

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

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Alberta Distinguished Leadership Award Recipients

On Thursday, May 15, more than 150 people gathered to honour the 25 recipients of the Council for School Leadership's highest honour—the Alberta Distinguished Leadership Award. This learning community of outstanding principals and assistant principals throughout Alberta can share professionally, interact collegially and act as mentors to new colleagues. They are people who are looking to challenge the status quo, improve learning in their own contexts and equip themselves for higher levels of leadership. They are role models in the CSL, itself a vibrant network of educational leaders who have the confidence and capabilities to lead innovative change for 21st-century learning.

The principals honoured with a Distinguished Leadership Award were selected from a large number of nominees from all over Alberta:

Jennifer Allen	Kevin Deforge	Ken Griffith	Krista MacGregor	Geoff Sader
Dave Antymniuk	Kelly Forner	Kristen Hodgins	Diane Malecki	Katherine Toogood
Nancy Bergeron	Christine Gannon	Steve Laberge	Colleen Nelson	Reagan Weeks
Thomas Brimsmead	Kenneth Garinger	Lynn Leslie	Mike Nightingale	Marie Whelan
Timothy Cusack	Marcie Gomes	Brenna Liddell	Paula Robinson	Paul Wozny

Several recipients of the CSL's Distinguished Service Award, including Barb James and Dean Lindquist, also attended the ceremony. Recipients and their guests, including representatives from their school division, enjoyed a banquet and a presentation by Sarah Lewis. Sarah spoke about her latest book—*The Rise: Creativity, the Gift of Failure, and the Search for Mastery* (Simon & Schuster, 2014)—and its implications for school leaders.



Take the recommendation that has drawn the most press, implementing a process that would require teachers to be assessed to maintain their certification. ...

This micromanagement madness creates a massive bureaucracy that has zero chance of working, which is precisely the track record of its impact in other political systems that have tried it.

— Michael Fullan
commenting on Minister
Johnson's Task Force



Council for
School Leadership



Q & A
GORDON THOMAS
Executive Secretary

Q: Minister Jeff Johnson’s Task Force for Teaching Excellence recently raised questions about the process for supervision and evaluation, and suggested that sweeping changes are required in both how principals supervise and evaluate teachers and how principals themselves are evaluated. What issues might this create for school principals in Alberta?

A: The recommendations by the task force in this area have significant ramifications for school principals in Alberta. Principals typically engage in a one- to two-year evaluation process for new teachers before recommending them for further contracts with their school district or for permanent certification. During that period, principals have many opportunities to make suggestions for growth and to engage teachers in ongoing mentorship activities that will further develop their practice.

At the same time, the principal has an ongoing responsibility for the supervision of teaching staff with permanent teaching certificates. Again, there are daily opportunities for the principal to make suggestions for growth and to exercise instructional leadership to support all faculty in the school. The principal is also responsible for initiating an evaluation process if ongoing supervision raises concerns that a teacher may not be meeting Alberta’s Teaching Quality Standard. This can be done at any point in the teacher’s career, without a need to wait for a point in a five-year cycle.

The task force recommendations, if implemented, would disrupt a supervision and evaluation cycle that already provides ongoing opportunities for evaluation as needed and would replace that system with one that requires an evaluation of every teacher at regular intervals. One can easily imagine how difficult it might be to be a principal in a school with six new teachers needing their first evaluation and to also have the responsibility of conducting evaluations of many long-standing, successful teachers. Such a system would result in a great deal of work on the part of school leaders in Alberta—work that simply would not be productive. It is also difficult to imagine how such work would be conducted by school leaders in learning communities where the principal also has significant teaching duties.

Another possible challenge would involve the evaluation of school leaders themselves. Alberta already faces challenges attracting, developing and retaining principals. Teachers considering entering school leadership in Alberta often see the role as daunting. This would only be compounded with the knowledge that once the difficult process of qualifying for the role (through graduate studies or district school leadership programs) has been undertaken and once the one- to two-year district evaluation process has successfully been completed, all of their hard work might be for naught. The knowledge that the role could be temporary and could possibly last for only five years would be very discouraging. People in the school community would also be aware of the principal’s vulnerability and may launch campaigns in the last year or two of a principal’s five-year evaluation cycle in an effort to ensure that certification does not reoccur. This would make leading a school a much more difficult task.

