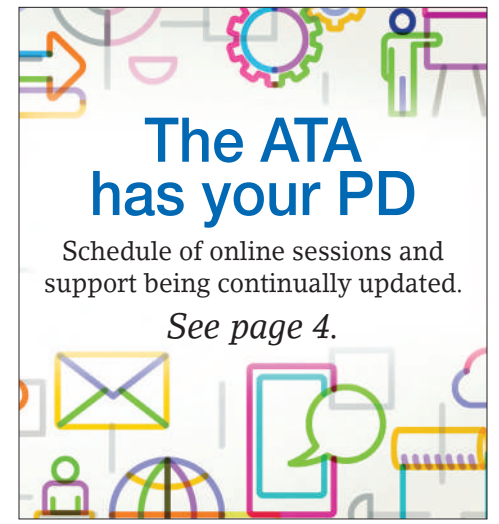




Off Script
with ATA President Jason Schilling

See page 4.



The ATA has your PD
Schedule of online sessions and support being continually updated.
See page 4.

ATA NEWS

May 19, 2020 | Volume 54, Number 13

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



KIM CLEMENT

Emily Berg Noskiye, daughter of ATA staff officer Andrea Berg, tests a new rainbow crosswalk that was recently painted at Barnett House in Edmonton. At its April meeting, Provincial Executive Council directed that the pattern be added to the parking lot to demonstrate the Association's commitment to inclusivity.



Spending vs austerity

Pandemic shows the value of public services.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on page 2.



Demise of pet lizard provides key lesson

Advocacy efforts make a difference, even if they seem to do nothing.

Read Dennis Theobald's Q&A on page 2.



ARA goes virtual

Scaled down version of annual assembly to take place in August.

See story on page 5.



Carrington delivers

Trauma expert shares message of encouragement and connection.

See story on page 6; additional comments on page 17.

COVID is teaching us the value of public services



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Former prime minister Stephen Harper has written an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* arguing for government austerity in the wake of the COVID pandemic. The argument goes that governments will have taken on high spending in reaction to the pandemic that will create a public debt crisis needing to be solved.

It is important to pay attention to what Mr. Harper is saying on this topic because he was recently appointed by Premier Jason Kenney to sit alongside a slew of bankers and CEOs on a council to advise on Alberta's economic recovery.

Harper, as he writes in his op-ed, recognizes that conservative politicians will need to push back against growing popular support for public spending.

He's correct on this point: people are gaining a greater appreciation for public services during this pandemic. And how. Places with strong public services have fared much better in the crisis. Public services have risen to the challenges and public services are saving lives.

Responding successfully to this pandemic required jurisdictions to have plans in place and the ability to quickly

and effectively marshal resources. I believe that Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services were prepared for this and did a very good job responding. We have received good advice from the chief medical officer of health and her team, and AHS had good stocks of personal protective equipment and other supplies. Public health preparations were critical to set us up for success.

Similarly, our universal, free health-care system was set up to ensure that everyone had good access to health care, including free access to testing. The public health system was able to access

“ Responding successfully to this pandemic required jurisdictions to have plans in place and the ability to quickly and effectively marshal resources. ”

testing supplies and people who needed to be tested were tested. Contrast this with the United States where there is a high degree of variance in levels of access to health care. Those with the best insurance plan get the best access to testing and treatment and those with less, get less. There is little doubt about the inequitable effects of this infection.

Consider also that countries like Italy and Spain have recently gone through significant government austerity that has affected their public health systems.

I can't help but think that this is a factor in their elevated numbers.

There is no doubt that we have seen public health care rise to the challenge of COVID, but let's also reflect on how other public services are being called upon. The response and adaptability of teachers has been absolutely amazing. The dramatic shift we have seen in public education delivery is remarkable, and teachers just rose up and made it happen. It has required great work, but it happened. Teachers do what they always do — they see a problem that needs a solution and they just get it done.

We've seen similar responses in universities that quickly moved to online classes, but also in the research departments that are quickly working away at the long, complex process of developing the treatments and vaccines that will put this issue behind us. Public safety nets are responding to the social needs that have been created, and government income supports are helping keep people afloat. Similarly, public infrastructure investments and business supports will help spur the economy into recovery.

None of this is meant to take away from private sector heroics that have also helped immensely to keep essential services open and operating and to keep the food supply chain connected. Truck drivers, grocery store workers, retail outlets and delivery services have been amazing.

But, it is undeniable that public services matter.

From the public servants who are saving lives in our health-care system, to the teachers who are keeping kids learning, to the long-term and elder care institutions that are keeping the vulnerable safe — public institutions matter and deserve to be supported.

It would be a huge mistake to turn around and attack these services as we recover from this situation. Instead we must invest more to make sure that the programs and services stay healthy and ready for the next challenge that they will have to rise up and respond to.

Frankly, Harper's op-ed is telling. He should be out there applauding public services. But instead he did not miss an opportunity to attack them. He is a smart man. He knows that those who recognize the value of public services will mount a defence that will spread as effectively as, well, a pandemic. I'm sure he saw a need to inoculate against it as early as possible. ■

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

Advocacy has an impact, though it may be unseen



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: The Alberta Teachers' Association is always asking teachers to write, phone or email their MLA or various cabinet ministers or the premier whenever government screws them over. Well I've done my part, and all I've gotten back are lame, canned responses and no action. What's the point?

Answer: Bear with me here. My daughter Claire, when she was quite young, got herself a bearded dragon, a small, rather prickly lizard that, as lizards go, was really quite charming. Well, one day she discovered her Beardie, who had appeared to be perfectly healthy the night before, on its back in its terrarium, four feet pointing skyward and its little forked tongue poking out of the corner of its mouth. Claire was naturally quite distraught, not only over the passing of her beloved reptile, but at the thought that its death was somehow her fault, either by some direct act or inadvertent negligence, and by the suspicion that if only Beardie had received some

veterinary attention, he might have survived.

Shortly afterward, my daughter had the opportunity to discuss her concerns with a friendly veterinarian. The vet asked her some questions and determined that Beardie had been well-cared for. He then observed that bearded dragons lived in the wilds of Australia and that they were on the menu of anything that could fit them in its mouth. It followed that if you were a bearded dragon, in a dangerous neighbourhood, and you were sick or weakened, the last thing you wanted to do was advertise that fact to someone else who might decide to make a snack of you. So the little guy, who was getting on in lizard years and had probably been sick for some time, was doing what came naturally — putting up a brave front, conveying that nothing was wrong, and hanging tough until he could hang on no longer. At that point, there was nothing to be done.

Government politicians are a bit like bearded dragons, although perhaps without the charm. They are under constant pressure in the political wilds from their opponents, the media and interest groups; they are concerned always with their survival to and through the next election; and, as a result, they are loath to show weakness or admit that

they could possibly be wrong, unless and until they have no other option.

