

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 1

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 2



A Letter from the President on Practice Review

In 2003, the Association and the government of Alberta agreed to amend the *Teaching Profession Act* to make the Association responsible for the practice review of teachers. This fulfilled a long-established Association policy that the profession should be responsible for determining whether members of the profession meet professional practice standards. Central to this agreement was a practice review process predicated on collegiality and the existing professional growth, supervision and evaluation policy.

In recent months, it has become apparent that school administrators may be removed from Association membership if the government establishes the Council of Education Executives (CEE). Should CEE be established, some of the elements of the already agreed-upon process would be compromised.

Practice review, under the authority of the Association, can only begin once Provincial Executive Council passes a practice review bylaw and it is approved by the minister. As noted below, Council is seeking assurances from the minister about the future of school administrators before implementing the bylaw. Should government take steps to destroy the unity of the profession, Council is unlikely to approve the bylaw. The following letter about this issue from ATA president Frank Bruseker to Dr Lyle Oberg is printed in its entirety.

Dear Dr Oberg

At its 2004 09 23–24 meeting, Provincial Executive Council directed me to reiterate the value of practice review to the Association and the teaching profession, and to make very clear that the Association remains willing to assume responsibility for reviewing the professional practice of teachers.

As I indicated to you when we met on 2004 09 03, Provincial Executive Council passed a motion at its emergent 2004 08 09 meeting that the Association would not implement the practice review bylaw until issues related to the status of school administrators are clarified by the Government of Alberta. The Association is concerned that the Government of Alberta will establish a parallel teachers' organization, the Council of Education Executives, and bring an end to the unity of the teaching profession. We believe that the real purpose of a competing organization will be, over time (and we are uncertain if it will be a few months or a year or two), to remove school administrators from membership in the Association. In this respect, we are concerned that the government's real objective may be to reduce the Association to a union of classroom teachers, hiving off central office and school-based administrators, and replacing the professional collegiality which is the hallmark of our successful culture in Alberta schools with a management–union relationship. It is important to recognize that the approach proposed by the Association does not work in a management–union context. The practice review model that you accepted does not fit the directions we fear you are taking. The practice review model that you accepted is based, fundamentally, on a collegial relationship between school administrators and teachers. A collegial relationship is, at best, undermined by the establishment of a Council of Education Executives and is ultimately destroyed by removing school administrators from the Association. Provincial Executive Council requires additional information about the government's intentions respecting the future of school administrators to ensure that the practice review process, as agreed to by the Association and government, can be successfully implemented and sustained into the future.

Yours sincerely,
Frank Bruseker
President

A collegial relationship is, at best, undermined by the establishment of a Council of Education Executives and is ultimately destroyed by removing school administrators from the Association.



Administrator Mentorship Pilot Project Continues

With more than 50 per cent of school-based administrators in Canada over the age of 45, we can expect a huge influx of new administrators in the next 10 years. At the same time, the demands engendered by site-based decision making and accountability have made the job increasingly complex.

These two related factors prompted the Association to pilot a project for administrator mentorship based on the highly success-

ful teacher mentorship program introduced six years ago. The pilot project started in 2003 is being carried out in cooperation with the St Albert Protestant Separate School District No 6.

A steering committee of school-based administrators, central office staff and ATA staff has used the Leadership Quality Standard and the Administrator Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy to de-

velop a draft framework. There are 18 administrators involved in self-selected groups of two, three or four. Colleagues mentor each other, and experienced administrators help new administrators develop their skills. Each group has developed a mentorship plan that the district has accepted as the administrator's growth plan for the year.

Preliminary comments from administrators and mentors are very positive. The time for reflection, professional development activities, sharing of ideas and opportunities to improve skills has been beneficial and worth the effort to find time in already-crowded schedules.

A handbook to guide expansion of the program from administrators across the province will be developed next year.

For more information, call Catherine Moir at 447-9473 (in Edmonton); 1-800-232-7208 (toll free outside of Edmonton); or e-mail cmoir@teachers.ab.ca.

Administrator Instructor Corps Established

At its September meeting, Provincial Executive Council approved the establishment of an instructor corps of school administrators to deliver workshops and presentations to school administrators. School administrators all across Alberta were invited to apply. Those who become part of the corps will have the opportunity to develop leadership skills and share expertise with administrator colleagues. Initially, the corps will present workshops and presentations on professional learning communities and on professional growth and supervision. Additional programs will be developed based on administrators' needs.

For further information on this exciting new opportunity, contact Jacquie Skytt, coordinator, PD, at 447-9469 (in Edmonton); 1-800-232-7208 (toll free outside of Edmonton); or e-mail jskytt@teachers.ab.ca.

Blue Ribbon Panel Established

Earlier this fall, the Association established the Blue Ribbon Panel on the School Administrator to review Association structure and services related to school administrators. The panel, consisting mostly of school administrators from across Alberta, was selected to ensure credibility in the field and good advice. The panel will function at arm's length from the Association and will be chaired by D Paul Stevenson, retired deputy superintendent, Lethbridge Public School District. Other members of the panel include Joanne Hunt, principal, Sir Winston Churchill High School, Calgary; Dr Mark Yurick, principal,

Earl Buxton Elementary School, Edmonton; Kathleen Murphy-House, principal, St Anne School, Fort McMurray; Peter Driedger, vice-principal, Foothills Composite High School, Okotoks; Kelly Lewis, teacher, J C Charyk Hanna School, Hanna; R John Waterhouse, principal, Avondale School, Grande Prairie (and ATA vice-president); Dr Rosemary Foster, Department of Education Policy Studies, University of Alberta; and Susan Fraser, associate coordinator, administrator assistance, Member Services, ATA. The ATA's executive secretary, Dr Gordon Thomas, will serve as panel secretary.

Major Survey Under Way Professional Development and Instructional Leadership Needs

The University of Alberta's major study of Alberta school principals and assistant principals and of central office administrators has two purposes: to identify school administrators' professional development needs and concerns relative to instructional leadership, and to provide guidance for further professional development planning.

A review of literature indicates that professional development can facilitate principals' knowledge and skills as educational and instructional leaders. The literature also shows that little attention has been paid to the PD needs and concerns of principals and senior educational administrators.

The first phase of this project will be a

survey of principals, assistant principals, and central office senior administrators during the month of November. The surveys will be followed by interviews with selected people. The researchers believe that the information gathered may help postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers improve their programs for school administrators.

The ATA has recognized the importance of this work by providing funding support, though the ATA involvement is arm's length. The ATA looks forward to the research findings and believes that they will be a valuable source of information that can strengthen resources for administrators.

For further information, visit www.teachers.ab.ca or contact Member Services at the Alberta Teachers' Association, 447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta).