



**Want to survive teachers' convention?**  
Check out your colleagues' helpful tips. *See Page 12.*

**#DISCONNECT CHALLENGE**

Thousands ready for tech break  
*See page 4.*

# ATA NEWS

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WEST EDMONTON MALL

Students from the Jing Qing Athletic Society welcome in the Year of the Rat during a lunar new year celebration at West Edmonton Mall on Jan. 18. See page 8 for more photos commemorating the Chinese new year.

## What's that elephant?

Let's talk about school choice for what it really is: privatization.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on page 2.



Convention is a time to connect.

See page 4.

## Teachers making gains in local bargaining

Nearly half of local agreements now in place.

See page 5.



## Curriculum report earns mixed reviews

Recommendations undermine teachers.

See page 5.



## Success Stories

Students and teachers benefit from Indigenous exposure and Finnish exchange.

See page 7.

## Privatization is the elephant in the room



### EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

#### Don't think of an elephant.

Today's editorial is about choice in education. I'd like to present a well-reasoned, rational argument for how we should counter narratives about educational choice and focus on promoting a comprehensive, accessible and cohesive public education system, but I know you are still thinking about that elephant.

You are probably thinking about its rough skin, large flapping ears, gigantic round feet and, of course, its long, sturdy trunk.

You see, elephants are impossible to ignore. So whatever I have to say about elephants automatically conjures up for you an inescapable mental image. Even when I tell you to not think about it.

Noted linguist George Lakoff entitled his 2004 book about political framing, *Don't Think of an Elephant*. In that book he discusses how language and metaphors are used in political discourse to evoke a moral frame that is deeply embedded in people's subconscious to bypass reason and win policy points on emotional response.

The phrase "school choice" is a classic example of this framing strategy used in education. Choice is automatically perceived as a good thing; therefore, people are automatically preconditioned

to think that more choice must be better than less choice.

This makes it very difficult to argue against choice, much like it is very difficult not to think of an elephant.

Instead of arguing against choice (because, frankly, I have no problem with choice), let's call out what is actually being discussed: when our government talks about choice, they are actually talking about privatization.

So, to engage this debate, let's debate it using the terms of privatization.

#### Alberta already has enough privatization in education.

We are the only province in the country with charter schools — fully funded, privately operated schools offering alternative education outside of public boards. In Alberta, public education refers to schools operated by public, separate and francophone school boards.

We also provide far more public funding for private schools than any other province. We fund private schools at 70 per cent of the base funding provided to public boards, whereas other provinces offer, at most, 50 per cent funding, and a number of provinces provide no public

funding to private schools at all.

Then there is home education, which is also very well-supported by public funds — up to \$1,700 per student per year. Again, many provinces offer no funding for home schooling.

#### Increasing privatization often comes at the expense of public education.

At its policy convention last fall, the UCP voted in favour of a resolution to adopt a voucher system in education, which would offer full public funding to private schools and home schoolers. While the government says it won't adopt a voucher model, it has also clearly indicated it wants to hold the line on total operational funding for education. This means that any future funding increases for private options must come from funding that already exists for public boards.

#### Privatization increases inequality in education.

Take a look at most of the advertising and promotion done by private schools and you will see them tout small class

sizes. Alternately and often conjointly, they offer significant programming enhancements like outdoor pursuits, elite athletics or college preparatory programs. These benefits come at a cost, sometimes with tuitions that exceed \$10,000 or even \$20,000 per year. Some schools even specialize in special-needs programming, which means parents who can afford the tuition can access the supports their children require for success, while others within the public system have to beg for the most basic supports.

Enhanced privatization ensures that those who have the means to participate in private education — those who can afford the tuition or meet the strict entrance requirements — have access to the smallest classes and the best educational programs. This exacerbates the inequality that unfortunately already exists in society.

With 93 per cent of students in Alberta attending public, separate and francophone schools, the choice is clear. That choice is public education, and I think public education needs to be the first priority of our government, especially at a time when public funding is being constrained. Privatization leads to education inequality. It comes at the expense of public education and, frankly, we already have enough of it.

Parents' first choice is for public education; I hope the government will choose it first too. ■

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

“Choice is automatically perceived as a good thing; therefore, people are automatically preconditioned to think that more choice must be better than less choice.”

## Teachers have nothing to fear from EpiPens



### Q & A

Dennis Theobald  
ATA Executive Secretary

**Question:** I heard recently that all schools now need to have EpiPens in the office in case of emergency? What is this all about, and what does this mean for me?

**Answer:** The following explanation comes courtesy of Robert Mazzotta, co-ordinator of the ATA's Member Services program area.

A private member's bill was passed in the legislature last year which came into effect on Jan. 1, 2020. Bill 201, the *Protection of Students with Life-Threatening Allergies Act*, ensures that every school in Alberta has at least one epinephrine autoinjector device (EpiPen) for use in the event of a severe allergic reaction. The act requires that a minimum of one EpiPen and/

or EpiPen Jr. be stocked in each school operated by the division.

While most schools will already have a plan in place for those students who are known to have a life-threatening allergy, this act mandates all schools to have a plan in place for those students who do not know that they may have a life-threatening allergy.

