

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 7

Number 2



Member Services Program Area

Who Are We and What Do We Do?

A. Who Are We?

Coordinator: Robert C Bisson

Associate Coordinator, Southern Alberta Regional Office (SARO): Kurt E Moench

Associate Coordinator, Administrator Assistance, Barnett House: Konni A deGoeij

Barnett House executive staff officers: Brian J Andrais, Marvin E Hackman, Ihor Z Kruk, Robert T Mazzotta, Cory W Schoffer and Joyce T Sherwin

SARO executive staff officers: Brenda M Haubrich and Cynthia G Malner-Charest

Member Services executive staff officers are experienced classroom teachers with

- experience in administration,
- experience in local leadership and
- a commitment to teachers.

B. Assistance to Individual Members

Call Before You Dig

It's always best to be proactive. No question is a stupid question; problems tend to remain minor when people seek advice long before the situation gets out of hand. When you call, the secretary will ask you for your name, school, school board and a brief description of the reason for your call. Your information will be passed along to the duty officer of the day. If you are already working with a staff officer

on a specific issue, please ask to speak to that person.

To speak to a staff officer in Member Services, call one of the two following locations:

- Barnett House in Edmonton at 1-800-232-7208 (local calls: 780-447-9400)
- Southern Area Regional Office in Calgary at 1-800-332-1280 (local calls: 403-265-2672)

Confidentiality

All calls to Member Services (MS) are confidential. Initially, you will be asked your name, school, employing board and a brief description of the reason for your call. Asking these questions helps us to ensure confidentiality and the proper handling of your case. For example, if you did not identify your school, you might be assigned the same staff officer as another teacher or administrator at your school who perceives you to be the problem.

MS provides services to all active ATA members. When you access services, the ATA will verify your identity and create records related to your case. If we don't know who you are, we cannot ensure that you are a member. It is unfair to members if we advise nonmembers who do not pay for services.

Once you are assigned a staff officer, your case will stay with that staff officer. No one, including the staff officer assigned, will initiate any action on your behalf without your

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all these acts will be written the history of this generation.

—Robert F Kennedy



authorization. The ATA is subject to the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA). When you access Member Services, you grant implied consent for staff to collect your personal information for the purpose of managing your case. The ATA's privacy policy is available at www.teachers.ab.ca/Privacy+Policy.

Common Types of Calls

Criminal/Assault

- If you are alleged to have assaulted a student, it is critical that you seek the assistance of an MS staff officer.
- Even if your principal does not insist that you call the ATA, you should insist on doing so before any discussion of the incident happens.
- Neither your school representative nor a trusted colleague is authorized to represent you or to take notes for you at a meeting.

Interpersonal Relations

- Problems in professional relationships between colleagues can be among the most difficult to resolve. MS can provide assistance in matters between teachers, and with support staff and school volunteers.
- MS staff officers are trained to help de-escalate potential problems by providing proactive solutions before problems arise.
- MS staff officers will advise you of your responsibilities within the Code of Professional Conduct.
- Dealing with parents is becoming a key issue for teachers and school administrators. MS staff officers provide effective strategies for dealing with emergent situations, particularly with regard to school and parental rights under the *School Act*.

Employment Information

- Before accepting employment or resigning, note the statutory timelines and ask an MS staff officer to review the contract.
- Work-related issues, such as rights or duties of teachers, can be reviewed with MS staff before further action is taken.

Employer Action

- Members should consult with MS staff before responding to written reprimands or other employer discipline.
- The *School Act* provides teachers with statutory rights to appeal a transfer. These rights are bound by timelines.
- It is important to get advice regarding the status of your transfer before you accept it.
- Teachers facing suspension or termination by employers—through contract expiration or a personal decision—should get advice before proceeding.

Professional Competence

- If you are being evaluated, it is important to call Member Services for information about the appropriate processes involved and the possible outcomes.
- MS staff officers offer consultations to school principals to ensure that the evaluation process is correct and fair.
- MS staff officers assist members facing investigations and/or hearings arising from the Association's Practice Review bylaws.

