

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 6

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 2



Education Provisions of Bill 44 on Hold Until September 2010

On September 14, 2009, the Alberta cabinet proclaimed Bill 44, the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act, 2009*, with the exception of the education-related provisions in Section 9, to be in force effective October 1, 2009. Section 9 will come into force on September 1, 2010. The delay in implementing the Section 9 amendments is intended to allow education officials, teachers and school boards to develop a common understanding of the bill's implications for school boards and classroom teachers, as well as policy recommendations.

Section 9 of the bill would oblige school boards to provide parents and guardians with advance notice where "courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises, prescribed under [the *School Act*] include subject-matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion, human sexuality, or sexual orientation." Parents or guardians who objected to this content could then provide written notification requiring that their child not take part in the instruction, courses of study or use of the materials they deemed to be offensive, or requiring that their child be excluded from the classroom altogether. Such exclusion would not be permitted to result in the student's incurring an academic penalty.

The remainder of the bill includes a provision to extend to Albertans formal protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Already, the government, the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta School Boards Association have been working to

develop a practical definition of what *primarily and explicitly* means within the context of Section 9. This may help reduce the considerable ambiguity concerning what curriculum content, resources and instructional practices might be deemed as dealing primarily and explicitly with religion, human sexuality or sexual orientation. In addition, it will be necessary to determine what would constitute adequate notice to parents and what, if any, alternative processes might be established to forestall the need for parents to take their complaints to the human rights commission.

The goal of this consultation is to ensure that before the education provisions of Bill 44 do come into effect, Alberta Education will be able to provide clear direction to school boards about how to proceed in developing policy and regulations to ensure that the provisions are implemented with minimum disruption to schools, teachers and the education of students. It is hoped that the policies implemented by school boards in response to the Section 9 amendments will reflect this advice, thus ensuring that practices concerning notification, student exclusion and local dispute resolution will be very similar across the province.

Accordingly, the Association is advising teachers and administrators not to act in the absence of such explicit direction. **Any change in regular teaching practice in advance of Section 9 coming into effect would be unnecessary, premature and potentially**

Finish each day
and be done
with it. You have
done what you
could; some
blunders and
absurdities
have crept in;
forget them as
soon as you
can. Tomorrow
is a new day;
you shall begin
it serenely and
with too high
a spirit to be
encumbered
with your old
nonsense.

—Ralph Waldo
Emerson



Continued on page 2

Education provisions of Bill 44 on hold

Continued from page 1

harmful to the interests of students and teachers. Teachers and administrators should simply continue with current practices, complying with the policy concerning human sexuality education in the current *Guide to Education*.

Even though the Association is providing advice to the government concerning the implementation of Section 9, it should be clear that this is primarily an effort to reduce teachers'

risk and to mitigate potential damage to the quality of education in the province's classrooms. From the perspective of the Association, this section of the bill remains fundamentally flawed—it is an unnecessary and unwelcome intrusion into the classroom and diminishes the professional judgment and practice of teachers.

Particularly offensive to the Association, which has a long history of promoting respect for diversity, equity and human rights, is Section 9's underlying proposition that the appropriate consideration of emergent issues relating to sexual orientation in the classroom somehow poses a unique

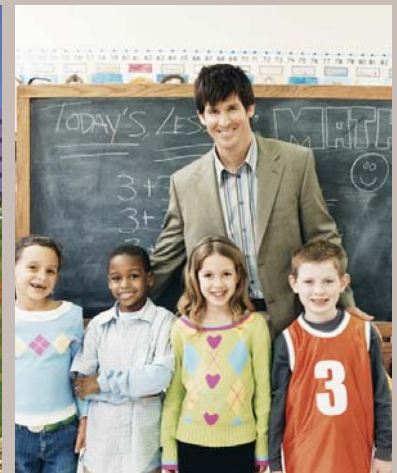
and serious threat to the well-being of students that must be addressed. It is both profoundly ironic and profoundly disappointing that our government should choose to respond to this imaginary threat in the same legislation that finally extends equal protection under law to gay, lesbian and transgendered Albertans.

Unfortunately, gay, lesbian and transgendered students and staff are at particular risk of discrimination and bullying. Educators should be mindful of the subtext of Section 9 and be aware of their obligation to create and maintain a safe and caring learning environment for all in their school.

Western Canadian Educational Administrators' Conference 2009



Courtesy: www.edmonton.com



Leadership Today for Tomorrow

WCEAC 2009 brings together educational leaders from Western Canada and throughout the world in an opportunity to grow as colleagues in a stimulating setting - the beautiful Fantasyland Hotel in the West Edmonton Mall. This year's sessions will address a variety of themes and promise to provide a rewarding experience to all those attending. Our themes for the conference include many areas of interest for administrators such as Rural Education, Assessment, Technology in Education, Differentiated Instruction, Legal Issues for Administrators, Cyberbullying, and 21st Century Learners.

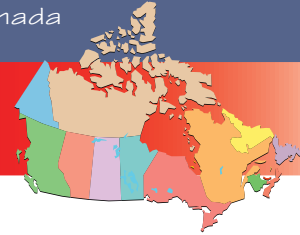
Featuring Dylan Wiliam, Cheryl Lemke, and Don Horwood





THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP
Champions of Public Education Across Canada

Canada's Outstanding Principals



Winners from across
Canada are recognized
for the unique and
crucial contributions to
their schools and to
public education.

Nominations are now being accepted for the
**2010 Canada's Outstanding Principals™
Awards**

Nomination deadline is October 30, 2009

To learn more and to nominate Outstanding
Principals in your community visit:

www.thelearningpartnership.ca

or contact

Jon Powell
416-440-5112

jpowell@thelearningpartnership.ca





Leadership Essentials

FOR ADMINISTRATORS

November 16–17 2009

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Calgary

Open to administrators in the first two years of their appointment and to administrators new to the province of Alberta. There is no registration fee. Space is limited; apply early. Registration forms are available at www.teachers.ab.ca, Resources for School-Based Administrators, Leadership Essentials for Administrators Conference.

Network with colleagues and learn about

Fostering Effective Relations • Embodying Visionary Leadership • Leading a Learning Community • Providing Instructional Leadership • Developing and Facilitating Leadership • Managing School Operations and Resources • Understanding and Responding to Larger Societal Context

Keynote Speakers

Harvey Alvy—Growing into Leadership

Carol Boothroyd—Gender and Communications

Breakout Sessions

- Welcome to Alberta; Critical Information for those New to the Province • Building Trust • Getting on the Same Page: Discipline Strategies • Leading and Managing a School Effectively • Understanding Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples • Facilitating the Work of Multidisciplinary Special Education Learning Teams
- Suspensions/Expulsions/Attendance Boards • Guide to Education • The Principal Quality Practice Guideline and Administrator Professional Growth • Top Ten Sections of the School Act • Technology Traps and Treasures
- Dealing with Difficult People and Difficult Issues • Interpreting and Understanding Collective Agreements
- Health and Safety Issues in Alberta Schools • Policy 2.1.5—The Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy (including Practice Review) • Effective Practices in Teacher Supervision and Evaluation • Bullying (including Cyberbullying)

For further information, contact Barnett House at 780-447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta) or visit the ATA's website at www.teachers.ab.ca, Resources for School-Based Administrators, Leadership Essentials for Administrators Conference.



**LEADERSHIP
UPDATE**

An ATA/CSA publication for school administrators



The Alberta
Teachers' Association