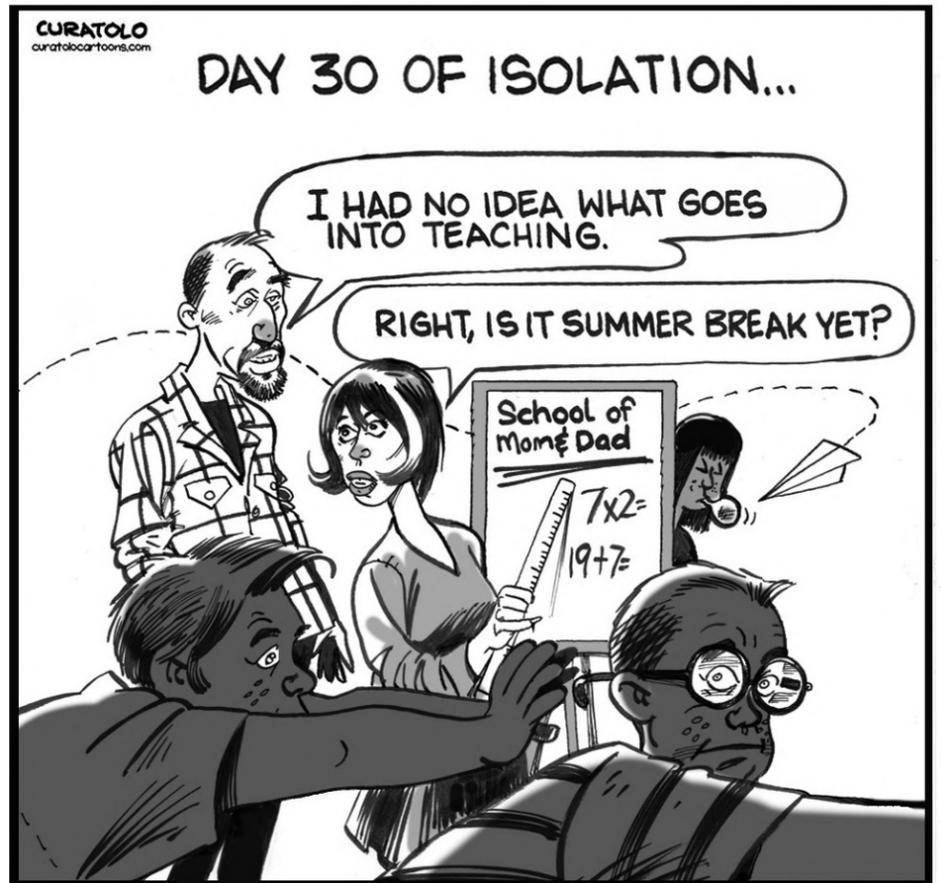
Jason Kenney: Listen to us. This is our money!

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 remarkable because it is not normal market volatility.”

– Greg Meeker, Alberta teacher and former board chair of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund, speaking about AIMCo's recent investment loss of \$4 billion.



COVID-19 disruption an opportunity to rethink assessment



VIEWPOINTS

Sherry Bennett
Alberta Assessment Consortium

During this time of physical distancing, teachers are doing the best they can to ensure that meaningful student learning continues. Any discussion of learning — distance or not — usually includes questions about assessment.

Assessment is often seen as a chore — something that teachers have to do, that students have to endure, and that ranks and sorts students. But what if assessment, especially during this time of isolation, could be a gift in disguise? What if assessment could simply focus on learning, without the pressure of grades?

It sounds wild and crazy, but let's think this through.

Setting the context

Since 1998, educators have been studying the research on formative assessment. This body of research continues to grow, and continues to hold true to its claim: formative assessment, when implemented appropriately, can have a positive impact on student learning. A key component of formative assessment is feedback — ongoing communication between teacher and student about significant learning goals. Its primary purpose is to improve learning.

The promise of formative assessment is so great that it has been a focus of professional learning worldwide for more than two decades. Yet we have not seen the consistent adoption of these practices to obtain the degree of improvement in learning that the research claims.

While correlation is not causation, consider that while jurisdictions have been working to improve formative assessment practices, they have also been adopting increasingly sophisticated digital reporting systems. These are useful tools for recording and calculating grades, but they focus on the results of the summative end of the assessment cycle. Yes, many of these tools include a "formative assessment bin" where teachers can report the results of formative assessment. However, when we think back to the purpose of formative assessment, one might wonder why we would record and report formative "marks" at all.

What we currently have is a mismatch between what the research tells us will improve student learning — formative assessment — and a disproportionate focus and expenditure on grading and reporting. That's not to say that formative assessment has disappeared. It hasn't. But ask leaders what's happening with assessment in their jurisdiction. Chances are they will mention their digital reporting system.

During this time of "new normal" when things are anything but normal, this is absolutely the best time to take a risk. Alberta Education has provided ample flexibility with respect to year-end grades. Let's take hold of this unprecedented opportunity to rethink assessment, for our students' sake.

Could we let go of the grade book — just for now?

There are good reasons for tracking grades, but right now, there are so many variables and disparities among our students that any marks we try to gather will be inaccurate.

In light of the limitations, consider putting that reporting framework on pause for now. There is no need to rank and sort students, especially K – 9 students. We have insufficient evidence to do so. Even using the evidence collected prior to mid-March

doesn't account for what improvements the students may have made had classes not ended abruptly. And while a mark can't be based on conjecture, what value is there in putting a mark of "limited" on unfinished learning? Let us give our students "credit" for their learning thus far, and see how far teachers can still take them along this uncharted learning journey.

The most important thing we can do right now is to help our students feel confident as learners. Their world has turned upside down too. Our job is not just to finish this school year, but also to set the stage for a successful new year of learning.

If not grades, then what?

Replace the time previously spent marking with a focus on two key principles of formative assessment.

1. Engage students. Rich performance tasks and problems that don't have a single right answer are authentic learning opportunities that develop competencies students will need now and in the future.

2. Focus on feedback. Help students learn how to reflect on their work in progress, and learn how to respond to feedback. These are essential life skills, and they also have a positive impact on learning.

These formative assessment practices can actually make a difference for students. Individual teachers can try them out, but it's best when we implement them together. Leaders — please take time to thoughtfully consider how these suggestions might support students' emotional well-being. If summative assessment and grading practices cause harm to students, even unintended harm, what's the value of the grade?

Let's give our students the opportunity to develop confidence as learners. This is one gift that will definitely retain its value. There will be plenty of time in the years ahead to focus on grades, if, in the end, we decide they actually matter. ■

The ATA has your PD

Staff in the ATA's Professional Development program area are continually updating the schedule of online support and sessions that are available to help teachers with online teaching and learning. Members should keep an eye on Twitter and frequently check PD's Facebook page as well updates on the Sched platform.