Medical

- MS staff officers advise members on issues related to medical leave and return to work after medical leave.

Liability Matters

- Teachers have a duty of care toward students and should get advice about liability in such matters as school field trips, transportation of students and general school safety.
- Teachers' rights, responsibilities and legal liabilities include many issues that do not fall under the categories above. If you have a concern, it is wise to contact the ATA's Member Services program area.

Legal Issues

- Members can consult with MS staff on a variety of issues from human rights to privacy legislation and how they affect a teacher's work.
- Member can consult MS staff on board policies, obligation to report, teacher obligations in custody matters or when called to testify.

Professional Conduct

- The professional discipline process is unfamiliar to most teachers; MS staff officers can clarify the process and advise on those matters that should be referred for investigation and those that are best resolved between the parties concerned.

C. Presentations to Teachers and Administrators

Member Services offers a range of relevant and current presentations to teachers and administrators. For a complete listing, go to the ATA website at www.teachers.ab.ca, scroll down to Professional Development and click on Workshops, Courses and Presentations. To book a presentation, contact

Marilyn Terlaan, at Barnett House in Edmonton, at 1-800-232-7208 (local calls: 780-447-9400) or Doreen Link at the Southern Area Regional Office in Calgary at 1-800-232-1280 (local calls: 403-265-2672). Member Services publishes various monographs and teacher guides dealing with legal responsibilities and liabilities of teachers. As well, Member Services staff directs the Education Leadership Academy, which is held during the summer, and offers Legal Issues for School Administrators, a seminar for school-based administrators, usually held in the spring.

D. Assistance to Locals

Member Services staff offer the Local Program course and the Local Presidents' seminar at Summer Conference. The certificate in local leadership requires the completion of a core number of sessions offered as part of the two-year program. Local presidents who have completed the Local Program course are eligible to attend the Local Presidents' seminar. As well, Member Services staff offer consultation to local officials regarding their specific duties and on matters arising from constitutions, regulations and procedures. A seminar for local treasurers and local secretaries is offered during the school year. Finally, Member Services staff take an active role in providing the training program for school representatives through key contacts. This cascade model provides training for key individuals in the local who assume the responsibility of training school representatives in their role.

E. Other Activities

Professional Conduct

- Member Services staff are charged with the investigation of allegations of unprofessional conduct and presentation of evidence at the hearing if a member is charged under the *Teaching Profession Act* and Association Discipline Bylaws.

Practice Review

- Member Services staff not in conflict due to prior involvement with affected parties may be designated to act on behalf of the Association in presenting the case at a Practice Review Committee hearing.

An annual orientation is provided to members of the Professional Conduct and the Practice Review Committees charged with hearing charges of unprofessional conduct or failing to meet the Teaching Quality Standard.

Conflicts in Schools

- Member Services offers the Healthy Interactions program, training facilitators to provide information and skill building for individuals or on a school-by-school basis in participating districts. A steering committee is in place in each district to monitor and coordinate the program.
- When concerns are raised of a school in conflict, members of the Staff Relations Services may be assigned to assist staff members in conflict resolution. An annual orientation is provided to committee members who serve on this joint ATA/College of Alberta School Superintendents initiative.

An Educator's Guide to Childhood Cancer

Statistics show that 1 in 400 children will have cancer before the age of 18. Given this alarming statistic, it is important that teachers be educated about the needs of a child suffering this disease and learn how to support the child's siblings, classmates and other members of the learning community. Most teachers are unprepared for having children with cancer in their class and do not anticipate the changes in a child's abilities and behaviour that cancer can cause. For example, aggressive cancer treatment can often cause learning disabilities. To inform and aid teachers and parents of children with cancer, the Childhood Cancer Foundation, Curriculum Services Canada, has created a website, *An Educator's Guide to Childhood Cancer*, which is intended to

provide an improved school and learning experience for children or adolescents who have or who have had cancer. It is crucial for them to maintain normal life experiences as much as possible. Since school is their major "normal" activity, educators need to make every effort to continue the school experience as soon as cancer is diagnosed and throughout treatment

To access the website, go to www.childhoodcancer.ca/educatorsguide.

