

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 5

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 2



Ensuring Compliance with Policy on Professional Growth Plans

The requirement for all certificated teachers to develop and complete an annual professional growth plan was enshrined in provincial policy in 1997. This policy also outlines the supervising principal's requirements. Is your practice consistent with the provincial policy?

Are teachers required to align their professional growth goals with the school and district education plan goals?

No. However, teachers need to consider the education plans of the school, the school authority and the government (or the program statement of an ECS operator). The key word is *consider*, which does not imply that these goals must be included. Teachers should not only have a well-developed rationale for all goals they have included in their professional growth plan but also be prepared to explain why they have excluded other goals.

Can the school principal recommend changes to a teacher's professional growth plan?

Yes. The principal can recommend changes to the plan if it does not reflect the Teaching Quality Standard. Furthermore, if, through supervision, the principal believes that the teacher's practice does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard, he or she may initiate an evaluation. Through the evaluation process, the principal can develop a remediation plan that replaces the teacher's annual professional growth plan. The teacher is then obliged to use the remediation plan. Teachers might also

be asked to provide a rationale for the goals and strategies they identified in their professional growth plan.

Can the principal reject a teacher's professional growth plan?

The regulations governing professional growth plans state that the professional growth plan is submitted "for review or approval." School authority policy may give the principal the authority to approve the professional growth plan, in which case the principal can reject it if it does not meet the three criteria stated in the regulation. In other words, the professional growth plan must be based on the self-assessed learning needs of the teacher, must demonstrate a relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard and must consider the education goals of the school, district and government.

Can teachers be required to use provincial student achievement data as a measure in their professional growth plan?

No. Provincial student achievement data is only one type of data teachers should use for professional reflection. This data is subject to more than just teaching practice and can vary considerably from year to year as the context of the classroom changes. Provincial student achievement data can be valuable if it is analyzed so as to take into account other factors that may affect student achievement, such as attendance, fluency in English and socioeconomic status.

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You
cannot
teach
a man
anything.
You can
only
help him
discover
it within
himself.

Galileo



Ensuring Compliance with Policy on Professional Growth Plans

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Teachers should consider, however, what can be learned from analyzing a wide range of student achievement data over time in relation to their professional growth plan goals. The provincial achievement data is not available before the end of the year. Therefore, teachers will need to use a variety of other classroom assessments to meaningfully measure changes in student learning.

At what point must the principal meet with teachers to monitor professional growth plans?

At a minimum, principals must meet with each teacher twice during the year in relation to the teacher's professional growth plan. The first meeting is held early in the school year to review or approve professional growth plan goals and discuss strategies. The second meeting is held in the latter part of the school year to determine if the teacher has completed the professional growth plan. This second meeting gives the teacher an opportunity to reflect on the impact of professional growth plan activities on his or her practice. Each school district policy will have deadlines for the initial and final review of growth plans.

The ATA Professional Growth Plans module has a Frequently Asked Questions section that will be useful to teachers and principals. As well, principals can find sample questions for the initial and final review meetings with teachers in section 4 of the module. For more information, contact Professional Development staff at 1-800-232-7208.

Saying the F-Word Out Loud

What happens when women leaders say the F-word out loud? For many years the word *feminist* has elicited powerful reactions, and as a result women in education are often reluctant to refer to themselves as such. In May 2008, Noreen O'Haire, former director of the Canadian Teachers' Federation's Professional and Developmental Services, on behalf of the Status of Women Committee, invited leaders from teachers' organizations across Canada to the annual Women's Seminar, called "Feminist Leadership: Feminist Voices in Education." Dr Amy Burns, a teacher in the Rocky View School Division and a University of Calgary graduate, explored issues relating to feminist leadership in her research with school administrators. She wanted to find out how female administrators, who referred to themselves as feminist leaders, interpreted and lived out their lives in school settings. In particular, she focused on "fear of feminism." Dr Janice Wallace, of the University of Alberta, extended the discussion by suggesting that, for many female

administrators, the claim to be feminist poses difficulties and even dangers. Her research explored similarities and contradictions in the work of female superintendents, two of whom identified as feminist and two of whom did not.

The Alberta Teachers' Association will continue the conversation by hosting a seminar on gender issues, "Learning to Say the 'F-Word': Feminism for Everyone," on the evening of November 3 and all day November 4, 2008. This seminar will ask, What does feminism have to do with the work of educators? We will highlight current research on feminist leadership and explore student action, diverse cultural perspectives and issues pertinent to gender in public education. The goal is to solicit input from educators across the province about future directions and policies relating to the principles of feminism, social justice and equality for all. This seminar will be of interest to teachers, administrators, superintendents, preservice teachers and faculties of education.