As a member you have access to

- a wide variety of live interactive PD Sessions (Zoom*) offered by PD staff;
- a wide variety of recorded PD sessions – any time, any place, any pace;
- ConnectEd Chats (Zoom*) – interact with teachers from all over the province in a moderated discussion forum;
- LibGuides (Library Guides) – all kinds of tools for teachers;

- workshops online (coming soon); and
- self-study modules (coming soon).

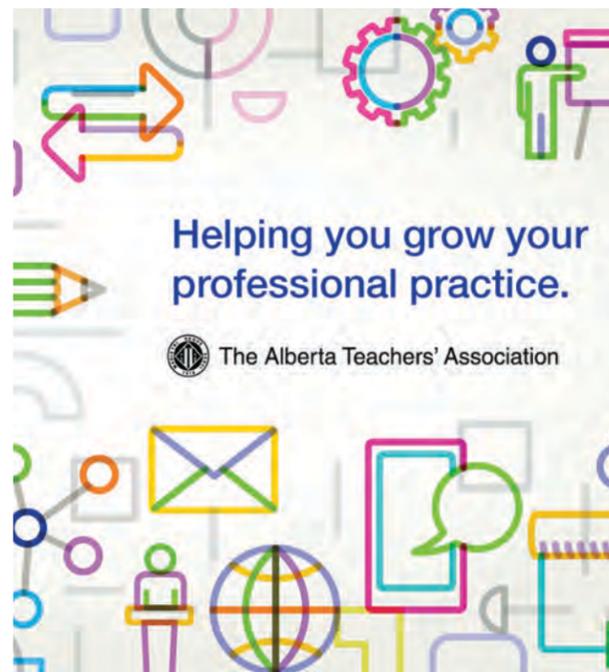
Keep up to date with the latest online offerings from your PD program area:

- Visit Facebook at <https://fb.me/ATApd> at least once a week.
- Follow on Twitter @ATA_PD.
- Access the schedule of PD sessions online at <https://atapdwebinars2020.sched.com> **.
- Access Lib Guides at https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/ATA_PD/SupportsForOnlineLearning.

Where sessions have been recorded, the "Video Stream" link is replaced with a direct link to the session recording. To quickly see a listing of all recorded webinars, use the filter options for "Recording Available." ■

*To participate you will need to download free software from Zoom at www.zoom.us.

**If you have the Sched app on a mobile device and prefer to load these ATA PD sessions into the app, search for "ATA PD Webinars 2020" in the directory of Sched events. In the session listing, a "Video Stream" link is shown that opens the Zoom meeting link for upcoming sessions.



The ATA's PD program area has a wealth of recorded and interactive sessions available for teachers working in isolation.



Teachers are rising to the challenge

On Wednesday, April 15, I attended a meeting that included the majority of presidents from teachers' unions across Canada. During this meeting, hosted by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the presidents shared their province's pandemic experience in terms of school closures and the impact on teachers, students and their communities. Throughout the conversation, one theme was constant – teachers across Canada are rising to the challenge of remote teaching. Teachers in every province are being creative, collaborating with each other, working with parents and doing a lot of problem solving.

What we are experiencing as teachers right now is common from coast to coast to coast. Though we may be doing it differently, we are all the same. Across the country, teachers are all identifying the same issues: equity of access to technology, reaching all our students and worrying about the ones we can't connect with, food security, and what exactly does assessment look like in this new teaching reality.

Further to our discussion about the pandemic response, the presidents also discussed how each province will tackle the issue of how to open schools once our chief medical officers say it is safe for teachers and students to return to the classrooms that we so dearly miss. Like you, teachers across Canada are eager to see their students, but safety needs to be our number-one priority.

We often hear about how we are so different from all the other provinces, but when it comes to figuring out how to make things work in this strange space we find ourselves in, there is more that unites us than separates us. Truly, we are in this together from coast to coast to coast. ■

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

Sharon Vogrinetz named acting co-ordinator of Teacher Welfare

ATA News Staff



Sharon Vogrinetz, acting co-ordinator, Teacher Welfare

The Alberta Teachers' Association has appointed former co-ordinator of Teacher Welfare, Sharon Vogrinetz, to serve in an acting capacity with the resignation of current co-ordinator, Sandra Johnston.

Vogrinetz is well-known to many teachers across the province. She began her career with the ATA in 1995 after spending 13 years as a music, French, health and mathematics teacher with the Elk Island and County of Lamont school divisions.

Vogrinetz served as a Teacher Welfare staff officer supporting local bargaining, administering collective agreements, and managing pension and benefits, eventually rising to the position of Teacher Welfare

co-ordinator in 2008. In 2013, she was appointed as the assistant executive secretary, a position she held until her retirement in 2017. Since then she has returned from time to time to assist program area staff by providing coverage and capacity, particularly during periods of exceptionally high workload.

Executive Secretary Dennis Theobald expressed the appreciation of the Association and members for the work that Sandra Johnston has done over her career to protect and advance the interests of Alberta's teachers through collective bargaining, often in very challenging circumstances. Theobald noted that Johnston will continue to serve as an Association nominee on the board of directors of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF), which she currently is chairing.

"We have an exceptionally strong group of very talented staff in Teacher Welfare and, with additional assistance from Sharon Vogrinetz, I am confident that members will continue to be well-served," said Theobald.

He also wished Johnston well as she looks to new opportunities. ■

Convention review moves ahead



EXECUTIVE REPORT

Danny Maas
ATA Executive Staff Officer

At the 2017 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), members approved a resolution to strike a committee tasked with reviewing the current vision, mandate, structure, governance, operation, financing and programming of teachers' conventions.

During the 2017/18 school year, the Committee on Convention Review consulted with members from across the province through surveys, focus groups and symposia. Based on members' feedback, in October 2018, staff presented Provincial Executive Council with a preliminary report that outlined a number of possible future directions that the Association could take to improve teachers' conventions.

At Council's direction, staff sought further validation of these findings during the 2018/19 school year, and the Convention Review Validation Survey was administered, which garnered 2,888 responses. In addition, the Convention Review Symposium was held in conjunction with the spring Professional Development Area Conference (PDAC), which included deep discussion on the proposed directions with the table facilitation and data collection led by the Association's professional development facilitators.



On Oct. 24, 2019, staff presented a final report to Council, which approved the findings in principle, disbanded the committee with thanks and directed staff to develop a draft implementation plan.

What's happening now?

