

# Special Edition

A Newsletter for Specialist Council Executive Members

Volume 4:1 November 2014

## Thinking Outside the Conference



**Gaylene Schreiber**

Executive Staff Officer,  
Professional Development

Another year of successful professional development by teachers, for teachers: that is my hope for specialist councils during the 2014/15 school year. ATA specialist councils offer what no other professional development provider can, and that is professional development intimately informed by teacher membership. As you embark on planning for your next PD event, consider augmenting your excellent conferences with alternate and linked PD endeavours. Ed Camp, online webinars, web-based forums and multi-event courses can all engage members at the regional or local level and feed into conferences, resulting in greater delegate numbers in sustained communities of practice.

Consider this proposal: a council regional sponsors a three-evening workshop series with a well-known teacher expert on a curriculum topic on successive Tuesday evenings, followed by a web-based forum for participants and all members on the topics within the course. To support and generate interest, the council offers low-cost virtual gift certificates to the highest forum contributors each month. Finally, the participating teachers are encouraged to attend a culminating session at the annual conference. This style of sustained professional learning could be adapted to support any topic and could be used in the development of common curricular materials or resources, to be presented at the conference by the participants. The online component will bring repeat visitors to your website. You can capitalize on this traffic to build interest in your publications and other services.

Specialist councils contain the richest resource for professional learning in the province: YOU and your peers. Don't confine your professional learning intentions to the annual conference. Build buzz and desire to attend the conference by structuring a year of PD that culminates in conference attendance. Not only will you enhance your conference attendance, but you will fill the hunger among your members for dialogue. Celebrate the expertise among your members.



# Welcome Back to Association Web Managers



**Gregory J Romaniuk**  
Information and  
Technology Services

Welcome back to another year for Association Web managers! Over this past summer, the Alberta Teachers' Association Information and Technology Services department was busy completing a major upgrade of our services infrastructure, bringing the ATA to the most current version of SharePoint 2013. SharePoint is the technology the Association uses to manage our publishing and collaboration Web services, which includes websites for Association subgroups such as specialist councils. Maintaining a current version of SharePoint allows the Association to remain up to date in the secure publishing and collaboration services we offer our subgroups.

Association-hosted websites are an attractive option for councils to maintain a Web presence with no additional cost to the council. The Association can provide a permanent domain name (that is, a Web address) for councils that use our hosted services, and there are

no additional hosting or domain costs for using this service.

Recently, new Web templates were developed that allow specialist councils to have new capabilities to customize the layout of items on their pages. Of special interest may be the unified front page layout, which allows subgroups to emulate the look of the front page of the provincial ATA website in a straightforward manner.

SharePoint allows for much more than publishing websites. Are you interested in having your council use its Web space in a more collaborative manner? Additional tools and features may be activated on your website to integrate Twitter feeds, set up notice boards, build shared discussion threads, host information wikis, and provide collaborative file spaces and shared calendars. These collaboration features can also be configured to be available only to a subset of your council's membership, such as your executive members or other planning groups.

I am very interested to hear from our subgroup Web managers and other executive members. Are you considering using Association-provided Web hosting? Maybe you are already using Association-provided Web hosting and would like to learn more about available site features. Perhaps you are new to the role of Web manager and need direction on how to begin. If you have any questions about Association Web services, please call me (780-447-9415, 1-800-232-7208 outside of Edmonton) or send e-mail to [greg.romaniuk@ata.ab.ca](mailto:greg.romaniuk@ata.ab.ca). I look forward to speaking with you.



# Happy New Year!



**Didi Heer**  
Accountant, Subgroup Services

With this edition, I am privileged to have the opportunity to wish you all a very happy new year, as we like to say in Barnett House at the start of each joyous school year.

Each year, I make a point of sharing with you highlights of my summer. Sadly, there aren't that many this year, but hey, there's always Summer Conference. So here goes ...

## Summer Conference Highlights

I had the pleasure of presenting to council presidents and conference directors at Summer Conference 2014. I covered three fascinating topics with the presidents—highlights of the 2013 treasurers seminar; a financial overview for specialist councils; and some fun facts gleaned from the 2013 year-end review, such as surplus levels for councils, annual grant funding from the Association and an analysis of changes in membership count for each council.

