

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 7

Number 8

Inclusive Education Update

In June 2010, Minister of Education Dave Hancock held a press conference with the minister of health and wellness and the minister of children and youth services to announce that the three government ministries would collaborate on a plan to implement the *Setting the Direction Framework*. This implementation initiative is entitled Action on Inclusion. The Action on Inclusion section of the Alberta Education website (www.education.alberta.ca/inclusion) has been updated and includes links to information in French and English. Presentations and vignettes are posted at www.education.alberta.ca/department/ipr/inclusion/presentations.aspx and www.education.alberta.ca/department/ipr/inclusion/library.aspx.

The Approach to Implementation of an Inclusive Education System in Alberta has been reviewed by the three ministers. It can be found at www.education.alberta.ca/department/ipr/inclusion/approach.aspx.

There have also been personnel and structural changes at Alberta Education. Dianne McConnell has been moved from her position as director of the Special Education Branch to director of Action on Inclusion. The Special Education Branch has been renamed the Inclusive Learning Supports Branch, with Joyce Clayton as acting director. There are several initiatives within the ministry to support the implementation plan.

Coordination between various ministries to support students with a wide range of needs is a ministry goal. To that end, a project on collaborative practices (often referred to as wraparound services) has been initiated, and \$2 million has been allocated to create a prototype of collaborative service delivery for the 2011/12 school year. Vignettes and

corresponding conversation guides have been posted at www.education.alberta.ca/admin/crossministry/collaborative-practices/videos.aspx.

An online Inclusive Education Planning Tool (IEPT) has been piloted this school year. The second version of this digital resource is now being developed based on input from the 16 pilot sites. A provincewide pilot of the IEPT will be available to districts in the 2011/12 school year.

Learning coaches have been identified by the ministry as potential supports for inclusion, and it is currently reviewing a case study report on five school authorities in Alberta that have implemented a learning coach model. A literature review, a discussion paper and a proposed learning coach role description are available on the Action on Inclusion website. The Association, in collaboration with the Special Education Council, has also published a discussion paper on learning coaches available at www.teachers.ab.ca/News%20Room/WebExtras/Pages/Inclusive-Education-and-Learning-Coaches.aspx. In addition, an Association workshop on coaching practices and processes is in development and will be available in September 2011. It does not appear at this time that there will be any funding specifically directed to learning coaches initiatives, nor will the learning coach model be mandated by the ministry.

The Association has been vocal in emphasizing the ongoing need for more detailed and timely communications. Upcoming communications from the ministry will focus on a number of items, including the \$12 million allocation to school authorities to support building an inclusive education system and what will be different in September 2011.



**A great life is
born in the
soul, grown in
the mind, and
lived from
the heart.**

—Suzanne Zoglio



Educational Leadership Academy 2011

July 11–15, Banff

Getting to Got It: Helping Struggling Students Learn to Learn, with Betty Garner

It's one of the great mysteries of teaching: Why do some students “get it” and some don't?

In this in-depth inservice, Betty Garner focuses on why students struggle and what teachers can do to help them become self-directed learners. Difficulties in reading, remembering, paying attention, following directions or behaving appropriately are not the *reasons* students fail but, rather, *symptoms* of the true problem: underdeveloped cognitive structures.

Cognitive structures are the mental processes necessary to connect new information with prior knowledge; to organize information into patterns and relationships; to formulate rules that make information processing automatic, fast and predictable; and to abstract generalizable principles in order to transfer and apply learning.

Garner uses real-life examples of struggling students to illustrate typical learning problems and provides strategies for diagnosing and resolving those problems in our classrooms. Garner's simple techniques stress reflective awareness and visualization. By helping students become conscious of what their senses are telling them, encouraging them to visualize the information for processing, and then prompting them to ask questions and figure out solutions on their own,

teachers can best help students develop the tools they need to

- gather, organize and make sense of information;
- become cognitively engaged and internally motivated to learn; and
- experience learning as a dynamic process of creating and changing.

Who Should Attend?

- School-based administrators
- Lead teachers
- Guidance counsellors
- Cognitive coaches
- Teachers

Why Should You Attend?

