

# LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 11

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 1



## A New Year

Welcome back to a new year of leading your learning community. There are some exciting things to share with you as you begin your year. This edition of *Leadership Update* contains many important pieces of information, both to support you in the work that you do and to inform you of some ways you can access very high-quality professional learning activities for school leaders in Alberta throughout the year.

### Professional Learning Opportunities and News

As an Alberta school principal or assistant principal, there are two things that you should do this year to get off and running. First, you will want to keep abreast of the many exciting professional learning opportunities that will be available to you throughout the year in Alberta. This year, it is easier to obtain information about upcoming professional learning events and programs for school leaders than ever before. You need only remember this phrase—[www.uLead.ca](http://www.uLead.ca)—to access up-to-date news about school leadership in Alberta, provincial and regional professional learning events, and the uLead conference that will take place in March. Please visit [uLead.ca](http://uLead.ca) on a regular basis, as the events and news will change frequently.



[www.uLead.ca](http://www.uLead.ca)

**As educators,  
we must trust  
ourselves and  
work hard to  
seize the trust  
of the public,  
in order to win  
the freedom  
to do what is  
right for our  
kids.**

—Richard Gerver



### Council for School Leadership

Second, if you are not already a member of the Council for School Leadership please take a moment—today—to go to [bit.ly/joincsl](http://bit.ly/joincsl) and follow the steps to join this school leadership specialist council. It is custom made for school leaders and aspiring school leaders.



# School Leaders Online Professional Growth Planning Service

The Alberta Teachers' Association, with financial support from Alberta Education, has been working on a pilot project to enhance online services for teachers' and school leaders' professional growth planning. The Association is pleased to announce that the School Leaders Online Professional Growth Planning Service will be available for field testing/pilot in the 2014/15 school year. School jurisdictions, schools and/or individual teachers or administrators who are interested in piloting the Teacher or School Leader OPGP Service in 2014/15 are invited to contact Mark Yurick, coordinator, Professional Development, Alberta Teachers' Association, by phone, at 780-447-9475 or 1-800-232-7208, or by e-mail to mark.yurick@ata.ab.ca.

As with the Teacher OPGP Service, the School Leaders OPGP Service will provide

- a robust online self-reflection tool based on the *Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders*,
- an online template for developing the school leader's professional growth plan, and
- archival capability for storage of the personal history of an individual's growth plans and capacity to upload supporting evidence of achievement of goal(s) in both print and nonprint (digital) format.

The protection of teachers' and school leaders' privacy is a paramount consideration in this online service. The database, software and servers for the online tool reside securely behind the ATA firewall and will be subject to the individual protections under the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA).

We invite you and interested members of your staff to participate in field testing of the OPGP service in 2014/15. The feedback provided by field test participants will continue to enable the Association to refine and enhance the features of the online service as it moves forward in designing and developing the service.

The Expression of Interest form to participate in the 2014/15 field test can be completed at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/OPGP](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/OPGP).

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## Professional Learning Opportunities

### Cognitive Coaching

#### Leadership Development Program— Cognitive Coaching Foundations Series

This leadership development program, sponsored by the Council for School Leadership, provides participants with the knowledge and skills essential for a positive professional coaching relationship.

Cognitive coaching is a process that helps people to become self-directed with the cognitive capacity to develop excellence, both independently and as members of a community. The Cognitive Coaching Series is a registered program of the Center for Cognitive Coaching, in Denver, Colorado, cofounded by Art Costa and Bob Garmston.

This workshop series is open to all teachers and school and system leaders interested in peer coaching, mentorship, curriculum leadership, teacher supervision and school/system leadership development. The Cognitive Coaching Foundations series is a required program for all principals who would like to be considered for mentorship roles in the Leader2Leader program. Participants will receive a certificate on completion of this six-workshop series.