Therefore, it is unlikely that your individual letter or phone call is going to result in a politician undergoing (or admitting to) some road-to-Damascus conversion. However, your expression of interest and concern does have impact. It is noted and registered and often read by the minister him or herself. While you might get an entirely unsatisfactory boilerplate response, your expression of concern may help convince the government to mitigate the application of problematic policy or avoid taking similarly offensive action in the future. It will certainly help the Association by reinforcing the credibility of its representations on your behalf. You will never know what you have prevented from happening and, in a few rare instances, your letter or phone call together with those of hundreds of your colleagues might even cause the government to reverse course, although you will never get credit for it.

I know this because, in my journey to Barnett House, I spent some time helping to manage correspondence for Gary Mar and Lyle Oberg, both education ministers under former premier Ralph Klein. My job in government was to practise what might be described as

“repressive tolerance” — to politely and rather blandly defend the government policy in a way that did not encourage or energize those opposed to it, all in the hope that eventually our correspondents would give up and go away. (I was really good at this, and could suck the oxygen out of an issue more effectively than a halon fire suppression system. I could probably give the premier's director of issues management and his buddies a tutorial, but I'm not sure I want them to be any better at their jobs.)

If you want to have an impact, start and then don't stop advocating. Sign a petition or send an email. Better yet, mail a letter — handwritten is best — place a phone call or set up a meeting. Blind copy your own MLA, the premier, the opposition critic. Remember, you do not have to be in possession of every fact or offer a detailed solution — that is the government's job. What you need to do is, politely and professionally, tell your story and share your concern as a voter and citizen.

Above all, channel your own inner Beardie: you've only lost when you've given up. ■

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



YOUR VIEWS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Foul language detracts from Carrington's message

I cannot believe the ATA is wasting money on Jody Carrington to give a webinar. I've seen her in person at convention. [She has] a mouth on her that rivals some rig hands I knew back in the day. Now one or two expletives placed in a speech for emphasis, in the right place and at the right time, will work for some audiences, but she drops so many F-bombs that are completely unnecessary that it actually detracts from her as a speaker. People can't even concentrate on the point she's trying to make! She might have good ideas, but many teachers I know are so turned off by her delivery that the message is lost.

Luke Peters
Gus Wetter School, Castor

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

Teachers comment on the webinar delivered by psychologist Jody Carrington on May 9.

See story on page 5 and additional comments on page 16.

Tracy Marie

I needed to hear what she had to say — all of it. I've been beating myself up more and more each week of this convoluted situation as I feel that I'm not enough for my class. The one comment that stands out over and above the rest is that you do what you can with what you've got and that's enough.

Michelle Mason

Jody did an amazing job holding space for teachers during her session. I felt heard and seen.

Nicole Falcone-Dempsey

First and foremost, thank you for hosting this for our members. Amazing webinar. So many takeaways.

Eugénie McCallan

She just makes me feel good. It makes me feel like my work is important and, most importantly, that I'm important.

Donna Lee DeBruin

I think it will be important to have her present again in August, before we go back. I can see teachers getting overwhelmed with all they hope to accomplish, but we have no script for what we will be walking into. This will also be important for new teachers.

Heather Plesniarski

Joined a friend at the school we teach at, had coffee in hand, Dr. Jody on the Smartboard, and felt gratitude for feeling heard and acknowledged. Thank you ATA!

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.

FOR THE RECORD

“A meeting without food should be an email.”

— Dr. Jody Carrington, Connecting in COVID-19 webinar, delivered May 9



Pandemic exposes inequities that must be addressed



VIEWPOINTS

Shelley L. Morse
President
Canadian Teachers' Federation

When schools abruptly began closing in March, very few knew at the time that days of closures and physical distancing would become weeks, and that weeks would turn into months. I distinctly remember the week that the CTF shuttered its office doors how discussions quickly changed from planning to action. It all happened so suddenly that only now have many of us had a chance to begin reflecting on this extraordinary period in our lives, especially as we now look toward the fall.

Let's all be honest, this has not been easy. Everyone is dealing with a plethora of challenges, ranging from health concerns and economic fears to isolation and being confined with others at all times of the day. Combining work with child care, seemingly 24 hours a day, has pushed a lot of people to their limits. With women accounting for 75 per cent of the teaching ranks, an unequal and heavy burden tends to fall on their shoulders.

Uncertainty makes it difficult to imagine the moment when we can once again move freely, see friends and family up close and in person, and get back to doing what we all do best: teaching in schools with our students. Until then, health and safety must come first. But as we've sacrificed to keep the virus at bay, fissures throughout society have become increasingly evident, and the importance of schools has been noticed by all.

Bringing our world to a screeching halt has shone a huge spotlight on the great inequities that exist in

our communities. When at their best, our schools, although imperfect, act as the tides that raise all boats. No matter the backgrounds of our students, the classroom is a wonderful equalizer where ideas and experiences are shared across the socio-economic spectrum.

Schools are also where vast numbers of students receive their meals every day, and where teachers, support personnel and counsellors keep a close eye on the most vulnerable. Once everything stopped, the support systems that students depend on did as well. It also turns out that the learning experience is difficult to replicate from afar, something that teachers have long known.

“... the learning experience is difficult to replicate from afar, something that teachers have long known.”

As provinces and territories introduced distance learning, teachers have worked tirelessly to recreate learning through high-tech and low-tech methods. Although distance learning can never replace the experience of the classroom, it also exposed the digital divide and economic disparity throughout communities. Not all families have Wi-Fi, and countless others lack the devices to connect. Even when technology is present in the home, the conditions

needed to concentrate and participate in group chats are often not.

Food security, high-risk homes and connectivity issues are challenges that have risen to the surface for all to see. Problems that may have been swept under society's carpet are now exposed. We must work collectively to address these glaring inequities to see that our students receive the support they need to learn, and learn safely, whether schools are open or not.

At this juncture of the COVID-19 crisis, many of the questions we had at the beginning remain unanswered today. Although the lights are turning back on in some classrooms in parts of the country, and students are being welcomed back, this situation is far from over. As we are all too aware, it is likely not a one-off.

For scores of students, the interruption of the school year was sudden, and came as they were either preparing to return to school after or pausing classes for spring break. School years are nicely bookended, but for the majority of students, teachers and education workers, there will not be any proper closure this year, no milestones to celebrate together. From kindergarten to Grade 12, the dramatic stoppage meant little time to say goodbye, to carry out the end-of-year rituals reserved for the endless possibilities of summer.

The combination of a pandemic, physical distancing and an abrupt end to the year means that student mental health needs to be a priority when schools reopen. We must all be prepared to help our children and youth deal with everything they and their families have endured. But to do that, we have to make sure that all teachers and support personnel receive the help they need to address mental health and well-being to cope with what has happened, and to be ready for their students. ■



Helping you grow your professional practice

 The Alberta Teachers' Association

ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The ATA's PD program area has a wealth of recorded and interactive sessions available for teachers working in isolation.

The ATA has a variety of remote PD

Staff in the ATA's Professional Development program area are continually updating the schedule of online support and sessions that are available to help teachers with online teaching and learning. Members should keep an eye on Twitter and frequently check PD's Facebook page as well updates on the Sched platform.

