Your Voice Matters

Michael Podlosky, Coordinator, Professional Development

When is the last time you felt moved or bothered enough by something that you were compelled to speak out? Were you responding to an injustice being done to someone else or to a betrayal or irritant directed at you? Sooner or later we are called to speak out on issues of concern in order to bring to bear influence on behalf of others. This is what advocacy is all about; it is the heart of democracy.

Cohen, de la Vega and Watson (2001) define advocacy as “the pursuit of influencing outcomes—including public-policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions—that directly affect people’s current lives.” The Association’s Real Learning First initiative invites educators to stand up and speak out about what real learning looks like in Alberta classrooms, and how this learning is best captured and subsequently communicated to others. The School Act is very clear about a teacher’s responsibility for determining curriculum emphases, designing instructional and learning activities, and developing and administering evaluations. Yet the current high-stakes environment has pushed aside real learning because of an increased narrow focus on standardized learning. We cannot hold back our students from becoming their best selves—creative, engaging and innovative people in a world that honours and celebrates the diversity and complexity of our communities.

Part of our responsibility as professional development leaders is to advocate for conditions favourable to teaching and learning. We need to get involved in the development and implementation of jurisdiction AISI initiatives; we need to work with our colleagues on economic policy committees to secure improved teacher working and learning conditions. Most important, we need to continue to advocate for ongoing and meaningful PD programs and opportunities.

In the words of Martin Luther King Jr, “A time comes when silence is betrayal.”

Reference

Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortium (ARPDC)

Process Review

The People Resources Division of Alberta Education has advised Alberta Education's executive team that it plans to undertake a process review of the ARPDC in the period from September 2009 to December 2009.

With the known fiscal challenges for the ministry in the current budget year and those anticipated for 2010, the department is looking at the broad spectrum of ministry-funded programs and initiatives, with the intent of ensuring the highest possible return for its investments. The purpose of the ARPDC process review will be as follows:

1. To determine the extent to which the education community continues to support the goals of the ARPDC as they are currently identified and, with confirmation of same,
   a) to identify the means and processes by which ARPDC could meet its goals with an overall budget reduction that would be more or less consistent with the budget targets established for the ministry in 2010, and
   b) to focus the review on the question, How can ARPDC continue to provide high-quality service to the ministry and to education system stakeholders in a more cost-effective way?

Proposed Process Review Elements

• The number of regional consortia
• Stakeholder representation
• Collaboration between professional development organizations and across consortia
• Infrastructure (administrative, technical and facility) costs
• Human resource deployment
• Role of technology in program planning and delivery
• Funding allocation model(s)
• Relationship with Alberta Education

Conclusion

The ARPDC is a valued partner in professional development and curriculum implementation support. Should local PD leaders be asked to participate in the review or have additional questions, please contact the ATA staff officer assigned to your region at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208.
For a comprehensive look at the multifaceted nature of teacher induction, you are well advised to read this book. Barry Sweeney’s second edition (2007) of *Leading the Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program* provides a practical step-by-step approach for leaders who want to implement a mentoring program within their school or school district to ensure that their novice teachers are supported during the initial stages of their teaching careers. This book is chock full of resources, fresh ideas and the latest research on mentoring best practices. Sweeney remarks,

> Sadly, some schools have been pressured to stop school improvement efforts and focus solely on instruction to improve test scores. … One wonders whether policy makers have forgotten—or perhaps never knew—what every educator knows is true. Professional development [and in this case mentoring] to improve the learning and skills of educators is the prerequisite for improving students’ learning and achievement. (p xiii)

Sweeney describes the key components of a high-impact induction program in a schematic (Figure 3.1, p 54) of a successful mentoring program: orientation, workshops and training, professional development, classroom observation, professional development portfolios and peer support activities. His mentor of mentors, train the trainer model and peer support activities for proteges offers both the mentor and the protege opportunities to grow together in their respective journeys from novice mentor to seasoned mentor and from novice protege to experienced protege.

Many of Sweeney’s innovative ideas and activities have already been implemented in Alberta schools within the purview of the ATA Mentorship Program, which is currently under revision. Sweeney’s thesis will no doubt figure prominently within the new mentoring program, given the strength of his foundational work in this area.
The New 22: The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council

Patrick Loyer, Executive Staff Officer

The journey to finally have a First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) education specialist council came to a successful end on March 21, 2009, in Calgary. On this day, at the annual general meeting of its inaugural conference, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council (FNMIEC) adopted its constitution to officially become the 22nd specialist council of the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Key to the formation of the new FNMIEC was the work of Jacqueline Skytt, assistant executive secretary of the Association.