**Schedule:** Participants are required to attend all six workshops. Each session consists of Friday evening (7:00–9:30 PM) and Saturday full day (8:30 AM–3:30 PM)

#### *Calgary*

2014 October 24–25, November 21–22, December 12–13

2015 January 9–10, February 6–7, May 1–2

#### *Edmonton*

2014 October 31–November 1, November 14–15

2015 January 16–17, March 20–21, April 17–18, May 22–23

**Cost:** \$525 plus GST for ATA members; \$750 plus GST for nonmembers

**Facilitator:** John Clarke is a registered training associate and board member of the Center for Cognitive Coaching. John is a former Alberta teacher, counsellor and school principal. In addition to providing Cognitive Coaching programs, he works with schools and school jurisdictions across the province and internationally to promote the development of excellent teaching practice, positive school culture, student self-esteem and change management.

The registration deadline is October 5, 2014.

The cost of registration includes all workshop materials. The program will be offered if sufficient registrations are received by the registration cut-off date. Register at [www.uLead.ca](http://www.uLead.ca). For more information, please e-mail [leadershipfor21c@me.com](mailto:leadershipfor21c@me.com).



## uLead Conference— March 15–18, 2015

A unique opportunity awaits. Join educational leaders from around the world in the beautiful world heritage location of Banff, Alberta, at Canada's premier conference for school-based leaders, district-level leaders, and provincial and state education leaders. Join us in March, 2015 for a rare and historic dialogue with the world's leaders in education in a setting that has been called the jewel of the Rockies. A wide array of world-class keynote speakers will animate the dialogue of those attending and there will be myriad opportunities for spouses and family members to explore one of the most pristine wilderness areas in the world during the conference. uLead 2015 is sponsored by the Council for School Leadership, a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. We are expecting 800 principals, assistant principals, district leaders, education ministry representatives from around the world and national ministers of education to attend. This conference will be memorable and ground breaking. Find out more at [www.uLead.ca](http://www.uLead.ca).

## Full-Day Workshops with Simon Breakspear in October and November 2014

Simon Breakspear will return to Alberta this fall as part of a year-long series of events leading up to the uLead 2015 conference. These events begin with fall workshops for superintendents, day-long workshops in the fall for school leaders, the uLead conference in March (with a host of other world-renowned speakers), and a Global Emerging Leadership conference in the late spring or early summer. In October and November, Simon Breakspear will offer full-day workshops for principals, assistant principals, and teacher-leaders on the topic of "Leading the Agile School: How Educators Can Lead Continuous Innovation in Order to Radically Improve Learning." These workshops will be offered in Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Edmonton and Grande Prairie. You can obtain more information and register at [www.uLead.ca](http://www.uLead.ca)—the sessions are expected to fill quickly.

## Global Emerging Leadership Summit

The Emerging Leaders' Summit will be two days of collaborations, leadership development and exposure to the most innovative educational ideas on the planet. This summit will become an annual incubator for emerging educational thought leaders throughout Canada and beyond.

The summit will be an intensive customized leadership development experience. This tailored two-day program will take participants through a process of leadership discovery and development. Participants will be equipped with the mindsets, capabilities and network to influence their school and system.

The summit will be curated by Simon Breakspear, a leading expert in educational futures, innovation and change leadership, in collaboration with leading local scholars and practitioners in the field of educational leadership and change.

The event will be aimed at principals, assistant principals and aspiring school leaders who have an interest in acquiring an in-depth understanding of leadership theories and models. It will allow them to gain a framework through which to lead and develop. It will expose attendees to innovative approaches to improving learning outcomes and help them set goals for future leadership development and to become part of a powerful network of like-minded emerging leaders.

This event will be advertised worldwide, but Alberta school leaders will hear about it first at [www.uLead.ca](http://www.uLead.ca).

# The Principal's Role in Practice Review

Joyce Sherwin

This article explains practice review and looks more specifically at the responsibilities of principals in the process of teacher supervision and evaluation that leads to practice review. Topics covered include

1. practice review and the public interest,
2. professional competence,
3. historical perspective,
4. the practice review bylaws,
5. the principal's role and
6. teacher competency in Alberta.