- As a member you have access to
- a wide variety of live interactive PD Sessions (Zoom*) offered by PD staff;
 - a wide variety of recorded PD sessions – any time, any place, any pace;

- ConnectEd Chats (Zoom*) – interact with teachers from all over the province in a moderated discussion forum;
- LibGuides (Library Guides) – all kinds of tools for teachers;
- workshops online (coming soon); and
- self-study modules (coming soon).

Keep up to date with the latest online offerings from your PD program area:

- Visit Facebook at <https://fb.me/ATApd> at least once a week.

- Follow on Twitter @ATA_PD.
- Access the schedule of PD sessions online at <https://atapdwebinars2020.sched.com> **.
- Access Lib Guides at https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/ATA_PD/SupportsForOnlineLearning.

Where sessions have been recorded, the "Video Stream" link is replaced with a direct link to the session recording. To quickly see a listing of all recorded webinars, use the filter options for "Recording Available." ■



* To participate you will need to download free software from Zoom at www.zoom.us.

** If you have the Sched app on a mobile device and prefer to load these ATA PD sessions into the app, search for "ATA PD Webinars 2020" in the directory of Sched events. In the session listing, a "Video Stream" link is shown that opens the Zoom meeting link for upcoming sessions.



We're wired to deal with uncertainty

Like many of you, I have spent a fair amount of time these last few weeks in front of the television, flipping between channels looking for something to entertain me. Now, I don't always PVR television shows, so I am often stuck watching the commercials as well. One theme I've noticed among the many television commercials we see – from auto insurance to fast food – is the notion that we are all in it together.

I realize that "we're all in this together" has become a cliché during these unprecedented times, but if there was ever a time when a cliché matched reality, it's now. Here's another truth: the measures we've taken as a society to flatten the curve and stay safe haven't

always been easy. I'm missing my family and friends and feeling a bit uneven from the stress, anxiety, fear and boredom that have resulted from being isolated. So for me, like many others, it hasn't always been easy.

This brings me to Saturday, May 9, when I was fortunate to see psychologist Jody Carrington speak to several hundred teachers by webinar. The 90-minute session zipped by quickly and one particular comment from Carrington really stuck with me: "We are wired to do hard things." Like our students, we also get emotionally dysregulated when we don't have a script, and with this pandemic, we are all working without a script. But as she

said: "We do the best we can with what we got and that's enough."

So yes, living in uncertain times is difficult. As a teacher in Alberta, you know this well, as this entire school year has been wrought with uncertainty, and now this uncertainty is projected forward as we contemplate what a return to school will look like in the fall.

But like everything else we've gone through in these last few weeks, we will get through that together because, as Carrington said, we are wired for it. ■

*I welcome your comments.
Contact me at
jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca.*

Correction

An article in the April 28 issue of the *ATA News* incorrectly stated that a chalk drawing in honour of health-care and other front-line workers had been completed on a driveway in Calgary. In fact, the artwork is located in Brooks.

The *ATA News* apologizes for the error.

The drawing, co-created by Grade 9 student Kayla Wildschut, has since been expanded to include a local RCMP officer. The project is a response to a challenge called Quaranteens, which was issued via Instagram by a family school liaison worker employed by Grasslands Public Schools. ■



ATA working with government on plan for school re-openings

Laura Harris
ATA News Staff

Decisions are yet to be made on school re-openings in Alberta, but teachers can be assured the education minister is aware of their perspectives.

"When you talk about reopening schools, you have to talk to teachers because they have a fundamental knowledge of how schools work and what will work in their classrooms. We can't be on the sidelines of this conversation," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

As announced by Alberta Education, the Alberta Teachers' Association and other education stakeholders are presently working with the provincial government to develop a plan for reopening schools. Input that the Association has provided to the minister has drawn largely on information from teachers in the field.

"Our Provincial Executive Council (PEC) members are very knowledgeable and provide the Association with feedback about what's going on in their geographic districts. Their work with our (55) locals and local presidents helps us gauge what's going on with our members across the province," Schilling said.

"Of additional benefit to us is the pandemic research study we recently conducted. To have input from thousands of individual teachers on the specific issue of reopening schools is vital, and that's what the results of this study are giving us."

The research study was a stratified survey of 3,000 members to capture how Alberta's teachers are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducted between April 27 and May 15, the survey had a section on returning to school.

Planning for the reopening of schools and resumption of in-school learning after a pandemic is incredibly complex, Schilling said. Transportation, sanitization, class size, mental health, assessment and so many other elements must be viewed from policy, practice, people and budget perspectives.

Schilling said it has been a very valuable exercise to work with government and other stakeholders to learn what reopening looks like from different perspectives.

"We have been looking at all issues through different lenses to ensure nothing is missed or overlooked," Schilling said. "I think the next step for us is answering all of the questions we've generated, and coming up with solutions to the issues we've identified."

Overall, safety has emerged as the number-one issue for teachers.

"The safety of staff, students, parents and our broader community is the starting point. Everything goes through the lens of 'safety first,'" Schilling said.

"If we don't feel safe at school, that's going to affect teaching and learning. Once the question of safety is answered, it is very likely everything else will fall into place."

About the ATA's pandemic research study

The Alberta Teachers' Association conducted a random, stratified survey of 3,000 members to capture how Alberta's teachers are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. It included questions on these issues:

- Equity and well-being
- Technology use and distance learning
- Pedagogy and the profession of teaching
- Return to public school buildings and the world after COVID-19

The data from the random sample was supplemented by an open survey that was posted on the Association's website, and a sampling from interviews and virtual focus groups of teachers and school leaders involved in the Association's international action research projects.

The 3,000 participants in the stratified survey random were a highly representative random sample, generating a confidence level of plus or minus 1.5 percentage points on every question. ■



Annual Representative Assembly will proceed in mid-August but delegates will vote and express their views via videoconference.

ARA goes virtual

Modified version of annual assembly to take place in August

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

The ATA's Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) will take place via videoconference on Aug. 13 and 14.

At an emergent meeting held virtually on April 30, Provincial Executive Council (PEC) cancelled its previous plan to hold ARA in person on Aug. 15 and 16.

"We had to find a way to hold our meeting that would still comply with the safety orders from Alberta's chief medical officer," said Jason Schilling, ATA president and member of the ARA steering committee.

The annual event has taken place over the May long weekend since the early 1990s. It brings together approximately 450 teacher representatives from the province's 61 ATA locals to debate ATA policy and the budget that will guide the organization for the upcoming fiscal year. Normally scheduled for three days, the event has been pared down to two for this year.

Nailing down the specifics for this year's ARA has been unbelievably challenging due to the everchanging restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, Schilling said.

"It was a difficult decision to postpone this year's assembly because it's such a fundamental part of our organization. It's how our membership directs the Association," Schilling said.

The meeting will be held via the Zoom webinar platform, which will allow delegates to participate in a free and equitable discussion forum, a central tenet of ARA, but options are still being explored to allow only authorized delegates to vote on resolutions. Accurate tallies are vital to the outcomes that shape the ATA, Schilling said.

