

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

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Real Learning First Initiative

CSA has sponsored and cosponsored Real Learning First dinner meeting/forums in six regions across the province to date. Events are scheduled in Red Deer, on April 15, 2009, and Peace River, on May 11, 2009. The Association has launched the Real Learning First website (www.reallearningfirst.ca), a standalone site. In addition to providing a discussion forum on student assessment in Alberta, the site has multiple video and other presentations (including Dr Pasi Sahlberg's Edmonton presentation). Get involved and share your stories.

The Association will soon advertise a grant program to help Association groups organize regional community forums to communicate the "Real Learning First" messages and to disseminate the video and other materials. These public forums would also affirm the central role of teachers' professional judgment in diagnosing, assessing and responding to the

learning needs of students, and would advocate for a shift in the government accountability scheme to one that focuses on teacher-developed student assessments and facilitates the conditions required for optimal teaching and learning.

Design work continues on the documentary about Real Learning First. The video, highlighting the experience of teachers and students in attempting to meet the contradictory expectations of provincial achievement tests and focusing on students at various grade levels, will be completed by May 1, 2009.

The accountability book project, consisting primarily of the papers that graduate students wrote for the 2008 course presented by Dr J-C Couture (ATA) and Dr Brenda Spencer (U of A) is expected from the publisher very soon. Dr Pasi Sahlberg and professors David Berliner and Andy Hargreaves have all contributed to the book.

**The first
step toward
change is
acceptance.
Once you
accept
yourself,
you open
the door
to change.
That's all
you have
to do.
Change
is not
something
you do, it's
something
you allow.**

—Will Garcia

Educational Leadership Academy, July 12–16, 2009 with Dr Todd Whitaker

How to Deal with Difficult People

This workshop will assist administrators in developing a repertoire of tools and skills for comfortable and effective interaction with parents and teachers. It will cover how to deal with the individual who is bossy, volatile, argumentative, aggressive, or maybe the worst—apathetic. The workshop will provide specific phrases to use to help the administrator avoid using "trigger" words which unintentionally make matters worse.

For more information contact the director, Konni deGoeij at 1-800-232-7208 or 780-447-9400.



Curriculum Update

Following are recent developments in curricular areas.

Arts Education: The Learning and Teaching Resources Opinion Survey is available until April 1, 2009. *Promising Practices and Core Learnings in Arts Education: Literature Review of K–12 Fine Arts Programs* (2008) is available on Alberta Education's website.

Distributed Learning Strategy: Alberta Education has completed the Discover phase, the first of five phases (Discover, Define, Design, Develop and Deploy). *Discover Phase—Summary Report (May to August 2008)* details the current state of distributed learning (DL) in Alberta, perceptions of emerging trends and future possibilities. DL work is on hold pending the completion of the minister's dialogue with Albertans.

WorldSkills Competition 2009: The competition will be held September 2–5, 2009, in Calgary. The premier event will showcase career and technology studies and participating registered apprenticeship programs. Note the new resource available online at www.new.learnalberta.ca/content/ctsws/index.html (English) and www.new.learnalberta.ca/content/prtmm/index.html (French).

English as a Second Language (ESL): Two new resources are posted in the English as a Second Language section of the Alberta Education website: *A Review of the Literature on English as a Second Language (ESL) Issues* (2008) reviews research on diverse aspects of ESL programming; and *A List of Assessment Resources for English as a*

Second Language (ESL) (2008) provides a list of 24 useful assessment resources for ESL.

K–12 Wellness: A draft framework to describe the fundamental concepts and inherent values of wellness education and to provide guidance to the future development and implementation of K–12 wellness education in Alberta will be released in the spring of 2009 for consultation. The final framework is scheduled to be released in June 2009.

Mathematics K–9: The third Mathematics Summer Institute is being planned for July 8–10, 2009. Participants will have the opportunity to work in large- and small-group sessions to look closely at the vision, philosophy and outcomes of the revised program and at effects on their teaching. The focus will be on the programs for Grades 3, 6 and 9, which will be available for optional implementation in September 2009. Programs for Grades 2, 5 and 8, which are being implemented provincially in September 2009, will also be addressed.

K–6 Science Program: The major changes planned for the program include (a) a reduction of topics from five to four per grade; (b) learning outcomes for kindergarten; (c) increased elaboration of the expectations; (d) increased opportunity for students to make connections that enhance their learning; and (e) infusion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) perspectives; information, and communication technology (ICT) outcomes; science–technology–society (STS) connections; and literacy skills. The consultation draft of the K–6 Science program of studies is scheduled to be available in both French and English for review and feedback early in the spring of 2009.