Minister Johnson’s task force seeks to destroy the teaching profession and reduce the role of the principal to one of management and enforcement. It seeks to supplant a process for supervision and evaluation that allows for the evaluation of teachers at any point in their career and replace it with an expensive, ineffective system that would tie up the daily work of principals and leave little time for instructional leadership. Individually and collectively, we need to make our voices heard and help the government understand that the task force recommendations should not be used to so fundamentally change one of the world’s top education systems.

2014 Educational Leadership Academy

presents

Leading School Change: Bringing Everyone on Board

with



Dr Todd Whitaker, an internationally recognized speaker on a variety of educational topics, including teacher leadership, instructional improvement, change and leadership effectiveness. Dr Whitaker has published work in all these areas, as well as technology and middle-level practices.

Banff Park Lodge, Banff, Alberta

July 6–10, 2014

This workshop provides a step-by-step approach to successfully implementing the change you want to bring to your school. Leading School Change is perfect for individual leaders, leadership teams or any combination of people whose mission is to effectively lead change throughout their school or district.

Workshop participants will learn how to

- understand the three levels of change—procedural, structural and cultural;
- ensure that the first exposure to the change idea is compelling;
- work with “superstars,” “backbones” and “mediocres,” and understand who matters most to the change process;
- find and understand the entry points to change;
- learn how to diminish the influence of resisters; and
- look past buy-in to action and make it happen together.

Space is limited; early registration is recommended.

Register online at <https://event-wizard.com/events/ELA2014>.

For additional information, contact Leslie Kaun at 780-447-9410 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (elsewhere in Alberta); e-mail: ELA@ata.ab.ca.



• A program for those who hold or aspire to leadership positions in schools



Political Smoke and Mirrors: Five Issues the Task Force for Teaching Excellence Ignores

Nicole Lafreniere

There are some amazing voices among us. Nicole Lafreniere's recent blog post in response to Jeff Johnson's task force recommendations is a poignant message from a teacher and school leader that raises important questions about what the priorities should be for education in Alberta. The post, reprinted here with permission from the author, has been edited for length, and minor changes have been made to fit ATA style. The original post, along with many pertinent comments, can be found at <http://teacherstuffthatkeepsmeawake.blogspot.ca/2014/05/political-smoke-and-mirrors-five-issues.html>.

A few years ago, I attended a parent party for my daughter's sports team. It was a social gathering of a disparate group of people whose only real connection was the fact that they all had twelve-year-old daughters.

It just so happened, however, that several of those twelve-year-olds attended the same school and had the same teacher. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the conversation turned toward the teacher, and parents were loudly and vociferously complaining about the woman.

I felt extremely awkward. I didn't know this teacher, but I did know this group of girls (I had helped coach them) and I knew they weren't a breeze; additionally, the parent community in which I live can be a critical one. And

the teacher was a pretty easy target, especially given the fact she wasn't there to defend herself. The parents knew I was a teacher, but since my daughter didn't go to that school, I wasn't included in the conversation. In the end, I just said, "Hmm. I wonder if there is a group of parents, right now, all sitting around in a room talking about me."

Silence.

The thing is, teachers *are* easy targets. We've all been to school and we've all known teachers who are more or less capable. We have seen teachers at work, daily, for years, and so we assume that we know exactly what they do. Unfortunately, there are few jobs people can claim to know so intimately, even if they have never done it; sadly, it is this lack of knowledge and understanding, in large part, that has led us to the Task Force for Teaching Excellence debacle with which we are now faced.

The really troubling part is that the task force really is a game of political smoke and mirrors for the government. By creating problems where none exist, such as demanding five-year recertification or allowing tradespeople to teach without teaching certificates (anyone else see the inherent contradictions in that?), we are distracted from the real issues that impede true teacher excellence in this province, real issues that the

government seems unwilling to tackle creatively and thoughtfully.

Minister Jeff Johnson has said that he is willing to have "tough conversations" about "thorny issues." Here are five thorny issues that, in my opinion, *actually* impact teacher excellence.

1. Child Poverty

According to a report by Human Services, 17 per cent of students in this province are living in poverty—17 per cent! This is reprehensible, given that we are one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in the world.

I have seen some truly excellent teachers do amazing work with students, but not even the cream-of-the-crop teachers can do their very best work when students are coming to school hungry.

