Greetings colleagues and happy new year!

I am honoured to have been appointed coordinator, Professional Development, and to have the opportunity to continue the exceptional PD leadership work initiated by Jacquie Skytt, former PD coordinator. I am also privileged to have this unique opportunity to work with you to advance teacher PD programming across the province.

The past decade has seen an increase in the importance of PD, and the leadership roles advanced in the Four Roles of PD Leadership program will ensure that PD continues to play a prominent role in our profession. I’d like to highlight Role 2: Enhance Professional Expertise and Practice, which deals with developing leadership capacity. As PD leaders, you are expected to facilitate broad-based participation in planning, developing and implementing high-quality PD policies and programs. Leadership requires access to and use of a range of data to inform important decisions. Remember, you have played a critical role in providing this important information.

If you have not already read the ATA research update of October 2008, Shaping Our Future: Current Contexts and Strategic Possibilities for Enhancing Alberta’s Teaching Profession, 2008–12, then I encourage you to do so. The document describes recent trends and conditions influencing the development and delivery of PD programs to teachers. These trends and conditions include teaching and learning conditions, the growing complexity and diversity of class composition, significant erosion in support for students with special needs, emerging technologies, teachers’ workload and increases in student reporting requirements.

Shaping Our Future highlights data from various sources, including the Association’s PD Survey. I can’t underscore enough the critical role that you play in developing, facilitating, or completing questionnaires or surveys to ensure that the Association continues to have sound information on which to build strategic directions, policies and programs. In the coming months, you will play a leadership role in ensuring that the PD Survey is completed in a timely manner, that the Regional Needs Assessments are disseminated and completed promptly, and that the results are used to inform planning for the following year’s PD programs.

We must continue to be vigilant in assessing the scope and quality of teachers’ work life and use this information to provide opportunities for professional growth and leadership development.

I wish you well in the year ahead.
Advocacy is one of the leadership roles for specialist councils. The provincial vision for specialist councils states that by 2012 specialist councils will
- advocate for conditions that support optimum student learning,
- advocate for working conditions that allow teachers to engage in exemplary educational practice,
- advocate for social justice and the greater public good, and
- empower teachers’ professional voice.

The Special Education Council has been focused on advocating for students with special needs and their teachers since the minister of education announced the Setting the Directions for Special Education in Alberta initiative in June 2008. The council started by developing an action plan with three main goals: (1) to inform its members about the Setting the Directions initiative, (2) to encourage teacher participation in the community consultation process, and (3) to represent the views of special education teachers throughout the provincial consultation process. This action plan has helped the council focus resources toward achieving its goals.

The Special Education Council executive collaborated with Alberta Education to ensure that teachers had opportunities to participate in the consultation process. Six focus group sessions were incorporated into the annual conference program, and information about the Setting the Directions initiative was included in each delegate’s conference package. As well, through its regionals the council has organized meetings where teachers can discuss the issues and submit individual online responses as part of the community consultation.

Minister of Education Dave Hancock has initiated a number of significant initiatives that have the potential to change the education system. Has your specialist council considered how it will advocate on these professional issues? Executives are encouraged to work with their staff and PEC liaison officers to develop advocacy plans. For more support, contact Jacquie Skytt, coordinator of Organizational Support, at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208 or at jacquie.skytt@ata.ab.ca.

If you have a success story from your subgroup that you would like to share, contact your executive staff representative or Françoise Ruban (at 780-447-9421 or francoise.ruban@ata.ab.ca).

**Upcoming Events**

**January**
28: Integrating Global Citizenship into Alberta’s Secondary Curricula, at Barnett House

**February**
5–6: Central Alberta Teachers’ Convention
5–6: North Central Teachers’ Convention
12–13: Calgary City Teachers’ Convention
12–13: Northeast Teachers’ Convention
19–20: Palliser District Teachers’ Convention
19–20: Southeastern Alberta Teachers’ Convention
19–20: South Western Alberta Teachers’ Convention
26–27: Greater Edmonton Teachers’ Convention

**March**
5–6: Central East Alberta Teachers’ Convention
5–6: Mighty Peace Teachers’ Convention
13–14: Professional Development Area Conference

Janice Wallace, associate dean of undergraduate teacher education at the University of Alberta and a long-standing member of the Gender Equity Subcommittee, and Amy Burns, a recent doctoral graduate from the University of Calgary, provided the keynote address for the daylong dialogue. The seminar was designed to stimulate thinking about the essential question: What does feminism have to do with the work of educators?

Dr Wallace’s scholarship has focused on equity issues in educational organizations—particularly the effects of gender on schooling practices and the organization of educational work. At “Learning to Say the ‘F-Word,’” she challenged delegates to examine the term feminist—a word that elicits powerful reactions. Her research has revealed that female educators and leaders have found that “being feminist” is a complex location for their work. She noted that women in leadership roles found that to identify themselves as feminist was to put themselves in a difficult and even dangerous position. She also found that, in some cases, having a feminist consciousness opened up transformative possibilities.

