

# LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 7

Number 6



## GOVERNMENT Program Area

Sometimes people think that the Government program area of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) pertains to the government of Alberta. Actually, the word *government* refers to the governance of the ATA, though this area also does have dealings with the provincial government.

Essentially, the Government program area looks after five major ATA functions: Association governance, representation, communications, research and operations.

### Association Governance

With respect to Association governance, the Government program area is responsible for planning the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), arranging meetings of Provincial Executive Council and providing support services for committees central to the Association's ongoing operations, such as Table Officers, Finance and Resolutions. The Government program area also plans and hosts local presidents' meetings.

### Representation

The Table Officers Committee communicates policy adopted at ARA to the provincial government and other bodies. In so doing, the senior officers of that committee act as the official voice of the Association. Meetings are scheduled as needed with the education minister, the opposition parties, the Alberta School Boards Association, the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta, the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents

and parent organizations. Staff in the Government program area coordinate all liaisons with Alberta Education.

The Government program area also liaises with teachers' organizations throughout Canada and the world through the Canadian Teachers' Federation and Education International. The Association's international aid program, primarily carried on through Project Overseas, is coordinated by the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

### Communications

Staff in the Government program handle Association communications, both with members and with the public.

The *ATA News* and *ATA Magazine* are official publications of the Association and are sent to teachers employed in all of Alberta's public, separate and francophone school jurisdictions. Copies also go to education students, MLAs, school jurisdiction officials, media outlets, officials in Alberta Education and teacher organizations throughout Canada and around the world. Circulation is approximately 42,500 copies. The *ATA News* is a tabloid newspaper published every two weeks 20 times throughout the school year, and the *ATA Magazine* is a quarterly professional journal.

The Association also communicates with various audiences through its website at [teachers.ab.ca](http://teachers.ab.ca) and on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The Government program area also oversees the Association's media relations, public relations and publicity campaigns. Most ATA publicity

**Success  
means we go  
to sleep at  
night knowing  
that our talents  
and abilities  
were used in a  
way that  
served others.**

**—Marianne  
Williamson**



campaigns are designed to promote public education and advance the image of teachers and the teaching profession. The Association's social responsibility program, Healthy Minds, Bright Futures, is a partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association and Global Television; its goal is to promote the good mental health of children and youth.

## Research

The ATA conducts research to maintain and improve the competence of teachers and to study emerging issues in education and the work life of teachers. Leading-edge research positions the Association as an authoritative voice on learning and professional practice, and informs Association policy positions. The ATA's research department also conducts activities related to developing and advancing the ATA's strategic plan.

Examples of recent research are a longitudinal study that followed a cohort of teachers through their first five years of teaching, an examination of online student reporting, and a study of the impact of emerging technologies on classrooms and teacher workload. Ongoing research includes regular polling of ATA members and the public.



## Operations

The Government program area is also responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the organization. This includes departments related to finance, records and archives, publications and distribution, information technology, and the building operations for Barnett House, including our cafeteria, catering and room rentals.

### Program Staff

Gordon R Thomas	<b>Executive Secretary</b>
Ernest C Clintberg	<b>Associate Executive Secretary</b>
Jacqueline K Skytt	<b>Assistant Executive Secretary</b>
Dennis E Theobald	<b>Coordinator, Communications</b>
J-C Couture Phil A McRae Gaylene R Schreiber Jonathan H Teghtmeyer	<b>Executive Staff Officers</b>
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To find archived issues of *Leadership Update* go to [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) and click on Resources for School-Based Administrators.

Feedback is welcome. Please contact Konni deGoeij, associate coordinator, administrator assistance, Member Services, at [konni.degoeij@ata.ab.ca](mailto:konni.degoeij@ata.ab.ca).

