



Remembrance is something you do.

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THE FACE OF EDUCATION

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ATA NEWS

November 6, 2018 | Volume 53, Number 4

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



International co-operation

Teachers change lives through volunteer work.

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PATs are broken

It's time to trash this program that doesn't deliver on its purpose.

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from ATA President Greg Jeffery

Life lesson found beyond curriculum

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Curriculum report

Survey reveals hope and concern about new K-4 curriculum.

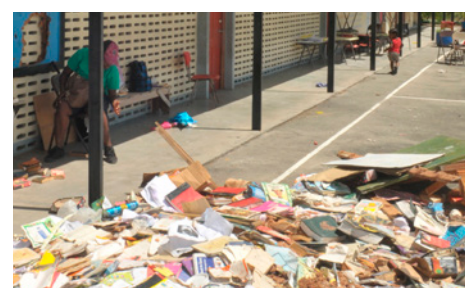
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ATA advocates for issues, not parties

Association is politically active but staunchly non-partisan.

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Find your tribe

Colleagues stay connected despite distance and years.

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Provincial Achievement Tests are broken



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Last month shocking news emerged that a passing mark on last year's Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) in mathematics was as low as 41 per cent, fuelling further fire about a math crisis in Alberta's schools.

The *Calgary Herald* reported the revelation after test results showed that one-third of students in Alberta (and 40 per cent of students in Calgary public schools) failed to meet the acceptable standard on the Grade 9 PAT.

Parents and other pundits pointed to the number as evidence of declining standards in math education in Alberta. Most reflected on their experience in schooling, where a passing grade was typically deemed to be 50 per cent.

In this context, the term *passing grade* is used as a replacement for the less well understood term *cut score*.

It is important to note that many people think that the grade on a test is calculated by taking the number of marks a student gets on the test and dividing by the total possible marks. Seems reasonable, as this is what is

done in most classrooms around the province. But that is not how it is done for PATs and diploma exams.

Instead, a complex series of formulae incorporates information about the difficulty of test items and the performance of students on a subset of questions relative to the performance of students in previous years on the same subset of questions to determine the final mark. Part of the calculations determine the *cut scores*, which define whether a student has reached an acceptable standard or whether they have reached a standard of excellence.

These tests are highly engineered by using very technical psychometrics in order to produce complex data sets that are pored over by a large cadre of statisticians and other bureaucrats in order to allegedly pull out information about how students are doing.

In the meantime, all of this alchemy has resulted in test results and test reporting that – for teachers, students and parents – is obscure, meaningless and shrouded in secrecy.

Alberta Education used to publicly release every single provincial achievement test and diploma examination immediately after it was written by students. Students and parents then had a chance to reflect on actual test items to assess what happened. Teachers had an opportunity to use the information to reflect on

their practice and to use the test items as a learning tool in future years.

That is now gone.

In its place, we have secret anchor items that are used to see if students are getting better over time. And get this: if student learning actually improves over time, then the tests get marked harder in future years!

This stuff is bananas.
B-A-N-A-N-A-S!

These tests have never been more obscure or more meaningless.

Simply put, these tests are broken.

PATs were first introduced in 1983, and aside from bouncing back and forth on whether written portions are included and introducing this complex grading hocus-pocus, they have largely gone unchanged.

In the next few years, we are going to be implementing a modern curriculum for modern students in a modern Alberta. It would be an absolute tragedy – and incredibly counterproductive – if we continued to assess that curriculum and those students with these 30-year-old relics.

We should have dumped them years ago. After a free vote in the legislature more than nine years ago, Alberta's education minister announced that PATs were being eliminated.

Look, if we want to actually use assessment to improve learning outcomes

for students, then we need to tap the assessment capacity of teachers. Support teachers with time, professional development and resources to enable better assessment at the classroom level. Empower teachers with better diagnostic tools and provide them with assessment items that generate meaningful information that can actually be used to inform learning and improve practice.

If the government and school boards still want provincial standards and provincial information, they can give teachers access to provincially developed and field-tested items, and they can continue to use provincial assessments to test a sampling of students. Just do away with this costly, archaic, complex and meaningless regime of testing every kid in every subject every three years.

The purpose of assessment should be to ask the question, "Have students learned what we expect them to learn?" If they haven't, then we must ensure that they do learn it, and inform future practice so that the next students are better able to learn it.

Our Provincial Achievement Test program does not deliver on that purpose. These tests are broken and they should be trashed. ■

I welcome your comments – contact me at jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca.

ATA advocates for issues, not political parties



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: Why is my association contributing to a political action committee (PAC) that supports the New Democratic Party – isn't the ATA supposed to be non-partisan?

Answer: I keep being told that, in newspaper terms, I have a tendency to "bury the lede," so here's the short answer: the ATA is not contributing to a PAC that supports the NDP, and we are committed to being non-partisan.

The longer, more interesting answer starts with the origin of the question. Last week considerable attention was being paid to political advertisements sponsored by Shaping Alberta's Future (www.shapingalberta.ca), a PAC that had received a large infusion of money from members of the Motor Dealers' Association. The PAC and its advertisements are unapologetically partisan, explicitly supporting Jason Kenney's United Conservative Party and calling on Albertans to defeat the Notley government.

PACs provide third parties access to the political process through advertising. While they can support or oppose political parties, they are supposed to operate independently and the funds they expend do not count against spending limits imposed upon political parties. In an effort to preserve some transparency and accountability, PACs spending more than \$1,000 are required to register with Elections Alberta and disclose the identity of contributors who donate more than \$250. Unlike donations made directly to political parties, there is no cap on the amount that a person, corporation or union can contribute to a PAC; however, PAC donations do not generate tax credits.

The controversy surrounding Shaping Alberta's Future concerned the size of the donations received (a total in excess of \$375,000 in the third quarter of 2018) and, more problematically, the suggestion that the Motor Dealers' Association may have colluded with the UCP in expectation that the party, if elected to government, would enact legislation and regulations favourable to the dealers.

It is not my place to comment on these allegations, but in the immediate fallout, it was reported that the Alberta

Teachers' Association had itself contributed to a PAC, namely Public Interest Alberta (PIA).