Over the last few months, subsequent to the release of the report from the Minister's Task Force for Teaching Excellence, a lot of misinformation has been generated both by the report and in the media about the practice review process. This article is meant to help readers understand practice review and to separate fact from fiction.

## 1. Practice Review and the Public Interest

The Alberta Teachers' Association is a body that regulates membership in an effort to protect and serve the public interest. Unprofessional conduct by a teacher or incompetent teaching may result in a teacher being sanctioned by the profession, up to and including cancellation of membership. All Alberta teachers must be members of the Alberta Teachers' Association in order to teach in public, separate or francophone schools.

The Practice Review Bylaws and the discipline process for conduct outlined in the *Teaching Profession Act* (TPA) are based on the premise that in matters relating to conduct and competence, the Association must act, first and foremost, in the interest of the public. In other words, these processes safeguard the interests of the teaching profession as a whole, but ultimately, the reason for practice review and the discipline process for conduct is the protection of students and the public good.

The Association has a long history of dealing with conduct issues of its members; in September 2009, the Association was granted the authority also to deal with competence issues under the Practice Review Bylaws.

## 2. Professional Competence

Practice review is an assessment of the skill of a teacher's practice and is governed by the Practice Review Bylaws. Practice review is not a mechanism to deal with conduct of a teacher; rather, it is a process to deal with incompetent teaching. Professional competence of a teacher means that the quality of the teacher's professional practice meets the requirements of the Teaching Quality Standard (Ministerial Order #016/97). The purpose of practice review is the assessment of the quality of a teacher's professional practice in relation to the expected standard. Practice review extends from the process of teacher

growth, supervision and evaluation, as per Policy 2.1.5, Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation. When the quality of the teacher's practice does not meet the Association's expectations, the teacher could lose his or her membership in the Association and have his or her teaching certificate cancelled. The implications of this extend beyond employment, because it has implications for the teacher's ability to teach in Alberta and elsewhere. It is a matter of interest for the profession and the public.

## 3. Historical Perspective

Generally, professions are responsible for ensuring the proper conduct and competence of their members. This entails the establishment and enforcement of standards for both conduct and competence.

The passage of the *Teaching Profession Act*, in 1935, gave the Association the legislated authority to discipline its members for unprofessional conduct. Since its inception, the Association has monitored the conduct of its members.

Long-standing policy of the Alberta Teachers' Association endorsed the principle that practice review was a function to be carried out by the profession with adequate provision for appropriate public involvement.

In 1985, Minister of Education David King established the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards





(COATS) to advise the minister on matters relating to teacher competence. In 1986, a process was established in regulation for the minister to remove the certificate of a teacher who was determined to be incompetent. In 1997, Minister of Education Gary Mar approved the Ministerial Order: The Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta. Alberta was the first jurisdiction of any kind to establish a standard to guide judgments about teaching practice, and the establishment of Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5 soon followed, in 1998. This policy implemented provincial requirements for supervision and evaluation of all teachers in Alberta and continues to be the foundation for teacher supervision and evaluation practices, including practice review.

In 2004, Minister of Learning Lyle Oberg, in response to requests from the Association, amended the *Teaching Profession Act* to allow the Association to develop bylaws to ensure professional competence, similar to other professions. Powers or objects of the ATA described in section 4 of the *Teaching Profession Act* speak to, among other things, improving the teaching profession by advising, assisting, protecting and disciplining members in the discharge of their professional duties and relationships; and by assessing the professional competence of its members by means of a professional practice review process provided for under the bylaws of the Association.

Establishment of the Practice Review Bylaws occurred between 2004 and 2008. The Association and

government worked to develop Association bylaws paralleling structures used in other professions and the existing discipline bylaws of the Association. In January 2008, Provincial Executive Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association approved the Practice Review Bylaws. In February 2008, Minister of Education Dave Hancock approved the Practice Review Bylaws for implementation in September 2009. At this time, the Government of Alberta transferred to the Alberta Teachers' Association responsibility for practice review of teachers employed by public, separate and francophone school boards. Previously, this responsibility fell to COATS, under the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation.