High School Enhancement Flexibility Pilot Project

Alberta Education launched a four-year pilot study (2009–12) to determine if the requirement that students have access to 25 hours of face-to-face instruction per course credit should be maintained. Pilot high schools will continue to adhere to the 1,000-hour instructional time requirement. Department staff will ensure that this requirement is met when they review and approve each pilot school's programming proposal. Pilot project schools will continue to deliver the programs of study and assess students on the mandated learner outcomes. Alberta Education states that it is responding to interest from those in the education field to examine the time requirement attached to high school credits. The pilot will also examine whether schools are able to better accommodate individual learners with increased timetabling flexibility. Upon conclusion of this pilot project, the advisory committees will make a recommendation to the executive team of Alberta Education regarding the requirement for 25 hours of face-to-face instruction.

Alberta Education Plans Dialogue with Albertans, Works with Stakeholders to Enhance the Status and Profile of Teachers

Education Sector Workforce Planning Initiative Update

“What will it mean to be an educated Albertan 20 years from now?”

This question will be a key focus of “Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans,” a wide-ranging process that ultimately aims to define the future course of education in Alberta.

The dialogue, originally announced by Education Minister Dave Hancock in late November, is remarkable in its design and unprecedented in its ambition. Because of criticisms that participation in previous government consultations has been limited to selected stakeholders and that the consultations themselves have been directed toward reinforcing previously defined conclusions, the dialogue is being designed to encourage broadly based input, and great efforts are being made to reassure prospective participants that the outcomes have not been predetermined.

In a process that will begin in April, a cross-section of Albertans representing diverse perspectives will participate in series of regional meetings culminating

in a provincial citizen’s forum in the fall of 2009. The results of the dialogue are intended to inform the development of a policy framework and resulting changes to the current *School Act*, most likely in 2010.

The public dialogue will be based on a series of 8 to 10 large public discussion meetings, each involving more than 100 participants. The process, hosted by members of the steering and working committees, will involve concurrent round tables. One-third of the participants will be recruited randomly, one-third will represent stakeholders and the remainder will be drawn from a list of those who sign up for the event. A workbook and online forum will be developed to extend participation to individuals and groups that may not be able to participate in the formal discussion meetings.

As more information about “Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans” becomes available, the Association will advise members about opportunities to participate.

In another venue, the department’s Workforce Planning Branch is wrestling with the question of who will teach Alberta’s children in the year 2020. Workforce Planning Branch is currently consulting with stakeholder organizations to find ways to elevate the status of the teaching profession. The initiative is a response to a looming teacher shortage and reflects the need to recruit Alberta’s best and brightest to the profession.

As part of this effort, the branch has researched successful strategies employed in the United Kingdom and Australia and has involved representatives of the faculties of education, the Alberta Teachers’ Association, the Council of Alberta School Superintendents and the Alberta School Boards Association in a series of officials-level discussions. The ATA has a particularly important part to play in any initiative to increase the public profile of the teaching profession, because it alone has consistently invested in public advertising to promote the teaching profession.

For resources for administrators please visit

<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Resources%20For/School-Based%20Administrators/Pages/Index.aspx>

Towards the Development of a Provincial School Leadership Framework

Since the release of the report of Alberta's Commission on Learning, in 2003, Alberta Education has been working with education partners on a number of initiatives to support the development of effective school leaders. The Association has been involved in all these collaborative initiatives and, in addition, the provincial Association has undertaken a number of related projects. This update provides an overview of these initiatives and supporting projects.

Principal Quality Practice Guideline

From June 2005 to December 2008, a stakeholder advisory committee, through a process of provincial roundtable discussion and consensus-building activities, developed a draft Principal Quality Practice document outlining seven leadership dimensions and supporting descriptors relevant to the role of school principals. In the spring of 2009, the ministry will issue the Principal Quality Practice Guideline for voluntary implementation by education stakeholders. The provincial guideline is posted on the ATA website at www.teachers.ab.ca/Resources/For/School-Based-Administrators.

Leadership Essentials for Administrators Conference

The Association and the Council on School Administration organized the first annual Leadership Essentials for Administrators (LEA) conference in

November 2007, in Calgary, for school administrators new to their role or new to the Alberta system. This two-day conference featured keynote presentations and breakout sessions on topics related to the leadership dimensions in the principal quality practice document. The second annual LEA conference was held in Edmonton, in November 2008, and planning is underway for the November 2009 LEA conference, in Calgary. Information about the upcoming conference will be provided in the *ATA News* and on the ATA website.