Students use cognitive structures to process information by comparing bits of data to create connections, identify patterns and relationships, and generate predictable outcomes, and to abstract generalizable principles. Through this process they learn, create and change—develop metability. Students can learn to see, to focus attention, and to gather and input data. When students appear to be “attention deficit,” they are seeing everything as disconnected bits of data. They are unable to determine what is relevant and what is not because they do not see relationships.

Garner delves into cognitive structures, which are the basic mental processes used to make sense of information.

Cognitive structures can also be called cognitive tools, mental structures, patterns of thought or ways of thinking. Cognitive structures are interconnected psychological systems that equip us to learn how to learn; to effectively gather, organize and evaluate information; to “figure out how to figure out” as independent learners. Cognitive structures are developed through reflective awareness and visualization. Cognitive structures develop metability.

Cognitive structures are so basic that we take them for granted and assume that everyone has them. It is hard for those who have cognitive structures to comprehend what it is like not to have them, or even to believe that others don't have them. People who have poorly developed cognitive structures are difficult to work with because they do not see relationships or notice the obvious. They are also unaware that they do not have cognitive structures.

You will leave this academy with a greater understanding of the mental processes students need in order to gather, organize and understand information. As a teacher, you will learn how to infuse lessons with new routines and teaching approaches that influence students to become better, more independent learners. As a coach or administrator, you will be equipped with examples of these strategies to share with teachers.

Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Workshop

August 8–9, Barnett House, Edmonton

The provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy (Policy 2.1.5) deals with accountability and continuous professional growth, and ensures that a teacher's professional practice is under ongoing supervision. The Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy defines the process, and the Teaching Quality Standard defines the competencies for professional practice.

This two-day workshop reviews with principals their critical role and the duties they must perform as outlined in the *School Act* and Policy 2.1.5. The following topics will be covered.

Teacher Growth

- Leadership for Teacher Growth
- Overview of Policy 2.1.5
- Teacher Growth and Alberta Policy
- The Teacher Growth Process
- Activity: What Matters?
- The Teacher Growth Process More Than Policy
- Tips for Working with Teachers
- Sources of Feedback for Teacher Reflection
- Teacher Growth Plan Questions
- Activity: Key Elements of Effective Professional Development Practices
- The Principal as Professional Development Leader
- Teacher Growth Key Messages

Supervision

- Overview of Supervision
- The Difference Between Supervision and Evaluation
- What Is Supervision?
- What Is Evaluation?
- The Evolution of Educational Supervision
- Teacher Decisions Resulting in Optimum Learning
- Supervision for Optimum Learning
- The Alberta *School Act*
- Supervision of Teachers
 - Purpose of Supervision
 - Supervision as a Partnership
- Reflections: Thinking About a Supervision Plan
- Moving from Supervision to Evaluation
- Justifiable Reasons for Moving from Supervision to Evaluation
- Steps from Supervision to Evaluation
- Developing a Supervision Plan
- Supervision Key Messages

Evaluation

- What Is Evaluation?
- Evaluation Is Based on Rules of Fairness and Natural Justice
- Evaluation Policy 2.1.5
- Flow Chart: Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation
- Moving from Supervision to Evaluation

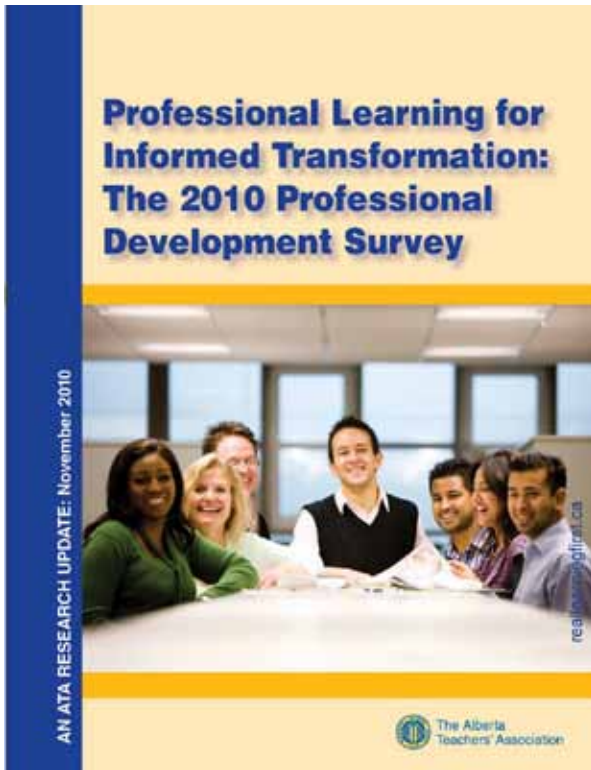
- Activity: What Matters Most?
- Ministerial Order (#016/97): Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta
- Indication of Unsatisfactory Performance
- When a Discipline Approach Is Required
- Crucial Elements of Evaluation Processes
- Duty of Fairness
- Right of Representation
- Critical Elements of Documentation Throughout the Processes
- The Notice of Evaluation
- The Evaluation Plan
- The Evaluation Report
- Conferencing
- Notice of Remediation
- Practice Review Procedures in Accordance with ATA Practice Review Bylaws
- Procedural Cautions
- Advice Given to Teachers from the Association About Evaluations