Leadership in the Intercultural School

Alberta's rapidly changing demographics are creating an exciting cultural diversity that is reflected in the province's classrooms, both urban and rural. The new landscape of the school provides one of the best contexts in which to teach young Canadians that strength lies in diversity. Cultural diversity in our society can be defined by ethnicity, language, race, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion and other characteristics.

Alberta schools must extend their focus on the growing diversity of Alberta's population as demonstrated by the following (Statistics Canada 2006):

- 527,000 immigrants live in Alberta
- 2/3 of Canada's population growth over the last 5 years was created by immigration alone
- 188,400 Albertans identify with an Aboriginal identity; 50 per cent of this population is under 15 years old
- By 2017, Alberta's Aboriginal population will have increased by 39 per cent
- 388,200 Albertans identify as francophone
- 10.5 per cent of Albertans speak a nonofficial language as their first language

As the microcosms of the diversity of Canadian society, schools are in the front line for instilling an appreciation of cultural difference in young and impressionable students, and the administrator is the lead support for teachers as they develop the skills and tools necessary for dealing with changing student demographics. School administrators who

acknowledge the intercultural imperative in Canadian society recognize the significant role teachers play in ensuring equity and equality, both in the classroom and in the community.

Currently, many students from diverse backgrounds face discrimination, harassment and difficulties in our schools, and they express feelings of marginalization, isolation, frustration and rejection. These feelings can seriously affect their self-esteem, academic motivation and achievement, and sense of identity. Consider the following statistics:

- 75 per cent of lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) and 95 per cent of transgendered students felt unsafe at schools compared to 20 per cent of straight students (Egale Canada 2009)
- 28 per cent of suicides are completed by LGB people (Egale Canada 2009)
- 44 per cent of Alberta's Aboriginal population aged 15 and older have not completed high school (Statistics Canada 2006)
- Immigrant students who come to Canada as teenagers drop out of high school at about twice the rate of Canadian born students (Watt and Roessingh 2001)

The gap in achievement between students from mainstream culture and those outside of it continues to grow. In classrooms where teachers depend on practices based on and steeped in mainstream culture, students from outside that culture will be left behind. In these classrooms,

already-marginalized students are further challenged and often fail. At its best, the classroom should provide equal opportunities for all students. If you recognize the decisive role that a student's culture plays in his or her ability to succeed, you will also recognize the importance of using educational approaches that take into account the culture of nonmainstream students.

The Alberta Teachers' Association is committed to ensuring that Alberta schools and classrooms are safe, caring and inclusive for all students. The new teacher resource published by the Association's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee, *Here Comes Everyone—Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom*, is designed to help school staff build and sustain educational practices that honour and reflect intercultural perspectives. It provides practical advice to help teachers communicate and interact more effectively with students and their families, wherever they come from, whatever their culture, traditions, ethnicity, language group, race, colour, sexual orientation or religion. The teaching approaches and strategies in the guide will enhance the unique qualities of an intercultural classroom for the benefit of everyone.

Here Comes Everyone is divided into six distinct chapters. It begins with the necessity for introspection—the first chapter, "Understand Yourself," reminds us that to be an effective teacher in a culturally diverse classroom, you need to understand your own cultural identity. The second chapter, "Build Inclusive Classrooms,"

follows with suggestions for creating inclusive environments in which students feel safe, welcome and cared for. Find out about the effects of power and privilege afforded dominant groups in chapter three, “Confront Inequity and Assumptions.” Now that you are ready to take action, study the suggestions in chapter four, “Transform Instructional Practices,” for ensuring that the classroom environment, curriculum and resource materials are culturally meaningful and relevant for all students. Chapter five, “Engage Families and the Community,” looks beyond school boundaries and reinforces the cumulative benefits of liaising effectively with students’ families and community members. The final chapter, “Tips for Administrators,” provides suggestions specifically designed to assist administrators responsible for creating inclusive school environments.