In a research project in which she explored the work of female administrators, she examined the similarities and contradictions among the work of four superintendents, two of whom identified as feminist and two of whom did not. She provided some historical background that highlighted the two paths taken by these women: the “dutiful daughters” who worked within the system to bring about change and the “troubling women” who confronted injustice openly.

Dr Burns is currently teaching both at the University of Calgary in the area of educational leadership and at Springbank Community High School as the theatre arts teacher and fine arts curriculum leader. Her research interests include feminist educational leadership, critical discourse analysis and the use of narrative in educational leadership theory. She explored the meaning(s) of feminist leadership and drew on her research with school leaders to understand how they interpreted and lived out feminist leadership in practice. She focused on the “fear of feminism” that these women negotiate in complex ways every day in schools.

After the two keynote presentations, delegates were given a few minutes to reflect and compose a question for each speaker. For example, can we find feminist ideals and principles in personal experience? Where do acceptable norms for boys and girls stem from in education, and do norms differ for both sexes?

Later, Wallace and Burns joined other speakers for more intimate round-table discussions, where they pursued deeper conversations relating to individuals’ interests.

Burns and Wallace set the tone for a thought-provoking and action-packed day. The seminar encouraged delegates to voice their ideas, respond to what they had heard and offer good ideas for future directions for the work of the Gender Equity Subcommittee. Many excellent suggestions for policies, programming and curriculum were generated during the course of the day. The Association strongly recommends both Wallace and Burns as informative and provocative speakers on issues related to gender equity and social justice.
From Staff Room to Classroom: A Guide for Planning and Coaching Professional Development

By Robin Fogarty and Brian Pete
Corwin, 2006

Reviewed by Dorothy Stanley, Executive Assistant

Fogarty and Pete provide the reader with tools and processes to effectively guide professional development and staff development personnel in designing effective PD opportunities that will have lasting effects. The authors look at the four critical roles of the staff developer: designing, presenting, facilitating and coaching. In doing so, they define processes and techniques. These include customizing PD to meet the unique needs of adult learners, organizing successful workshops, incorporating five essential components, building relationships and community, and putting ideas into immediate practice through the use of templates and practical tips.

The material in the book is easy to read and is designed to allow you to read the entire book or only those sections upon which you wish to focus. The tools are well thought out, and the templates can easily be used by the reader in providing processes for a PD activity. The book also contains compelling information on adult learners and how to meet their particular needs and attract them to the strategies required to develop effective adult learning.

Feature Workshop

Invest in Yourself—Share the Profits

Barb Maheu

A new addition to the Association workshops is “Invest in Yourself—Share the Profits,” a workshop designed to help school staffs learn to take greater responsibility for their personal and professional wellness. The belief is that by doing so, they will have greater capacity to help their students. Participants will reflect upon their current state of wellness and consider approaches to improve their health and well-being. The interrelationship of the physical, emotional, social and psychological states will be explored, and ideas for making informed choices about improving quality of life will be shared.

To book this workshop, contact Janey Kemp at 780-447-9485 or 1-800-232-7208 or at janey.kemp@ata.ab.ca.

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The English Language Arts Council (ELAC) was one of the first specialist councils, formed in 1961/62. Throughout its history, the council has remained committed to the pursuit of excellence in the teaching of English language arts (ELA). The council has been instrumental in influencing the development of English curriculum during its long history, and in providing inservice when curriculum changes have been mandated by Alberta Education.

In the past several years, the enthusiastic and hard-working executive and the regional councils have been very active. Much of this was prompted by the major changes to the ELA curriculum in 1992/93. The face of ELA programs changed significantly. The council established directions that would define itself as the voice of ELA teachers throughout the province. ELAC began to renew its focus. Previously the council had dealt with Grades 7–12 ELA. However, with significant changes in the elementary and secondary ELA curricula, the council determined that it should increase its focus to Grades 4–12, encompassing all those affected directly. The change in focus has been extremely beneficial for the council.

Over the past several years ELAC has determined that it must also reach out to ELA teachers in their home jurisdictions. This has resulted in such activities as the following:

- Developing and conducting a series of workshops for a school jurisdiction and its ELA teachers
- Developing lists of exceptional print and film resources for ELA teachers
- Working with ELA students in the university faculties of education
- Establishing an effective communication plan for its membership
- Enhancing its website to meet the needs of colleagues
- Providing both public and members-only windows in the website
- Enhancing and enriching its work with beginning ELA teachers
- Providing opportunities for young ELA teachers to attend the annual conference
- Partnering with universities on various projects
- Using individual strengths to the fullest by making presentations at conferences and conventions

The hard-working, dynamic and enthusiastic teachers who make up the ELAC executive are there to provide programs, events and opportunities for ELA teachers throughout the province. They are serious about the work they do, but they also take time to celebrate who ELA teachers are and what they do.