Staff are preparing an implementation plan for each goal, beginning with those that are low cost, low complexity and low risk. Recommendations will be presented to Table Officers' Committee and/or PEC and ARA (if there are budgetary implications), in accordance with the Association's normal operating procedures. As decisions are made about those recommendations, associated adjustments to administrative guidelines or other operational and procedural documents, those changes will be communicated to members.

Check out the convention review website

Updates, committee reports and a visual summary of the implementation goals can be accessed on the [Convention Review Implementation Update page](#).

If you have any questions or comments about teachers' conventions or convention implementation, please contact me at daniel.maas@ata.ab.ca. ■

New workshops in development for fall

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

This fall, when teachers return to the classroom, the demands on their professional and personal lives will be something never before seen in public education.



Nancy Luyckfassel
ATA staff officer,
Professional
Development



Melissa Purcell
ATA staff officer
for Indigenous
education

So it's perfect timing that the Alberta Teachers' Association is preparing to roll out several new workshops with a focus on health and wellness, according to Nancy Luyckfassel, an executive staff officer with the ATA's Professional Development (PD) program area.

"We know that times change very quickly," Luyckfassel said. "We look at our workshops as living documents and hope they are always reflecting the current needs and realities in teachers' classrooms."

The ATA's PD program area offers 50 workshops, seminars and presentations for schools and can be booked by any active or associate ATA member in good standing. They're delivered by Association instructors, staff officers and Indigenous facilitators. Many workshops are also offered in French.

A \$200 booking fee is required, and Luyckfassel says people should register early to avoid disappointment, particularly around hot spots like the beginning of the school year or division PD dates.

"We will take bookings a year in advance," Luyckfassel said. "When we get really full days, we manage the bookings based on the date they were received."

Before the COVID crisis, PD was on track to have a record-breaking year in requested workshops.

Aside from the annual updating of current content, six new workshops will be available in late August. Four will support teacher wellness, a healthy work-life balance and class management; two will be added to the Indigenous education roster.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING WORKSHOPS

Creativity – Our Next Generation Depends on It!

Luyckfassel says this workshop develops the strong relationship that exists between creativity and personal well-being. Participants will learn how to use creativity as a tool for problem solving in their personal and professional lives.

She says the COVID crisis has provided some excellent examples of how creativity is being used to provide innovative solutions to evolving problems.

"Bauer started repurposing their plants from making hockey helmets to making personal protective devices. We'll incorporate this story and many others as examples of how creativity is being used to solve the challenges we're faced with."

Making the Most of a Teaching Life: How to be Well and Stay Well

This workshop was developed to study a holistic approach to teacher wellness. Strategies will be explored to confront the pressures that exist both inside and outside the classroom, such as financial or family issues.

Luyckfassel says these strategies are becoming increasingly valuable to teachers.

"We will soon be experiencing a very difficult bargaining process and managing the pressures placed on education by the current government will be tough. This workshop will look at tactics for members to be well and stay well both professionally and personally."

Mental Health 101

This workshop provides teachers with a basic understanding of the mental health issues they might see in their classrooms. However, the purpose

of the module isn't to train teachers as counsellors or psychologists.

"Similar to first-aid training, this workshop will give teachers the basic information they need to identify and help students who may be experiencing mental health issues," Luyckfassel said.

Lessons learned in this workshop are not confined to the classroom. The skills acquired will also help teachers understand the feelings that they and their colleagues may be experiencing at times, Luyckfassel said.

Classroom Management: Beyond the Basics

The result of teacher demand, this is a follow-up to the workshop entitled Classroom Management: What Works, which was developed for beginning teachers. This new clinic will help teachers who have some experience in the classroom but still need guidance with the next steps, such as managing student behaviour and dealing with difficult situations.

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Two new Indigenous education workshops are currently under development and will be available in the fall. Both were designed with much input from First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers, teachers from Alberta, and the Association's Indigenous Advisory Circle, said Melissa Purcell, executive staff officer for Indigenous education with the ATA's Professional Development program area.

The Sixties Scoop: Understanding Implications and Contributing Towards Reconciliation

The Sixties Scoop took place from the 1960s to the 1980s. Social workers,

unfamiliar with working with Indigenous peoples or not understanding the cultural or historical context of Indigenous communities, identified thousands of Indigenous children as living in unacceptable conditions. They "scooped" these children from their homes and placed them with non-Indigenous families across North America and throughout the world.

Many victims of the Sixties Scoop dealt with horrific physical, mental, sexual and emotional experiences. The disconnection from their cultural roots and trauma from abuse had long-lasting impacts that are still being felt today.

Purcell hopes this seminar will help teachers reflect on their own understanding, values and beliefs about Indigenous people and how they can apply this new knowledge in their classrooms and professional life.

"It's learning about the histories of this land that we are not taught through our own learning experience," said Purcell. "It's important for us as teachers to work toward making change, not just for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, but for the benefit of all students and teachers across the province."

The Association worked very closely with the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta (SSISA) for guidance on the information the workshop would be sharing with teachers.

Finding Our Way in Indigenous Education: Connecting Hearts and Minds

This workshop addresses some of the common statements heard from teachers, such as "I don't know what I don't know," or "I am afraid to say or do something offensive," Purcell says.

She stressed that the workshop is meant to help unpack some of the Indigenous education resources that already exist and "just hold space for conversation about how we find our way in Indigenous education – how do we connect hearts and minds." ■

TOP 5 requested workshops for 2019/20

1. Staff Wellness: Don't Just Survive – Thrive!
2. Increasing Student Resilience
3. Trauma-Informed Practice: Safe, Supportive and Self-regulated Classrooms
4. The Power of Play: Engaging all Learners
5. Unseen Hurts: Promoting Positive Mental Health in Schools

Book your workshops now for the 2020/21 school year

[Current Workshop listing](#)
pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca
[PD Workshops Request Form](#)



ARA and Summer Conference prospects remain uncertain



ATA offices remain closed and next month Provincial Executive Council is scheduled to discuss options for holding the Annual Representative Assembly.

ATA News Staff

Provincial Executive Council will make decisions about the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly and Summer Conference at its May meeting, but extended public health restrictions on mass gatherings suggest in-person meetings will not be possible.