Here Comes Everyone is currently available for schools at no charge. Please contact Andrea Berg, in Professional Development, by phoning 780-447-9423 or e-mailing andrea.berg@ata.ab.ca, to order copies for your staff.

The road to achieving equitable education is a long one; it is critical that schools take the leadership role on the journey.

References

- Egale Canada. 2009. *Youth Speak Up about Homophobia and Transphobia. The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools*. Phase One Report. Toronto, Ont: Author. Available online at www.egale.ca/ (accessed September 16, 2010).
- Watt, D L E, and H Roessingh. 2001. “The Dynamics of ESL Dropout: Plus ça change ...” *Canadian Modern Language Review* 58: 203–22.



Q & A
GORDON THOMAS,
Executive Secretary

Q: What actions should the principal take with respect to professional growth plans?

A: There are four steps in the process of professional growth plans where the principal has a key role. Principals can encourage teachers to visit the ATA

website at www.teachers.ab.ca as a resource for developing and implementing their growth plan. Professional growth plans can take many forms. They can be textual or graphical. They can include mind maps or web formats. Whatever the format, the plan must demonstrate a relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard and include the following essential information:

- Name
- Dates/timeline
- Goal(s)
- Strategies
- Indicators or measures of success
- TQS reference
- Reflections and implications

The second occurs early in the fall when the principal’s role in growth plans should be to review the plan and provide constructive feedback to the teacher. The teacher’s growth plan should be based on the professional judgment of the teacher and reflect priorities for growth identified on the basis of the teacher’s own assessment of the teacher’s professional learning needs. While some board policies require the principal to approve the teacher’s growth plan, most require the principal to review the plan and this is the stance that the principal should take. *Review* means that the principal considers the teacher’s growth plan, offers suggestions and provides constructive feedback, entering into a dialogue about the teacher’s priorities for professional growth. However, *review* should not mean imposing the principal’s own views about the teacher’s learning needs. The teacher professional growth plans should be teacher authored and directed. Principals should use this opportunity to dialogue about observations they have made during supervision.

The goals of the fall review conversation are to

- empower the teacher in the review process,
- encourage professional reflection and collegial dialogue,
- link professional development to improved practice and the TQS,
- discuss the support required to facilitate future professional growth,
- discuss the teacher’s role in achieving school and district goals and
- promote a collegial model for professional growth.

The teacher’s role in the review is to

- be prepared for the review,
- lead the discussion of the plan if comfortable,
- provide a rationale for the goals and strategies identified in the plan,
- lead the administrator through the critical parts of the growth plan and
- identify resources that may help support the growth plan.

The school administrator's role in the review is to

- link information gained through supervision into the reflective questions asked of the teacher,
- ask reflective rather than evaluative questions,
- ask questions of clarification and
- help to identify the resources needed to complete the growth plan.

As the year progresses, the principal should provide support and assistance to teachers in implementing their growth plans. In many jurisdictions, the teacher's growth plan resides in the principal's office for the year but before the end of the school year, the plan should be returned to the teacher for possible use as a starting point for next year's growth plan. So, the administrator's roles in the implementation phase are to

- help the teacher implement the growth plan;
- gather information regarding the teacher's progress;
- be aware of the learning needs of all teachers on staff and keep them up to date with materials, PD opportunities and information about new developments in the area of professional growth;
- using supervision visit the teacher's classroom and provide feedback on his or her learning goals; and
- recognize the hard work, commitment and accomplishments of each teacher.

It should be noted that the growth plan cannot be used in the evaluation of a teacher unless the teacher agrees. Concerns about a teacher's practice should be addressed by the principal through supervision.