The ATA together with the Alberta Federation of Labour founded Public Interest Alberta (pialberta.org) in 2005 in an effort to provide an alternative to the political discourse being promoted by the Fraser Institute and its allies. (Full disclosure: I was elected as the first chairman of PIA – my opponent was a plate of muffins). Where the Fraser Institute advocates for "market solutions" to public policy issues, PIA promotes public services and spaces that serve the public interest. PIA is non-partisan and does not advertise or organize for or against any political party.

PIA recently launched Revenue Reno, a campaign calling on the provincial government to fix Alberta's revenue shortage (spoiler alert: we need a sales tax coupled with a progressive income tax). Other recent campaigns have focused on issues of poverty, funding of private schools, child care, privatization and democratic reform. In each instance, PIA has been pushing for policy solutions, not to see one or another party elected. In fact, PIA is an equal opportunity irritant, encouraging citizens to exert pressure on

previous Progressive Conservative and the current New Democratic government to address long-standing public policy issues. This year, the Association will contribute \$55,000 to support PIA and its campaigns.

Elections Alberta has adopted a sweeping definition of what constitutes political advertising that includes any advertising that takes a position on an issue that a party, MLA, nominee or candidate might be associated with. Although the activities of PIA in no way resemble those of Shaping Alberta's Future, out of a surfeit of caution, PIA chose to register as a PAC, as its promotion of tax reform might conflict with a position being espoused by a political party (or, in fact, all political parties) and thus constitute political advertising.

The bottom line is that, like the Association, PIA advocates on issues and not for parties. It and the Association are non-partisan and encourage meaningful dialogue with people of all political stripes on a wide range of issues. ■

Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca.



YOUR VIEWS

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

On land-based learning

Lesley Haney

Land-based learning and forest school strategies ought to become more prominent in ALL of Alberta's curriculums; early childhood, elementary, junior, and senior!

On editorial "Approving new curriculum just the first step"

Bob Cocking

Very informative and helpful summary of the new curriculum! Thanks Jonathan!

On Viewpoints column by Michael Janz: "Quality at stake when funding cuts are considered."

Reta Yvonne

Excellent article by an Edmonton board trustee. Love the challenge that he gives to other boards and trustees!

On the ATA Magazine

Jamie Biggs-Tillotson

Have we, as a union, ever considered preparing this [ATA Magazine] as a digital download? I know my school, and family, is trying to be more conscious of waste and our footprint and the sheer volume of glossy magazines produced seems wasteful. It would likely be financially responsible to members as well. Just a thought.

Letters to the editor: We welcome letters to the editor. Please limit your submission to 300 words. Only letters bearing a first and last name, address and daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. Teachers are also asked to indicate where and what they teach. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Email managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

ON TWITTER

Maria Murray @ariajmurray:

"Teachers want what students need." Truth — I often feel like I am failing my students because even doing my best, they aren't getting what they need because of the issues we deal with. Those beautiful, complex minds deserve the best.

Jonathan Sharek @jsharek:

Irony alert: obsessing with "results," accountability, austerity, ideology & quick fixes won't improve the culture of education in the province.

Kitty Cochrane @kittycochrane:

Thank you @KristopherWells for working so hard and selflessly to help Alberta LGBTQ youth and adults feel safe, supported and wanted in schools. So glad to hear you speak @ATALocal48 Institute PD Day.

ATA48 DEHR @ATA48DEHR:

Instead of GSA being an extraordinary conversation, we want it to be an ordinary conversation. First GSA in AB, in 2000. Now 100s of GSAs at all grade levels.

Heather Quinn @HQuinnLocal37:

Early morning! Getting ready to continue the Professional Conduct Committee Orientation process. Started last night, continues today. Proud to be a part of a profession that offers transparency & clarity in the discipline process of its members!

“ We need to ensure that our students have teachers in front of them that have the capacity to teach the math that's required for today and for jobs of the future. ”

— Ontario education minister Lisa Thompson explaining why the province will develop a new regulation requiring student teachers to pass a basic math test.

CURATOLO
curatolocartoons.com



Make remembrance something you do



VIEWPOINTS

Tim Cusack
Special to the ATA News

Memory is a powerful human faculty. The recollection of a past event may evoke a range of emotional responses. We might remember feeling excited for a graduation ceremony or nervous before taking the road test to get our license. Whatever the emotional response to a memory, we know that over time a memory can fade. Therefore, our annual act of remembrance is significant.

I can recall several occasions from my childhood of lining up along the main street of my hometown with my siblings and schoolmates for the annual Remembrance Day observance. Wearing poppies, which we received from members of the Legion, we would clap for the veterans and service personnel as they marched along the route to the local cenotaph. In the mid-1970s there were still many surviving soldiers, sailors and airforce members who had served our nation during the Second World War; there were even still many alive who had served in the Great War. While I may not have fully understood the significance of these men and women at the time, it was made abundantly clear by my parents and teachers that Remembrance Day was important; that we could never forget the price of peace. That concept stuck with me.

There are many images I can still recall about those Remembrance Day observances from my youth: the chill of an autumn morning, trees bereft of leaves, an array of colourful flags fluttering in the breeze, the trill of the bugle playing the "Last Post," a reverent

crowd observing silence for the fallen, the lament of bagpipes, the snap of a salute at the sound of "Reveille," tears on the faces of those who had returned, still more tears for those who had not.

As a teen I was in scouts and was able to march in the annual parade. Following each year's observance, I would take great interest in hearing the veterans' stories and took great delight in thanking them for their service. I recall a certain naval vet who, in asking about the various badges on my uniform, said that one day I might choose to serve in the navy.

Acts of kindness, service and being a leader for peace can speak louder than words.

Upon joining the navy in 1985, I became profoundly aware of what being in service to one's country means. I came to better understand why we are called to remember those who served in past conflicts and why we dedicate time to commemorate the sacrifice of those who died, those who returned, those on the home front. To this day I make a point of hearing the voices of those who served Canada in its time of need. I heed the refrain in the "Act of Remembrance" which, recited at the annual observance, states: *We will remember them.*

As a teacher, I know it is important to participate in school-based observances. When speaking at school assemblies and sharing my experiences as to why Remembrance Day is so important to Canadians, I strive to make meaningful connections to the importance of peacemaking, global citizenship and the need to serve the greater good of society.