“While it is Association policy that teachers are not medical practitioners and are not to administer medication to students, the injection of an EpiPen on a student is the one exception.”

With that, all schools shall have a policy that includes a strategy that reduces the risk of exposure to anaphylactic causative agents in the classroom and common areas, a communication plan for the dissemination of information on

life-threatening allergies, and mandatory training for all employees.

While it is Association policy that teachers are not medical practitioners and are not to administer medication to students, the injection of an EpiPen on a student is the one exception. EpiPens are foolproof and do not require the careful, uninterrupted measuring of a

medication prior to injection. The user simply removes the safety cap, places the tip against the fleshy part of the student's thigh, and pushes the tip into the skin or through the child's clothing.

The act also protects a teacher from

any liability from the use of the EpiPen on a student. Assuming the teacher acts in good faith and is not acting out of gross negligence, a teacher would not be held liable if the EpiPen was injected in error. The *Emergency Medical Aid Act* also applies here to protect individuals who were acting in an emergent situation where it was deemed that the use of an EpiPen was required.

Members are reminded that for other medical situations, administration of medication or care of students is to be left to a non-certificated staff member who can provide uninterrupted care of that student. A publication entitled *Administration of Medication: Rights and Risks* can be found on the ATA website at teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > Publications > Teacher Guides. Further information is also available by calling Member Services in Edmonton or Calgary. ■

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



# Focus on job readiness shows lack of vision

Curriculum report contains positive aspects while raising serious concerns



## VIEWPOINTS

Carla Peck  
Special to the ATA News

As a professor who works with both preservice and inservice teachers at the University of Alberta, and as a member of the Alberta Education Teacher and Educator Focus Group Committee (Social Studies) during the previous government's curriculum redesign process, I awaited the release of the Curriculum Advisory Panel's report with great interest. Below, I briefly share my analysis of its recommendations.

### The positives

The panel recommends that the government develop a "comprehensive plan" and "a broad range of resources" to support curriculum implementation. This is crucial. Teachers need long-term professional learning opportunities and high-quality resources to support them in their efforts to become proficient with a new curricular mandate.

Recommendation 12 advises including Indigenous histories and perspectives to advance the "recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the calls for justice in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report" and recommendation 13 counsels to "ensure curriculum reflects the diversity of Alberta's students." Excellent. We can no longer ignore the histories and perspectives of Indigenous peoples in all of our curricula.

There is already very good work being done on this, which means there is much to build on. I hope that, with the latter recommendation, the advisory panel is being inclusive of not only ethnic diversity but also other

forms of diversity, as well as learning about the forms of oppression that accompany them. Every day there are reports of racism and other acts of discrimination in the news. We have a duty to teach about these and work to eradicate systemic oppression from our society.

### The maybes

There are two recommendations specific to history education: "Develop a senior high school program of studies in world history" and "Ensure significant world events are represented in curriculum." I am supportive of this provided that the focus is not on memorizing dates, places, names and events but more so on developing students' "historical thinking." This approach provides opportunities for students to learn how to analyze primary and secondary historical sources, analyze change over time, assess the historical significance of people and events from the past, analyze multiple historical perspectives on global issues, and make connections between global events to their lives and to contemporary society. There's great potential here.

Another recommendation is to "support opportunities to consult with subject-matter experts throughout the development of curricular content." It is not clear if panel members mean curriculum and pedagogy scholars like me, who specialize in teaching and learning in school subject areas, or if they mean specialists like historians and mathematics scholars, who specialize in related academic disciplines. I hope they mean both, as both have a lot to offer to the process.

### The negatives

The advisory panel has taken an extremely limited view of the purpose of education by focusing almost exclusively on job readiness. This is *not* a visionary approach to education. Yes, most people have to work. But the education that students experience should inspire them, nurture their creative and critical thinking, and expose them to ideas that stretch their imaginations and confront their misconceptions. It should help them understand how knowledge is produced in the sciences, humanities, arts and social sciences, and teach them how to evaluate and critique knowledge claims made in these domains. It should teach them how to build understanding across differences, identify injustices and develop strategies to make our society more just for all. It should help them create the future *they* want. Surely we want for our children an education system that does all of these things, and more?

The report also recommends implementing "standardized formative assessment tools" in grades 1-5. There is so much to say about this, but let me start here: how about we trust the highly trained professionals who spend their days closely monitoring and assessing student learning, differentiating their instruction as required, to make judgments on student progress and put the considerable funds it would take to implement this recommendation into classroom supports instead?

### What else?

I have other serious concerns about some of the advisory panel's recommendations. If you would like a more in-depth critique, you can find it posted on my Twitter account @cpeck3. ■

*Carla L. Peck, PhD, is a former elementary school teacher who is now a professor of social studies education at the University of Alberta.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### ON TWITTER

#### On the Curriculum Advisory Panel

**Nicole Cey @ceyscience**  
Absolutely ridiculous. A 68 million dollar curriculum revamp being reviewed for many more millions and next to nothing being accomplished. Looks like the remodel only needs more standardized testing to prove teachers aren't doing their jobs.