With the conference directors, I discussed conference budgeting and accounting. I presented some budgeting tips and handed out a conference budget template for each council, which includes historical data from the prior year conferences to help them get started with the budget for the upcoming conference. I also briefly covered conference accounting procedures, a checklist and the worksheet available in MS Excel.

## Resource Materials Available to You as Treasurer

- Treasurers' and specialist council handbook—provided by the Association to address treasurers' needs as well as a comprehensive overview of specialist council operations.
- Specialist council policy handbook—developed by each council for effective administration of council internal operations. The handbook covers council policies such as reimbursement of expense claims by executives, PD fund policy (subject to Association policy and CRA rules), and other business and administrative policy. It is the council's responsibility to review and, where applicable, update the policy handbook. Treasurers should take the initiative to review and update the financial policy section each year. Ideally, the policy handbook should be reviewed by the council executive at the first meeting in the fall each year.
- Constitution—the formal document with respect to governance of the council (as opposed to the council policy handbook, which addresses the administration). This document outlines the underlying authority with respect to the function of each council executive.



# Frequently Asked Questions

Send your questions to Gaylene Schreiber at [gaylene.schreiber@ata.ab.ca](mailto:gaylene.schreiber@ata.ab.ca) for immediate response and for possible inclusion in upcoming issues of *Special Edition*.

**Question: Is it true that councils can no longer advertise their conference through e-mail, Twitter or Facebook? How can we inform our members about our event?**

**Answer:** Canadian anti-spam legislation (CASL) came into effect on July 1, 2014. The legislation means that you cannot freely send commercial electronic messages (CEMs) without the express consent of your members or by providing an opt-out mechanism. Staff at Barnett House have secured legal guidance on this matter and are prepared to support councils with a specific protocol that will ensure that councils comply with the legislation.

All councils will appoint a CASL officer who will receive training to ensure compliance with the legislation. The training can be done by telephone in about 20 minutes. At the time of training, the CASL officer will also be provided with a disclaimer that must be attached to all electronic messages that reference any product, service or event that has a fee. The CASL officer will be responsible to vet and send any electronic communications that could be considered commercial in nature, and send the names of those members who choose to opt out to Barnett House for entry into the membership database.

This officer should be the only person who has access to the council membership listing and should be the sole person who communicates electronically with the membership on behalf of the specialist council.

CASL officers will have access to two membership lists: the entire membership, and the membership list minus those members who have opted out of CEMs. Barnett House staff will maintain these centralized lists. To assist in the promotion of conferences, the Association has low-cost advertising through school mailings and encourages councils to promote their conference through the *ATA News*. We will also feature conference information on the front page of the ATA website. Paper mail and phone contact strategies are not affected by CASL. Encourage your members to visit your council website regularly, and plan the release of new information on your site strategically.

If your council has not already done so, please ensure that your CASL officer contacts Sharon Vogrinetz at [sharon.vogrinetz@ata.ab.ca](mailto:sharon.vogrinetz@ata.ab.ca) for training as soon as possible. Councils without CASL officers may not send out any electronic messages that reference conferences or other events and services that have a cost to their members.

**Question:** Our council has hired an expensive keynote speaker. Our venue for this session will seat twice our delegate numbers. Can we defray our costs by advertising this session to others outside our conference delegation and charge a separate fee to attend this event?

**Answer:** The mandate of a specialist council is to provide service to their members. However, there is an avenue for almost anyone to join a specialist council.

The *Handbook for ATA Specialist Councils* (p 65) describes membership types, including subscription membership, which can be applied to anyone not eligible for other types of membership. Councils should not provide access to any council-organized or sponsored events to nonmembers, but insist on membership. Councils should take on only financial obligations that they can be reasonably sure can be met through typical conference subscription, based on an analysis of previous conference attendance and other factors.