I remind students of the challenge issued by John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields," that the torch is ours to hold high. That remembrance is a sacred national trust with those who laid down their lives that we may live and fully enjoy our many blessings. We must not, however, take such blessings for granted.

Today our world is volatile, uncertain, complex and often presents ambiguity that demands our students become critical thinkers who can solve problems, communicate, collaborate and find creative and innovative ways to persevere and overcome the challenges they will face. When I speak at school observances, I close by issuing the challenge for students to make remembrance something they *do*, not just think about. Acts of kindness, service and being a leader for peace can speak louder than words. Holding high the torch is our collective call to action as global citizens. *Lest we forget.*

As you read the "Act of Remembrance" please ask yourself, "How might I make remembrance something I do versus something I just think about?"

Act of Remembrance*

They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them.
We will remember them. ■

*An excerpt from "For the Fallen," a poem by Laurence Binyon

Tim Cusack is a teacher and administrator serving with Edmonton Catholic Schools and is an officer in the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve.

This...

from ATA President Greg Jeffery



A life lesson found beyond curriculum



On Oct. 10, a young girl from Beaumont walked across the stage at M.E. LaZerte High School in Edmonton and received a diploma.

Odd to receive a diploma in October, you're thinking? Maybe, but it was also joyous, generous, inspirational and bittersweet. You see, the recipient of that diploma is only eight years old and has a rare form of brain cancer and an inoperable brain tumour. Her name is Janaya, and her mother is Amanda Chekowski.

Their story has caught the attention of many Albertans. One of them was teacher Angie Tomlinson. When she heard about Janaya's bucket-list wish to graduate from high school, she brought it to the attention of her principal, Kim Backs. Tomlinson, Backs and the rest of the staff and students at M.E. LaZerte made it happen and, from all of the media reports I've seen, it was a spectacular day for Janaya.

Gracious deeds like these make me very proud to be a teacher.

In my eyes, it was also a spectacular day for teachers and public education.

Teaching is a highly relational profession, but the relationships teachers form aren't restricted to students and core subjects. Teachers engage their students and communities, and vice versa. The relationships between them intertwine and have helped strengthen public education and our society over the years.

Deeds like the one Backs and her staff undertook to make a dream come true for Janaya and her mom happen in schools across Alberta way more often than is reported in the media. They are not a part of curriculum. When they happen in our schools, they teach students and the rest of us valuable lessons in compassion and gratitude. Gracious deeds like these make me very proud to be a teacher. ■

I welcome your comments — contact me at greg.jeffery@ata.ab.ca.



STORIES AND PHOTOS WANTED

If something newsworthy is going on in your school, district or local, please let us know. We will also consider articles, photos and cartoons. Please email tips and submissions to managing editor

Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Alberta educator wins international award

Education International Special to the ATA News

University of Alberta researcher Curtis Riep is the winner of the Albert Shanker Education Award.

Every four years, Education International (EI) awards the Albert Shanker Education Award to a teacher or other education employee in recognition of an outstanding personal contribution to education. The EI award celebrates "professional action [that reflects] a commitment to educational excellence and the promotion of democracy, social justice and equality through education."



Curtis Riep
Albert Shanker Education Award winner

Riep is a PhD candidate and teaching assistant at the University of Alberta. In 2014 he conducted groundbreaking research that helped promote quality public education in Ghana by shining a spotlight on the increasing privatization of education in Ghana and the shortcomings of so-called private "low-cost" schools.

Riep said he's grateful for the international recognition, but added that he hopes it leads to greater acknowledgment of the importance of public education.

"It is a fundamental human right and a moral imperative," he said, "that is currently under threat in various corners of the world due to the growing

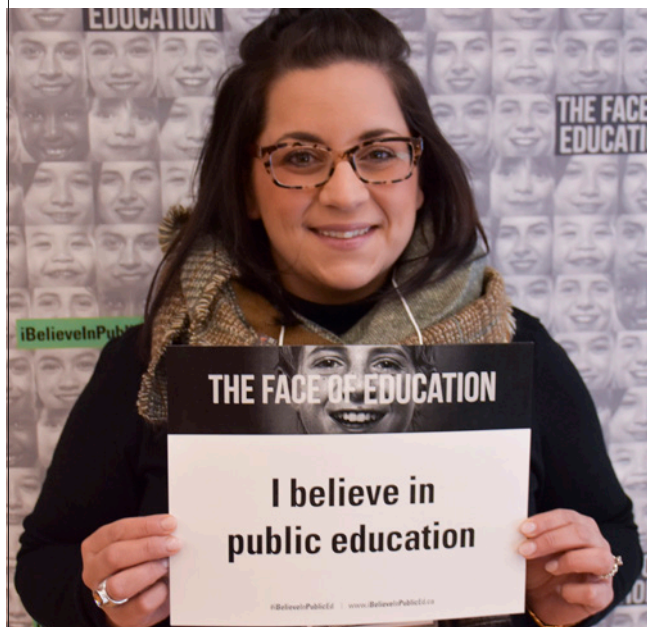
involvement and influence of commercial actors that are prioritizing profits before students and teachers."

Riep's work extended beyond West Africa when he conducted research on the Affordable Private Education Center, a chain of private high schools in the Philippines. His research contributed to the success of EI's global response against the privatization and commercialization of education.

In 2016, Riep conducted research into Bridge International Academies (BIA), a for-profit school chain operating illegally in Uganda. This research provided evidence for a successful effort by the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) to convince the Ugandan government to act against BIA and announce the chain's closure.

During his field research Riep was arrested due to fabricated allegations made by BIA. While the allegations were dismissed and deemed to be "without merit," BIA continued harassing Riep. Despite the threats and attempted intimidation, Riep concluded the research. The information he uncovered has been critical in the campaign to counter the privatization of public education.

According to the organizations that nominated him — the Canadian Teachers' Federation and UNATU — "over the last half a dozen years Riep has made a contribution to quality publicly funded public education throughout the world that most could not hope to make in a lifetime. His personal contribution to ensuring all children have access to quality, inclusive, public education regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, or the country they call home is outstanding." ■



Show of support

Elected representatives took some time from a recent meeting of local presidents and district representatives to show their support for the Association's Pledge for Public Education campaign.