Reminders
PDAC—March 13–14, 2009
French Induction Colloquim—CNIPE—April 30–May 1, 2009
Françoise Ruban,
Adjointe exécutive

Nouvelles initiatives

Plusieurs belles initiatives prennent de l’ampleur dans le secteur de perfectionnement professionnel. L’identification et la traduction de plusieurs documents à l’intention de nos membres œuvrant dans nos écoles francophones, dans les programmes d’immersion et en langue seconde se déroulent. Un sommaire des documents traduits ou en voie de traduction est maintenant affiché sur le site collaboratif de perfectionnement professionnel de l’Association.

Y inclus, nous avons rajouté une liste de ressources nouvellement reçues de la Fédération canadienne des enseignants et enseignantes (FCE). Ces ressources sont également disponibles à la bibliothèque de l’ATA.

Un nouvel atelier s’offre à nos membres : Améliorer la résilience des élèves – dégager les diamants de leur gangue. Cet atelier pose la question : comment peuvent les enseignants stimuler leur résilience afin d’établir et de maintenir des rapports constructifs et chaleureux avec les élèves venant d’environnements à risque? Les participants pourront considérer des approches pour l’intégration d’une forte perspective de la résilience pour la pratique pédagogique, examiner des perspectives/paradigmes qui promeuvent des relations positives avec les élèves et qui fournissent des idées, des ressources et des stratégies qui se marient bien avec les pratiques courantes appuyées par la recherche, et donc, qui augmentent les compétences des élèves afin d’assurer leur réussite à l’école et dans la vie.

Carrefour national de l’insertion professionnelle (CNIPE)

Le 2e Colloque national sur l’insertion professionnelle se déroulera le 30 avril et le 1er mai 2009 au Centre des Congrès Sheraton Laval à Québec.

Le colloque « À la lumière de nos actions, donnons un nouvel élan à la profession! » constitue un événement d’envergure nationale qui réunira des acteurs aux fonctions variées (stagiaires de 4e année, personnel enseignant débutant, enseignantes et enseignants, accompagnateurs de la relève, conseillères et conseillers pédagogiques, directions d’établissements, gestionnaires du MELS et des organismes scolaires, universitaires, représentantes et représentants syndicaux) et proposera un éventail de communications portant sur les diverses réalisations en matière d’insertion.

Dans ce contexte, la profession enseignante tant au Québec qu’en Alberta est arrivée à un tournant où l’insertion professionnelle devient un incontournable. Le Carrefour national de l’insertion professionnelle en enseignement (CNIPE) vous invite à un deuxième colloque national dont le titre à intégrer des démarches prometteuses et à innover grâce à des projets rassembleurs. Pour plus amples renseignements, composez 450-662-700 http://www.insertion.qc.ca.

Links

Global Citizenship Conference
Teachers’ Challenge: Seven Days In a Struggling School: A Discussion Guide
Vision CTF e-newsletter
Catherine Moir, Executive Assistant

Did you know that immediately following the ten 2008 teachers’ conventions across Alberta, the volunteer members of the convention associations began planning for the 2009 conventions?

They began by reviewing feedback from the 2008 conventions, including opinions on keynote speakers, individual sessions, exhibitors, presenters and the board members themselves.

Then the planning started in earnest for the new conventions. Upcoming trends and issues were considered, regional and local PD needs assessments were consulted, and convention executives from across the province met in April to share their expertise with each other.

With all this data, convention program committees moved into high gear. They checked out appropriate keynote speakers, workshops and smaller session presentations; dealt with budget realities; and were always hoping to find that terrific new speaker on curriculum changes or new teaching and assessment strategies, who could inspire teachers to remember why they came into this wonderful but demanding profession in the first place.

As well, convention associations considered the interests of teachers new to the profession, substitute teachers, and school or central office administrators. The expertise of our ATA specialist councils was also used to provide sessions for teachers in those 22 specialty areas.

What you will experience in February and March of 2009 is the result of this massive effort by each of the 10 convention associations to provide the teachers from their locals with top-notch professional development. Conventions are the premier PD event of the ATA.

Yes, your attendance is both a professional and a legal obligation, but conventions are also an opportunity to direct your own professional development, meet with colleagues, and explore research-based and practical sessions, all to enhance your professional practice.

See you at Conventions 2009!
Following in the footsteps of her mentor Noreen O’Haire, who is affectionately referred to as the Goddess of PD, Jacquie Skytt assumed the role of coordinator, Professional Development, in 2001. After seven years on the job, she has been deservedly dubbed the Empress of PD by those working in Professional Development and Teacher Qualifications Service. Empress refers to her love of anything penguin, to say nothing of her visionary leadership, acute intelligence, problem-solving and decision-making abilities, and plain hard work. Jacquie has served the profession and professional development leaders both at Barnett House and in the field with vigour, enthusiasm and passion. She has launched numerous professional development initiatives, including those within the organization and in collaboration with education stakeholders.

She has now been appointed to the new position of coordinator, Organizational Support. In her new role, she will assist executive secretary Gordon Thomas and associate executive secretary Ernie Clintberg with the work of Government, including representing the Association to external agencies. She will assume responsibility for major internal and external initiatives, and will also coordinate the work of a portion of Operations.

We are glad that Jacquie will remain in Barnett House so we truly are saying farewell and not goodbye.