



Alberta's Teachers and Trustees— Working Together for Public Education



The Alberta Teachers' Association

www.teachers.ab.ca

GREETINGS



Congratulations on your recent election or re-election to office as a school board trustee.

Teachers value the important role of trusteeship in school board governance and support elected boards, for they put the “public” in public education. In Alberta, we include public, separate and francophone school boards in our definition of public education because public education is free and accessible to every child, delivered by certificated teachers with active membership in their profession, governed by elected school boards and a responsibility shared by all Albertans.

I am honoured to have been elected as the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association and I look forward to serving our members by advocating on their behalf. Our Association is made up of the 46,000 teachers who work in Alberta's public schools and is lead by nearly 3,000 teacher volunteers. We look forward to working with you on the important matters affecting public education in Alberta.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg A. Jeffery'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'G' and 'J'.

Greg A Jeffery, President



INTRODUCTION

Teachers believe in the importance of school boards to the effective governance of Alberta’s public education system. The election of school board trustees puts the public in public education by ensuring that school boards are accountable to the broader communities they serve.

Thank you for putting your name forward to serve in this important role and congratulations on your election.

School board trustees are elected to represent the public interest in education, and, as such, trustees are representative of the wide range of backgrounds, experiences and interests present across society.

This document is intended to provide trustees with information about Alberta’s teaching profession and the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA).

ATA POLICY 8.A.35:
Education
Governance in
Alberta should
continue to be
provided by publicly
elected school
boards.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The ATA is a proud supporter of Alberta’s public education system. In Alberta, public education refers to schools governed by public, separate and francophone school boards.

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.

We believe that public education must be

- free and accessible to every child;
- delivered by certificated, highly skilled and knowledgeable teaching professionals;
- appropriately funded to ensure that every child learns, every child succeeds; and
- a responsibility shared by all Albertans.

School board trustees and teachers have a common interest in public education and share a history of advocating together for a strong and effective public education system in Alberta.

ABOUT THE ATA

MISSION

The Alberta Teachers' Association, as the professional organization of teachers, promotes and advances public education, safeguards standards of professional practice and serves as the advocate for its members.

HISTORY

When John Walker Barnett—a teacher and former member of the National Union of Teachers in England—immigrated to Alberta in 1917, he was shocked by the deplorable working conditions for teachers, which included poor wages and wrongful dismissals. Through his efforts, the Alberta Teachers' Alliance was established in 1918.

In 1935, the government passed the Teaching Profession Act, which gave the ATA its legal foundation. In 1936, the act was amended to require mandatory ATA membership for all certificated teachers employed by a public or separate school board. The Teaching Profession Act remains in effect today and continues to govern the Association.

THE TEACHING PROFESSION ACT

The Teaching Profession Act (TPA) outlines the objects of the Association, which are to

- advance the cause of education in Alberta,
- improve the teaching profession,
- arouse public interest and increase public knowledge of education matters and
- cooperate with other similar organizations in Canada and elsewhere.

The TPA calls on the Association to

- promote recruitment and selection practices for teacher education;
- promote adequate programs of preservice education and internship;
- promote working conditions that support optimal professional service;
- organize groups that improve the knowledge and skills of teachers;
- undertake activities that maintain and improve the competence of teachers;
- assist, advise, protect and discipline members; and
- assess teacher competence through professional practice review.

The TPA and related regulations prescribe conditions related to the Association's membership, governance and fees. The legislation also outlines how the Association is to conduct its processes related to discipline and practice review.

HOW WE FUNCTION

The ATA is a democratic organization governed by teacher representatives elected from the membership.

Teachers are organized into 55 local associations (based on school jurisdictions) whose executives are made up of active teachers employed by the school board(s) pertaining to that local. Most local executives are elected by their colleagues at a general meeting or through in-school balloting to serve one- or two-year terms of office. For the most part, their Association work is done outside of their teaching duties, except for a few situations where release time has been secured. The Association is frequently represented with school boards by the local president.

The Provincial Executive Council serves as the executive branch of the Association. It consists of fifteen district representatives and five table officers (the president, two vice-presidents, a past president and the executive secretary). The president, vice-presidents and district representatives are elected every two years through direct ballot of active and associate ATA members across the province.