Topleft: Marjorie Charles, president, Northern Lights Local No. 15

Topright: Peter MacKay, North West district representative, and Rhonda Kelly, president, Grande Prairie and District Catholic Teachers Local No. 42

Bottomleft: Sandra Haltiner, president, Edmonton Catholic Teachers Local No. 54

Bottomright: Valerie Browne, president, Medicine Hat Local No. 1

Teachers want time and support for curriculum implementation



EXECUTIVE REPORT

Phil McRae
ATA Associate
Co-ordinator of Research

Alberta Education is in the process of rewriting the K–12 school curriculum. Six subjects and all grades are under review and will be rewritten simultaneously in both English and French. Alberta Education's goal is to have the K–4 curriculum in six subjects approved by the minister by December 2018. The government hasn't finalized implementation timelines for the new curriculum but is considering partial implementation in September 2019 and full implementation of the six subjects in K–4 by September 2020.

This is the most ambitious and far-reaching curriculum redesign in the recent history of education in Alberta, and so the Alberta Teachers' Association conducted research surveys (in English and French, as well as a stratified random sampling of the profession) in October 2018 to gather the perspectives of K–4 teachers across the province. More than 2,800 teachers made their voices crystal clear on the essential conditions necessary for a successful implementation of this new K–4 curriculum.

Teachers were equally enthusiastic and concerned that the essential conditions for a successful implementation may not be in place for either their students or themselves as teaching professionals. The key findings outlined in this research report speak immediately to the need for an implementation timeline that is longer than six months to one year, and the importance of limited field testing for rural and urban teachers before the new curriculum

is made mandatory for all Alberta students. It also includes thousands of qualitative comments detailing specific resources and supports that are needed.

Overall, the key findings showed that Alberta's K–4 teachers are excited about new programs of study defined by less content and greater flexibility, and look forward to their successful implementation. However, 89 per cent of teachers in this large representative

This is the most ambitious and far-reaching curriculum redesign in the recent history of education in Alberta.

sample believe that six months to one year is not a reasonable time frame for implementation of a new curriculum. A majority (76 per cent) feel that implementation should be done over a one- to three-year period.

While 47 per cent of K–4 teachers stated that they feel ready to implement the new curriculum by 2020, readiness was broadly interpreted, as reflected in some qualitative comments. A review of this data point indicated that comments associated with readiness include a sentiment of professionalism already in place to adapt to any new curriculum (or the myriad of complexities already in their learning environments for that matter) despite resource and time concerns, or a desire to move ahead with new programs of study given that curriculum redesign has been ongoing for several years.

While 62 per cent of K–4 teachers are aware of the vision for the new curriculum, only 43 per cent have seen a copy of the draft curriculum. This suggests a need for clear and

transparent communication by Alberta Education to teachers over the next several months along with cohesive professional learning opportunities from the education partners to meet teachers' diverse needs.

This study indicates that a majority (83 per cent) of K–4 teachers have not yet discussed the new curriculum with their colleagues (including their principal) or prepared (94 per cent) for its implementation. This is not a surprising finding given that the new draft curriculum was only first publicly released in the middle of July 2018.

Of the K–4 teachers in this sample, 92 per cent have not yet met with central office colleagues to discuss or to help prepare for the new curriculum implementation. If the K–4 curriculum is to be approved (in some form) by the minister in less than two months, these data indicate that many conversations remain to be had across the system so that K–4 teachers are fully aware of the design and structure of a new concept-based curriculum, and have an opportunity to give further voice to the practical and tangible resources and supports necessary for successful implementation.

Respondents identified time as both a resource and a concern. As a resource, teachers need time to review the new curriculum, adjust to new expectations, and create resources, plans and cross-curricular connections. As a concern, respondents cited the implementation timeline and the potential for a dramatic rise in work intensification.

K–4 teachers have a strong desire for adequate resources and supports to be delivered on scheduled non-instructional or professional development days (87 per cent) and through face-to-face workshops (78 per cent), collaborative unit and lesson planning (77 per cent), and resource selection and development (57 per cent).

The French version of the survey

revealed concerns similar to those expressed in the English version, with a notable difference being that French first-language respondents voiced greater concern about the availability of French resources and the lack of preparation for implementation. Another dimension of need identified by respondents is for resources and supports related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge and stories, as well as resources on contextual perspectives of Indigenous people.

In conclusion, K–4 teachers are enthusiastic about the new curriculum and are looking forward to the long-awaited updates to the programs of study. However, they have also expressed some very specific needs and have legitimate questions and concerns that must be taken into consideration as soon as possible. The entire education system needs to focus its energies on supporting the teachers and school leaders who are closest to K–4 students on a daily basis if the new curriculum implementation is to be successful. ■

Who is responsible for curriculum?

Alberta Education has the ultimate responsibility for curriculum and has a department dedicated to supporting development and implementation.

The Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia receive government grants annually to support curriculum implementation across the province.

The Alberta Teachers' Association supports curriculum by offering professional development through its workshop program, 21 specialist councils, various committees, conferences and events, and the ATA library.

Alberta organization seeks technology donations

Teachers lead hurricane relief for Caribbean island

Jen Janzen
ATA News Staff

It's been a little more than a year since Hurricane Maria ravaged the Caribbean island of Dominica, destroying or damaging 90 per cent of all of its school infrastructure. Now, after being out of school for more than six months, many children are back in the classroom.

"The challenge now is that they don't have the technology resources they need," says Maurice Hollingsworth, a retired teacher who is president of IT for Dominica, an Alberta-based organization that has been equipping Dominican schools with technology for the last 20 years.

"We're talking huge dollars, well beyond our means to support," he said.

Which is why the organization is soliciting donations by working with industry contacts, school districts and ATA locals (Palliser Local No. 19, which is Hollingsworth's local, has been a long-time supporter of the organization).

The team is seeking tablets, computers and other front-end equipment that is in new to "good-used" condition, as well as items like tables and switches that allow the computer equipment to be used.

Steve Hypolite, a principal of a secondary school in Dominica, is in Alberta this month touring schools to see how digital technology can be implemented and, just a few days into his trip, he says it's been "enlightening." As Hypolite points out, the hurricane's damage was severe, but if there is a silver lining, it's that the country gets to start from scratch with its technology program.