"At ARA, it's the floor that decides the outcome of the issues being debated," Schilling said. "Our policy forms the fabric of what we believe in. It becomes our belief statement of what we value."

Pedro Carriel, the ATA's treasurer and chief financial officer, says it is an essential right of ATA members to debate and vote on the upcoming year's proposed operating budget.

"Members need direct participation in the budgetary process," Carriel said. "The debate provides a forum where they can guide the priorities for the upcoming fiscal year."

Traditionally, ARA also conducts several other orders of business, such as the presentation of the Honorary Membership Award, the Association's annual report and the president's report.

"We're still working those details out," Schilling said. "We've received some advice from Provincial Executive Council about what things we'd like to keep and what things might be better done in person [at another time]."

The ARA Steering Committee continues to meet regularly to finalize details about this year's assembly. Instructions for attendees will be sent out prior to the assembly.

COVID and the Association

The effects of the COVID-19 crisis are also being felt in several other areas of the ATA's operations.

Summer Conference, which usually takes place in mid-August in Banff, has been completely cancelled. For 72 years, the gathering has provided a range of information sessions and learning opportunities.

Joni Turville, conference organizer and associate secretary for the ATA, says the restrictions on social distancing have left organizers no choice but to cancel this year's event.

"It will certainly be missed as it's one of the key events that brings members together," Turville said, "but we're working hard to find alternate ways of providing information and support to teachers who take on leadership roles in the Association and their profession."

Additionally, 2020 has also seen the postponement of the popular uLead conference, member training sessions and various committee meetings. An up-to-date calendar of all scheduled/cancelled ATA events can be found on the Association website, www.teachers.ab.ca.

Fortunately, the Provincial Executive Council (PEC) has been regularly meeting online to discuss the issues facing Alberta's teachers and public education. ATA president Jason Schilling points out while the virtual meetings possess their own set of challenges, the commitment, determination and flexibility of the council is impressive.

"We're still able to do the work of the Association. We've not missed a beat in that regard," said Schilling, "though there's a certain nuance of 'in-person' debate that's missing when meeting online."

The pandemic has also resulted in the physical ATA building being closed to the public. However, the majority of employees still continue their work from home. Turville emphasized that each program area — Professional Development, Member Services, Teacher Welfare, Library Services, Government — is fully operational and only a phone call or email away. ■



LAURA HARRIS

Tables in the library at an Edmonton school have been spaced to allow for social distancing in preparation for a return to in-school learning in the fall.

Program area inquiries	Edmonton	780-447-9400	1-800-232-7208
	Calgary (SARO)	403-265-2672	1-800-332-1280



ISTOCK

Task force addresses student transportation

ATA News Staff

The province has struck a new task force to provide recommendations on the future of student transportation across the province.

Chaired by Lethbridge-East MLA Nathan Neudorf, the task force also includes four other government MLAs and 13 members from the student transportation industry, community partners and various education organizations. The group will meet

virtually until further notice and provide recommendations in the fall.

Since there is no direct representation by the teaching profession on the task force, Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling said the ATA will watch how it rolls out and offer its input if needed.

"We hope the task force makes an effort to talk to principals and other school leaders, as busing does impact the scheduling of the school day and other decisions that may have pedagogical implications," Schilling said. ■

Student Transportation Task Force members

MLA representatives

- Nathan Neudorf MLA for Lethbridge – East, chair
- Tracy Allard MLA for Grande Prairie
- Michaela Glasgo MLA for Brooks–Medicine Hat
- Nate Horner MLA for Drumheller–Stettler
- Matt Jones MLA for Calgary–South East

Representatives from key education and community partners

- Josée Devaney Fédération des Conseils Scolaires Francophones de l'Alberta
- Dexter Durfey Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
- Trisha Estabrooks Alberta School Boards Association
- Brenda Gibson College of Alberta School Superintendents
- Andrew Knack Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
- Jody McKinnon Student Transportation Association of Alberta
- Kathy Rooyakkers Rural Municipalities of Alberta
- Jacquie Surgenor Alberta School Councils' Association
- Chris Gilmore Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools

Representatives from student transportation industry groups

- Yacine Belhadj First Student, Inc.
- Mark Critch Sparksman Transportation
- Brian Hauptman Golden Arrow Buses
- Jonathan Weal Pacific Western Transportation (Southland Transportation)

Emotional regulation should be teachers' primary concern

Psychologist Jody Carrington shares thoughts on COVID-19 with Alberta teachers

Jen Janzen
ATA News Staff

Teachers, take heart. Loosen your shoulders. Let the pedagogy simmer on the back burner for a few minutes. Your most important job right now is to sit back and see your students.

That was the message given to more than 800 Alberta teachers by psychologist Jody Carrington in a webinar on Saturday, May 9.

"I have not met an educator who doesn't have a heart the size of Texas," Carrington said as she acknowledged that the COVID-19 measures, including the sudden shift to online learning and not being able to see their students in person, were wreaking havoc on teachers' confidence.

But the kind of connection that students need right now is the kind that teachers are wired to facilitate, Carrington said, and even though the pandemic is putting physical distance between teachers and students, the opportunity for emotional connection has never been more alive.

"You don't get into this business because you love Bunsen burners. If I take you back to the beginning of this, so many people say 'I love kids,' 'I want to make a difference,' 'I want to give back to the world.'"

In other words, the most important part of a teachers' job isn't pedagogy.

"Our job is to impart the wisdom of emotional regulation," Carrington said, "and this is particularly true when we don't have a script."

Helping children emotionally regulate starts with simply seeing the child in front of you.

Earlier in Carrington's career, when she would visit schools and help staff work with difficult children, the children's files would be thick and full of acronyms.

"[The child] will have a litany of diagnoses," she said, along with multiple IPPs, with the school staff saying that the child spits, hits or draws pictures of bombs.

During every school visit, Carrington would close the file, look at the staff, thank them for their good work then

get down to the important questions. "What level is he on Fortnite? What's his favourite colour? Where's his mama? When was the last time he saw his dad?"

The process was magical. "If I have people start to answer those questions, you can watch the kid's file [go down in size]. The only way for kids to get regulated is they have to be seen," Carrington said.

For a child to be seen, their emotions need to be validated. That means listening without trying to fix.

"The number one thing we have to do [with big emotions] is feel it," she said.

And to hold space for feelings, we have to explore them. When we start to feel ourselves looking for solutions instead of letting children talk, we can reset the trajectory with three words: "tell me more." Ask them what the hardest part is, ask them what they miss.