2. Inclusive Education

We need to expand our understanding of inclusion. Inclusion should mean that every student is a valued and contributing member of the school community, not that every student is in every class, no matter what. At its best, inclusive education fosters a culture that allows for and accepts difference. It means ensuring the most appropriate learning environment for each child, sometimes within a "regular" classroom and sometimes not.

3. Infrastructure Issues

The government loves to be able to say that local boards have the decision-making power to determine which schools open and which schools close, which is really just a way of passing the proverbial buck. School boards are being placed in an untenable position. With limited and unpredictable funding, we are faced with schools and neighbourhoods being pitted against one another for improved facilities.

4. Support for Mental Health

When Jeff Johnson says he wants to do “what is right for kids,” he needs to do what is right for families *and* kids and lobby for increased support for mental health care in this province, which is woefully underfunded and sadly lacking. Schools attempt to

provide wraparound services, understanding that students cannot learn when they are mentally unwell.

5. Class Size and Composition

Jeff Johnson has repeatedly stated that class size does not have a measurable impact on student learning. Maybe he is right, in some instances. I have taught students from junior high to postsecondary, from classes of six to classes of 150; in my experience, the number of students is far less important than the context in which I am teaching. What matters *may not* be class size. It is, perhaps, the composition of the class that matters more.

By focusing the public’s attention, once again, on issues of supervision and certification, this government is

diverting attention away from issues that truly matter to students, to families and to teachers. The tactic reveals a lack of understanding of the Alberta Teachers’ Association and the profession of teaching. It reveals a deliberate agenda that attempts to weaken the profession; further, it reveals an unwillingness to investigate underlying issues that impact teaching and learning. Jeff Johnson said that he needs to be able to look in the mirror and know that he has done the right thing for kids. Well, every day that teachers teach, we look in the mirror and wonder if we have done all that we can for the kids in front of us, given the constraints that bind our teaching. We are doing the very best we can. I have to wonder, however, if this government can say the same.

Cognitive Coaching Foundations Series

The Council for School Leadership will sponsor the Cognitive Coaching Foundations Series in the coming school year. This leadership development program provides participants with the knowledge and skills essential for a positive professional coaching relationship. Cognitive Coaching is a process that supports participants in becoming self-directed people with the cognitive capacity for developing excellence both independently and as members of a community. Cognitive Coaching is a registered program of the Center for Cognitive Coaching, in Denver, Colorado, cofounded by Art Costa and Bob Garmston.

The workshop series is open to all teachers and school and system leaders interested in peer coaching, mentorship, curriculum leadership, teacher supervision and school/system leadership development. This series will be offered in Edmonton and Calgary. Participants will receive a certificate upon completion. Watch upcoming issues of the *ATA News* and *Leadership Update* for more information and registration details for this popular program.

Dates for the six-workshop series are as follows:

Calgary

October 24 and 25
November 21 and 22
December 12 and 13
January 9 and 10
February 6 and 7
May 1 and 2

Edmonton

October 31 and November 1
November 14 and 15
January 16 and 17
March 20 and 21
April 17 and 18
May 22 and 23

Join the CSL

Now more than ever it is important that you, as a school leader, join the Council for School Leadership. If the CSL is your first specialist council, then membership is free. Please consider joining the CSL today.

CSL membership offers the following benefits:

- The opportunity to attend many regional and provincial professional improvement activities at a reduced rate
- The opportunity to network and collaborate with Alberta school leaders locally and provincially
- The opportunity to participate in international partnerships and research through the ATA
- A voice to speak on the direction that the province and the ATA are heading toward regarding policies that affect school leaders
- A voice at the national level
- Membership in the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP)
- *Leadership Times* newsletter, published tri-annually
- Representation on the School Administrator Issues and Concerns Committee (SAICC)
- Opportunities to attend the uLead conference, Leadership Essentials for Administrators

(in Calgary or Edmonton), the Banff Leadership Seminar and the Educational Leadership Academy (in Banff)

- Council resource materials and workshops

- Issues for Administrators monograph series

To find out more and to become a member of the Council for School Leadership, visit <http://csl.teachers.ab.ca> today.



To find archived issues of *Leadership Update*, go to www.teachers.ab.ca and click on Other Publications (under Publications), then go to School Administrators.

Feedback is welcome. Please contact Jeff Johnson, executive staff officer, Professional Development, at jeff.johnson@ata.ab.ca.

