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TEACHER GUIDE

Why Is There an ATA?



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

Why Is There an ATA?

To Maintain and Raise Professional Standards

The Alberta Teachers' Alliance, formed in 1918 and renamed the Alberta Teachers' Association in 1935, fought hard to have teachers recognized as professionals. It succeeded in a battle that is still being fought in many other places. As professionals, teachers need a representative body that maintains their code of professional conduct and works to raise standards within their profession.

To Improve the Quality of Education

Since teachers joined together to form the ATA, they have managed to raise standards, adjust their workloads, increase their preparation time, reduce class sizes, obtain more funding for education, introduce the extended practicum and provide input into the government's curriculum- and policy-development processes. United, they have helped to improve education.

To Provide Specialized Information

Specialist councils, supported by the provincial Association and by members' fees, offer current information on specific curriculum areas and a channel for the exchange of ideas and classroom techniques.

To Protect Individual and Professional Rights

As employees of school boards, teachers need protection from arbitrary or unfair decisions affecting their employment. Through the ATA, teachers ensure that they will receive assistance from professionals when they encounter employment difficulties.

To Provide Specialized Services

Not every teacher is an expert at drawing up a contract, bargaining or dealing with professional or employment difficulties. However, through the support of the provincial ATA, all teachers have experts available to help them with their professional and legal problems.

To Ensure Judgment by Peers

The ATA appoints teachers to help determine teacher qualifications and to judge cases involving professional conduct and standards.

To Help Achieve Just Salaries and Benefits

Through legislation teachers have achieved basic tenure and adequate pensions, and through collective bargaining, teachers have achieved better salaries, health care provisions, sick leave, paid inservice and sabbaticals. A lot has been accomplished, but maintaining present benefits and attaining future improvements depend on strong local and provincial associations, supported by individual members.

To Help When a Strike Becomes Necessary

Through the support of the strike fund, local teachers have funds available to them when collective bargaining fails and strikes take place. In this way, teachers support each other when they find it necessary to withdraw services.

To Affect Political Decisions

Decisions about education are made primarily by the provincial government and local school boards. Teachers can influence those decisions individually but are more effective when they act through local and provincial bodies that monitor government and present teachers' views.

By working together, teachers have improved their students' learning conditions and their own working conditions. By remaining strong, teachers can achieve further progress.