**Erin Norrish @ErinNorrish**  
"The Panel would like to thank all individuals and stakeholders who shared their expertise and insights." @albertateachers, you were on that list. Do you feel as though we, as teachers, had the opportunity to provide expertise and insight?

**Paul McCann @Paul\_M\_McCann**  
Curriculum design WAS always about moving kids and this great province forward. This UCP government continues to live in the past... and it was wonderful while it lasted. But, we can't go back. Please, give our future generations a chance.

**Alison Van Rosendaal @avrosendaal**  
I had a read through the curriculum panel recommendations. Do you know what is missing in their research? Curriculum.

**Greg Kushnir @gregkushnir**  
You see, the point of a high-quality education system is to ensure students can think critically. That means looking at all points of view. @albertateachers do this extremely well. Why are @Alberta\_UCP supporters so afraid of people learning to think?

**Dree @shmoopita**  
As an educator, education researcher and parent, I'm frustrated at the release of AB's draconian curriculum review. It is such a huge step backwards and one that has erased decades of proven educational research. I stand with a public and nonstandardized education system.

### FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

#### On the Curriculum Advisory Panel's recommendation re standardized testing

**Christina Wilson**  
I have been teaching for almost 20 years. The UCP says it believes standardized testing will help to identify students who are falling through the cracks. I can assure you, every teacher can identify within the first month of school which students are struggling. This is not the issue. The issue is that there is a lack of consistent support FOR those students. Put the money into additional resource teachers, not expensive tests.

**Linda Butler Dunn**  
How unfortunate. These people don't understand what these tests will do to the youngest students. The first years should be spent developing a love for learning, not a fear of testing. High-stakes testing is not valuable at these young ages.



### FOR THE RECORD

“I want parents to know that their government has heard them and we agree it's time for us to get back to the basics ...”

- Education Minister Adriana LaGrange while releasing a report by a curriculum advisory panel she established last summer.



# Teachers' convention enables us to connect, develop and refocus

As a teacher, I always impressed on my students the importance of lifelong learning. Teachers know the importance of continuous growth and work hard to refine their teaching practice throughout their careers. Recent changes to the Teaching Quality Standard along with the development of the Leadership Quality Standard and Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard have further sparked the need for teachers and school leaders to

take a reflective look at their practice. Teachers' convention provides us that very opportunity.

Teachers' convention has always been one of my favourite times of the school year. Not only was I able to connect with colleagues I had not seen in a while, it allowed me to refocus my energy around my own professional growth. The ability for teachers to engage with their colleagues is important, and Association research shows it is one of

the most preferred ways to engage in professional development.

Convention also allowed me the opportunity to seek a variety of different professional development options that I could later expand on if I desired. As a result, not only have I been fortunate to hear some great speakers who have challenged my thinking around pedagogy, or life in general, I have also been fortunate to present to my colleagues on my own learning

and professional practice. (Though I believe that when I have presented at convention, my colleagues mostly came to heckle me from the back of the room.) Regardless, both opportunities enhanced my teaching, and I am grateful to the teachers who volunteer their time and energy to organize conventions for their colleagues across the province. ■

*I welcome your comments — contact me at [jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca](mailto:jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca).*

February 2020 — join the **#DISCONNECTCHALLENGE**

The Disconnect Challenge is a two-week activity in which Alberta students will assess how technology affects their sense of connection with themselves and others.

## Thousands poised to take a tech break

### *Disconnect Challenge raises awareness of technology usage*

**Jen Janzen**  
ATA News Staff

How does your media use affect your real-life connections?

That's the question more than 10,000 people across Alberta will be pondering later in February as they take part in the Disconnect Challenge.

A partnership between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the eQuality Project, which is hosted by the University of Ottawa, the Disconnect Challenge is a public art project that is geared towards teachers and students, but open to anybody in Alberta.

"We've had tremendous uptake," said Philip McRae, associate co-ordinator of research for the ATA, noting three entire school districts and nine schools are included in the 10,000-plus estimated total participants.

Vanessa Amyotte, who will be leading her Grade 10 religion class through the challenge, is a high school teacher at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic High in Spruce Grove. She was inspired to join after spending some time thinking about her own use of technology and checking out the app tracker on her iPhone.

Last semester, she worked through an activity with her religion class that

had students looking at how much time they're spending on devices, and whether this time matches what they value in their lives.

"It was a conversation they were excited to have," she said. "They started to talk about how they're Snapchatting with people they don't even know."

The challenge, which begins on Feb. 20, takes place over two weeks. During the first week, participants will document their media usage without judgment. In the second week, they limit their use — no screens unless they're checking in with a parent or guardian or doing homework, and no music with headphones.

Although McRae says that the Disconnect Challenge itself isn't part of a study, 18 self-selected participants will be part of a formal research study conducted by the University of Ottawa.

"I wanted to find a way to take the work we're doing around technology and health and learning, and try to manifest some action," he said.

After bringing the topic to last semester's class, Amyotte is optimistic about the challenge.