Association policies and the annual budget are set at the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), which is attended by approximately 450 teacher delegates selected by their local associations. ARA is held each May long weekend, and alternates between Edmonton and Calgary.



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WHAT WE DO

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

One of the most important functions of the ATA is to maintain the high regard the Alberta public has for teachers.

This is done by upholding standards related to teacher education, practice and conduct. Alberta's teachers are among the best in the world, and the ATA supports the highest professional standards. Teacher competency, as outlined by the Teaching Quality Standard, is upheld by the Association's practice review process. Standards of conduct prescribed by the Code of Professional Conduct are enforced through the Association's discipline process. Association staff present regularly to teacher groups on professional conduct and competence.

The ATA represents the interests of teachers on issues of teacher education and certification through liaisons with Alberta Education and Alberta's universities. It also operates, at arm's length, the Teacher Qualifications Service, which is responsible for evaluating teacher education for salary purposes.

ADVANCING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Teachers in Alberta are subject to provincial and school board regulations and policy related to teacher growth, supervision and evaluation (TGSE). These policies help ensure that professional practice standards are maintained and that teachers are treated fairly. We support TGSE policies by offering advice and delivering presentations to teachers and administrators on all aspects of growth, supervision and evaluation.

The ATA also supports teacher growth by providing assistance and resources to help teachers develop professional growth plans and by providing outstanding teacher professional development opportunities.

Each year, the ATA organizes hundreds of institutes and workshops; dozens of conferences, seminars and symposiums; and 10 teachers' conventions, which are planned and operated by regional boards of teachers and funded through ATA fees.

The Association's 21 specialist councils foster the professional development (PD) of teachers interested in common curriculum for specialty areas. Through organizing annual conferences, producing academic journals, maintaining websites and offering regional workshops and seminars, specialist councils provide members with opportunities to share ideas and gather new information.



Every year, the Association organizes and hosts a number of PD opportunities, including annual conferences for administrators and beginning teachers. With the help of teacher instructors and facilitators, the ATA also supports school-based PD by coordinating numerous workshops and events.

The ATA library houses an extensive collection of books, periodicals, videos and other resources to help teachers advance the quality of their teaching practice.

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The ATA is the bargaining agent for all teachers employed by public, separate and francophone school jurisdictions in the province, as well as for school-based administrators and nearly all central-office-based teachers and administrators. Salary, benefits and conditions of practice are negotiated through bi-level collective bargaining with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association centrally and with individual school jurisdictions locally.

Opening proposals for collective bargaining are developed through teacher consultation and are approved by democratic votes. Our bargaining teams include elected teacher

representatives, and all collective agreements are subject to ratification by a direct vote of teachers. Our democratic focus on collective bargaining ensures that the process is driven by the voice of teachers.

The ATA also represents teachers on the boards of the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan and the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund, ensuring that teacher pension and benefit plans are responsive to teacher needs.

REPRESENTING TEACHERS

The ATA represents teachers individually and collectively.

Association staff offers advice to teachers on all matters related to their professional life, including certification, contracts, evaluation, medical issues, maternity, benefits, retirement and PD. If requested, staff will also represent individual teachers in meetings or hearings related to any employment-related issue, including disciplinary matters, transfers and terminations. If it is necessary, the ATA will obtain legal advice or assistance for its members.

The Association acts as the voice of the teaching profession in Alberta and advocates on behalf of teachers and students.

The Association also acts as the voice of the teaching profession in Alberta and advocates on behalf of teachers and students. To ensure that the profession speaks from a position of knowledge and authority, the ATA conducts research on a variety of issues related to education, teaching and learning. Its advocacy work includes public relations and political engagement activities to promote public education and the professional role of teachers. The ATA is however non-partisan and approaches political engagement with a focus on awareness of educational issues instead of endorsing or supporting particular parties or candidates for office.

To keep members informed and up to date on professional, legal and political issues, the Association produces many publications, including the *ATA News*, a biweekly newspaper; the *ATA Magazine*, a quarterly magazine, as well as scholarly journals and educational research monographs. It also maintains an informative website at www.teachers.ab.ca.

CONCLUSION

Welcome to the world of public education trusteeship and the community that supports education in Alberta. Alberta's teachers, through their professional Association, look forward to working with trustees on supporting and improving quality education in Alberta.

Congratulations!





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