

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 11

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 2



Autumn greetings everyone!

This edition of the *Leadership Update* contains valuable information to help support your work and to inform you of ways to access high-quality, professional learning activities for school leaders in Alberta throughout the year.

Council for School Leadership

As an Alberta school principal or assistant principal, there is one very important step that you should take this year. If you are not already a member of the Council for School Leadership, please take a moment—today—to follow the link you see on this page, bit.ly/joincsl, and follow the steps to join this school leadership specialist council. It is custom-made for school leaders and aspiring school leaders.

Professional Learning Opportunities and News

This year it is easier to obtain information about upcoming professional learning events and programs for school leaders than ever before. You need only remember the following website—www.uLead.ca—in order to access up-to-date news about school leadership in Alberta, and provincial and regional professional learning events. You will also find information about the uLead conference that will take place in March. Please visit uLead.ca on a regular basis as the events and news will change frequently.



www.uLead.ca



**I worry that
we're losing
our moral
compass and
that those
educators
with the
highest
aspirations
for our
students are
those who
increasingly
are least
welcome in
our schools**

**—Dr Dennis
Shirley**



National study highlights challenges faced by school leaders

Cory Hare

The job of school principal is almost as rewarding as it is impossible.

That's a tongue-in-cheek twist on the findings of a new national study into the challenges faced by Canada's school principals. These school leaders are facing heavier and heavier workloads due to an overload of sometimes conflicting demands created by a range of factors that include increasingly diverse student populations, heightened accountability measures, the proliferation of digital technology and unrealistic parental demands.

"The school has become the venue to be all things to all students. We are the parents, doctors, nurses, social workers and educators. The responsibility is becoming too much," said one Alberta principal who participated in the study.

Undertaken by the Alberta Teachers' Association in partnership with the Canadian Association of Principals, the *Future of the Principals in Canada* project conducted 40 focus groups with 500 principals from across Canada over a two-year period.

The study found that 90 per cent of principals view their work as very fulfilling, but 95 per cent say they face a growing, unsustainable workload and complexity in their schools. Principals work an average of 58 to 60 hours a week, time that is increasingly spent doing business management functions as well as reporting and documentation.

A vast majority of principals—95 per cent—want to spend more time in classrooms working with teachers yet typically manage to devote only 4.7 hours per week to this activity.

Beyond the administrative and managerial roles that they are expected to master, principals are also expected to be innovators and agents of change in a culture that increasingly challenges traditional conceptions of leadership, the report states.

"The principal's work often involves navigating myriad seemingly irreconcilable government policies and community expectations while trying live up to an idealized vision of instructional leadership. Moreover, the work of a school principal demands meeting heightened expectations while mediating multiple and often seemingly conflicting roles," writes J-C Couture, lead author of the study and associate coordinator of research with the ATA.

Alberta results

The study included a broad sample of Alberta principals.

These administrators reported many of the same concerns as their national counterparts, but they stood out by noting that they work within a "culture of consumerism" in which students and parents do "comparison shopping" before choosing a school.

"Much of what we do each day is done to market ourselves. We need to

keep parents happy so we have good accountability pillar results. I have become, in many ways, more of a marketing manager than an educator," stated one principal.

Fifteen per cent of Alberta administrators commented specifically on high parental expectations as a source of stress, matching the 15 per cent national average.

Alberta principals also noted that teachers lack the preparation they need to manage the complexities they face in the classroom. This was attributed to an influx of new teachers to the province in last five years, ineffective preservice education and "disconnects between schools, districts and postsecondary institutes in aligning the supports and training needed to build teacher capacity."

Like administrators nationally, Alberta principals are struggling to find the funding and resources they need to support teachers.

The report highlights three overlapping sources of diverse student needs that are especially apparent: immigrant and aboriginal students who are not achieving academically; students who fit the traditional definition of "special needs" due to learning and physical disabilities; and the exploding number of children with undiagnosed difficulties described by administrators and teachers as "anxiety," "depression," "mental health issues" and "behavioural issues."

Integrating immigrant students and their families was a prominent concern for Alberta school leaders, as was the impact of technology on education, which was cited as both a challenge and an opportunity.

“Challenges include teacher professional learning, meaningful implementation and the costs of devices and maintenance. Opportunities include increased engagement in learning that reflects the current realities of our students and the world they live in,” said one participant.

Alberta administrators are seeking relief from accountability demands, reduced and clarified expectations and the resources they need in their schools to meet an increasingly complex array of student needs.

“I have to be the doctor, counsellor, advisor, and psychologist,” one said. “I have to be whatever my families need, and we are increasingly asked to provide it for our students and their families without systemic change.”