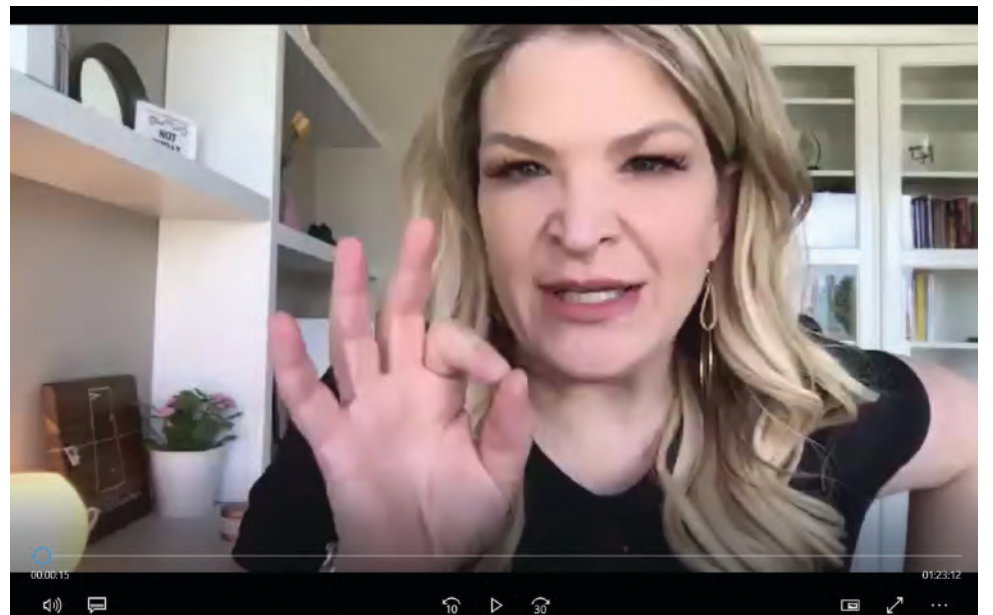
The next aspect of connection is making sure we're taking care of ourselves, but Carrington suggests framing it as self-growth instead of self-care. She said rather than the oft-touted self-care activities such as long baths and fancy moisturizers, it's the self-growth activities such as cultivating gratitude, moving our bodies and choosing to limit our news consumption that make the biggest difference in how we're able to show up for the children in our lives.

And when teachers feel like they can't handle the strangeness of online learning or are having difficulty connecting with faces on a screen, they need to go back to the beginning of their careers, to the reason they wanted to be a teacher in the first place. She said that desire to connect will get teachers through the pandemic, and that will get our children through it.

"There's nothing wrong with Bunsen burners," she said. "However, they're not your conduit to magic." ■

VIEW THE VIDEO

The video of Carrington's talk is available on the ATA website: teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Members Only. Watch the ATA's social media channels for details.



ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Psychologist Jody Carrington delivers a webinar for teachers on connecting during COVID-19 on Saturday, May 9.

Words to lead you astray: 'Don't tell anyone'



PITFALLS AND PRECAUTIONS

Cory Schoffer
ATA Secretary to Professional Conduct Committees

Pitfalls and Precautions is a series that aims to educate teachers on professional conduct issues by highlighting situations addressed by the ATA Professional Conduct Committee.

Shhh ... don't tell anyone! That's never a precursor to anything good. It's also a pretty significant tell that the person who has made this declaration knows that something isn't quite right with what they have said or done. A hearing committee of the professional conduct committee has adjudicated on such a matter.

A teacher recently answered to three charges of failing to treat students with dignity and respect. In this case, the hearing committee heard that the teacher acted as a coach for one of the team sports in the school. Additionally, the teacher had also previously attended a session on observing appropriate boundaries with students.

The committee heard that a student,

who was a player on the team that the teacher coached, sought one-on-one assistance from the teacher relating to the subject matter that he taught. During the discussion on academics, the teacher engaged the student in conversation about the student's romantic relationship with another student. Later that same day, the teacher sought out the student and told her sexually graphic things related to their earlier conversation. Later, in the evening of that same day, the teacher texted the student to remind her that their earlier conversation was to stay between them.

The committee also learned that the teacher had a practice of texting individual players on his team, and that the teacher would make uninvited physical contact with some team members both during games and in the hallway at the school. Students had become accustomed to this behaviour but were not comfortable with it.

The teacher was found guilty of all three charges of unprofessional conduct.

In making an inappropriate comment to a student at the start of the day, the teacher made a poor choice. However, despite having an entire day to think about it, he made an even worse choice by following up later in the day with a more graphic comment and then a subsequent text urging the student to keep the comments confidential.

This was not the teacher's finest day, nor was it a day that will rest positively for the student. Quite the contrary.

The student was asked to be loyal to her teacher and coach to a higher level than any obligation she had to herself and her own well-being. When coupled with the teacher's ongoing practice of initiating physical contact with students during games and in the school hallway, the teacher displayed an ongoing practice of inappropriate behaviour and a willing disregard for the respect and dignity of these students.

Upon establishing guilt on three charges, the hearing committee imposed a penalty consisting of three letters of severe reprimand and fines totalling \$2,500. The committee considered precedent cases and relevant factors deduced in evidence when making its decision on penalty. The teacher initiated all of the inappropriate

communications with the student. Each time it was the teacher who broached the topic of the student's relationship. Speaking to the female student in isolation and following up the verbal conversations with a text to remind the student to keep the conversations confidential demonstrates that the teacher was keenly aware that these conversations were inappropriate.

The Association does not condone the encouragement of secrecy between students and their parents. In addition to that, the teacher's comments were highly disparaging to the other student in question. These comments also failed to treat that student with dignity and respect.

Though the hearing committee considered mitigating factors such as the teacher's relative inexperience, his subsequent transfer to a different school, and his pursuit of personal counselling, the committee recognized that the public and the profession expect that teachers will behave in a manner that upholds the honour and dignity of the profession.

A letter of severe reprimand and the significant fines are intended to serve as a deterrent to this teacher and to members of the profession a whole. There is a need to promote a deterrence in the teaching profession, particularly on issues when trusted coaches betray the trust of athletes. ■

Council addresses pandemic issues

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the emergent Provincial Executive Council meeting held April 29 2020, via video conference.

1. Approved a new administrative guideline that allows Provincial Executive Council to declare that a governance emergency exists and to issue emergency governance directives that will supersede specific provisions in existing constitutions and policies of subgroups for the purpose of ensuring the continued operation of the subgroups.

2. Approved the insertion of common text into local, convention association and specialist council constitutions.

3. Declared that the COVID-19 pandemic and related public health measures constitute a governance emergency, which commenced on March 16, 2020, and which will extend until such time as Provincial Executive Council deems the governance emergency to be over.

4. Approved emergency governance directives for locals, convention associations and specialist councils.

5. Cancelled the in-person Annual Representative Assembly scheduled for Aug. 15-16, 2020.

6. Approved a virtual Annual Representative Assembly to be held Aug. 13-14, 2020.

7. Unanimously endorsed the candidacy of ATA vice-president Jenny Regal for vice-president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF).

8. Approved for submission to the Annual General Meeting of the CTF a resolution that the CTF advocate with the Government of Canada to allow teachers working from home to be able to deduct the cost of information technology and connectivity from their annual taxes.