"I think it will get them to think about it a little more seriously," she said. "I think it's a conversation we should be having in general as a society." ■

## #DISCONNECTCHALLENGE

More information on the Disconnect Challenge is available at <https://disconnectchallenge.ca/>. Participants can sign up online and download a lesson plan.



### 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](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

# Curriculum panel report earns mixed reviews

Despite some positives, recommendations are cause for concern on many fronts, say ATA experts

Mark Milne  
ATA News Staff

Fewer jobs for teachers, more non-certificated teaching staff and a general undermining of professionalism in the classroom — these are just a few of the concerns voiced by members of the Alberta Teachers' Association's Curriculum Committee following the release of recommendations by the government's curriculum advisory panel.

Education Minister Adriana LaGrange released the report at a news conference in Calgary on Jan. 29. LaGrange said the committee found the current draft K-4 curriculum, which was reworked from 2016 to 2018, was mostly structurally sound.

"What was drafted is a good foundation to work on. But there is opportunity for further growth, for strengthening of the curriculum, and we really want to ensure we get it right," LaGrange said at the news conference.

The report contains 26 recommendations that are broken down into four categories: curriculum development, curriculum content, assessment and draft K-4 curriculum.

Nancy Luyckfassel and Phil McRae, both members of the ATA's Curriculum Committee, gave the report mixed reviews, suggesting that many of its recommendations could result in a negative impact on teachers and public education in the province.

They suggested that recommendations focusing on "single stream course offerings" and deleting CALM may create even larger and more complex high school classrooms with fewer certificated teachers supporting student learning. This change, along with the narrowing of course offerings, may be designed to open the door for "budget efficiencies."

"This could translate to fewer



Education Minister Adriana LaGrange and Curriculum Advisory Panel member Glenn Feltham celebrate the release of the panel's recommendations by posing for a photo-op with students from St. Marguerite School in Calgary.

teachers and increasing cost pressures on schools," said Luyckfassel.

They also pointed out that there appears to be an "undermining of professional judgment" throughout the document, especially in terms of teacher certification, performance-based models and teacher education programming related to curriculum.

"We get a sense that teachers are being further marginalized in some of the recommendations, just like there were no active teachers on this panel, and indeed nobody with any experience in the classroom in this millennium," said McRae. "We are concerned that the government may be willing to position non-certificated teaching staff in schools to deliver the skilled trades or other programs."

## Economic focus

McRae also pointed to language that suggests the government may seek greater involvement of corporate and business interests to influence economic imperatives in future

curriculum. He said that the Association believes business has a legitimate contribution to make, but curriculum must address much more than short-term economic objectives.

Within the report's draft K-4 curriculum category, the pair noted a distinct narrowing of learning intentions to focus on core knowledge and "back to basics" when dealing with literacy, numeracy and history.

The report also advances the use of standardized testing, which doesn't sit well with ATA president Jason Schilling.

"Alberta's teachers have advocated for years against standardized assessments," he said "and it's disappointing that the panel wants to see them at every year of this curriculum."

Luyckfassel and McRae did acknowledge the report possesses some promising points.

"There's no doubt we have some issues with several of the recommendations," said McRae, "but the report also provides some real room for collaboration with the government."

He feels the report's approach to the implementation of new curriculum has merit.

"It addresses the real need for adequate resources and an appropriate pace for implementation," McRae said. "It opens the door for some co-operative work with the government in terms of curriculum validation and field testing where teachers have historically played an important role in Alberta."

They applauded the report's recommendations to keep the curriculum free from the "prescription of pedagogical approaches."

Luyckfassel said it's important to keep the two separate to honour professional judgment, though she resented the report's use of the term *discovery math* as an example.

The province is seeking feedback through an online survey that runs until Feb. 26, a timeline that McRae finds unacceptable.

"For this government to impose a three-week timeline of response on a curriculum redesign process that has cost tens of millions of dollars, and spanned several years of public and professional consultation, is problematic," he said. "This will shape our society for generations, and I don't believe it honours all of the efforts and hard work that have been put into our world-class Alberta curriculum." ■

## Have your say ...

The Alberta Teachers' Association is strongly encouraging all Alberta teachers to participate in the government's curriculum feedback survey. A link to the survey can be found on the Associations' website at [teachers.ab.ca](http://teachers.ab.ca).

# Teachers making gains in local bargaining

Mark Milne  
ATA News Staff

Teachers are seeing meaningful gains in local bargaining despite very tight school board budgets, said Sandra Johnston, co-ordinator of the Teacher Welfare



Sandra Johnston,  
Teacher Welfare  
co-ordinator

program area of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Twenty-eight of the ATA's 61 local bargaining units have reached a memorandum of agreement (MOA) for 2018 to 2020. The most significant gains have come in the areas of health and wellness, professional development and personal leave.

"The agreements to date provide several important low-cost improvements for teachers," Johnston said. "It shows a willingness of teachers and school boards to work together in what is a very difficult financial time."

As of press time, 17 units have ratified their agreements, and the remaining 11 will be taking a vote in the upcoming weeks.