# Alberta Teachers on iTunes U



**Jeff Johnson**

Executive Staff Officer,  
Professional Development

Imagine attending a workshop or presentation and having the opportunity to dive deeper with your understanding either prior to the event or in the weeks that follow—all in the palm of your hand. The ATA has recently become an iTunes U affiliate and the first courses and collections are beginning to make their way to the site. The first group of courses deal with school leadership topics, and many principals and assistant principals have already received training in how to create courses in iTunes U and in the creation of multitouch iBooks that will be part of many courses. The courses that Alberta teachers design for the site will offer them the opportunity to share their knowledge with colleagues throughout Alberta, across Canada and around the world. This month, a variety of new courses have been added to the

Alberta Teachers Association on iTunes U site. Courses created thus far provide subscribers with learning opportunities ranging from subjects such as fostering effective relationships to diving into Alberta's Principal Quality Practice Framework. To access the site, please visit [tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes](http://tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes) or scan the QR code on the next page.

iTunes U course materials can include

- audio and video,
- presentations,
- documents,
- PDFs,
- iBooks textbooks for iPad,
- ePub books,
- iOS apps, and
- Web links.

The ATA on iTunes U site will allow public lectures, events and digitized collections in audio, video and PDF format to be easily shared without cost. The iTunes U service offers an option for publishing media easily, into the most popular (legal) online content distribution system on the planet. The courses you will see on the site—designed by your colleagues—will join the world's largest online catalogue of free education content on iTunes U. Stanford, Yale, Oxford, UC Berkeley, the U of A, the U of C and the New York Public Library are among the hundreds of institutions that are sharing courses, lectures, videos, books and other resources with students and lifelong learners all over the world. The site offers a new way to obtain digital lectures, PDF materials, presentations and courses in which Alberta's school leaders can participate at their own pace. It will not replace the same access you already enjoy to professional materials on the ATA

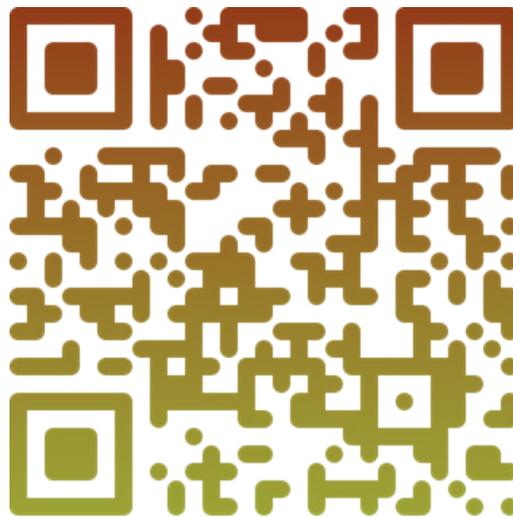


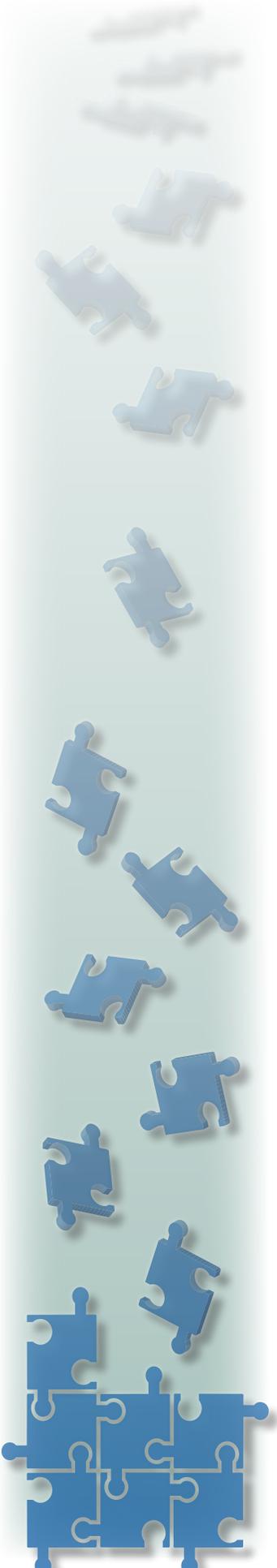
website, but will offer a supplemental access to professional learning materials for you and your teachers. These resources and learning experiences will be searchable and accessible in a very familiar manner—just like obtaining music or apps from iTunes.