CAP Journal

The editorial team of the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) invites Alberta school leaders to submit articles for consideration for publishing in the *CAP Journal*. CAP advocates for principals and vice-principals at the national level. Working with other national educational groups, CAP presents the views and opinions of principals, assistant principals, vice-principals and other school administrators on a variety of issues and in many different forums.

At this time, the *CAP Journal* is requesting written submissions for its next issue, with the theme “Future of School Leadership—Voice of a Nation.” If you have an article of approximately 1,000–1,250 words, CAP would be

pleased to consider it for publication. The deadline for submissions is **July 10, 2014**.

Please note that the *CAP Journal* is published in a print version and an electronic version. Amendments to accommodate space requirements may be necessary; however, any revision will be approved by the author prior to publication.

Send your article to K J White, the editor of the *CAP Journal*, at kjwhite@edu.pe.ca. Submissions should be in the form of a Microsoft Word document of 1,000–1,250 words. Please include an author’s biography (not to exceed 40 words) containing your designation, credentials and any relevant experience.



Teacher Growth, Supervision, Evaluation and Practice Review Workshop

You are invited to attend a
Teacher Growth, Supervision, Evaluation and
Practice Review Workshop

August 18–19, 2014, at Barnett House,
in 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 workshop focuses on the principal’s critical role and the duties he or she must perform as outlined in the *School Act* and Policy 2.1.5.

For information and additional registration forms, visit www.teachers.ab.ca; go to For Members>Events Calendar.

The ATA on iTunes U

Imagine attending a workshop or presentation and having the opportunity to dive deeper into understanding, either before the event or in the weeks that follow—all available in the palm of your hand.

The ATA has recently become an iTunes U affiliate, and the first courses and collections are beginning to make their way to the site. Over 60 principals and assistant principals are already receiving training on how to create courses in iTunes U and how to create the Multi-Touch iBooks that will be part of many of the courses. These colleagues are working to design a range of courses that will connect directly to Alberta's Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders and will offer participating Alberta school leaders the opportunity to share their leadership stories and knowledge, not only with colleagues in their own school districts but also with school leaders throughout Alberta, across Canada and around the world.

The iTunes U course materials can include audio and video, presentations, documents, PDFs, iBooks textbooks for iPad, ePub books, iOS Apps and Web links.

The ATA on iTunes U site will allow for public lectures, events and digitized collections in audio, video and PDF format to be easily shared without cost. The new iTunes U service offers an option for publishing media easily, in the most popular online content-distribution system. The courses designed by your colleagues will join the world's largest online catalogue of

free education content. Stanford, Yale, Oxford, UC Berkeley, the U of A, the U of C and the New York Public Library are among the hundreds of institutions that are sharing courses, lectures, videos, books and other resources with students and lifelong learners all over the world. The site offers a new way for Alberta's school leaders to obtain these resources and participate at their own pace. It will not replace the access you already enjoy to professional materials on the ATA website, but it offers a supplemental method to access professional learning materials for you and your teachers. These resources and learning experiences will be searchable and accessible in a very familiar manner—just like obtaining music or apps from iTunes.

Users install free iTunes software on their devices (PC, Mac or a wide array of portable devices) to access content by searching or browsing the iTunes store. An option exists to download the iTunes U app on your iPad to access enhanced capabilities such as note-taking for students participating in a course. Each course is conveniently divided into sections: Info, Posts, Notes and Materials. Interactive assignments can be made part of courses during their design, or even after a course has been launched. Interactivity can be further enhanced as participants can share their notes with each other.

The iTunes U has the capacity to increase teacher efficacy, agency and autonomy. It enhances the ability of classroom teachers and school leaders

to create locally relevant curricular material and to be in the driver's seat when it comes to sharing that material. It also greatly magnifies the voice of individuals and, therefore, increases the impact that voice might have. The iTunes U places a multitude of incredible classroom resources at a teacher's disposal. It's a repository of entire courses of educational content for K–12 schools, postsecondary institutions and other stakeholders beyond the campus (such as the ATA and a wide array of institutions, from museums to national opera houses). For Alberta school leaders, the ATA on iTunes U will offer convenient, fully searchable access to important tools for growing as a professional and for fulfilling their role in the school.

This month, a variety of courses created by Alberta school leaders have been added to the ATA on iTunes U site. To access the site, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes> or scan the QR code on this page.