## Teacher wellness

Many of the memoranda include improvements to the language surrounding personal leave. Teachers have gained the ability to accumulate more personal leave days not used in a school year, and several agreements have removed many of the existing restrictions on accessing personal leave.

The very strict schedule that teachers keep can often pose some unique challenges to a healthy work-life balance, Johnston said.

"They don't have a job where they can leave for a half an hour in the middle of the day to attend to personal needs."

She said teachers need time flexibility to handle the demands of everyday life so they're able to return to their jobs and focus on their work.

"One of the ways to provide teachers with that flexibility is through personal leave clauses," Johnston said.

Another gain for several bargaining units is the creation of a wellness spending account that will enable affected teachers to allocate money from their health spending account to approved health and wellness initiatives.

## Professional development

Several settlements also contain upgraded language around professional development. Many bargaining units either established a teacher-controlled

PD fund or saw an increase to school division contributions to their existing fund. Johnston sees this as a very important gain for members.

"Teachers have to, under the Teaching Quality Standard, seek out professional development that meets their very specific individual needs," she said.

## Still to come

The important gains achieved through these first 28 agreements will most likely find their way onto the bargaining table for the remaining agreements, Johnston said.

"Teachers in those other 33 will demand it. They'll ask 'Why does this

person who teaches across the street from me [get it] and I don't?'"

The 2018-20 round of local bargaining appears to be running a bit more smoothly than the 2016-18 round, Johnston said. While budget cutbacks didn't play a large role in the recently reached agreements, that may change with some of the upcoming negotiations with larger boards. Johnston believes that the most contentious negotiations may still lie ahead.

"There are school boards who will want to strip things out of contracts," she said. "They're not settled yet ... and most likely won't be soon." ■

Memorandum  
of agreement

28

Ratified

17  
11

## What's the process?

Local bargaining began June 2019, following the completion of a central table settlement that applies to all collective agreements. Both phases apply to the 2018-2020 collective agreement.

Central table bargaining for the 2020-2022 collective agreement will begin in early spring.

# Extravagant gifts to students are not acceptable



## 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.*

There are times when teachers and the families of the students they teach become friends outside of the school environment. Teachers may be the professional colleagues of the parents of their students. In smaller communities, there may be fewer social opportunities, and those that do exist may involve the parents of students. Teachers may hire students to babysit or to check in on pets. In these cases, teachers can end up in the homes of the students that they teach, and students can end up in their teachers' homes. The vast majority of these situations are benign; however, there are occasions when boundaries get crossed.

One such case came up at a recent hearing of a professional conduct committee. In this matter, through school, coaching school teams and community coaching over several years, a teacher had become friends with the family of one of their students.

The teacher was invited to the family home for meals, and the student would check in on the teacher's pets when the teacher was away. The parents knew and trusted the teacher.

Nothing about the teacher's interactions with the family raised any suspicions or doubts. This was apparent

“ Society expects teachers to be role models and holds them to a high standard of behaviour, so teachers must be mindful of how their conduct is perceived by the public. ”

when the teacher offered to pay for the student to travel to Europe when the student graduated and turned 18. The parents encouraged the trip, knowing that the teacher, who was their trusted friend, would accompany the now former student on the trip to Europe.

During the trip, the teacher and the student each had their own accommodations. The student became

ill during the trip and also felt homesick. Nevertheless, the parents encouraged the student to enjoy the travel experience. The teacher also contacted the student's partner who, in turn, encouraged the student to remain on the trip. Ultimately, the student decided to return home, and the teacher facilitated and paid for the return travel. At no time during the trip was there any sexual contact between the teacher and the student.

By written submission at the hearing, the teacher admitted guilt on two charges and acknowledged that these actions placed the student, the family and school colleagues in an awkward and untenable situation. The hearing committee determined that it was

the student and the teacher, potentially causing the student to feel obligated to accept the teacher's gift. Giving such an extravagant gift to a student goes beyond the boundaries of an acceptable teacher-student relationship, and parental approval did not absolve the teacher of their responsibilities. While there was no sexual relationship in this case, the optics of the situation provided opportunity for misinterpretation, which was harmful to the profession.

The committee found the teacher guilty on two charges and imposed a penalty of two severe letters of reprimand and fines totalling \$6,000. The committee cited a number of reasons for the penalty. Because of the unequal relationship between the teacher and the student, the responsibility for maintaining proper boundaries rested solely with the teacher. Society expects teachers to be role models and holds them to a high standard of behaviour, so teachers must be mindful of how their conduct is perceived by the public.