Users install free iTunes software on their devices (PC, Mac or a wide array of portable devices) to access content by searching or browsing the iTunes store. An option exists to download the iTunes U app on your iPad, which provides enhanced capabilities such as note-taking for students participating in a course. Each course is conveniently divided into Info, Posts, Notes and Materials sections. Interactive assignments can be made part of courses during their design or even after a course has been launched. Interactivity can be further enhanced as participants can share their notes with one another.

iTunes U has the capacity to increase teacher efficacy, agency and autonomy. It enhances the ability of classroom teachers and school leaders both to create locally relevant curricular material and to be in the driver's seat on sharing that material. It also greatly

magnifies the voice of individuals and therefore increases the impact that voice might have. iTunes U places a multitude of incredible classroom resources at a teacher's disposal. It's a repository of entire courses of educational content for K–12 institutions, universities and colleges, and other institutions such as the Alberta Teachers' Association, beyond the campus. These include a wide array of institutions from museums to national opera houses. For Alberta school leaders, the new ATA on iTunes U will offer convenient, fully searchable access to important tools for growing as a professional and for fulfilling your role in the school.





# Supporting Enhanced Classroom Assessment Capacity

The Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC) has received a conditional grant from Alberta Education to support and enhance classroom assessment capacity. AAC facilitators will work closely with teacher cohorts to

- explore dimensions of sound classroom assessment practice within the current and future curricular contexts and
- gather exemplars of effective assessment practice at a variety of grade levels and subject areas.

The project will focus on the core curricular areas as outlined in the Alberta Education Prototyping Guide, that is, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, wellness and arts. The grant involves two potential key partners: teachers involved in the official prototyping sites, and ATA specialist councils.

While there are obvious connections to councils within the identified curricular areas, other specialist councils that are not linked to a specific discipline may be interested in partnering with councils in the core areas. A council (or partnership of councils)

could nominate a cohort of three to five teachers who are currently teaching at the same grade level. We are seeking teachers who are willing to

- engage in collaboration with colleagues and the AAC facilitator(s);
- consider new ideas with respect to the relationships among curriculum, instruction and assessment;
- be reflective about their work;
- give and receive constructive feedback; and
- take on some level of informal leadership role by sharing with colleagues.

Cohorts will meet through a combination of face-to-face and technology-mediated formats. Videotaping will be an integral component of the collaborative planning sessions, focus groups and interviews, as well as in the classroom setting. Copyright on the materials developed will reside with AAC; however, materials developed for posting will be placed in the public section of the AAC website so they will be accessible to all Alberta teachers. Councils will be encouraged to post links to the project materials on their websites. The potential exists to highlight the project products and lessons learned at various specialist council conferences and the AAC fall conference.

The project will operate through a cost-sharing model. Interested specialist councils are encouraged to contact Sherry Bennett, AAC executive director, at [sherry@aac.ab.ca](mailto:sherry@aac.ab.ca) for further information.

# Increasing Membership and Conference Attendance Using Social Media



**Leanne Calderwood, CMP**

Director,  
Global Accounts,  
HelmsBriscoe

Back in the “days of old,” we distributed information predominantly through print advertising and direct mail. Those traditional forms of marketing are making way for digital marketing, e-mail marketing and social media.

According to market research sources, the most successful ways to market and increase membership and conference attendance are through

1. e-mail,\*
2. e-newsletters,\*
3. conference websites,
4. Facebook and Twitter,
5. direct mail, and
6. partnerships with other organizations.

Below are some tips and tricks for each marketing method; make sure you pick methods that work for you and are easy for your team to maintain.

**Websites**—having a high-quality, easy-to-navigate website will increase your traffic and create trust in your potential delegate or member. Also, ensure that your website has quality content and that the content is updated on a regular basis.

## **Social media platforms—What do they do?**

- Create peer-to-peer information sharing
- Reach nontraditional audiences
- Engage younger members
- Increase opportunities for sponsors and exhibitors
- Allow two-way dialogue