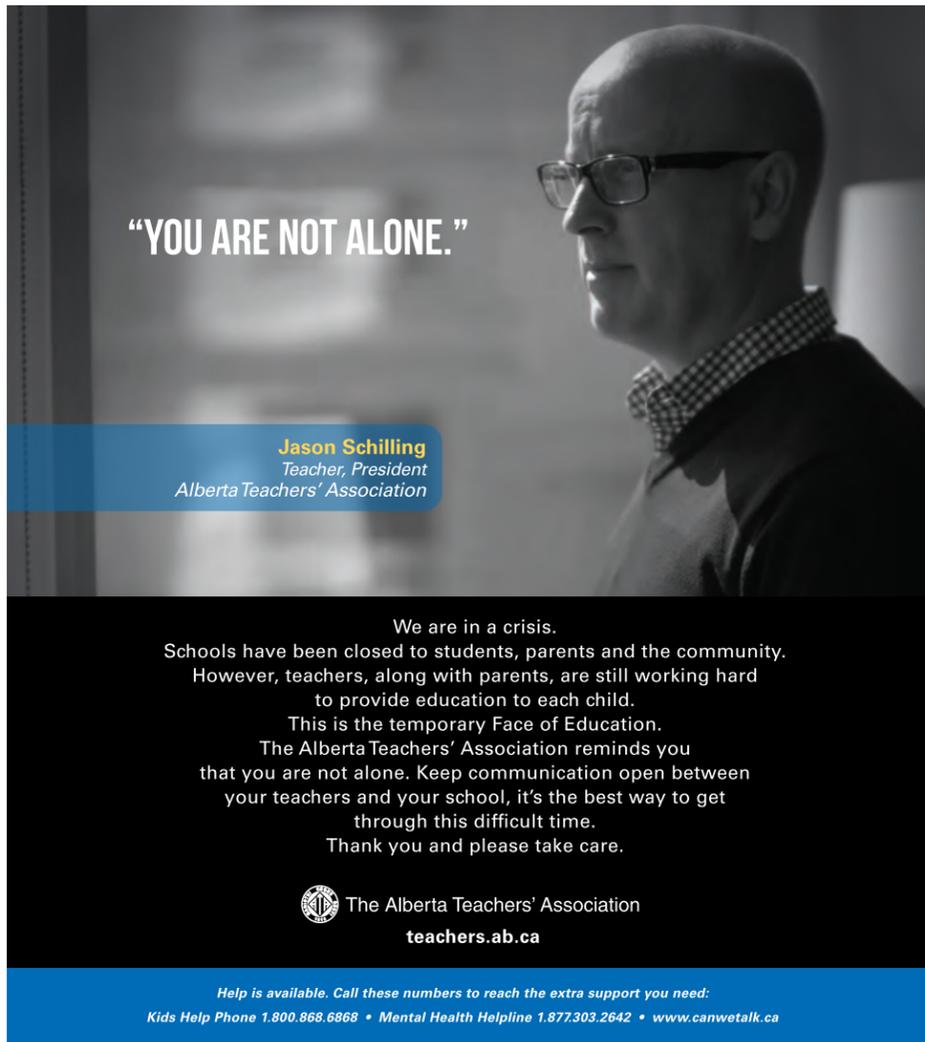
Plans were being made to hold the Annual Representative Assembly Aug. 15 and 16 in Calgary, but different options will now have to be considered. As a result of the postponement of ARA, the deadline for locals to vote on resolutions has been extended to May 15.

ATA offices in Edmonton and Calgary have been closed to the public since

March 23, but most services for members continue with most employees working from home. Some employees remain at each location to provide essential on-site services such as caretaking and mail receipt.

The main switchboard is still operating. You can call the Association in Edmonton at 780-447-9400 or toll free at 1-800-232-7208; in Calgary at 403-265-2672 or toll free at 1-800-332-1280.

Meetings that are legislated or regulatory, such as Provincial Executive Council and discipline hearings, are continuing to take place using remote technology or social distancing. Some ATA committees are holding virtual meetings whereas others have suspended their meetings altogether. ■



“YOU ARE NOT ALONE.”

Jason Schilling
Teacher, President
Alberta Teachers' Association

We are in a crisis.
Schools have been closed to students, parents and the community.
However, teachers, along with parents, are still working hard
to provide education to each child.
This is the temporary Face of Education.
The Alberta Teachers' Association reminds you
that you are not alone. Keep communication open between
your teachers and your school, it's the best way to get
through this difficult time.
Thank you and please take care.

 The Alberta Teachers' Association
teachers.ab.ca

Help is available. Call these numbers to reach the extra support you need:
Kids Help Phone 1.800.868.6868 • Mental Health Helpline 1.877.303.2642 • www.canwetalk.ca

The ATA's Face of Education campaign, which has been running since the fall of 2018, has been changed to reflect the new reality of COVID-19. SUPPLIED

COVID-19 prompts update to Face of Education campaign

ATA News Staff

Q&A with Shelley Magnusson, ATA staff officer responsible for the Association's media campaigns.

Why did the ATA change the campaign to reflect the new reality of COVID-19?

We realized that the existing campaign, which showed teachers and students in school settings, was no longer relevant given the closure of schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also wanted to honour the work that teachers and students were doing in figuring out how to make the new emergency distance learning work. And we had to do it very quickly.

What special considerations or precautions were made in the filming of the ad?

We made sure that the students we chose were old enough so that they could film themselves. We didn't want to take the risk of having even a small film crew interact with young people. We also chose students who are experienced professional actors who had previous experience being on camera so that they would be comfortable acting with very little

direction, filming themselves and uploading the file.

To shoot the part of ATA president Jason Schilling, we sent a very small film crew (two people) to ensure that Jason and the crew were able to maintain physical distancing to lower the risk to everyone involved. These constraints limited what we were able to do, but I am very proud of the new ad.

How did the concept come about?

As with all of our ads, it was a team effort. There were several conversations about what our message should be. Once that was in hand, then it was a lot of back and forth with the creative team at Tag Advertising until we had a script that everyone was happy with. It can be difficult to distill a message down to 30 seconds, which is why we trust the advice of our ad team.

I would like to thank Tag Advertising, and especially Todd Sloane, who donated all the work that went into the updated ad, including the art direction, writing, film crew, sound crew and production costs. It was an amazing gesture that goes to the heart of our longstanding relationship with Tag Advertising. I also would like to note that all of our media partners have donated significant TV and radio air time to the ATA. This is a direct result of the relationships we have built up over the years with the media. ■

NOTICE

On Jan. 24, 2020, a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee established under the *Teaching Profession Act* found that Marc Daigle engaged in unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee ordered that Daigle's membership in the Association be cancelled effective Jan. 24, 2020. ■

Teachers reiterate call to repeal Bill 22 after failed AIMCo gambit

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers' Association is reiterating its call for the UCP government to reverse its decision to transfer teacher pension investment control to the Alberta Investment Management Corp (AIMCo), in light of news that investment managers lost \$4 billion on a "wrong-way bet."

While teacher pension plan investments were not affected by this loss, the news underscores the concerns identified by teachers about the pension investment takeover, said ATA president Jason Schilling.

"It is completely unacceptable that investment managers would make such a significant investment without fully understanding the risks," he said. "I am confident that ATRF would not have invested in such a risky venture."