# Waves of Change



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## CAP 2011 Prince Edward Island

**May 18 – 20, 2011**

**Delta Prince Edward Hotel, Charlottetown, PE**

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**Steven Katz**

*Effective Learning communities*

**Keynote Speaker**

**Damian Cooper**

*Using Assessment to Drive Instruction*

**Dr Chris Spence**

*Achieving, Believing and Caring! Whatever It Takes*

# Alberta's Educational Leaders Shine in Latest McKinsey International School Leadership Study

We all know that Alberta's international reputation for excellence in education is well deserved, and now the world is focusing more attention on what makes us so great. Recently, Alberta was one of eight world-leading education systems invited to participate in an international research project, *Capturing the Leadership Premium: How the World's Top School Systems Are Building Leadership Capacity for the Future*. The project was undertaken under the auspices of the British firm McKinsey & Company by a research team led by Sir Michael Barber, Fenton Whelan and Michael Clark. The education systems studied, chosen for their reputation for excellence, were in Alberta, New Zealand, England, Netherlands, New York (United States), Ontario, Singapore and Victoria (Australia). During the months of June, July and August 2010, a number of educational leaders in Alberta participated in an online survey and telephone interviews that focused on what leaders in education do and believe, what motivates them, and what governments can do to support them better. Sample groups of four Alberta educational leaders were contacted by the research team: high-performing principals (as selected by their superintendents), randomly selected principals, middle-tier leaders (that is, superintendents and other central office educational leaders) and policymakers. Alberta's participation in the McKinsey project was coordinated by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) and Alberta

Education. The complete research report can be found on the McKinsey & Company website at [www.mckinsey.com/client-service/Social\\_Sector/our\\_practices/Education/Knowledge\\_Highlights/Capturing%20the%20leadership%20premium.aspx](http://www.mckinsey.com/client-service/Social_Sector/our_practices/Education/Knowledge_Highlights/Capturing%20the%20leadership%20premium.aspx).

The study findings, released in September 2010, were based on a comparison of results from a diverse range of educational systems to determine common themes, promising practices and areas for further research related to school leadership. The research team found that, across the educational systems reviewed, there is an emerging consensus on the importance of school leadership and how to improve it, and concluded that

1. leadership focused on teaching, learning, and people is critical to the current and future success of schools;
2. high-performing principals focus more on instructional leadership and the development of teachers;
3. system policies and practices make a difference to leadership capacity;
4. leaders are grown through experience and support; actively cultivating them can increase the leadership capacity of the system;
5. leaders learn best in context and from a diverse range of sources (including peers, superiors, online resources and formal training);
6. selecting a school leader is one of the most important decisions for an education system. Therefore, ensuring that selection committees have the skills and capabilities

required to make the optimum decision is crucial;

7. maximizing leadership capacity means regarding the selection and development of leaders as integral parts of the work of schools and the system, rather than discrete processes within it; and
8. while there are many ways to structure the middle tier (that is, the central office), an effective middle tier focuses on five practices that are essential if all schools (not just some schools) are to be great schools:
  - Support and coach school leaders in their efforts to improve student learning.
  - Assist principals in identifying their development needs and provide appropriate leadership learning opportunities.
  - Manage clusters (networks) and lateral learning.
  - Strengthen succession planning by ensuring that school leaders are developing succession plans and identifying leadership talent in their school.
  - Strengthen and moderate accountability, set goals with principals and support them over the course of the year to achieve these goals.

High-performing principals across all eight world-leading education systems were found to share a number of common characteristics and practices, including

- sharing a joy of teaching and being generally more tenured (had continuing employment contracts);

- setting clear vision, direction, and goals;
- supporting the development of staff;
- involving parents, community and students;
- valuing their experience as deputy school leaders (for example, vice-principals); and
- visiting and sharing with other schools and school leaders for learning and support.

Alberta's educational leaders stood out among study participants in two areas:

1. Alberta school principals scored highest on the following leadership practices:
  - Supporting the development of staff
  - Receiving mentoring from experienced school leaders
  - Meeting or working with individual students every day
  - Walking the school hallways and attending assemblies on a daily basis
  - Holding a leadership position with a volunteer organization outside of the education sector
2. Alberta's middle-tier leaders (superintendents and other central office educational leaders) were acknowledged for being
  - highly focused on working with teachers, school leaders and community members;
  - devoted to their roles as coaches and mentors;
  - well read and open to accessing online resources;
  - in favour of learning with and from each other through networking; and
  - comfortable with accountability requirements.

These study findings reinforce other international research findings on the critical importance of effective school leadership in achieving state, local and school community goals and in promoting student achievement and development.