The teacher in this case was experienced and should have been aware of the obligation to maintain an acceptable teacher-student relationship. Failing to maintain an appropriate relationship meant that the student felt awkward and was placed in a difficult situation. The profession will not tolerate teachers who exceed the boundaries of an acceptable teacher-student relationship. The penalty serves both as condemnation for the behaviour and as a deterrent for others who may consider similar behaviour. ■

# Council restarts *Hands Off My Pension* campaign

## PEC POINTS

**Audrey Dutka**  
ATA News Staff

### Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Jan. 23–24, 2020, at Barnett House in Edmonton

1. Approved the 2020/21 proposed budget for presentation to locals.
2. Set the member count for revenue purposes at 33,300 teachers in 2020/21.
3. Approved, for presentation to the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), a resolution setting the annual fee payable by a full-time, active member at \$1,362, effective Sept. 1, 2020.
4. Approved, for presentation to the 2020 ARA, a resolution setting the annual fee payable by an associate member at \$204.32, effective Sept. 1, 2020.
5. Approved the naming of one recipient for honorary membership in the Association, which is reserved for members and other persons who have given meritorious service to the teaching profession, to the Association or to the advancement of education.
6. Approved the naming of a recipient to receive the Public Education Award at the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly.
7. Approved in principle and referred to Resolutions Committee for processing four resolutions that
  - a. accept the scientific consensus that climate change due to human activity is a real and critical challenge

affecting the planet and the future of humanity;

b. support the inclusion of curriculum that explicitly addresses issues relating to climate change in a manner that is subject and age appropriate;

c. support curriculum that allows embedded opportunities to address issues relating to climate change, giving students an opportunity to express their views; and

d. urge school boards to adopt and implement policies that respect students' growth as active citizens, including voluntary participation in democratic actions and activities, while addressing potential risks to students.

8. Approved in principle and referred to Resolutions Committee for processing three resolutions that add the practices of asking for preferred pronouns on registration forms for use on nametags, allowing individuals to identify their preferred pronouns on the Association's online member database, and making gender-neutral washrooms available and publicly identified at all Association events.

9. Approved in principle and referred to Resolutions Committee for processing a resolution urging every local to engage in work to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's education-related calls to action, and to operate in the spirit of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

10. Approved in principle and referred to Resolutions Committee for consideration the following resolution: "Institutions offering

inappropriate and unprofessional for the teacher to pay for and travel with the student on an unaccompanied overseas trip. Despite the student's recent graduation, the teacher was responsible for maintaining a professional relationship and for recognizing how unaccompanied travel would be perceived by the school community. A power difference still existed between



Provincial Executive Council voted to restart the *Hands Off My Pension* campaign to protest the government takeover of teachers' pension assets.

teaching preparation programs should ensure that all prospective teachers receive education and support in [developing] foundational knowledge and [awareness of] contemporary issues of Indigenous peoples."

11. Approved the report on resolution 2-25/19 for publication in the Resolutions Bulletin and ARA Handbook.

12. Reinitiated the *Hands Off My Pension* campaign with a focus on the repeal of Bill 22.

13. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for sending emails, on several

**HANDS OFF** continued on page 7

## HANDS OFF

continued from page 6

occasions, to the teacher's principal that were critical of a colleague without providing the colleague an advance copy of the emails, and for sending an email to the teacher's principal, and to an assistant principal who is not a proper official, which was critical of a colleague without providing the colleague an advance copy of the email. The committee imposed a penalty of a single letter of reprimand for both charges.

14. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for making an intimidating comment to a colleague, thus failing to maintain the honour and dignity of the profession, and for sending a disrespectful email to a colleague, thus failing to maintain the honour and dignity of the profession. The committee imposed a penalty of a single letter of reprimand for both charges.

15. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of four charges of unprofessional conduct

a. for making inappropriate comments to pupils during a sport practice,

b. for licking their finger(s) and sticking the moistened finger(s) into the ears of student athletes during a sport practice,

c. for touching a pupil by pressing on various pressure points on the student's body, and

d. for making inappropriate comments toward students and taking inappropriate actions toward a student(s).

The investigated member pled guilty to each of the four charges. The committee imposed a penalty of a letter of severe reprimand and a fine of \$1,000 to address all four charges.

16. Received the report of a Professional Conduct Appeal Committee that upheld the guilty findings of a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee, resulting in the appeal being denied.

17. Approved in principle the Convention Review Implementation Plan.

18. Suspended the Education Decision Makers' Seminar at Summer Conference for 2020.

19. Authorized the attendance of up to three Council members who identify as women at the CTF 2020 Women's Symposium scheduled for April 19–21 in Toronto.

20. Authorized the attendance of up to four Council members at the ATA Women in Leadership Summit, scheduled for March 8 and 9 in Edmonton.

21. Authorized the purchase of four tickets for the Parkland Institute Gala Dinner and Silent Auction, scheduled for Feb. 27 in Edmonton.

22. Authorized that up to seven members of the Association's United Way Committee are eligible to attend the United Way Red Tie Gala, taking place on March 5 in Edmonton.

23. Approved dates of key Association-sponsored meetings and Council meetings for the 2022/23 school year.

24. Approved frames of reference for the Buffalo Trail Public Schools Regional Division Teacher Welfare Committee and the East Central Alberta Catholic Separate School Division Teacher Welfare Committee. ■

## Exchange program opens minds

## SUCCESS STORIES

Krysta Macdonald  
Crowsnest Consolidated High School

In October, a group of Grade 11 and 12 students from Crowsnest Consolidated High School (CCHS) in Coleman traveled to Kitee, Finland. This was the second half of an exchange program between the two schools as part of a partnership that's existed for about 10 years. This past spring, the school and students hosted their Finnish partners.