The opening keynote was a presentation by world champion hoop dancer and entertainer Dallas Arcand. A number of breakout sessions were offered, and overall the inaugural conference was deemed a success.

Though the efforts to establish this new council have ended, the actual work is just beginning. The aim of the FNMIEC is to be an authority in the province regarding FNMI education and to be the conduit for what is happening with regard to FNMI education. A main focus of the new council will be the annual conference, which will be held this year at the Edmonton Marriott at River Cree Resort, in Enoch, March 18–20, 2010. Membership in the council is open to all teachers, not just those who work with FNMI students. Register from the Association’s website (www.teachers.ab.ca).

The executive members of this new council are situated throughout the province and include president Mike Bruised Head, from Standoff in the south, and secretary Linda Miller, from Widewater in the north. The Provincial Executive Council liaison is Denis Espetveidt, from Calgary.

If you require more information regarding the FNMIEC, please contact Patrick Loyer (patrick.loyer@ata.ab.ca) at Barnett House. Patrick is the ATA staff officer working with this council and will direct all inquiries to the appropriate people.

The Laser Talk

Michael Podlosky, Coordinator, Professional Development

The Journal of Staff Development (JSD) is a leading professional development journal, published by the US-based National Staff Development Council (NSDC). The theme of the Spring 2009 issue is “Building Support,” which is really at the heart of advocacy. In addition to a number of excellent articles on the state of the profession, an interview with Linda Darling-Hammond and book reviews, this issue features a tool on how to be an advocate. The tool underscores the importance of being able to speak powerfully about important matters. A laser talk is a short, compelling talk that is the backbone for what one is advocating. It uses the acronym EPIC (Engage, state the Problem, Inform about solution and Call to action). For more information on delivering a laser talk, consult pages 40–41 of the Spring 2009, Volume 30, Number 2 issue of JSD, or visit the NSDC website at www.nsdc.org.
Upcoming Events

October
15–17: Beginning Teachers’ Conference, Calgary
16–18: Religious and Moral Education Council Conference
16–18: Social Studies Council Conference
16–18: Special Education Council Conference
21–23: Council on School Administration’s Western Canadian Educational Administrators’ Conference
23–24: Substitute Teachers’ Conference
23–25: Mathematics Council Conference
23–25: Second Language and Intercultural Council Conference
30–November 1: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Fall Conference
30–November 1: Fine Arts Council Conference

November
6: Convention Treasurers’ Seminar
6–7: Specialist Council Presidents, Editors and Webmasters Seminar
6–7: Association Instructors’ Fall Meeting
6–8: English as a Second Language Council Conference
7: Specialist Council Treasurers’ Seminar
13–15: Early Childhood Education Council Conference
13–15: Gifted and Talented Education Council Conference
16: Association Administrator Instructors’ Meeting
16–17: Leadership Essentials for Administrators Conference
19–21: Guidance Council Conference
20–22: Le Conseil français Conference
20–22: Science Council Conference
27: Convention Association Meeting
27–28: Professional Development Area Conference

Edmonton Catholic has revised its spring break to coincide with Edmonton Public’s spring break, scheduled for March 29 to April 5, 2010.

Global Citizenship Symposium

The Global Citizenship Symposium will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Canmore May 6–8, 2010. This two-and-a-half-day event will focus on the role of public education in preparing students to live peacefully and responsibly in an interconnected, sustainable world. It will provide a forum for sharing promising practices for developing engaged global citizens for the 21st century within UNESCO’s four pillars of learning: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Be and Learning to Live Together. Please see the Association website events calendar (at www.teachers.ab.ca) for further details.
Real Learning First: New PD Seminar Series

Get involved in the ATA’s Real Learning First initiative. This initiative is shaped around the belief that the essential work done in classrooms cannot be authentically measured through standardized testing and accountability regimes that devalue the professional judgment of teachers and discount the contextual factors surrounding student achievement. Because this is an issue that affects teachers throughout Alberta, local leaders are encouraged to implement local action.

One way to support this initiative is to host the Real Learning First interactive seminar series. This trio of seminars is predicated on the beliefs of the initiative and steps beyond to develop conversations around the need to change how we look at learning for the future, and philosophically reconsider our instructional and assessment practices.

Consider sponsoring Real Learning First professional development seminars through your local PD committee, specialist council or convention. Each half-day seminar is designed for up to 85 participants, so this is an excellent opportunity for regional collaboration.