If you are interested in registering, please e-mail Marilyn Terlaan in Member Services at marilyn.terlaan@ata.ab.ca or speak to Joyce Sherwin at 780-447-9453 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta).

To find archived issues of *Leadership Update* go to 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.

2010 PD Survey



Professional Learning for Informed Transformation: The 2010 Professional Development Survey was released in November 2010 and is available in print and online. Administered to ATA local professional development (PD) committee chairs, with responses representing 89 per cent of locals, the PD survey provides perspectives on a broad range of professional development issues across the province. The survey instruments include an online portion with various numerical and descriptive response options, and a chart to collect information about PD resources at local and jurisdiction levels. PD leaders in Association subgroups are encouraged to consider the PD survey data when planning events, collaborating with others and advocating for teachers' professional development needs.

The survey responses indicated considerable concerns about the time and resources available to support participation in professional development and about teachers' ability to direct their own professional growth. Survey participants celebrated the benefits of professional learning communities and the range and breadth of PD structures available to them. Further investigation is needed on how to best meet the PD needs of substitute teachers and those new to the province or country, and how to further support the mentorship of

beginning teachers. These and other PD issues are explored in depth in the full report.

Here are the major findings that emerged from the study:

- Funding and access for most forms of PD have declined. However, teachers noted an increase in their ability to participate in professional learning communities.
- Respondents indicated that stakeholders have been generally successful in implementing PD planning practices. According to respondents, the principle of effective PD that is most evident is that PD "contributes to collaborative learning cultures."
- Respondents indicated that the various conditions considered essential for effective PD are

generally apparent in their areas but that there is considerable room for improvement.

- Respondents reported that teachers are most interested in PD opportunities that have a collaborative element, such as seminars, joint unit or lesson planning, curriculum development and interschool visits.
- Teachers believe that the professional autonomy and choice they have when developing and pursuing their individual professional growth goals have declined.
- Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects continue to shape PD opportunities for teachers. Teachers do not appear to have as much influence, especially at the jurisdiction level, in setting AISI priorities as had been expected. Indeed, nearly half of the respondents (46.7 per cent) reported that teachers have only limited influence in determining project priorities at the jurisdiction level.
- Most ATA locals and jurisdictions in the province offer programs to support beginning and early-career teachers. In many cases, locals and jurisdictions share the cost of these programs; in other cases, either the local or the jurisdiction bears the full cost. In some cases, locals and jurisdictions share the cost of sending teachers to an ATA Beginning Teachers' Conference.
- Respondents reported that although part-time teachers enjoy the same access to PD as full-time teachers, PD opportunities for substitute teachers are quite limited.

- PD programs for new and veteran administrators and for teachers aspiring to administrative positions are broad and varied.
- Very few respondents indicated that their area offers PD programs tailored to the needs of teachers new to Canada or Alberta.

Professional Learning for Informed Transformation features an executive summary and a list of resources available through the ATA library. ATA members can order print copies of this publication at no cost from Barnett House by contacting Distribution. (In Edmonton, dial 780-447-9400, ext 321; toll free in

Alberta, dial 1-800-232-7208, ext 321.) Nonmembers can order copies for a nominal cost. The electronic document can be found on the ATA website (www.teachers.ab.ca), under Publications. Comments and suggestions are welcome, and should be addressed to Gaylene Schreiber at gaylene.schreiber@ata.ab.ca.