Wake-up call

The study’s findings will come as no surprise to anyone who’s spent time in a principal’s chair, said ATA president Mark Ramsankar.

“I’ve been in the position of acting principal before, and I’ve supported my principal as an assistant principal—I know it’s an extremely demanding job,” Ramsankar said.

“These results should be a wake-up call to school boards and government that our school leaders need a fully resourced system, including mentorship, collaboration time, professional development and reduced managerial obligations. Principals aspire to educational leadership, not management, so they can truly lead Alberta’s teaching force.”

Moving forward

Researchers summarized their findings into five themes, or “ways forward,” in the hope of providing a template for practitioners and policymakers to improve school leadership in their home communities.

1. Teach and learn for diversity.
 - Support new Canadian families, particularly in English language learning.
 - Strategically engage and teach aboriginal students and develop better partnerships with families.
 - Strategically address growing mental health issues in children and young adults.
2. Collaborate and build professional capacities in school staff.
 - Implement mentorship programs.
 - Foster leadership development to encourage school principals to draw on the strengths and talents of their teaching staff, moving toward distributive leadership models.
3. Build family and community relationships.
 - In the short term, support professional development that will help school leaders with negotiations, dispute resolutions and boundary setting.
 - In the long run, work to build community-level partnerships.
 - Advocate for integrated service models that house an array of family services in the school to benefit students and families directly, as well as to strengthen relationships in the community.
4. Use technology for creative learning and good citizenship.
 - Recognize and assume a significant leadership role in

teaching children and young people to use technology responsibly and thoughtfully.

- Continue professional development for school leaders and staff regarding technology in the classroom.
 - Balance technical skills with sensitivity to the pedagogical and social consequences of technology for students’ learning, social development and well-being.
5. Promote continuous leadership learning.
 - Continue articulating leadership frameworks and competencies for school principals.
 - Advocate for conditions that will not crowd out leadership learning with managerial competencies.

In their words – Canadian principals speak their minds

“Increasingly, school is becoming a social agency that must parent students, and parent parents.”

“After 20 years as a principal I appreciate the fact that there will always be a lineup of people outside of my office door — but it is the growing number of bureaucrats, consultants and other ‘experts’ hovering outside the school yard telling me how to do my job that I find most frustrating.”

“Schools are expected to be all things to all people.”

“Increasing government demands to quantify student achievement forces a schoolwide focus on numbers, not learning.”

“Paperwork keeps us from doing the right work.”

“Everyone feels they have the right to tell us how to do our jobs.”

“The time required to understand and absorb policy is beyond 24 hours a day.”



GORDON THOMAS
Executive Secretary

Q: I hear from time to time about clauses C2 and C5 that may affect my work as a principal in my school. What kinds of things should I be aware of in relation to C2 and C5?

A: Here are some thoughts on the two clauses and areas of focus for school leaders:

What does C2 stand for?

The C2 committee derives its name from part C and clause 2 of the March 2013 framework agreement. The Joint C2 Committees on Teachers’ Workload, mandated by the *Assurances for Students Act*, consist of teacher and board representatives. The committees are a forum to identify teachers’ tasks and determine what can be eliminated or modified to reduce teacher workload and improve teacher efficacy.

What is the C2 committee doing?

Reviewing jurisdiction tasks to reduce workload and improve efficacy.

What is teacher efficacy?

Teacher efficacy is described as the “confidence teachers hold about their individual and collective capacity to influence student learning” (Klassen et al 2010, 21).

How are they operating?

Each bargaining unit has formed a committee that is seeking input using various means, which may include surveys and focus groups.

What can I do?

Principals can contact their C2 chair and/or local president to provide their input to the work of the committee. Principals should be aware that, as part of the framework agreement, teachers may appeal to the principal and, if necessary, to the superintendent, if they believe issues in the local committee’s C2 report have not been addressed. A collaborative approach with your faculty members is recommended to resolve potential issues in this area.

What is the main focus of the C5 clause?

C5 relates to professional development. C5 states that

To implement elements of Inspiring Education, teachers must engage in ongoing professional development that considers school jurisdiction, and school and personal professional goals. Commencing in the 2013/14 school year, each school jurisdiction will ensure that time is dedicated from within the currently allotted noninstructional days or those times during the school year such as early dismissal days when students are not in attendance, to enable classroom teachers to

a. collaborate with their colleagues in a professional learning community setting to benefit student learning and mitigate teacher workload, and

b. address the goals of their personal professional growth plan.

Teachers who believe that insufficient time has been dedicated to professional development may appeal to the principal and, if necessary, the superintendent. If they are not satisfied by the decision of the superintendent, the Association may refer the matter to the Exceptions Committee as outlined in Part C 10.