"We've been making progress in moving away from traditional teaching methods and the hurricane put us back," he said. "I'm getting an idea now of what might be the best equipment we can acquire."

IT for Dominica normally recruits ATA members to travel to Dominica each summer to deliver professional development seminars to train Dominican teachers on how to integrate technology into the curriculum, but



Dominican principal Steve Hypolite explores technology with students during a recent visit to an Alberta school.

because of the extensive hurricane damage, this past summer was the first one in the organization's 20 years of operation that it didn't send teachers to the island.

"It would be meaningless to arrive to teach about technology when we're still gathering it," Hollingsworth said. ■

Learn more about IT for Dominica

www.itfordominica.com

www.facebook.com/ITforDominica

www.twitter.com/itfordominica

ATA International Co

Helping teachers change the world

The Alberta Teachers' Association's International Cooperation Program supports the organization's belief that Alberta teachers can effect change around the world. Through close working relationships with external organizations, the Association enables members to experience rich professional development opportunities in unique educational environments like Uganda and Guatemala.

To apply or get more details on these projects, visit teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Programs and Services > International Cooperation.

Masulita, Uganda Professional Development Project



SUPPLIED

Taryn Deeble gives out balloons at Masulita Children's Village, the orphanage where she stayed as part of a contingent of Alberta teachers.

Africa visit brings surprising result

Taryn Deeble

This summer I was fortunate enough to participate in the Masulita, Uganda project through the Alberta Teachers' Association. Since arriving home the end of July, family and friends have constantly been asking the question, "So, how was Africa?" It's difficult to put into words how much this experience has meant.

Do I tell them about the orphanage in Masulita where we lived for two

weeks, sharing our free time with children who have come from the streets, impoverished and malnourished? Do I tell them about the schools where we worked with dedicated teachers who barely have the basic resources to teach with, such as pencils and paper for their students, or chalk for a pock-marked chalkboard, let alone any time to themselves when they live and work at the school, usually away from their families? Do I tell them about the students who greatly desire the education they are receiving, and work incredibly hard to master their skills because their families are paying a significant fee for them to attend their "publicly funded" school?

Do I tell them how easy it was to forge a friendship with the people I was privileged to work with, because of their generosity and eagerness to share a part of themselves with me? Do I tell them how happy a people with so little can be? Or, do I tell them how I hope to be just a little bit better, as an educator, as a friend and as a human being?

I think the thing I found most surprising about this experience is that I got so much out of it, when I thought my purpose was to give. ■

Taryn Deeble spent last year as a literacy support teacher at Tevie Miller Heritage School in Edmonton. She's now a substitute teacher in B.C.

A life-changing opportunity

Craig Fullarton

Henry van Dyke once said, "Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best."

After being selected to participate in this year's Masulita development project, this quote has never had so much meaning. Traveling to Masulita, Uganda is a lesson in humility. The community and the people there have experienced hardships we cannot fathom. Despite this, they smile, welcome visitors with open arms, and share the little they have to show the gratitude they have for the help being provided.

It is a lesson in resourcefulness. This is teaching stripped back to its purest form, with no technology, supplies or even an enclosed classroom. Teachers definitely do have to use the talents they possess to provide welcoming learning environments, engaging lessons and even the supplies needed.

It provides reason for hope. Teachers in Masulita and the surrounding district are willing to go the extra mile (quite literally) to build their own knowledge and to help

their students. They are so appreciative of the help and support provided by the Alberta Teachers' Association. To see more than 150 educators attend a weekend symposium funded by the ATA, travelling large distances on the back of a boda (bicycle or motorcycle taxi) to be there, gives hope that the future of Ugandan children is in good hands.

Yet they still need support. They still need to know that people outside of their beautiful country care. They still need to know they are not alone in their efforts.

I cannot thank the ATA enough for this life-changing opportunity. To be fully immersed in the culture and daily life of the community and to see the natural beauty of the country are experiences I will never forget. This trip allowed me to develop

This trip allowed me to develop new relationships that will continue to flourish.

new relationships that will continue to flourish, both closer to home with the team members I had the privilege of travelling with, and others who are half a world away, who were so welcoming and hospitable for our stay. I certainly feel that I came back to Canada with a renewed determination to take action and challenge my students to seek ways in which they can make a difference to help Ugandans sing their song. ■

Craig Fullarton teaches Grade 2 at Ecole James S. McCormick School in Lacombe.



SUPPLIED

Students at Kiziba Mixed Primary School in Uganda show off letters they received from students in Lacombe.

Cooperation Program



African students demonstrate their hockey skills with mini-sticks.

Visit to Africa brings new knowledge and friendship

Matthew Oostvogels

The Masulita project made it apparent that no matter where we may live — northern Alberta, a big city or rural Uganda — a teacher is a teacher! We all want the same thing: a high quality education that provides the best outcomes for our students.

While in Masulita, I witnessed first-hand Alberta teachers providing professional development to a crowded room on a Saturday afternoon. The excitement in room showed how much the Ugandan teachers desired and appreciated this PD.

While teaching in two schools, I experienced a beautiful culture and learned from the teachers that surrounded me. When I had an opportunity to implement lessons with the children, my co-teacher also learned new techniques. The transfer of pedagogical knowledge and friendship, both to and from, will definitely help me as I continue in the field of education.

Living at the UWESCO (Uganda Women's Effort to Save Children) Orphanage, I experienced the phenomenal impact that this organization has on children who are orphaned in the area.

We all want the same thing: a high quality education that provides the best outcomes for our students.

The large groups of children running to the front of our residence became commonplace throughout our stay, which would prompt us to take out simple supplies like pencil colours and sheets of paper, or balloons and soccer balls in exchange for the biggest smiles! As we entered the gate after teaching at one of the local schools, we'd be greeted by children running to hold our hand with those same smiles on their faces.

Although the project is over, I know in my heart I will return and encourage others to apply as this has truly been a life-changing experience that I will treasure. ■

Matthew Oostvogels is a university studies instructor at Northern Lakes College in Peace River.