School Leadership Symposium

Alberta Education hosted an invitational School Leadership Symposium in March 2008, to discuss the expectations, roles and challenges of school leaders. Delegates identified twenty suggestions to support school leadership in Alberta in five key areas: (1) attraction, recruitment and retention of school leaders; (2) the evolving role of school leaders; (3) school leadership preparation; (4) ongoing professional development; and (5) school leadership in the 21st century. There was clear consensus among the symposium delegates that there should be a provincial, coordinated approach to the development and support of effective school leadership in Alberta.

Principal Professional Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Model Policy

The Association initiated a two-year collaborative project with Livingstone

Range School District to field test the ATA Principal Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Model Policy. This policy mirrors the current provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy. The collaborative project includes the development of specific leadership descriptors and indicators (evidence) that reflect the jurisdiction's context. These descriptors and indicators are used to guide school administrators in the development of their annual professional growth plans. Evaluation of school principals is based on a cooperative, transparent approach. The superintendent works with school principals scheduled for evaluation to develop an individual evaluation plan consistent with provincial leadership dimensions and jurisdiction indicators. The results of this collaborative project will be published in a final report scheduled for release in the fall of 2009.

Professional Growth Plans Online Module

The Association launched a new online module to support school administrators in developing their professional growth plans. The professional growth plans online module is hosted on the ATA website at www.teachers.ab.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment/TeacherProfessionalGrowthPlans. This module is based on the provincial leadership dimensions and features self-reflection tools, current readings, templates and suggested professional development activities. School administrators who have used the online module have found it to be very

user friendly, informative and relevant to the ongoing development of their leadership practice.

School Leadership Framework

In December 2008, Alberta Education established the School Leadership Framework Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives of key education stakeholder organizations, to develop a provincial framework to support school leadership. This committee is preparing a framework that will elevate the Principal Quality Practice Guideline to become the Quality Practice Standards for Principals. The framework will also propose a provincial approach to incorporate the new standards into the preparation, induction and ongoing professional development of school leaders. It will also stipulate the provincial requirement for school leaders' professional growth, supervision and evaluation. The committee has developed the draft framework, which is currently being reviewed by the stakeholder organizations. The next meeting of the advisory committee is scheduled for April, at which time feedback from the stakeholder organizations will be considered and the necessary revisions made to the draft framework for its submission to the Minister.

School administrators will continue to be informed through *Leadership Update* of provincial development and Association activities related to the School Leadership Framework. These are important initiatives that will lead to enhanced programs and services at the local and provincial levels. For more information on these initiatives, contact Jacqueline Skytt, Assistant Executive Secretary, at jacquie.skytt@ata.ab.ca.

Setting the Direction for Special Education

Setting the Direction for Special Education is an Alberta Education initiative to create a new special education framework that includes vision, principles, policy, accountability and funding. Phase 1 of the Setting the Direction project included a provincewide consultation process involving more than 3,000 people. The information gathered in Phase 1 has been published in *Phase 1 Community Consultation What We Hear Summary Report*. This information has been used to develop the vision, principles and building blocks for a new system of special education, outlined in *Setting the Direction: Towards a System Re-design*.

Phase 2 of the project involves a second round of community consultation to gather feedback on the new framework. Individuals are encouraged to attend a facilitated

community consultation meeting or to complete the online response guide. School principals can use the documents on the Setting the Direction website to guide a dialogue with their staff and submit a group or individual online response. It is hoped that principals, teachers, teacher assistants and school councils will take this opportunity to review the new directions being proposed and provide feedback to the steering committee. Your feedback will be used to develop the policy, accountability and funding mechanism to support the new vision. The deadline for feedback on Phase 2 is March 31, 2009.

The ATA home page, www.teachers.ab.ca, provides a link to the Setting the Directions website. Click on Success for All, and then the link to Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta. To read the Phase 1 summary, click on the Phase 1—What We Heard button. To participate in Phase 2, select the Discussion Guide, Phase 2 button.

Be part of the change—your voice matters!

Jacqueline Skytt is the Association representative on the Setting the Directions Working Committee.



Q & A
GORDON THOMAS,
Executive Secretary

Q: The principal of a nearby school just dealt with a situation in which allegations of sexual misconduct were raised against a teacher. If such allegations arise here, what do I as a principal do?

A: As a principal, you have an obligation to take such allegations seriously. There are certain steps you must take to ensure that a fair process is followed. You will need to check your board policy. It is also advisable to seek advice from the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). In addition, you will need to notify the teacher and advise him or her to seek advice from the ATA. Do not make assumptions or carry out unqualified investigations, because your involvement with potential witnesses and the handling of evidence may compromise the process.