## **What can you put out on social media?**

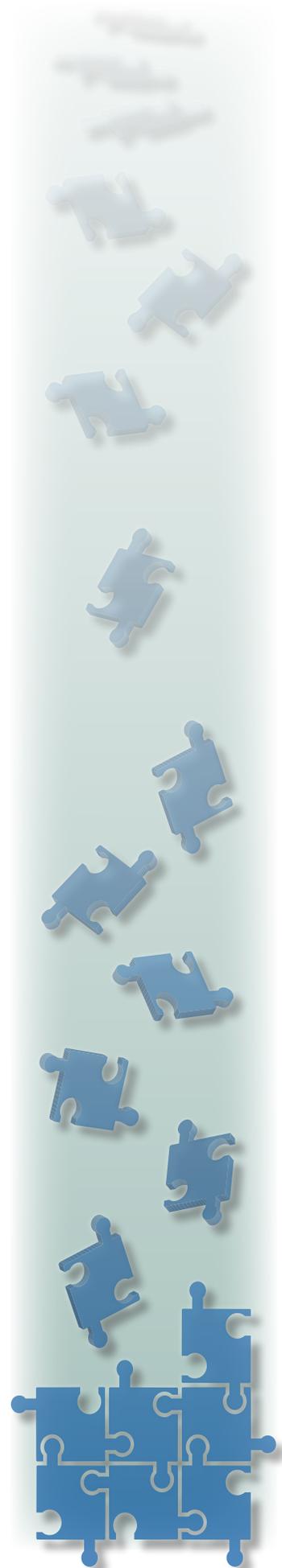
- Event information
- Brand awareness
- Conference updates
- Create excitement, urgency
- Date-sensitive information

## **How do you manage all the social media?**

- Designate a volunteer to monitor social media outlets for chatter and to create chatter.
- Be consistent and relevant.
- Don’t just promote, but provide content and reasons for further engagement.

## **What tools should you use?**

- Where are your delegates hanging out? Facebook? LinkedIn? Twitter?



- Facebook pages are more informational, with an attractive interface.
- LinkedIn creates more discussion.

#### **Twitter how-tos**

- Create a Twitter handle and hashtag months prior to your event—but make sure you test your hashtag to see if it’s already being used.
- Advertise the hashtag, especially with tweet geeks.
- Ensure that you have at least one team member monitoring the Twitter feed; having a team makes the job that much easier.
- Twitter tips:
  - Messages should be en masse; try to stay away from direct Twitter messages, or starting a message with someone’s handle (@xxxxx)—these messages may not be CASL compliant.\*
  - Using the hashtags ensures that people can follow the conversation without necessarily following people.
  - Ensure that your facility has appropriate Internet bandwidth and try to work wireless Internet into your venue contracts.
  - Advertise people’s handles on their name badges, under their names.
  - Hold a Twitter session at the beginning of a conference to create engagement and knowledge.

#### **Facebook how-tos**

- Create a page, as opposed to a group.
- Facebook page content is currently reaching only 2 per cent of its fans (this is a Facebook thing, nothing you’ve done). To ensure that your posts show up on your fans’ feeds,
  - post often;
  - create engagement—poll your fans, ask questions;
  - create content they will like and share; and
  - use tools for automated paid reach—Woobox, Facebook fan CRMs.

#### **LinkedIn how-tos**

- Create a group.
- Generate dialogue.
- Look for speakers in LinkedIn.

#### **YouTube how-tos**

- YouTube videos can be made anywhere nowadays—even from your desktop or your phone.
- Keep it simple—there’s no need to perfect your video. Be real.
- Negotiate with your speakers to create a YouTube teaser for their address, then use it as a marketing tool (post on Facebook!).

#### **Keeping it all organized**

There are tools that can help you post in multiple places at once, and schedule your posts so you can do most of the heavy lifting in advance:

- Hootsuite
- Tweetdeck

- Seesmic
- Socialite

An effective social media marketing program is cost effective, not too time consuming and very engaging. Starting your social media campaign now ensures increased engagement for the conferences to follow—you gotta start somewhere!

Have additional questions? You can find me on Twitter @lcalderwood, on LinkedIn, or by good old-fashioned e-mail at lcalderwood@helmsbriscoe.com. Happy tweeting!

\*Please check the ATA guidelines for distributing email and e-newsletters as per the recent

Canadian anti-spam legislation (CASL). ATA specialist councils cannot directly solicit funds (eg, council memberships, conference registrations) using e-mail or e-newsletters, but can direct people to a website where this information can be available. Please check with your ATA staff advisor before distributing e-mails and e-newsletters to your membership and potential membership.

*HelmsBriscoe helps specialist councils find and contract with hotels that will suit their needs for their conferences and meetings.*

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