As part of the program, visiting students attend school, address elementary classrooms, participate in discussions and present to different groups. Due to the homestay nature of the program, for that week students become fully immersed in a family and culture.

This time, the focus was on literacy and community. In the Crowsnest Pass, students visited and highlighted local stories centered on the Frank Slide, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and the history of the Alberta Provincial Police Barracks in Coleman. In Kitee, students studied a historical entrepreneur and musicians from the area. Students then composed, illustrated and translated (in both English and Finnish) picture books about these stories, which are now being formatted for publication through Amazon Direct Publishing.

The Crowsnest Pass has dozens of Little Free Library book-sharing boxes throughout the municipality. When hosting, students designed and built a



An ongoing exchange program with a school in Finland has brought many great learning experiences to students at Crowsnest Consolidated High School. SUPPLIED

Little Free Library for CCHS that highlights the connection and partnership between the two schools.

"Doing this program gives you a chance to travel and experience new things and open your mental state more; it helps you see different cultures and really realize it's not just us, so you don't just focus on your own little world," says Grade 11 student Samantha Dyck.

"It was interesting doing the project, but tough speaking in front of big groups, especially when we had to speak in Finnish, since I knew I wasn't saying it right. I was surprised by just how much fun it really was."

"The best thing was living with my Finnish family, and seeing differences and similarities," Grade 12 student Maron Lim.

"I was pleasantly surprised that I could bring that back with me to Canada, that change in perspective."

This is my third rotation with the program, and the second time as teacher in charge. It's a lot of work, but so valuable for the students. We see them grow up so quickly during the exchange. They host and they truly care about representing our school and our community. They travel and they stretch themselves beyond their own understandings of school and education and community and the world.

It's really special to see students who've never been out of the province learn to navigate through airports, hear them speak in front of whole schools or address current events in a university setting, watch them cheer each other on, work through jetlag and marvel at cities and languages, and witness the connections they develop with families on the other side of the world.

It's really a special program. ■

## Indigenous Science Day provides many memorable lessons

## SUCCESS STORIES

Sandra Lamouche  
Livingstone Range School Division

I have been looking for ways to engage teachers in ways that combine the best of education with the best of Indigenous ways of knowing. One of the resulting collaborations was with our numeracy lead, Kathy Charcun, on an Indigenous numeracy day in October 2019. Leroy Little Bear shared his knowledge of how Blackfoot and Indigenous people used math. We watched the *Navajo Math Circles* documentary and played Blackfoot hand games. Brian St. Germain from Red Deer Public Schools taught Indigenous games that could be used to teach math. We found that the best practices in numeracy aligned with the way Indigenous people used math traditionally.

More recently we held an Indigenous science day on Dec. 6. Michelle Hogue from the University of Lethbridge shared her research on Indigenous student success in science and math and how teachers can help Indigenous learners in terms of methodology and pedagogy. She shared a medicine-wheel way of teaching the scientific method that is aligned with the four seasons and traditional values. Two representatives from Destination Exploration taught



Livingstone Range teachers learn about chemical bonds with Michelle Hogue of the University of Lethbridge during an Indigenous Science Day held earlier this school year. SUPPLIED

teachers how to use Ozobots to connect with Indigenous knowledge.

In the afternoon, we hosted a panel of prominent local Kainai and Piikani Elders and Knowledge Holders. Mike Bruised Head (Kainai), a PhD candidate, shared Kainai knowledge and knowing from place, including an Earthwatch project at Waterton Lakes National Park that he has been helping with. Leroy Little Bear (Kainai) provided a framework for Indigenous knowledge to help teachers understand the Blackfoot perspective and how this relates to science and technology. Blair First Rider (Kainai), who works with Alberta Culture and Heritage and with the ATA's Walking Together program, shared his knowledge about the medicine wheels made by the Blackfoot

and some of the traditional stories related to different traditional sites, stars, constellations and local history. Ira Provost (Piikani) the director of Piikani Traditional Knowledge Services and Consultation, shared the history of the area. He discussed the importance of land-based learning, connecting with the land, and how, historically, Piikani people were restricted from using their own land.

One of the most memorable parts of the day was when Blair shared his gratitude toward the school division staff and teachers for their time and interest in Indigenous knowledge. As a residential school survivor, he appreciated that we are continuing to develop and deepen our understanding of the Blackfoot people, stories, culture and history for the benefit of all students. ■

Sandra Lamouche is the Indigenous education consultant for the Livingstone Range School Division.

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Success Stories is an ongoing feature 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.



Students from Highwood School in Calgary.

Students from Meyonohk School in Edmonton perform at West Edmonton Mall.

# YEAR of the RAT

*Schools around the province have been busy marking the beginning of the lunar new year with celebrations of Chinese and other Asian cultures. Chinese New Year officially began Jan. 25.*

ALL PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Students from Hunting Hills High School in Red Deer show off Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and East Indian attire during the school's recent multicultural celebration. Pictured are (L-R): Rimsha Ali, Emily Liu, Janessa-Lynn Tejada and Sajil McLean.

Students from Meyonohk School in Edmonton perform at West Edmonton Mall.