Healthy Interactions for Administrators

August 11–12, Barnett House, Edmonton
Registration deadline: June 18

Practical communication strategies are helpful for all educators at all levels of school organization. Participants will be given an overview of communication and problem-solving skills that can assist in handling concerns when they arise. This presentation is intended to help educators understand how to deal with concerns in a consistent, comprehensive and credible way that is interest-based and fair to everyone. Information will also be provided on how Healthy Interactions, when implemented throughout a school or district, can benefit all stakeholder groups.

If you are interested in registering, please e-mail Marilyn Terlaan in Member Services at marilyn.terlaan@ata.ab.ca or speak to Joyce Sherwin at 780-447-9453 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta).



Q & A

GORDON THOMAS
Executive Secretary

Q: I have heard that there is going to be a new Teaching Quality Standard for Alberta. What is the status of this? Are there going to be significant changes?

A: The Professional Standards Branch of Alberta Education has just released its proposed changes to the Teaching Quality Standard and the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation (TGSE) Policy, and they are posted on its website. The government proposes to replace the Teaching Quality Standard and the TGSE Policy with a new document:

Professional Practice Competencies for Teachers (PPCT). The document includes five competencies, each with multiple indicators. The *PPCT* would be in the form of a ministerial order (as is the Teaching Quality Standard today), and that would include the TGSE Policy.

With respect to general government directions, the proposal is to replace the current structure of interim and permanent certification with four separate milestones. A prospective teacher would be recommended by the dean and would receive a beginning professional certificate (similar to the interim certificate today). After two years and two formal evaluations, the teacher would be recommended by the superintendent for an intermediate professional certificate (based on indicators in the five competencies). After two additional years and two additional formal evaluations, the teacher would be recommended by the superintendent for a permanent professional certificate (also based on indicators in the competencies). A teacher could choose, in a future year, to obtain the master teacher endorsement with the support of the teacher's employer, peer review and approval by the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. This fourth level is optional.

The Association has serious concerns with the proposal. Proposed revisions to the TGSE Policy diminish professional autonomy. The draft guidelines will double the number of evaluations school principals will be required to complete and will extend the process of obtaining a permanent teaching certificate to at least four years. In addition, the Association does not favour a structure where certain teachers can become identified as master teachers. The Association will be making representation to obtain significant changes to the *Professional Practice Competencies for Teachers* and the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation proposals.

For immediate release

March 29, 2011

Media Awareness Network Launches Tool to Ensure Teens are Safe and Wise Cybercitizens

Ottawa – Media Awareness Network (MNet) today launched *MyWorld: A digital literacy tutorial for secondary students*. This engaging interactive resource helps teens develop critical thinking skills that can be applied to their online lives.

Made possible through financial contributions from Inukshuk Wireless Learning Plan Fund and TELUS, *MyWorld* places students in online settings that mimic their own digital world. As they navigate through popular environments such as search engines, instant messaging systems, social networking sites and file-sharing services, students learn and practice the skills they should be using online every day.

“Young people in Canada are increasingly living their lives online, but they don’t necessarily know how to deal with – or avoid – the potential downside of their online activities,” said Jane Tallim, MNet’s Co-Executive Director. “We’ve designed *MyWorld* to mirror their life experiences so they can learn how to manage these risks and challenges in the safety of a classroom setting.”

To reflect the complexity of teen’s online activities, students playing *MyWorld* assume a variety of roles – student, friend, peer and mentor – as they use online tools for homework, managing relationships, researching topics of personal interest and participating in social activism.

MyWorld is a follow-up to *Passport to the Internet*, MNet’s highly acclaimed interactive Internet literacy tutorial for students in Grades 4-8. Licences for *Passport to the Internet* are held in every province and territory in the country.

For more information on *MyWorld*, visit <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/catalogue/products/descriptions/myworld.cfm>

-30-

Media Awareness Network (MNet) is a Canadian not-for-profit centre for media literacy and digital literacy. Its vision is that young people have the critical thinking skills to engage with media as active and informed digital citizens. MNet’s programs are funded by its public and private sector sponsors, donors and partners, who include: CTV • Shaw • Bell • TELUS • Canadian Internet Registration Authority • Google • National Film Board of Canada • Government of Canada. (<http://www.media-awareness.ca/>)

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