Schilling referred to the *Globe and Mail* story that broke the news, citing sources saying that "AIMCo now acknowledges its executives were not fully aware of the risks they were taking."

Half of the board seats for the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) are occupied by teachers, and the fund has an investment strategy that specifically caters to the risk profile of teachers, Schilling said.

"This type of investment exceeds the risk tolerance that would be acceptable to teachers," Schilling said.

ATRF's investment plan was prepared to handle fluctuations like those that have been experienced during the current market downturn and, so far, ATRF investments have weathered the slowdown as well as could be expected, said Schilling.

He said that this news story again raises serious concerns over the AIMCo takeover of teacher pensions and is encouraging members to reach out again to MLAs.

"Teachers invest their own money into their pension plan. Teachers were not consulted on the takeover and this story further validates our concerns. I am calling on the Government of Alberta to finally listen to teachers and stop the takeover by repealing Bill 22." ■



What can you do?

Teachers and other Albertans concerned about the impacts of Bill 22 can email their MLA using the website www.handsoffmypension.ca.

All teachers invited to hear Jody Carrington

Popular trauma expert to offer wisdom for coping with isolation

Jen Janzen
ATA News Staff

Popular psychologist and author Jody Carrington will share her expertise with Alberta teachers next month as she hosts a webinar on coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Open to any Alberta teacher who is interested, the presentation is scheduled for Saturday, May 9 at 10 a.m.

"With so many physical spaces closed, it's nice to be able to offer this kind of learning on a larger scale," said Dave Matson, an ATA staff officer who is helping organize Carrington's talk.

The event came about after the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of an ATA conference at which Carrington was slated to speak on vicarious trauma. Organizers recognized that, if her focus was adjusted slightly, it could be of value to teachers all across the province.

A frequent guest at ATA events, Carrington is a child psychologist who works with teachers, parents, first responders and foster parents. She is the author of *Kids These Days: A Game Plan for (Re)Connecting with those we Teach, Lead & Love*. ■



Psychologist Jody Carrington will host a webinar specifically for Alberta teachers on May 9. SUPPLIED

How to register

The registration process is still being finalized. Details will be shared via the ATA's social media channels on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Dazzling driveway

Grade 9 student Kayla Wildschut and her stepmother Crystal Hancock created this chalk drawing on their driveway in Calgary as part of a neighbourhood teenager challenge that originated in Brooks. The project garnered a lot of attention on social media, including the following tweet from movie star Ryan Reynolds: "This is amazing. Beautiful work!"



Layoffs a new layer of pressure during pandemic

Laura Harris
ATA News Staff

Educational support staff started receiving layoff notices in recent weeks after the Alberta government announced cuts to education funding that will be in place until schools resume in-person classes.

Boards are taking different approaches to the funding cuts with a few boards finding ways to actually retain staff until the end of the school year.

This month, transportation grants to school jurisdictions were halved and in May, a cut of 14 per cent to basic instruction grant funding will also kick in. With millions of dollars in cuts to make and many members of their staff requiring 30-days' notice prior to layoffs, district and school administrators made quick decisions affecting their staff and student learning.

"Every single member of a school staff contributes to the learning environment of our students. Every single member plays a role in them feeling safe, feeling welcome and being ready to learn," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

"So there's nothing more chaotic for a school than uncertainty around funding, and now schools must deal with that during a pandemic. That's a lot of pressure when you are still in the early stages of transitioning your staff and hundreds, maybe thousands, of students and their families to at-home learning."

The education minister said the province was going to "match resources to what is being delivered in an at-home learning environment."

But as Schilling pointed out, one in six Alberta children live in poverty, and many do not have the resources to establish a learning environment near the quality of the one provided by their school. For many different reasons, other students require the supports of an in-school education.

"Equity is an issue that school

jurisdictions have struggled to address since schools shut down on March 15," Schilling said. "With these cuts, it's going to be an even greater challenge."

The government says funding from the cuts to education is being re-allocated to support Alberta's COVID-19 response.

Schilling said he is impressed by how teachers are striving to connect and learn with their students and families as they all adapt to a new normal.

"These are unprecedented times, but we are very lucky to have unprecedented teachers," he said.

Here is a sample of what has unfolded since the provincial government's announcement last month.

Calgary Board of Education

Schools: 246
Students: 125,800
Budget cut: \$21 million
Layoffs: 1,900

- CBE reported finding significant savings in other costs to the organization, allowing for the retention of all 880 of its education assistants and the majority of cleaning and facilities staff.
- Contract staff and substitute teachers will not receive layoff notices but will have their work limited until the end of the school year.
- Layoff notices were given to staff that include breakfast and lunch supervisors, part-time cleaners, library assistants, Career and Technology Studies instructors, psychologists and speech pathologists as well as other administrative and support staff.

"We prioritized dollars toward keeping positions that have the closest connection to students and to support learning from home," said CBE chief superintendent Christopher Usih.

Edmonton Catholic Schools

Schools: 95
Students: 44,330
Budget cut: \$5.7 million
Layoffs: 708

- Of the 708 ECS staff receiving layoff notices, 479 are educational assistants.
- Ninety members of staff being laid off are funded through the federal Jordan's Principle grant, which provides additional support to Indigenous students and expires at the end of April.
- Other positions receiving layoff notices include therapeutic assistants (behavioural therapy, speech language and occupational therapy), media resources support staff, administrative support, licensed practical nurses, and instructors in the areas of second-language programming, career and technology services and fine arts.

"These employees are extremely valued and it is very difficult to issue layoff notices due to a provincial government reduction in funding," said ECS board chair Laura Thibert. "The board's expectation is that Alberta Education will restore funding as soon as classes resume."

Edmonton Public Schools

Schools: 213
Students: 104,930
Budget cut: \$17.5 million
Layoffs: 1,868 (1,740 FTE)

- Staff receiving layoff notices included those in a range of roles in support, custodial and exempt staff groups.

"These decisions were difficult. Every single one of our team members are valued," said EPSB superintendent Darrel Robertson.

Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools

Schools: 17
Students: 6,000 (approx.)
Budget cut: Information not available
Layoffs: 116

- Categories of staff receiving layoff notices were not provided.

"We are disappointed that we must lay off these valuable staff members who play important roles in supporting student learning a success — including

during this temporary model of learning from home," said Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools board chair Joe Becigneul.

Holy Spirit Catholic School Division

Schools: 15, and two outreach programs
Students: 5,000-plus
Budget cut: Approximately \$1 million
Layoffs: 181

- All educational assistants (including early learning EAs and early learning speech language assistants) received layoff notices.
- Also receiving notices were child and youth care workers, library clerks, library technicians and division receptionists.