9. Approved for submission to the Annual General Meeting of the CTF a resolution that the CTF advocate with the Government of Canada to expand the scope of eligible wellness account expenses to include the costs teachers incur in setting up information technology infrastructure to conduct their work from a location other than their school in response to public health emergencies or individual circumstances relating to health and wellness.

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held May 7-8, 2020, via video conference.

1. Amended administrative guidelines related to the fees charged for services provided by the Teacher Qualifications Service.

2. Amended administrative guidelines to allow substitute teachers to vote on matters respecting collective bargaining if they were employed 60 calendar days prior to the closing of schools due to a pandemic or other occasion in which schools are closed for an extended period.

3. Approved funds in the amount of \$6,500, allocated from the Contingency Fund, to the Canadian Teachers' Federation for transfer to Education International in support of a COVID-19 response fund.

4. Suspended the 2019/20 local public relations; political engagement; diversity, equity and human rights; and

Indigenous education awards programs and expanded the project eligibility for the 2020/21 awards to consider projects completed in the 2019/20 school year.

5. With respect to Council election processes, approved that

a. regional forums be scheduled and organized by the Association for all candidates during the election period;

b. a "nomination day" be established on which all nomination papers are submitted and due;

c. active distribution of campaign materials in any form be prohibited prior to nomination day;

d. locals be prohibited from making campaign contributions;

e. subgroups inviting a candidate to any event sponsored by that subgroup during the campaign or voting periods of an election be required to extend the same invitation to all candidates running for the same position;

f. the possibility of co-ordinating a special school mailing with only campaign and election materials be explored;

g. a PEC election logo be provided by the Association for optional inclusion on candidate campaign materials;

h. an electoral ballot be prepared for distribution to the membership in the fall proposing amendments to General Bylaw 53 to reflect voting eligibility timelines for all active and associate members based on online election and voting practices; and

i. administrative guidelines be amended to reflect current practices related to the voting period for elections.

6. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of four charges of unprofessional conduct. Two counts involved making derogatory comments toward students, and one count involved making derogatory comments about a student's schoolwork, thus failing to treat students with dignity and respect and be considerate of their circumstances. The fourth count involved engaging in impersonations in order to display stereotypically gay characteristics, thus failing to respect the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of severe reprimand addressing charge one and a single letter of reprimand addressing charges two, three and four.

7. Received notice of an appeal of a decision of the Professional Conduct Committee with respect to a charge of unprofessional conduct. A hearing of that appeal will be conducted by the Professional Conduct Appeal Committee established in accordance with provisions of the *Teaching Profession Act*.

8. Approved the names of three teachers for inclusion in the Indigenous Education Professional Development Facilitator Corp name bank.

9. Approved Council committee and representation assignments for 2020/21.

10. Amended administrative guidelines to remove outdated language and to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of staff advisors and Provincial Executive Council liaisons in their support of convention associations and specialist councils.

11. Amended the standard constitutions for local associations, with and without local council, to include a mechanism by which Association representatives are named to joint worksite health and safety committees. ■



Editor's note

Dear *ATA News* readers,

You may notice more advertisements than usual in this edition of the *ATA News*. We have had to cancel the spring issue of the *ATA Magazine* due to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Magazine advertisers were offered space in the *News* instead and many have taken us up on that offer. We thank them for their patronage and thank you for your continued readership.

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Work, Live and Play Here!

Every year, hundreds of Alberta teachers move to British Columbia for adventure and better career prospects.

Upon arrival, Alberta teachers discover BC's beautiful natural landscapes, outstanding recreational opportunities, and our diverse and welcoming communities.

Learn more about teaching in BC's public school districts and independent schools.



makeafuture.ca/teach-bc

You support your students

Field Law SUPPORTS YOU

Proud to serve as legal counsel to the Alberta Teachers' Association.

fieldlaw.com

"Field Law" is a trademark and trade name of Field LLP.



Because Clarity Matters®

Answering **Why?** begins with asking **Where?**

Where has significant soil erosion occurred?
Where have election results changed?
Where does your community's energy come from?



Engage your students in problem-based learning through Esri's mapping, data and analytics tool, ArcGIS Online.

Free to all K-12 schools

Access free software, support & teaching resources
Support curriculum with interdisciplinary lessons
Access from any device, any time

Get your free account today at
k12.esri.ca/Alberta

 **esri** Canada

TIME FOR MY LIFE

TIME FOR MY TEACHING

Discover professional learning at Athabasca University and revitalize your K - 12 teaching.

BOLT

BLENDED AND ONLINE
LEARNING AND TEACHING



MOVING EDUCATION
ONLINE (MEO)

*Resources to Support
Moving Education Online*

> movingeducationonline.org

> BOLT.athabascau.ca

ADLC | Alberta Distance
Learning Centre

 Athabasca
University

BEYOND 

Visit the ATRF MyPension portal today.

Educators, **click to register** to monitor your pension benefits and manage your personal information.



Alberta Teachers'
Retirement Fund Board

ATRF.com

Reasons to join before you're 65!



- 1 Two great discount programs**

The Boom Group and Edvantage discount programs offer savings much greater than the annual membership fee.
- 2 Savings on home and auto insurance**

Up to 45% savings with our partner TW Insurance.


- 3 Twelve scholarships**

Up to \$40,000 available to the relatives of ARTA members (perfect for your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews!)


- 4 A unified voice**

Advocacy for issues affecting teachers across Alberta.


- 5 Planning ahead**

Access to a life insurance plan specifically designed for ARTA members.


- 6 Travel discounts**

Through ARTA's partnerships with Collette Travel, TripMerchant, and Merit Travel, you can visit the seven continents without breaking the bank.


- 7 Subscriptions to news updates**

news&views, a quarterly magazine, and ARTAfacts, an email newsletter, feature excellent information on wellness, health, and retirement planning.


- 8 Be proactive**

Joining now will keep you informed about the Retiree Health Benefits Plan when you eventually need it – one less thing to worry about.



As long as you've contributed to the ATRF pension for five years, you are eligible to join – you don't even have to be retired!

Email us at info@arta.net, Give us a call at 1-855-212-2400, or check us out online!

Learning *legacy.*

Join Gary, Jackie, and the many teachers who are leaving a legacy with ECF.

Your fund set up for your cause in a way that you choose to give.



Contact our Donor Services team to find out more.

donorservices@ecfoundation.org

Gary Smith, Assistant Principal, Prince Charles School

"I have left a will intention to ensure a fund is created after I am gone to continue to help children learn."

Jackie Fuga, Physical Education Specialist, Hillcrest School

"Sport and fitness was important to both me and my brother. I am pleased to continue to promote his legacy through the David Fuga Memorial Fund."

Give. Grow. Transform.