In the later part of the year principals will meet again with their teachers to review the completion of their growth plans. During this meeting the teacher will need to provide evidence that they have completed their growth plan. The year-end review of the professional growth plan is an opportunity to discuss the professional development activities and to showcase the results of the teacher's learning. Some typical questions could be:

- Where are you in terms of achieving your goals?
- What did you learn from this process?
- What difference has this made to your practice?
- How did you alter your plan? What was easy? What was challenging?
- What was the most beneficial aspect of this process for you? Where is this leading you for the next year?

The principal's role as the instructional leader in the school is written into provincial *Policy 2.1.5 Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation*. There is more information and support for both teachers and administrators on the ATA website. The two structured meetings around professional growth plans that you have with your teachers provides you a valuable opportunity to have individual conversations about teaching practices that optimize student learning.

To find archived issues of *Leadership Update* go to www.teachers.ab.ca and click on Resources for School-Based Administrators.

Feedback is welcome. Please contact Konni deGoeij, associate coordinator, administrator assistance, Member Services, at konni.degoeij@ata.ab.ca.

Teacher Growth, Supervision, Evaluation and Practice Review

Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5 reflected a major change in philosophy of supervision and evaluation. It now reflects a professional model based on teacher growth rather than teacher deficiency and takes seriously the professionalization of teaching; it assumes that all teachers work within a model of collegial collaboration, take responsibility for students' learning and share teaching practices in professional learning communities. In addition the Association assumed responsibility for Practice Review in the fall of 2009, which has a direct impact on you as an administrator.

You are invited to attend a **Teacher Growth, Supervision, Evaluation and Practice Review workshop**

October 7–8 in Calgary (location TBA based on numbers)

or

October 25–26 in Edmonton at Barnett House

If you are interested in attending, please e-mail Marilyn Terlaan in Member Services at marilyn.terlaan@ata.ab.ca.



Leadership Essentials

FOR ADMINISTRATORS

November 15–16 2010
Westin Hotel, Edmonton

Open to administrators within the first two years of their appointment or administrators new to the province of Alberta. There is no registration fee, space is limited; apply early. Registration forms are available at www.teachers.ab.ca, Grant-in-Aid for Association members is available (as per Association guidelines).

Keynote Speakers

Dr Robert Marzano—Instructional Leadership and You
Dr Phil McRae—Leadership and Sustainability of School Improvement

Network with colleagues and learn about

Fostering Effective Relations • Embodying Visionary Leadership • Leading a Learning Community • Providing Instructional Leadership • Developing and Facilitating Leadership • Managing School Operations and Resources
• Understanding and Responding to Larger Societal Context

Breakout Sessions

• Getting on the Same Page: Discipline Strategies • Leading and Managing a School Effectively • Understanding Alberta's First Nations, Metis and Inuit People • The Role of the School Administrator in Fostering an Inclusive Learning Community • Suspensions/Expulsions/Attendance Boards • Guide to Education • The Principal Quality Practice Guideline and Administrator Professional Growth • Top Ten Sections of the *School Act* • Technology Traps and Treasures • Dealing with Difficult People and Difficult Issues • Interpreting and Understanding Collective Agreements • Teacher Safety Net • *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5* (including Practice Review) • Effective Practices in Teacher Supervision and Evaluation • Dealing with Bullying (including Cyberbullying) • Teachers and Teacher Assistants • The Principal and Investigations: To Do or Not to Do • Bill 44: *Understanding the Implications for School Leaders and Classroom Teachers*

For further information please contact Karin Champion at Barnett House at 780-447-9435 (local calls) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta) or visit the ATA's website at www.teachers.ab.ca.



This conference is organized with the Council on School Administrators of the Alberta Teachers' Association.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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**LEADERSHIP
UPDATE**

An ATA/CSA publication for school administrators



The Alberta
Teachers' Association