"To meet the timelines and estimated funding reductions targeted by Alberta Education, while still adhering to collective agreements that govern employee relations with the majority of our support staff, we had to act quickly to notify impacted staff of their layoff with 30-days' notice, which was on March 31, 2020," said HSCSC superintendent Ken Sampson.

Peace Wapiti Public School Division

Schools: 36
Students: 6,000
Budget cut: Information not available
Layoffs: 103

- All 103 school bus drivers permanently employed by PWPSD received layoff notices.
- The cut to its transportation grant brought an end to deliveries of course packages to students with limited access to technology.

"... we were unable to find sufficient resources to cover the 51 per cent reduction to our transportation grant for the months of April, May and June," said PWPSD superintendent Bob Stewart. "As a result, we regrettably initiated the process of communicating temporary layoff decisions to our bus drivers." ■

Long division + social distancing + creative teacher = 1 engaged student

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Whatever it takes to connect with a student. That's the philosophy that led a Beaumont teacher to conduct math lessons in her neighbour's driveway.

Realizing that she hadn't heard from a number of her students' families in a while, Grade 4 teacher Catherine Slade sent a Google message to ask how everyone was doing. When local foster mom Barbara Kreamer responded that one of her charges was struggling to focus on learning while in isolation, Slade's reaction was swift.

"I just said, 'I'll come park my butt with my coffee on your driveway and I'll hang out with him for a bit,'" Slade said.

Within minutes of the exchange, the 17-year teacher was propped on a stool in Kreamer's driveway, delivering a long division lesson on the whiteboard she normally uses to list her own kids' chores.

"He went in and got his paper and pencil and put the Chromebook away and we just did some math together," Slade said. "For me it was beautiful in the sun. I had a bit more peace and quiet as well without my kids in the background."

Although the student is a boy of very few words, Slade could see him getting more settled as they worked through some questions and he engaged in the learning.



Catherine Slade works on some long division in a driveway to help a student who's struggling to focus on learning during this time of isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I saw him smile and I saw that little light in his eye," she said. "There were people walking their dogs and riding bikes, and all kinds of things behind us, but that didn't matter. It was really nice just connecting."

The impromptu lesson took place on April 16 and lasted about half an hour. Since then Slade has committed to delivering driveway lessons three times a week.

Slade's one-on-one attention is a great relief to Kreamer, who has five children at home, ranging from grade 4 to 7. As a non-teacher, she's challenged to keep up with her children's learning needs.

"I was totally flabbergasted. That's really going out of your way," Kreamer said of Slade's efforts. "She is absolutely phenomenal, just unbelievable."

"It is something that I would do a million times over because that's what I

do," Slade said. "That's what I'm here for."

She and Kreamer both said that teachers everywhere are taking creative and thoughtful steps to connect with students and brighten their lives, from organizing birthday parades to simply checking in with families to ensure they are OK.

"I think every teacher right now deserves a lot of appreciation," Kreamer said. ■

ARA postponed until further notice

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held April 2, 2020, at Barnett House in Edmonton

1. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, postponed the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly, currently scheduled for May 16 to 18, until further notice.

2. In accordance with section 31(2) of the *Teaching Profession Act*, extended the deadline for the commencement of five hearings of the Professional Conduct Committee.

3. In accordance with section 50(1) of the *Teaching Profession Act*, extended the deadline for the commencement of an appeal hearing of the Professional Conduct Appeal Committee.

4. Amended the 2020/21 proposed budget by reducing the Special Emergency Fund allocation from \$710,000 to \$333,000 and by adjusting other projections to better reflect actual costs, thereby reducing the proposed annual fee increase from \$96 to \$81. Council noted that additional changes may still be necessary before the 2020/21 budget is presented to the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly.

5. Approved, for presentation at the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly, a resolution that school boards be urged

to annually share a report of their Joint Worksite Health and Safety committees' work, including a report of aggregate data of incidents for the school year, to be shared with the appropriate Alberta Teachers' Association local president by Nov. 1.

6. Authorized that work be undertaken, in collaboration with the College of Alberta School Superintendents, to develop a template for division policy or administrative procedures to comply with section 390 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code dealing with violence prevention plans and procedures.

7. With respect to occupational health and safety legislation, authorized an FAQ page to be posted in the "Members Only" section of the Alberta Teachers' Association website; a Q&A article to be published in the *ATA News*; and that local constitutions be reviewed to include a clause on how Association representatives are named to the Joint Worksite Health and Safety committees.

8. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of three charges of unprofessional conduct for engaging in behaviour for which the teacher was convicted of indictable offenses related to child pornography. The investigated teacher entered a plea of guilty to all three charges, and the hearing committee imposed a penalty of a declaration that the teacher is permanently ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association and a recommendation to the minister of education to permanently cancel the teacher's teaching certificate.

9. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of five charges of unprofessional conduct for calling a student an inappropriate name in the presence of other students; for having students vote as to whether a derogatory term the teacher used to describe a student was accurate; for sending a student an inappropriate text message using profane language; for sending a student a text message asking the student to advance the teacher's position to a teaching colleague rather than communicating with the colleague directly; and for leaving students unattended in the classroom.

The investigated teacher pled guilty to each charge. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of severe reprimand for each of the five charges and a fine of \$500 for each of the first four charges. The committee ordered a single letter of severe reprimand to encompass all five charges.

10. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of 10 charges of unprofessional conduct related to sexual gestures made in the presence of students; improper and offensive comments to female staff; for taking two male students to the teacher's residence without the permission of the school principal; for making a disparaging comment to a student about the student's prior incarceration; for making a sexually inappropriate comment in the presence of school staff; and for yelling at a colleague in the presence of students.

The committee found that the teacher, through these various actions, failed to maintain the honour and dignity of the profession, failed to treat students with

dignity and respect and be considerate of their circumstances and undermined the confidence of pupils in the teacher's colleague.

The hearing committee imposed the penalty of a single letter of severe reprimand to encompass all 10 charges, a fine of \$3,000, a declaration that the teacher is ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association and a recommendation to the minister of education to cancel the teacher's teaching certificate.

11. Approved the creation of a rainbow pedestrian crossing in front of Barnett House to demonstrate the Association's commitment to inclusivity.

12. Amended the Administrative Guidelines to more clearly define the principle and purpose of teachers' conventions and to establish a solid direction on the types of sessions and exhibits that should be included in convention programming.

13. Amended the Administrative Guidelines related to expense claim processes and established new guidelines and procedures for capital projects exceeding \$1,000,000 in total estimated costs.