Learning to say the "F-Word": Feminism for Everyone

Monday, November 3, 2008

(7:00 to 9:00 PM)

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

(9:00 AM to 3:00 PM)

The Alberta Teachers' Association

11010 142 Street NW

Edmonton, Alberta

Go to www.teachers.ab.ca to access the agenda and registration information.



Q & A

GORDON THOMAS

Q: I accepted a position as principal of a school. I am new to the school and do not know my staff. Can I review their personnel files?

A. Whenever a principal uses the information in the custody or under the control of the board, he or she must do so only for those reasonable purposes for which the information was collected or with the teacher's consent (see section 39 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act [FOIP Act]* below).

Your purpose for reviewing the files might be to assign duties, build schedules, familiarize yourself with return-to-work accommodations, or other purposes directly related to the administration of the staff. For these

purposes, a review would be legitimate. If, however, the review is out of personal curiosity or for any purpose not related to your administrative mandate, then the review is ill advised, at best, and potentially in violation of section 39 of FOIP, at worst. One would not rely on information in the teacher file to initiate an evaluation or to take disciplinary action as this would require a direct supervisory role at the time the issues arose.

If you elect to review the district personnel files,

- preserve the confidentiality of the files' contents,
- protect the records from unauthorized access at all times,
- do not remove anything from the files or amend any content,
- do not photocopy or otherwise reproduce any content in the files and
- do not remove the personnel files from the district office.

Understand that both the files and any notes you make regarding the files

are subject to a FOIP request for access. Determine if notes are necessary. Ensure that any notes you create are secured and kept confidential.

Consider informing the staff that you are planning to review their personnel files and invite them to review their individual files with you. You must be able to justify reviewing the personnel files if you are challenged.

[Section 39](#) of the *FOIP Act* sets out how personal information may be used.

In [section 39\(1\)\(a\)](#) and (b), information may be used as follows:

39(1) A public body may use personal information only
(a) for the purpose for which the information was collected or compiled or for a use consistent with that purpose

(b) if the individual the information is about identified the information and consented, in the prescribed manner, to the use (see [section 6](#) of the FOIP Regulation)

Principals, Are You Labouring over Your Professional Growth Plan?

There's help. Visit the ATA website (www.teachers.ab.ca).

- Principal quality practice descriptors
- Leadership dimension reflection tools
- Current reading on leadership
- Sample professional growth plans
- PD strategies and templates

E-mail your comments and questions to Jacqueline Skytt, coordinator, Professional Development, at jacquie.skytt@ata.ab.ca.



Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta

In July, Education Minister Dave Hancock announced a comprehensive review of special education titled Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta. The purpose of the review is to develop a vision, principles, a policy, a framework, funding and an accountability system that will support a bold new approach to special education.

The project steering committee, made up of 16 Albertans, will review current research, best practices from other jurisdictions and input from Albertans. The Stakeholder Working Group, comprising representatives from 16 organizations, including the ATA, will assist the steering committee and Alberta Education staff with the development of policy, accountability and funding mechanisms for special education. The two committees will meet periodically and are expected to develop an interim report by September 2009 and a final report by September 2010. The recommendations from the review will be implemented in September 2010.

The project consists of five phases: (1) research and initial public consultation, (2) analysis and option generation, (3) policy drafting and final consultation, (4) ministerial consideration of recommendations and (5) implementation. The first phase of public consultation is scheduled for October through December 2008. Sessions will be conducted in at least nine communities across the province. These consultations will discuss the vision and principles for the direction of special education in Alberta. In-person consultations for phase one will be supported by an online survey to extend the commitment to reaching all Albertans.

The project's success depends on the participation and support of all education stakeholders and the public. Information about opportunities to become actively involved in the consultation process will be available soon.

Leadership Essentials for Administrators Conference 2008

Featuring keynote speakers Todd Whitaker and Carol Boothroyd

Administrators within the first two years of their appointment or administrators new to Alberta are invited to attend the 2008 Leadership Essentials for Administrators Conference November 24 and 25 at the Westin Hotel in Edmonton. Space is limited; apply early. A grant-in-aid will offset costs for participants.



The Leadership Essentials for Administrators Conference is a key component of the Association's program of services for school-based administrators. The goals of the conference are to provide ongoing knowledge and skill development to beginning administrators; to continue to assist new administrators; to provide awareness around roles, responsibilities, and professional and legal obligations; and to promote ATA services and supports to new administrators.

For more information and a registration form, visit the ATA website (www.teachers.ab.ca) and click on Resources for School-Based Administrators, or call Konni deGoeij or Mark Yurick at 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta) or 780-447-9400 (in Edmonton).