Call 780-426-0015 or visit our website www.ecfoundation.org



Supporting **your** students in **your** schools

Alberta Education is funding Alberta Distance Learning Centre to support Alberta schools to

- provide course content to Alberta teachers to use in **your** classrooms
- provide online and print courses taught by ADLC teachers to **your** students



FREE DIGITAL RESOURCES & INSTRUCTION
Grade 1-12

Contact our Partner Support Team

info@adlc.ca

1-866-774-5333

adlc.ca

ADLC

Alberta Distance Learning Centre

ADVERTISING IN
ATANEWS

For advertising information, contact Trevor Batty at Trevor Batty Advertising Sales 1-778-773-9397 trevor@tbsales.ca

Next deadline
Thursday, May 28 2020, 4 p.m.
(Publication date June 9, 2020)
Advertisers are encouraged to book early — space is limited

Circulation: 38,000
We accept Visa, Mastercard, cash or cheque.



CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
宣道國際學校

Want to sharpen minds, shape hearts and encourage serving hands?
Then join us in the transformation of students
in a Christian school in **Hong Kong!**



 @CAIS.HK

 @CAISBV

 @CAISBV



scan to see our school
www.caisbv.edu.hk

to *teach* at CAIS



The International School
OF MACAO | 澳門國際學校

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE TOGETHER

The International School of Macao (TIS) is looking for a dynamic Head of School to lead a highly skilled, experienced and collaborative faculty for a start date of August 2021.

About TIS

TIS is a vibrant multicultural school representing 1,400 students from 44 different countries around the world. Accredited with the Ministry of Education in Alberta, Canada since 2006, TIS earned the highest level of accreditation, Level 4, in 2017. Our rigorous programs culminate in the Alberta High School diploma and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma recognized by universities worldwide.



Application Process

Interested applicants should submit their curriculum vitae to Howard Stribbell, School Supervisor at howard.stribbell@tis.edu.mo. Application deadline is June 8, 2020.

Scan the QR code for more information about the Head of School position. Check out our website at www.tis.edu.mo.



2020 gotcha! PHOTO CONTEST

Winners to be announced soon!



The deadline has now passed and the judges are busy with their evaluations.

Thank you to everyone who submitted.

Be sure to catch the winners in the next issue of the **ATA News**.

DIGITAL ONLY

While schools remain closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the *ATA News* will be available in a digital format only.

Visit [bit.ly/2Subscribe Now](https://bit.ly/2SubscribeNow) and sign up for the *ATA eNews* to receive an email when a new issue is available.

The most recent issue is always available at teachers.ab.ca
> News and Info > ATA News.



YOU CAN'T MAKE A VACCINE IN YOUR KITCHEN

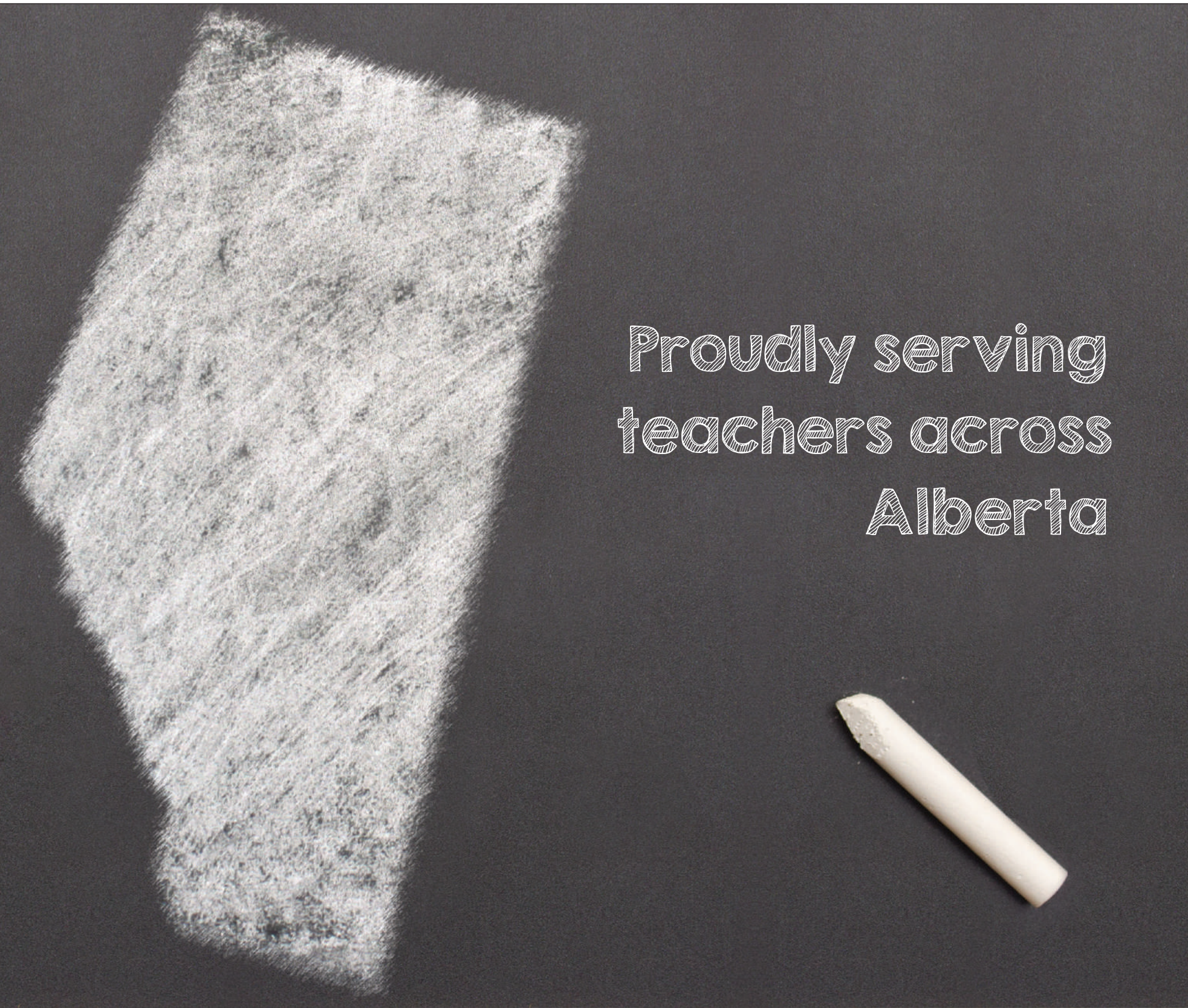
BUT YOU CAN LEARN THE RECIPE FOR MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

While we're hard at work flattening the COVID-19 infection curve, it is equally important to flatten the curve of toxic stress that faces families undergoing isolation and economic hardship.

Brain Story Certification has tools for teachers and support staff to help. In this accredited online course, learn from leading experts about the science of resilience and the brain, and how the actions we take now can help build resilience for a lifetime—even in a crisis.

ENROLL FOR FREE





Proudly serving teachers across Alberta

Morgex Insurance has been helping Alberta teachers save more on their home and car insurance for over 30 years. In fact, almost 20,000 teachers trust Morgex with their home and car insurance needs and take advantage of many benefits, such as

- AIR MILES® Reward Miles[±]
- Up to \$25,000 coverage for teachers' books
- Up to \$10,000 coverage for teachers' tools and instruments
- 24 Hour Claims Service
- First Claims Forgiveness

Taking care of our customers is our top priority and Morgex stands alongside you during these challenging times.