Change For Children — Guatemala

Importance of quality education highlighted by volunteer experience

Jessica Kornder, Steve Mazerolle, Angela Mendez, Colette Mondor and Michael Plouffe

What an amazing adventure! On July 6, 2018 a team of teachers from Alberta and colleagues from Change for Children met in Guatemala City. Our next stop was the Comitancillo region in the western highlands of Guatemala.

In the communities of San Isidro, El Calvario and Chamaque we explored the following educational topics: technology to diversify learning; student investigation around culture, productivity and economical development; and communication and language.

We gained awareness of ways to adapt curriculum to context and hope to integrate such valuable community projects into our own classrooms.

Chamaque

In the rural village of Chamaque, we were asked to support teachers in developing a school project around the curricular outcome of investigating culture, development and productivity to address community needs. Our dedicated colleagues tasked their students with investigating problems and solutions while we supported strategies for integrating cross-curricular subject matter into project-based learning.

In the end, students learned the art of Mayan basket and mat weaving from a local artisan (one of the last in her community), using recycled and natural materials, and then presented and sold their products at a school event, to which the community was invited. The teachers were enthusiastic about the project and are already planning how to expand



SUPPLIED

Alberta teachers who travelled to Guatemala returned with a renewed sense of the importance of providing quality education to all the world's children.

the opportunities for student learning and continue this as a yearly event.

Meeting such strong teachers and dedicated, welcoming students will leave a lasting impact on us. We gained awareness of ways to adapt curriculum to context and hope to integrate such valuable community projects into our own classrooms.

San Isidro

In the communities surrounding Comitancillo, students learn Spanish as a second language — their first language is Mayan Mam. Supporting bilingual education in San Isidro was challenging because students were very shy. Typically having few outside visitors to their community, they were reluctant to communicate with us.

We worked in the pre-primary (4–5 year olds), primary (5–6 year olds) and the Grade 1 class (6–7 year olds). Alongside local teachers, we worked on language learning strategies such as active participation, literacy centres and using manipulatives to help language learning. As teachers have few resources or materials, we tried to use and collect things found in their environment such as sticks and rocks for counting and making letters. The kids had a lot of fun collecting these materials, and the teachers were happy to have something concrete to work with.

GUATEMALA continued on page 8

ATA-CHANGE FOR CHILDREN 2019 Teaching Tour

Guatemala | July 6–21, 2019

Spend two weeks in Guatemala assisting with the professional development of fellow teachers in the areas of bilingual education, technology for learning and hands-on education for livelihoods.



Applications are now being accepted

The goal of the exchange is to improve the quality of education available to marginalized Maya-Mam Indigenous students in the western highlands of Guatemala. You will work one on one with teachers in the classroom to build capacity for differentiated instruction and engaging teaching strategies that improve student learning outcomes. You will have the opportunity to learn about approaches and challenges to teaching in remote Indigenous communities and the critical role of education in development.

- Travel and living expenses are covered by the ATA.
- Spanish language ability preferred.

To apply, visit teachers.ab.ca>For Members>Programs and Services>International Cooperation>Change for Children 2019

For more information, email adrienne@changeforchildren.org.

An ATA International Cooperation Program

Application Deadline: December 15, 2018



MASULITA, UGANDA
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

**ATA
INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION
PROGRAM**

The Alberta Teachers' Association

Volunteer for the 2019 ATA-Masulita, Uganda Professional Development Project. It's a professional opportunity for Alberta teachers to co-teach with Ugandan educators in a government primary/secondary school in Masulita or within the Street Children's Project. Open to teachers who have completed three years of full-time teaching in Alberta before the overseas assignment commences.

For information, email Jodi Rosvold at zeeke78@hotmail.com.

For an application form, visit the ATA website teachers.ab.ca and click on My ATA>Programs and Services>International Cooperation>ATA Masulita Uganda Professional Development. Travel and living expenses of participants are covered by the ATA.

Application Deadline: Dec. 1, 2018

Council approves election readiness plan

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Oct. 25–26 at Barnett House in Edmonton

1. Approved in principle, and referred to Finance Committee for review and costing, a proposed list of programs on which the Association should focus in 2019/20.
2. Approved the Association's 2019 Election Readiness Plan for implementation and an expenditure of up to \$255,000 from the Special Emergency Fund for activities outlined in the plan.
3. Consistent with section 31(2) of the *Teaching Profession Act*, extended the deadlines for the commencement of two hearings of the Professional Conduct Committee.
4. Approved that the Committee on Convention Review, in consultation with the executive secretary and the coordinator, Professional Development, develop for presentation and approval by Provincial Executive Council a process plan for validating the committee's draft report, completing a final report and implementing approved recommendations, with estimated costs of up to \$5,000 allocated from Contingency.
5. Named members to the Election Rules Appeal Panel and authorized the executive secretary to appoint one of those members as chair.

6. Authorized the executive secretary to conclude contracts for the purpose of facilitating online voting on matters arising from central table bargaining processes with costs charged as an overexpenditure to the Teacher Welfare–Bargaining–Negotiations budget line.
7. Approved the addition of up to 1.0 FTE editing capacity for a term not to exceed 10 months, with costs authorized as an overexpenditure from the appropriate staff budgeting line.
8. Approved the addition of 1.0 FTE communications capacity for a term not to exceed 10 months, with costs authorized as an overexpenditure from the appropriate staff budgeting line.
9. Notwithstanding administrative guideline 31.9.11, approved that all interested members of Council may attend the CTF Women's Symposium and Women Deliver Conference 2019 taking place in Vancouver from June 3–6, 2019.
10. Approved the terms of reference for the trustee of the Northern Rivers Teachers' Convention Association, approved the constitution of the Northern Rivers Teachers' Convention Association and amended the constitutions of the Central East Alberta Teachers' Convention Association and the Northeast Teachers' Convention Association to allow for their dissolution on April 1, 2019.
11. Approved the Guidelines for Local Collective Bargaining 2018.
12. Named a member of Council to the Political Engagement Committee and named field members to serve on Association committees and other external committees.
13. Ratified a collective agreement with the Executive Staff Association extending to September 2020. ■

GUATEMALA

continued from page 7

We also left with some strategies from the teachers in San Isidro that we are excited to try out in our classrooms.