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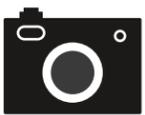
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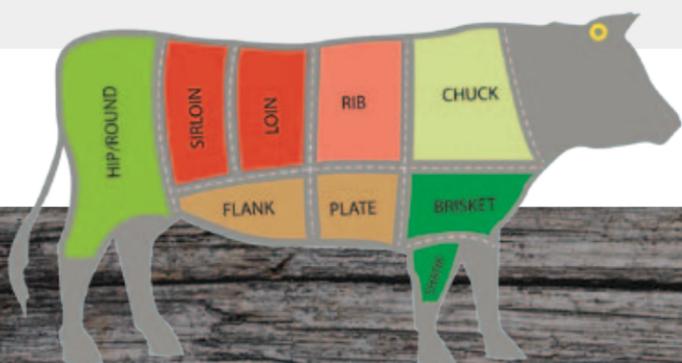


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Kindergarten/Grade 1	Grade 2/Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5

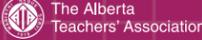


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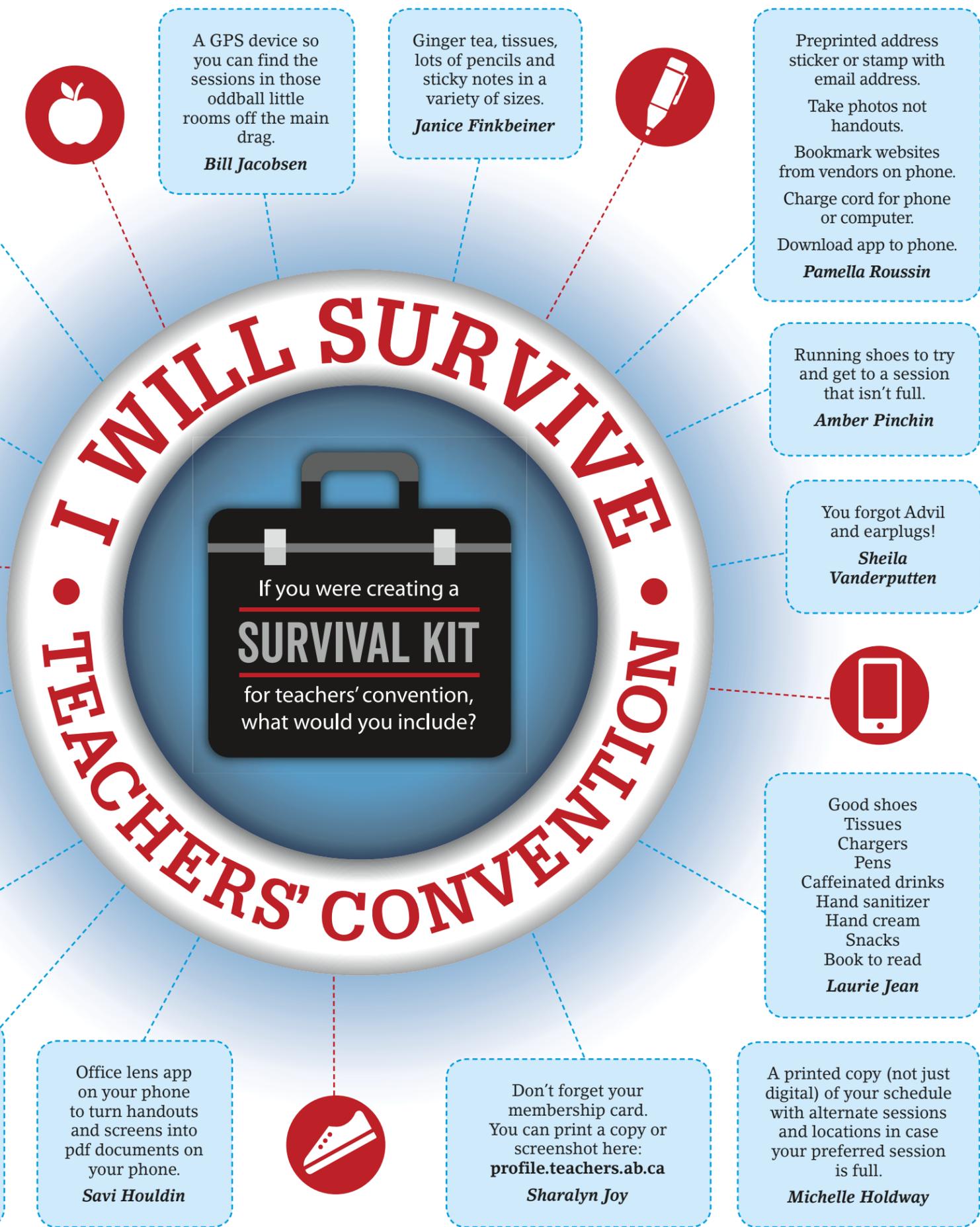
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# TALENT

February 4, 2020 | Volume 54, Number 8



## What topic or activity are you most looking forward to this year at teachers' convention?



Responses submitted via Facebook.