The research team cautioned, however, that the study findings have limitations and that there is a need for further research. While most systems now agree on the importance of central office support for school leaders, there is still uncertainty about how to maximize their effect. The development of the collective capacity of leadership teams, rather than the individual capacity of leaders, is still limited, despite much research suggesting that collective capacity is a greater driver of performance than individual capacity. All education systems studied face challenges to refine, contextualize and optimize the processes they use to support their leaders. Moreover, the challenge of how to deliver all this at scale (that is, across the province) is largely unresolved; few education systems across the Western world have begun to tackle the challenge of developing excellent leaders on a large scale. While the international evidence provides many instances of proven good practice, the leadership “premium”—one of the most important drivers of improvement in schools—is a long way from being truly captured.



The study's timing was fortuitous, as educational leadership has been the focus of many initiatives in our province over the past two years, including the 2008 ATA study *Leadership for Learning: The Experience of Administrators in Alberta Schools*; CASS's *Moving and Improving: A Framework for School System Success* initiative; and Alberta Education's 2008 School Leadership Symposium, 2009 *Principal Quality Practice Guideline* (PQPG) and the current School Leadership Framework initiative. Alberta's education sector stakeholder partners are collaborating in developing the School Leadership Framework, which will include *Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders* (replacing the PQPG), quality indicators for school leader preparation, induction and professional learning programs, and stakeholder roles and responsibilities in supporting, guiding and directing school leaders in their practice. The aim of this initiative is to build school leadership capacity within the provincial education system, ensure a sufficient supply of suitable, well-prepared school leaders for all Alberta schools and sustain our excellent education system well into the future.



Council on  
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**Because of her practical approach to instruction, Dr. Jackson has become a nationally recognized presenter...**

Dr. Robyn R. Jackson has served as a teacher, administrator, adjunct professor, consultant, and speaker championing equity, access, and rigor for over 15 years. In her work with teachers, administrators, schools and non-profit organizations, Dr. Jackson focuses on key principles of education rather than isolated strategies and canned approaches. Using these principles, she helps teachers and school leaders discover for themselves how best to increase students achievement and teacher effectiveness.

Dr. Jackson founded Mindsteps Inc. in 2006 because she believes that every child deserves a master teacher and any teacher can become one with the right kind of support and practice. Her unique approach to professional development shows teachers how to become master teachers that help every child meet or exceed rigorous learning standards. Her work with administrators helps them effectively train and support teachers and create highly rigorous school programs that ensure equitable access and opportunity for all students. She also works with school systems and non-profits to improve teacher effectiveness and remove instructional barriers to equity, access, opportunity and rigor for all students.

ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION: SPECIALIST COUNCIL - CSA

CSA is proud to present

**Dr. Robyn Jackson**

March 20th - 22nd, 2011

Banff Park Lodge, Banff, Alberta



**Dr. Robyn R. Jackson is the author of five books:**

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- *The Instructional Leader's Guide to Strategic Conversation with Teachers*
- *Never Work Harder Than Your Students and Other Principles of Great Teaching*
- *How to Support Struggling Students*

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## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE 2011

### Sunday, March 20th, 2011

**9:00 am - 3:00 pm**

*Conference Registration*

**2:00 pm - 5:00 pm**

**General Session with**

*Dr. Robyn R. Jackson*

**6:30 pm - 8:30 pm**

**General Session with**

*Dr. Robyn R. Jackson*

**8:30 pm - 11:00 pm**

*President's Reception*

### Monday, March 21st, 2011

**8:00 am - 8:45 am**

*Breakfast*

**9:00 am - 12:00 pm**

*(with Nutrition Break included)*

**General Session with**

*Dr. Robyn R. Jackson*

**Lunch**

**1:00 pm - 3:30 pm**

**General Session with**

*Dr. Robyn R. Jackson*

### Tuesday, March 22nd, 2011

**8:00 am - 8:45 am**

*Breakfast*

**9:00 am - 1:00 pm**

*(with Nutrition Break included)*

**General Session with**

*Dr. Robyn R. Jackson*

**Boxed Lunch**



**THE KEY QUESTION TO ASK YOURSELF IS...** *“Do you wish that students took more ownership over their own learning? In this workshop, administrators and teachers have the opportunity to learn how to differentiate between your work and their work and how to support your students so that they can do the work of learning themselves.”*

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