The series considers the following questions of practice:

• What will it mean to be well educated (K–12) and how will my actions shape the future for education?
• What does society want and expect from its schools?
• What kind of teaching and learning will we need?
• How will we know if we are successful?

Seminar 1: Putting Real Learning First

This seminar provides an opportunity to reflect on the intrinsic purposes of school and education, and reconsider how we frame our work in schools. It features a discussion process around the CBC news feature Teacher’s Challenge: Seven Days in a Struggling School.

Seminar 2: Learning in the 21st Century

This session uses a literature-based approach and a world café discussion forum to examine the changing nature of learning, consider skills for the future and explore issues surrounding technology-mediated learning.

Seminar 3: Measuring What Matters

In this final seminar, participants will dialogue about how we can measure what we value, rather than valuing what we can easily measure; affirm the importance of developing the full range of student abilities and capacities; and share suggestions for building and assessing real student learning.

For more information, contact Barnett House at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208, or e-mail michael.podlosky@ata.ab.ca or gaylene.schreiber@ata.ab.ca.
Association Instructor Training Dates

Fall training for Association instructors will take place at Barnett House on November 6–7. Instructors will learn how to present a new workshop called “Beyond Good Intentions,” which will assist teachers and schools in forming partnerships with schools in developing countries, and work through other workshops available through the Association. For more information, please contact Joni Turville at joni.turville@ata.ab.ca.

Supporting Teacher Inductees—Alberta’s Distributed Professional Learning Demonstration Project

The purpose of this project is to engage Alberta’s teacher inductees in distributed professional learning opportunities that advance their application of pedagogical strategies for diverse learners. Designed to support the implementation of the draft publication *Making a Difference* (Alberta Education, 2009), various sessions will be offered using new technologies and will provide online support for teachers new to the profession. The ATA is working in partnership with a number of organizations and more details will be forthcoming.

Looking for a Dynamic Workshop at an Incredibly Low Cost?

Association workshops are available to Alberta teachers for only $100 per workshop. These activity-based sessions are delivered by a talented group of teachers, the ATA Instructor Corps. Workshop topics that will support your comprehensive PD plan include the following:

- The Art of Questioning in a Critically Thoughtful Classroom
- Brain Matters—Teaching Strategies
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education
- Global Education
- Media Literacy
- Respect for Diversity
- Student Portfolios
- Winning Strategies for Struggling Students

For a detailed list of workshops, visit www.teachers.ab.ca and click on Workshops, Courses and Presentations (under Professional Development).

For more information or to book a workshop, please contact Debra Augustyn, Professional Development program assistant, at 780-447-9485 (in Edmonton), 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta) or 780-455-6481 (fax).

Links

*Just in Time*—article on support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students

www.teachers.ab.ca/Issues%20In%20Education/Diversity%20and%20Human%20Rights/Just%20In%20Time/Pages/index.aspx
As the newest of the new staff officers in the Professional Development program area, I’d like to say what a huge honour it is to be joining such a respected organization. Since joining the Association on August 1, I have been immersed in learning about all the different roles I will play in serving teachers in the province.

After my undergraduate work at the University of Alberta, I joined St Albert Protestant Schools, where I taught all subjects in Grades 1–6, as well as special education. I moved to a part-time position at the district office as AISI coordinator in 2000, and worked on many different K–12 projects, such as professional learning communities, balanced literacy, assessment for learning and supporting at-risk students. During that time, I also completed my master's degree in instructional technology at the University of Alberta, and began doing consulting work for a variety of organizations and authoring educational resources. My last three books have been on differentiated instruction. These experiences have given me a broad perspective on teaching and learning, which I hope will be an asset in my new role with the Association.

My current portfolio includes heading up the Association Instructor Corps, a talented group of teachers who facilitate professional development workshops across the province. This group is near and dear to my heart, as I joined the Instructor Corps in 1994 as part of a long career in teacher PD activities and Association involvement. My other work will include supporting the work of the Special Education Council, professional development in Region A (the northern part of the province) and the Northwest Regional Learning Consortium, as well as assisting in upcoming technology initiatives.

Please give me a call at 780-447-9455 or e-mail me at joni.turville@ata.ab.ca to discuss any PD issues or questions.
Building Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools for LGBT Students

Andrea Berg, Executive Staff Officer

According to the ATA’s Code of Professional Conduct, teachers are responsible for protecting students from discrimination based on sexual orientation. The first provision of the code states,

The teacher teaches in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background.