#### 4. The Practice Review Bylaws

##### Complaints

Complaints regarding the competency of a teacher may be made by any person. The complaint is initially made to the superintendent of schools. A superintendent who has reasonable grounds to question the competence of a teacher may initiate an investigation. This can be done with or without receiving an external complaint from a party such as a parent.

A principal, as per section 20 of the *School Act* and Policy 2.1.5, engages in ongoing supervision of all teachers. When a principal has reason to believe that a teacher is not meeting the Teaching Quality Standard, he or she issues a Notice of Evaluation to the teacher in question. On the basis of the evaluation by the principal, a superintendent may determine that a review of the teacher's practice is warranted under the practice review

bylaws because the evaluation has called into question whether or not the teacher should hold a certificate to teach.

##### Superintendent's Role

Only a superintendent can send a matter forward to practice review. The Alberta Teachers' Association plays no role in deciding whether a matter goes forward for review by a Professional Practice Review Committee.

It is the superintendent's role in practice review to ensure process, investigate the matter, advise the parties and draw conclusions regarding the competency of the teacher for the purpose of practice review. How is this done? If the complainant is an external party such as a parent, it is the superintendent who makes sure that the complainant has first attempted to address the complaint with the teacher and the principal of the school. Then, regardless of how the complaint came to the attention of the superintendent, during the investigation stage the superintendent determines whether the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy (Policy 2.1.5) has been followed by the principal and then investigates whether the teacher in question is meeting the Teaching Quality Standard.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the superintendent writes a concluding report. Did the teacher meet the Teaching Quality Standard? Did the process of supervision and evaluation comply with Policy 2.1.5? Is the teacher's suitability for certification in question? If the superintendent reports that the certification is in question, a report to the executive secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association must be made within 30 days.

When the investigation is complete, the superintendent is also required to advise the complainant, if any, and the investigated teacher, in writing, regarding his or her determination of competency. In other words, will the investigated teacher's professional competence be assessed by the Professional Practice Review Committee or will the teacher's professional competence not be assessed by the Professional Practice Review Committee? The superintendent must provide that answer and the reasons for the decision to the teacher and complainant, if any, in a report. Note that the superintendent may make such a report, even if there is no parent or external complainant, based on information from the principal through the ongoing supervision and evaluation process that is a fundamental aspect of a principal's role.

#### **Appeal by the Complainant**

Assuming that there is a complainant, upon concluding an investigation regarding the competency of a teacher, a superintendent must advise the complainant of the outcome, even if the decision is that there will be no review of the teacher's competency because the teacher is deemed to be competent or meeting the Teaching Quality Standard. If that is the outcome of the superintendent's investigation, the complainant has the right to request a review of that decision by the Complainant Appeal Committee (CAC), which is composed of two to four members of the Association as well as a member of the public. If the complainant appeals the superintendent's decision, the CAC hears the appeal upon request by the complainant. The complainant must

lodge the appeal within 30 days of receiving the report and provide reasons in writing why the decision of the superintendent should be reviewed. A charge of \$250 accompanies such an appeal.

If the complainant appeals the superintendent's decision, the complainant, teacher and superintendent are notified of the date, time and location of the appeal and of their right to make representations to the Complainant Appeal Committee. The committee may consider new information, if relevant, and may affirm the decision of the superintendent or no hearing by Professional Practice Review Committee (PPRC) or may send it to a hearing of the PPRC.

#### **Professional Practice Review Committee**

If a superintendent concludes that a teacher is not competent and that Policy 2.1.5 was followed, and reports to the executive secretary of the ATA that the teacher's suitability to hold certification is in question, a hearing *must* be ordered. The Professional Practice Review Committee (PPRC) must assess a teacher's professional competence within 120 days of such a report.

The ATA presents the case against the teacher in question; this hearing is open and public. The hearing committee members include a public member named by the Minister of Education, a central office administrator, a principal and two teachers named by the Association. The parties at a PPRC hearing include the teacher, the Association and the hearing committee. Each party may be represented by legal counsel or an agent.