El Calvario

The focus in El Calvario was to introduce staff and students to seven tablets and one RACHEL, a remote area community hotspot for education and learning. RACHEL is a small, portable, plug-and-play server that stores open educational resources and makes that content available offline through a wireless connection. With this technology we were able to provide a vast library of digital content (books, games, videos, textbooks and offline versions of websites) to a school that had no Internet access.

We were joined by Mundo Possible, a Guatemalan non-profit group that provides training for RACHEL. Following the one-day training, teachers had time to familiarize themselves with the technology and digital content. Together we looked at how they might integrate this new tool into their lessons through some more creative teaching approaches.

We were amazed at how quickly the teachers embraced the technology. We were able to support two of the teachers in introducing the technology to their students. After having spent a

week in the El Calvario classrooms with limited resources, distracting sounds and rote learning, we watched as students donned headphones and took control of their own learning.

Back In Alberta

After having time to take a step back and reflect on our collective journey to Comitancillo, up and into the hills of San Isidro, El Calvario and Chamaque, it is apparent that we have each returned with a deepened sense of solidarity with our colleagues at home and abroad. We've also returned with a renewed sense of importance in attaining the goal of providing quality education for all children around the globe. Although it was challenging at times, it was an amazing experience, and we would encourage those who are thinking of embarking on an experience like this to do so.

We recognize how fortunate we are to teach in a province where we have well-established teacher training institutions, a plethora of accessible learning resources and multiple professional development opportunities, all of which help us bring quality public education to Alberta children. Volunteering with this project in Guatemala, in partnership with Change for Children and the ATA, allowed us to have a small part in working towards achieving the same goal in another corner of the world. However, there is still more work to do. ■

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NOVEMBER 15-16
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Learn about the latest topics in agriculture with two days of exciting presentations regarding the impacts agriculture has on our economy, culture and environment.

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REGISTER NOW: agricultureforlife.ca/2018-education-symposium

NOTICES AND EVENTS

Fellowship recognizes northern innovator

Nominations are now open for the Telus World of Science – Edmonton Science Fellowship Award, which recognizes an outstanding researcher or innovator based in northern Alberta (home residence north of 52 degrees).

The awardee will be an individual early in his or her career (under age 40) who has demonstrated outstanding contributions to science, technology, mathematics, medicine or engineering. Contributions can take one or more of many forms, including research, teaching, entrepreneurship, communications and innovation.

The fellowship includes a monetary award of \$5,000 and recognition of the nominee's contribution(s) through the promotion of his or her work by

Telus World of Science in Edmonton.

The application deadline is Nov. 15. Candidates can apply themselves or be nominated.

Details are available at <http://telusworldofscienceedmonton.ca>.

Award program celebrates environmental excellence

Do you know an individual, group or business that has gone above and beyond in the protection of the environment? Nominations are now open for the Emerald Awards, which recognize outstanding environmental achievements in several categories that encompass large and small businesses, individuals, not-for-profit associations, community groups, youth and governments.

Nominations can be made at <http://emerald.foundation.ca>.

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Travel

UKRAINE, POLAND and MOLDOVA TOUR May 29-June 16 2019. For details, call Sharon 780-424-6481 or 1-800-203-2514 or email EuropaTravel@shaw.ca.

Cuba, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Colombia — Escorted Travel the Civilized Way! We took the "hurry" out of touring. Leisurely paced, small groups, unique experiences and terrific value balancing nature, history and culture. www.thediscoverytours.ca, 1-800-417-0250, Monday–Friday.

Wanted

What is climate change education and how should it be taught?

Research is being undertaken to investigate teachers' important perspectives on climate change education. This research is being conducted by Lakehead University, Living for a Sustainable Future, funding from SSHRC. Available in English and French. Please contribute: www.bit.ly/Isfclimatesurvey

Native Education classes - K-5. Nanabush Legends with Puppets. \$250 / class. Email eaglesend53@gmail.com

Disclaimer The Alberta Teachers' Association does not necessarily endorse the products or services presented in paid advertisements or in the Notices and Events column.

To Advertise

For advertising information, contact the advertising manager: 780-447-9417 direct 1-800-232-7208 toll free email: advertising@ata.ab.ca.

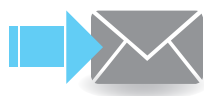
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Full-year and short-term exchanges for teachers and administrators.

Deadline is early December. Visit ieep.ca for applications and details.

The Alberta Teachers' Association



HOTEL RATES

A directory of special rates for Alberta Teachers' Association members at various Alberta hotels is available online at www.teachers.ab.ca under News and Info > Publications.

Contact 403-265-2672 in Calgary or toll free at 1-800-332-1280 for a hard copy.

Auto for sale

2015 Nissan Murano Platinum AWD

Features: Leather seats, front seats heated and air-conditioned, back seats heated. 360 camera. Includes winter tires on rims.

Colour: White

Engine: V6/3.5L

Transmission: Automatic AWD

Kilometres: 121,000

This is a sealed bid auction, so please mail your bid letter in a **sealed envelope marked Attn: Tracy Pohl – Car Bid**, Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5N 2R1. Bids will be accepted until 5 p.m., **December 15.**

For more information, contact Tracy Pohl at tracy.pohl@ata.ab.ca or by telephone: 780-447-9482 or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free), ext 482. The Alberta Teachers' Association reserves the right to refuse the highest bid if it is deemed to be inadequate.



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FACULTY OF HEALTH
School of Occupational Therapy

SUBSTANCE USE AMONG CANADIAN PROFESSIONALS

Invitation for Research Participants

Let's talk openly about your use of substances.

In our recent study, a group of professionals shared that in the past year:

- 92.5% used caffeine
- 24.1% used cannabis
- 83.1% used alcohol
- 4.5% used cocaine
- 56.5% used pain suppressants

Anonymously share your experiences and perspectives.

Participation options include the following components:

- a) an online survey
- b) daily tracking using an App
- c) telephone interview

For more information about this study, participation options, and how to participate, visit dal.ca/sites/substance-use/research.html

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Trip Cancellation and Interruption Protection for Alberta Teachers.



Trip Cancellation and Interruption coverage helps protect teachers all year long against unforeseen circumstances that may prevent or interrupt a trip.