14. Awarded the Alberta Teachers' Association Doctoral Fellowships in Education, the John Mazurek Memorial-Morgex Insurance Scholarship and the Nadene M. Thomas Graduate Research Bursary.

15. Approved the name of one teacher for addition to the Indigenous Education Professional Development Facilitator Corps name bank. ■



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Application deadline: May 1, 2020



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Online applications and the guidelines for grant applications are available at: www.teachers.ab.ca>Public Education>Education Research.

Deadline: October 15 and May 1 annually, 4:30 PM

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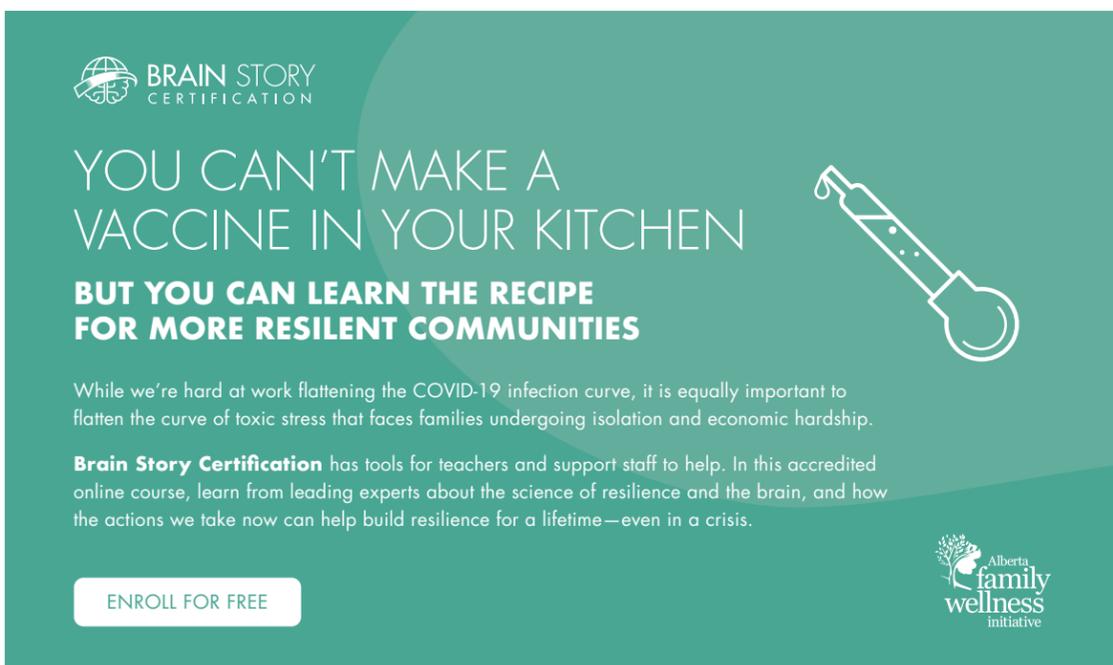
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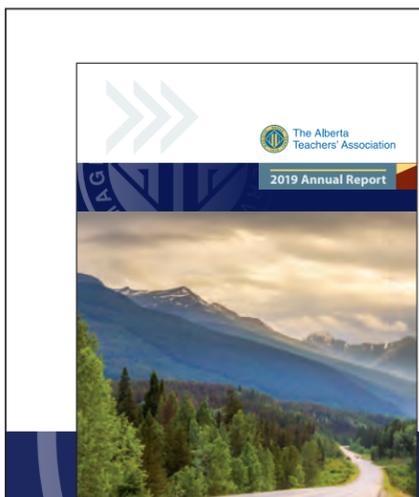
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For more information contact chris.gonsalvez@ata.ab.ca. Confirmation of session times and other conference details, for those selected to present, will be sent out by the end of June.

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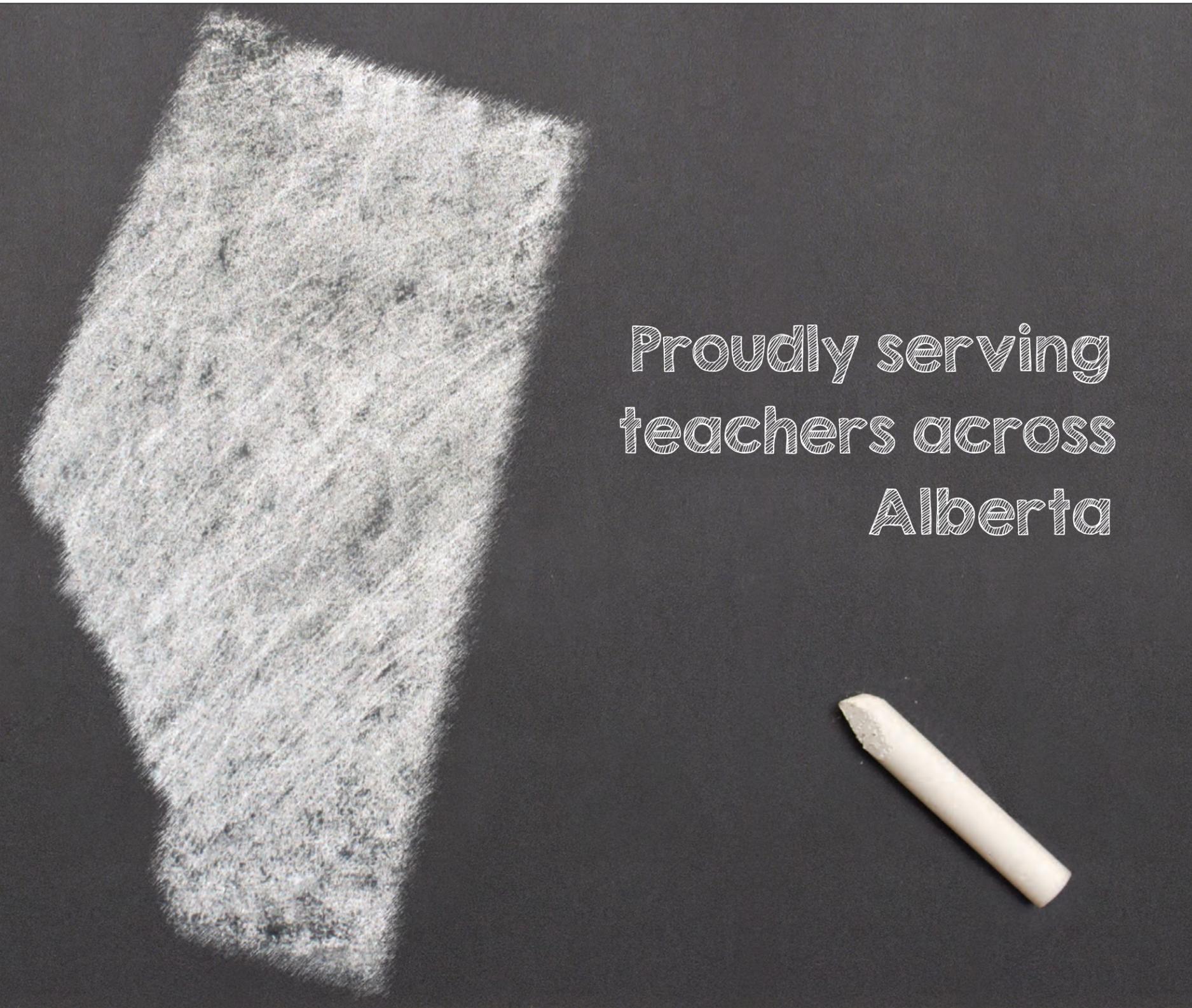
The ATA News invites you to get your camera out and start shooting those award-winning photographs.