Witnesses at a PPRC hearing are examined under oath on anything relevant to the hearing, similar to other court or administrative proceedings. Proceedings for civil contempt of court are possible if witnesses fail or refuse to attend, to produce records, to be sworn in or to answer questions. If the investigated teacher does not appear before the hearing committee, the hearing may proceed in the teacher's absence, meaning that the committee may still act, decide and report on the matter in the same way as if the teacher were in attendance.

It is important to note that, in contrast to the discipline process for unprofessional conduct, a teacher, prior to a PPRC hearing, may make a voluntary request for cancellation of the teaching certificate. This would be done in accordance to section 27 of the Certification of Teachers Regulation. Upon cancellation of the teaching certificate, the proceedings would cease.

If the hearing proceeds, a PPRC may find that the competence of the teacher meets the Teaching Quality Standard and therefore take no action or make no recommendations. Alternatively, a PPRC may find that the teacher's competence does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard. If that is the outcome, a committee may cancel or suspend the teacher's membership and/or recommend that the Minister cancel or suspend the teacher's teaching certificate. It may also make further orders.

#### **Appeal of Finding or Order**

Within 30 days of the decision, the teacher, superintendent or Provincial Executive Council of the ATA may appeal the finding and/or order of the PPRC. The Professional Practice

Appeal Committee (PPAC) is made up of three to five members of the Association and one member of the public. This hearing is open to the public and the PPAC may make any finding or order that, in its opinion, ought to have been made by the hearing committee.

## 5. The Principal's Role

In many ways, it can be said that school principals are the gatekeepers of the profession. Principals play a crucial role in determining whether or not a teacher meets or does not meet the standard of competency expected in Alberta. When a principal does not understand or take seriously this role, it is potentially detrimental to students, the district, the public interest and, ultimately, the teaching profession.

Just as superintendents need to understand their role under the Practice Review Bylaws and realize that key functions cannot be delegated, principals need to understand that they, too, play a key and pivotal role. Superintendents depend on principals to understand and comply with provincial Policy 2.1.5 as well as district policies and practices that align with and further expand upon Policy 2.1.5. In addition, just as superintendents must ensure that the system has the capacity to supervise and evaluate teachers in accordance with Policy 2.1.5, principals must understand that this responsibility is fundamental to their role. In other words, ongoing supervision of teachers by the principal must be conducted in accordance with Policy 2.1.5, and a principal must identify behaviours or practices of a teacher that for any reason may require evaluation. The *School Act*, section 20, underscores this important responsibility.

So what is a principal expected to do in terms of assuring teacher competency and the public interest? Principals are expected to provide ongoing supervision of teachers, which includes providing support and guidance as well as observing the teaching of each teacher directly. This means that each principal must be in every classroom in the school on a regular basis. Principals may receive information from any source about the quality of teaching. Principals are expected to evaluate teachers new to the district or the profession for the purpose of gathering information related to an employment decision, and a district's offer of a continuous employment contract to a teacher must be supported by the findings of two or more evaluations of that teacher. Evaluations are not just one or two observations of the teaching. The evaluation process is a thorough process that culminates in an evaluation report written by a principal for each round of evaluation. Principals, through ongoing supervision of teachers, are also expected to issue a notice of evaluation to a teacher if there are identified behaviours or practices of concern for any reason that require an evaluation. If a principal determines that a teacher's practice is not at the expected standard of competency, the principal must provide to the teacher a notice of remediation. This notice stipulates the remediation strategies the teacher is expected to implement.

Evaluation at the end of the remediation process may result in a principal judging the teacher as incompetent or not meeting the Teaching Quality Standard. This could result in a change of assignment, a

recommendation by the superintendent to the board to terminate the teacher's contract and/or a report by the superintendent to initiate a Professional Practice Review Committee hearing. This is done as per the Practice Review Bylaws if the superintendent concludes that the teacher's suitability for certification is in question due to lack of competence.