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Pre-existing medical conditions may affect your coverage under this plan. Pre-existing medical conditions may be covered if the condition has been stable for 90 days prior to the date of purchase of your travel arrangements.

Annual Coverage

This travel insurance has an additional feature which automatically provides for the issuance of a new policy upon the expiry date of this policy. This new policy issued for a period of 365 days commencing on the effective date (September 1) based on your previous policy year's plan. Coverage under the new policy will begin on the effective date of the new policy (immediately following expiration of the previous policy), unless you provide notice of termination to the Administrator within 60 days from the first premium deduction for that policy year.



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Trip Cancellation and Interruption Protection for Alberta Teachers is offered through Morgex Insurance ("Morgex"), a division of Johnson Inc., a licensed insurance intermediary. This product is underwritten by Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Company of Canada ("RSA"), and administered by Johnson Inc. RSA and Johnson share common ownership. The eligibility requirements, terms, conditions, limitations and exclusions, which apply to the described coverage are as set out in the policy. Policy wordings prevail.*Coverage for Trip Cancellation begins the day of booking your trip provided your insurance is in effect. If a trip is booked prior to Trip Cancellation insurance being in effect, coverage for that trip will begin the day that the insurance premium is paid and the policy is issued. ¹Unless stable for a period of 90 days before travel purchase, coverage is excluded for trip cancellation/interruption relating to pre-existing medical conditions of the following persons: you, an immediate family member, a travel companion, a travel companion's immediate family member, a business associate, a close friend and/or your host at destination. Please refer to your insurance policy for the definition of "stable". ²All amounts shown are in Canadian currency. Rates indicated are annual (September 1, 2018 through to August 30, 2019) and exclusive of applicable provincial taxes. If coverage is purchased mid-term, rates payable will be pro-rated according to the number of months remaining before the next policy year (September 1st of each year).

Find your tribe

MOOT POINTS

Nicola Ramsey
Special to the ATA News

Somewhere during our student teaching, we decided we should form an organization. Someone had the bright idea that it should be a sublocal of the Alberta Teachers' Association. That led to the birth of the Secondary English Language Arts Council (SELAC) – a group of starry-eyed University of Alberta students who dreamed of becoming high school English teachers. Shortly after SELAC was founded, it earned its street cred at a subject-specific competition between departments. Our bunch of English majors (mostly from northerly regions) roundly trounced the would-be shop teachers in the nail hammering competition.

Just fresh from student teaching, we had one year of university left before we would have students of our own. We were enthusiastic. We were energetic. We were eager to inspire. We couldn't wait to "make a difference."

We met regularly, planned social events for students and professors, discussed job openings and shared hopes, motivations and dreams. After graduation, we attended the ATA English Language Arts Specialist Council conference at the Banff Springs Hotel where we met

our senior colleagues and made believe we knew what "being a teacher" was all about. Shortly after that we spent a long weekend rodeoing and camping. And then we went our separate ways. SELAC disbanded but its members went on. We became English teachers.

We taught in remote northern villages and urban centres, online and face to face, in public schools and private ones. We coached sports and sponsored clubs and took kids on trips and volunteered. Some branched off into drama, world religions, social studies, math and administration. Some furthered their education. Some took time off to raise their kids. And through the decades, we persevered.

Although we mostly lived far apart, we stayed in touch. Sometimes we shared teaching ideas, discipline strategies, funny stories from the trenches, unit plans and resources. Occasionally we held reunions. More than that – we shared in each other's lives. Marriages, births, new jobs, moves, graduations, new homes, travels, grandchildren. Retirement. We suffered together with family issues, aging parents and mourned deaths, including the loss of our beloved Donna, who died much too soon.

This summer, 38 years later, at the edge of a sleepy northern lake, we met again to share good food, reminisce and talk about travel and books and curriculum change. We shared what we were doing in retirement, from supporting a family of Syrian refugees to volunteering with the local Legion. We talked about kids and parents. Thought-provoking



SUPPLIED

The Secondary English Language Arts Council began as a group of University of Alberta students who dreamed of becoming high school English teachers. While the council has long been disbanded, its members have remained lifelong friends for 38 years and counting.

conversations and new memories.

All teachers need a tribe of colleagues who mentor and support them through their journey. SELAC was my first such tribe, although it was not my last.

Was teaching what we dreamed it would be? Did we make the connections with students we hoped for? Did we inspire? Did we "make a difference"? That is not for me to say. But as I looked at the faces of these lovely women as they sat laughing around the table, I am glad I found them. I am glad I found my tribe. They made a difference in my life.

And I bet most of them can still hammer a nail faster than any shop teacher. ■

Nicola Ramsey recently retired from teaching after 18 years with the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. She lives in Slave Lake.

Moot Points is your chance to write about a funny incident, a lesson learned or a poignant experience related to teaching. Please email articles to managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

THE FACE OF EDUCATION

We believe in public education

The Alberta Teachers' Association is encouraging teachers, parents and other concerned citizens to show their support for public education by participating in the Pledge for Public Education campaign.

Public education provides students from all backgrounds with learning experiences to discover and develop their potential, their passions and their gifts, allowing them to make significant contributions to their communities.

Public education prepares learners for life, and Alberta's public education system* is widely recognized as one of the best systems in the world.

We believe in public education and we believe in providing students with the best opportunities for success.

* In Alberta, public education refers to public, separate and francophone schools.

The pledge for public education

- I believe all students should be able to learn in small-sized classes.
- I believe all students with special learning needs should receive the supports and resources they require for success.
- I believe all students should have the opportunity to benefit from fully funded junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs.
- I believe all students should have access to a teacher-certificated school counsellor in their school.

I believe in public education

How can you support the pledge?

1. Visit www.IBelieveInPublicEd.ca and add your name.
2. Encourage your colleagues, friends and family to sign on.
3. Share your support for the pledge on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, using #IBelieveInPublicEd.

What's next?

This fall we are collecting the names and email contacts for supporters who believe in public education and support small class sizes, supports for special needs, full-day kindergarten and access to counselling services. Later, we will contact supporters with information about actions they can take to advocate for students and to voice their support for public education.

Stay tuned for more information as the campaign rolls out.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

iBelieveInPublicEd.ca