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

GOTCHA! Contest rules

- 1 Photos taken by active and associate ATA members of education- or school-related activities are eligible. (Hint: photos depicting action are best.)
- 2 Entries must be submitted by the member who took the photos.
- 3 Photos taken between Sept. 1, 2019, and May 15, 2020, are eligible.
- 4 Please email photos to cory.hare@ata.ab.ca. Entries must be received by 5 p.m. on May 15, 2020.
- 5 Each entry must be accompanied by a description of the activity; the names (if possible) of the people in the photo; the date when the photo was taken; and the photographer's name, school and contact information.
- 6 Cash prizes will be awarded to entrants whose photos place in the top three, as follows: first place, \$200; second place, \$100; and third place, \$50.
- 7 Each winner will also receive a certificate of merit, as will those receiving honourable mention.
- 8 Up to 20 additional entries may be selected for an award of honourable mention.
- 9 Each entrant may submit up to five photos, but no entrant can win more than one top-three prize.
- 10 A panel of individuals with photography, publishing and teaching experience will judge the entries. The decision of the judges is final.
- 11 Winning photographs will be published in the ATA News.
- 12 Photos submitted for the contest may be published in the ATA News, the ATA Magazine or other Association publications.
- 13 Please read carefully. Failure to comply with any of these rules may result in disqualification.

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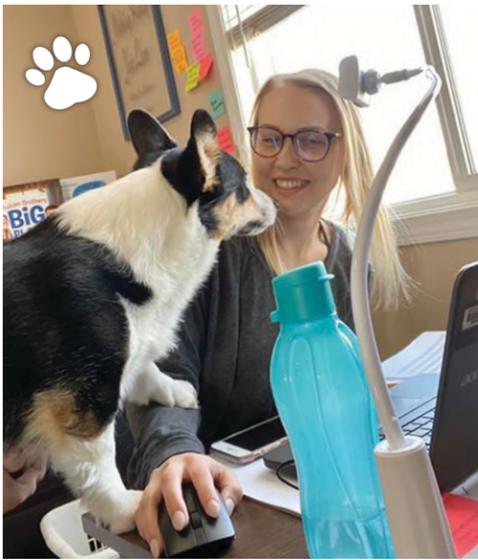
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TALENT

April 28, 2020 | Volume 54, Number 12

Teachers lean on their colleagues ... regardless of species

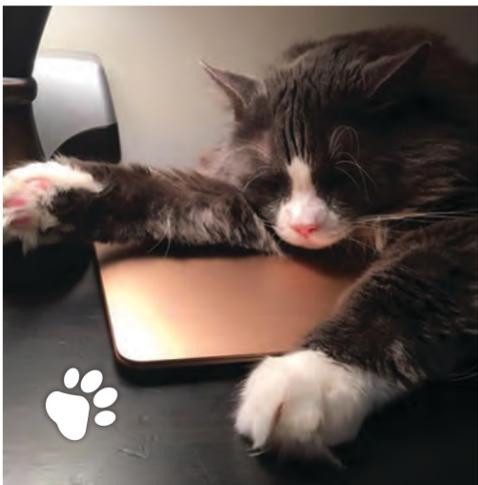
In this world of working in isolation, the word "colleague" has been co-opted to mean "pet," so we asked teachers: "How are your colleagues helping you connect with your students?"



I have three dogs ... so every day is an adventure with them. This is what working from home looks like with Tripp the corgi. – Alyssa Harrison



Chester helps teach every video music lesson! Sometimes he even sings along! – Crystal Brophy



I'm an education student in my third year of university and this is Oreo! He loves to join my Zoom classes and type on my laptop. – Katie Doucette



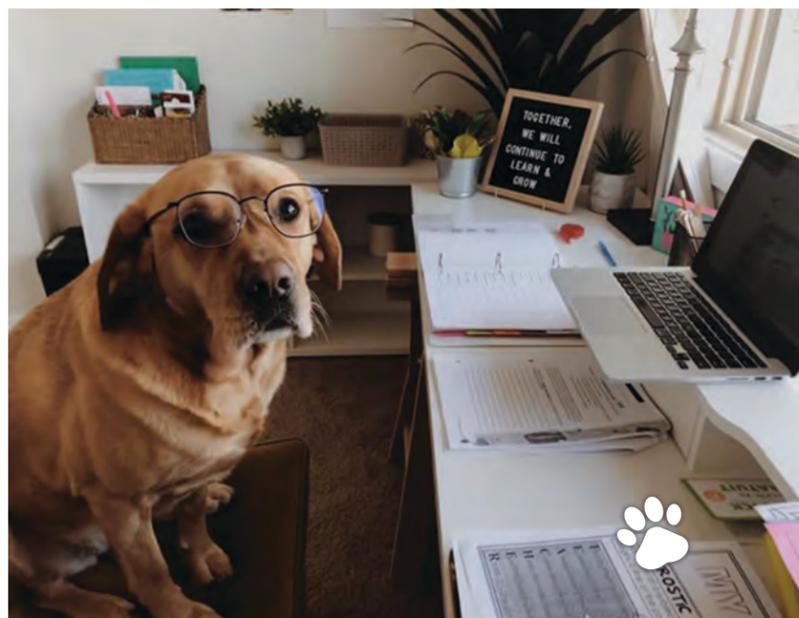
Benny is always playing "April Fools" tricks on my students in my lessons! – Alyssa Rose



Harley supports me by helping me create video lessons. – Anne Mouck



Vanilla helping with emergency online learning. – Mary Lynn Maher



Ms. Summer subbed for me for 20 seconds, then got fired for sleeping on the job! – Michele Pellis



My "colleague" headbutts books out of my hands while I am reading to students and makes them laugh during these difficult times. – Cassandra Martin