## 6. Teacher Competency in Alberta

In addition to participation in ongoing professional development activities, teachers in Alberta are expected to meet the Teaching Quality Standard, are regularly supervised by principals, and undergo evaluation when the principal deems it necessary or for reasons as stipulated in Policy 2.1.5, such as for the purpose of making an employment decision.

Incompetent teachers may face employer action up to and including termination of their employment contract. However, not all matters involving teacher competency rise to the level of a Professional Practice Review Committee hearing for the purpose of removing the teaching certificate. Myriad complex issues are often at play concerning a teacher's competency, such as mental health, collegial relationship problems, family turmoil, medical issues and so on. A teacher who is terminated by one school district may well be a successful teacher at a future time for a different employer if life circumstances are different. Superintendents consider this as they decide whether or not to initiate a review of the teacher's practice before a PPRC for the purpose of removing the certificate.

The Alberta Teachers' Association plays no role in initiating a review of

the teacher's practice by the PPRC. Only a superintendent can send a matter forward to practice review. Practice review is a process by which a superintendent refers a matter to the Association under the practice review bylaws if that superintendent believes that the teacher is not meeting the Teaching Quality Standard, that Policy 2.1.5 has been followed regarding the process of evaluation and that the teacher's suitability for certification is in question. If such a referral is made, the superintendent believes it is in the public interest to do so and a hearing will always be ordered by the executive secretary of the ATA. There is no mechanism by which the ATA can refuse such a hearing request.

While there are many cases that appear before the Professional Conduct Committee of the ATA, very few cases occur of a review of teacher competency for the purpose of removing the certificate. In the five years before 2009, when the ATA took over responsibility for practice review, there were no cases at all. Since 2009, only one referral for practice review has been made by a superintendent. That referral was subsequently withdrawn by the same superintendent, based on the teacher's medical issues. The reality is that practice review hearings are rare. Member Services staff officers, who are often involved in the representation of teachers when teachers experience employment difficulties, confirm that most incompetent teachers choose not remain in the teaching profession and pursue other options. Teaching is a difficult profession at the best of times. If you are not good at it, the demands of the profession will encourage you to seek other employment.

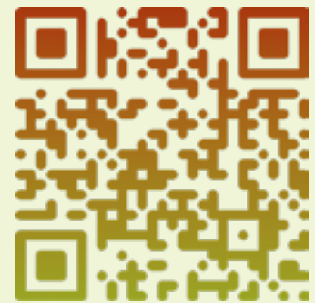
## Alberta Teachers on iTunes U

The ATA has recently become an iTunes U affiliate, and the first courses and collections are beginning to make their way to the site. Over 60 principals and assistant principals are already receiving training regarding how to create courses in iTunes U and in the creation of the multi-touch iBooks that will be part of many courses. These colleagues are working to create a range of courses that will populate the site. The courses they design connect directly to Alberta's Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders and will offer participating Alberta school leaders the opportunity to share their leadership stories and knowledge, not only with colleagues in their own school districts but with school leaders throughout Alberta, across Canada and around the world. Watch for upcoming training opportunities in creating interactive multi-touch iBooks and iTunes U courses and in becoming a course contributor for the Alberta Teachers iTunes U site.

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 to your iPad the iTunes U app, 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.

This month, a variety of new courses created by Alberta school leaders have been added to the ATA on iTunes U site. Courses provide you with learning opportunities ranging from fostering effective relationships to diving into Alberta's Principal Quality Practice Framework.

A timely course—Reflections on Teaching—has just become available. Principals can use it at the beginning of the school year with the whole staff, leading them through a 30- to 40-minute activity to examine their work-life balance and set the tone for the coming year. To access the site, please visit [tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes](http://tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes) or scan the QR code on this page.



To find archived issues of *Leadership Update*, go to [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) and click on **Other Publications** (under **Publications**), then go to **School Administrators**.

Feedback is welcome. Please contact Jeff Johnson, executive staff officer, Professional Development, at [jeff.johnson@ata.ab.ca](mailto:jeff.johnson@ata.ab.ca).