Call to get a home
or car quote today.
1-888-262-9522



Committed to Teachers in Alberta

Morgex Insurance is a tradename of Johnson Inc. ("JI"), a licensed insurance intermediary. Home and auto policies primarily underwritten by Unifund Assurance Company ("UAC"). Described coverage and benefits applicable only to policies underwritten by Unifund in Alberta. JI and UAC share common ownership. *AIR MILES® Reward Miles awarded only on regular home and car insurance policies underwritten by UAC. At the time the premium is paid, one (1) Mile is awarded for each \$20 in premium (including taxes). Miles are not available in SK or MB. ®™ Trademarks of AIR MILES Royalties Limited Partnership used under license by LoyaltyOne, Co. and JI (for UAC).

“YOU ARE NOT ALONE.”

Jason Schilling

*Teacher, President
Alberta Teachers' Association*

We are in a crisis.
Schools have been closed to students, parents and the community.
However, teachers, along with parents, are still working hard
to provide education to each child.

This is the temporary face of education.
The Alberta Teachers' Association reminds you
that you are not alone. Keep communication open between
your teachers and your school—it's the best way to get
through this difficult time.

Thank you and please take care.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

teachers.ab.ca

Help is available. Call these numbers to reach the extra support you need:

Kids Help Phone 1.800.868.6868 • Mental Health Helpline 1.877.303.2642 • www.canwetalk.ca

TALENT

May 19, 2020 | Volume 54, Number 13

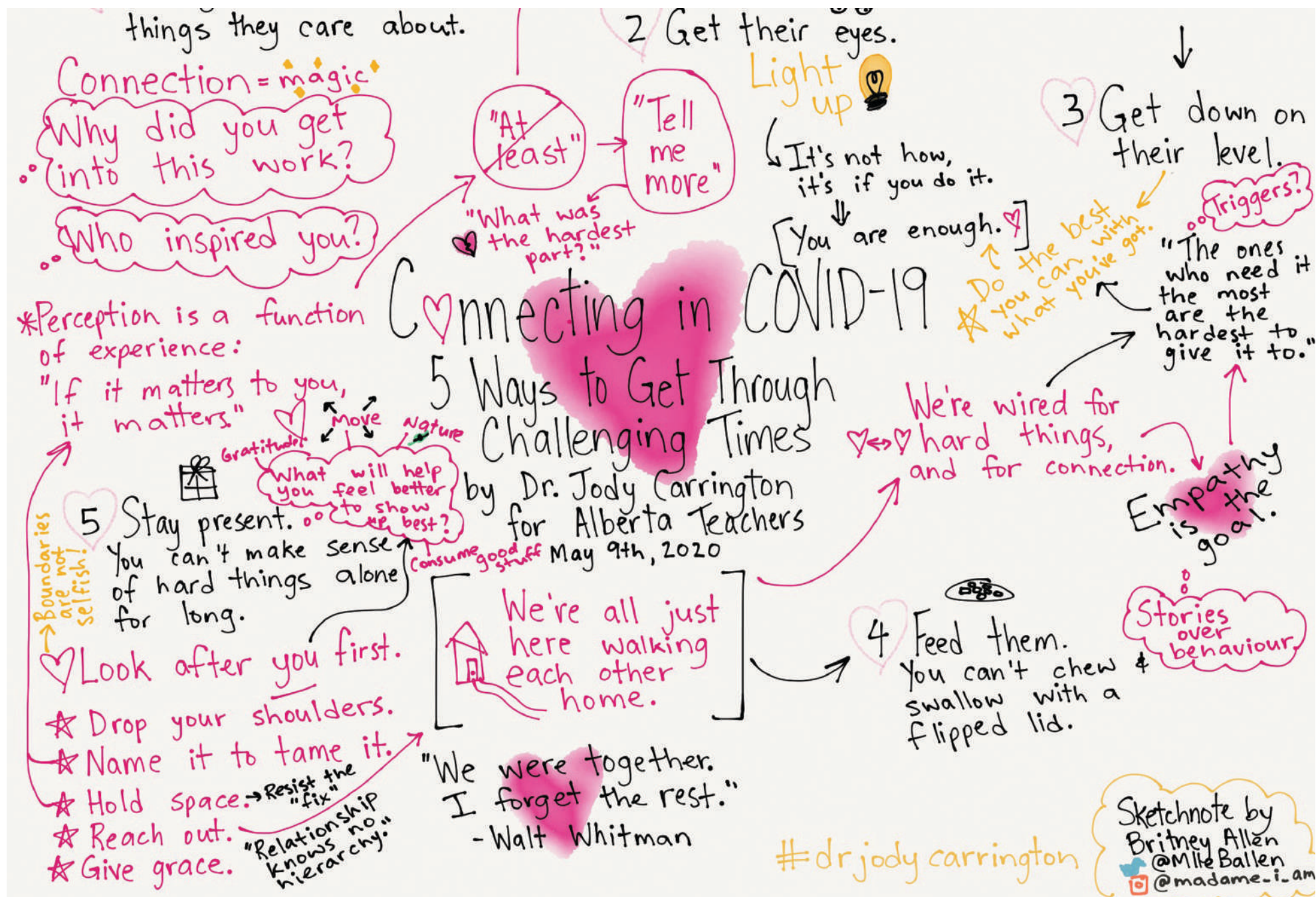
I loved the reiteration that we need to take care of ourselves first before we can take care of others.
Anna Li-Wang

"Tell me more..." refocus on building relationships and connecting with our students!
Gina Alessandra

My favourite Dr. Jody quote: "Sit with the winners, the conversation is different."
Catherine MacLellan

"You have to be ok. If we're not ok we can't help students. It's not selfish to look after ourselves."
Michelle Jensen

What was your key takeaway from Jody Carrington's webinar?



This sketch note was created by teacher Britney Allen to capture her main takeaways from Jody Carrington's talk on May 9.

BRITNEY ALLEN

"You need to name it before you tame it."
Kathy Bell

"Do your best with what is available to you."
Annemarie Simpson

"You're more important than you think."
Brittany Erin

"Drop your shoulders. You are enough."
Linda Zazula

My favourite was "Perception is a function of experience."
Nicole Falcone-Dempsey

"Empathy, kindness, compassion do not live when you are anxious."
Crystal Whitney

When people complain about anything... respond with "tell me more."
Lynnsey Harder

"The ones that are hard to love need your love the most."
Maria Kantolic

"Have grace with ourselves, our colleagues, the families that we teach and interact with. We are all just walking each other home."
Marie Carolyn

"We were together and I forget the rest" was my biggest takeaway. Trying to use that to live in the moment both with my family and with my students.
Allison Nette

"Comparison is the thief of joy!" So true at this time where we are teaching online and worrying if we are doing enough.
Trina Curtis Benteau

"Tell me more" ... such a great way to build relationship and show empathy.
Joanna Pederson Schipper