Schools are in a pivotal position to make a positive difference in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students. An inclusive school and classroom environment means that LGBT students are safe and supported. School staff and students need to be educated to create positive attitudes. The following are workshops and resources that can be accessed to help schools be proactive in building safe, caring and inclusive schools for LGBT students.

ATA Workshops

The ATA offers a series of three workshops intended to stimulate a critical dialogue that examines the attitudes, dispositions and beliefs that teachers, students, the school and the community hold about LGBT people.

• Workshop 1—Building Awareness of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues
• Workshop 2—Exploring Diversity Issues Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
• Workshop 3—Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments for LGBT Students

Length: half-day to full day each

Visit www.teachers.ab.ca and click on Workshops, Courses and Presentations (under Professional Development) for descriptions of all the workshops offered by the Association.

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities (SACSC) offers four microworkshops on sexual orientation and gender identity. The four workshops have been created separately for whole school staffs, teachers, district leaders and parents. The half-hour sessions can be scheduled as part of a monthly staff meeting or undertaken as a small group study session. Contact SACSC at 780-447-9487 or office@sacsc.ca for further information.

Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (ISMSS) offers a broad range of workshops for schools, teachers and counsellors. The workshops are designed to help educators improve the safety, inclusion, and health and wellness of LGBT youth. They can be tailored to meet the particular needs of your school, district or professional community. Contact ISMSS at 780-492-0772 or isMSS@ualberta.ca for further information.
Partners of the ATA’s Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Subcommittee

The following partner organizations also provide workshops and resources on LGBT issues. Please contact them for further information.

- Two Spirit Circle of Edmonton Society—Richard.Jenkins@capitalhealth.ca
- Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre—403-220-2505 or mluhtan@ucalgary.ca
- Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta—David Keohane, 403-547-7419
- John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights—780-453-2638 or www.jhcentre.org

Through the Looking Glass: Perspectives on Education

The Foothills PD Committee, under the leadership of Tracey MacNeil, has organized a leadership forum for 2009/10 entitled Through the Looking Glass: Perspectives on Education. The professional development dinner series invites participants to discover, discuss and explore perspectives on education. The three keynote speakers booked for this year’s series are Dr David Townsend, University of Lethbridge; Dr Ann Sherman, University of Calgary; and John Clarke, a private consultant and training associate with the Center for Cognitive Coaching.

For more information, contact Tracey MacNeil at macneilt@fsd38.ab.ca.

If you have a success story from your subgroup that you would like to share, contact your executive staff representative or gayleneschreiber@ata.ab.ca.
Votre perfectionnement professionnel, c'est bien votre affaire et votre responsabilité!

Septembre, la rentrée, les nouveaux élèves, de nouveaux programmes d’études, les attentes augmentent et les défis aussi. Plusieurs parmi vous êtes des enseignants débutants et parfois il est difficile de naviguer les eaux profondes et tumultueuses de sa première année d'enseignement.

Alors, que faire? Voici quelques idées :

a) Le Congrès des enseignants débutants à Edmonton ou Calgary : Ces deux congrès visent à accueillir les nouveaux membres de l’ATA pour les aider à se perfectionner dans des domaines plutôt pratiques, tels que gestion de classe et stratégies d'enseignement. C’est aussi l’occasion de retrouver d’anciens collègues d’université dans une atmosphère conviviale et chaleureuse.

b) Les programmes de mentorat : qu’un programme soit institutionnalisé ou non, formel ou informel, recherchez un mentor! Depuis plusieurs années, l’ATA encourage les partenariats entre ses sections locales et les conseils scolaires visant à développer des programmes de mentorat.

c) La fouille de sites de perfectionnement professionnel est parfois difficile… et bien l’équipe du magazine L’École branchée s’est donné la tâche de rendre cette recherche plus facile. Dans son dernier numéro, elle énumère des sites dont l'objectif est d'appuyer les enseignants dans leur cheminement professionnel : gestion de classe, pratiques exemplaires, insertion professionnelle, etc. Voici certains des sites qu’elle a dénichés :

• Carrefour national de l’insertion professionnelle en enseignement : www.insertion.qc.ca
• Cyberprofs : www.cyber-profs.org
• Gestiondeclasse.net : www.csmb.qc.ca/gesclasse
• Les balados de l’ACPLS : www.caslt.org
• L’enseignement en milieux défavorisés : www.milieuxdefavorises.org
• Zoom sur l’expertise pédagogique : http://zoom.cyberscol.qc.ca

Alors, bonne formation continue … et à la prochaine!