You will note that the agreement indicates that teachers who believe that insufficient time has been dedicated to professional development may appeal to the principal and, if necessary, the superintendent. An ongoing collaborative approach with your teachers in this area will help ensure that each teacher’s personal professional growth plan goals are met and that a climate is created within the school that supports the growth of a professional learning community where student learning and teacher efficacy are paramount.

Professional Learning Opportunities

Each edition of the *Leadership Update* will share important information to help support your work and to inform you of ways to access high-quality professional learning activities for school leaders in Alberta throughout the year. This year, hundreds of school leaders will attend uLead in Banff, which is gaining a reputation worldwide as one of the premier conferences on innovation and excellence in school leadership.

uLead Conference—March 15–18, 2015

A unique opportunity awaits. In March, 2015, educational leaders from around the world will gather in the beautiful World Heritage Site location of Banff, Alberta, for Canada's premier conference for school-based leaders, district-level leaders and provincial and state education leaders. Expect a rare and historic dialogue with world leaders in education that will be both memorable and ground-breaking. Among the 800 attendees will be principals, assistant principals, district leaders, education ministry representatives and national ministers of education from around the world, as well as a wide array of world-class keynote speakers. uLead 2015 is sponsored by the Council for School Leadership, a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Find out more at www.ulead.ca, or visit bit.ly/ulead15 to register.

School and district leaders from across Canada and beyond will gather to share their school leadership stories with colleagues from around the world. This event falls shortly before the International Summit on the Teaching Profession, also to be held in Banff, so we are also expecting many provincial and national ministers of education to join the principals and assistant

principals at uLead, making this a unique opportunity for all participants.

An impressive range of world-class keynote speakers will help to animate the dialogue about best practices in educational leadership worldwide and about the leadership Alberta demonstrates as one of the best performing school jurisdictions in the world. Invitees include the premier of Alberta, Jim Prentice, and Alberta's Minister of Education, Gordon Dirks. Confirmed keynote presenters include **Simon Breakspear (Sydney, Australia)**, **Pasi Sahlberg (Harvard)**, **Dr Andy**

Hargreaves (Boston College), **Dr Dennis Shirley (Boston College)**, **Pak Tee Ng (Singapore)**, **Abdul Chohan (Great Britain)** and talented educational leaders from Canada, Australia, Singapore, Finland, Norway, the US and Sweden.

There will also be myriad opportunities for spouses and family members to explore one of the most pristine wilderness areas in the world during the conference.

There is a 20% discount (early-bird pricing) for those who register before October 31.



ULEAD 2015

www.ulead.ca | uLead | Early Bird Pricing until October 30!

Stunning Keynote Presentations!

uLead 2015 will provide delegates with inspirational speakers to animate dialogue that are unrivalled in conferences for educational leaders worldwide. The uLead main stage will see presentations from many stunning presenters including:

- Ministers of education (both from Canada and around the world)
- Pasi Sahlberg (Harvard)
- Dennis Shirley (Boston College)
- Abdul Chohan (Essa Academy - Great Britain)
- Simon Breakspear (Sydney, Australia)
- Andy Hargreaves (Boston College)
- Pak Tee Ng (Singapore)



This year's conference lineup is truly outstanding! uLead 2015 will be an extremely valuable event for those attending with thought leaders from around the world animating the dialogue, presentations and workshops that attending national, provincial and state education ministry representatives, school district leaders, principals, assistant principals, and teacher-leaders will enjoy at the conference. The conference speakers and workshop leaders have been very carefully chosen to challenge those attending to return to their communities with a renewed sense of inspiration and many ideas to foster the growth of learning ecosystems that are creative, innovative, and fully meet the needs of the students in our schools today.



Join us in March in Banff!



Even the breakout sessions will astound!

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This spring, uLead will be groundbreaking in so many ways!

- Both Alberta's Premier and our new Minister of Education are invitees to the event.
- Breakout session presenters will come from a wide range of school districts from Alberta and across Canada and will include principals from Sweden, England, Belgium, Singapore, the United States, and Belgium.
- A call for proposals tinyurl.com/uleader is still open until October 30 so those presentations will continue to grow.
- Register at: www.ulead.ca/Welcome.html

The conference offers an ongoing dialogue on creativity and innovation in both leadership for our schools, and also in the programming we need to offer in those schools to allow the next generation of leaders to flourish.

Innovative principals and district leaders from around the world will share their stories with conference delegates. An array of international thought leaders will challenge delegates to go beyond current practices and to consider what GREAT leaders do differently to help students to realize their dreams.

uLead 2015 is going to be an event that will truly transform the leadership practices of those attending in a positive way. The conference will fill up quickly so please register early to ensure your place at uLead 2015! Watch this page for further news regarding the exciting range of presenters at this event.

One of the world's premier conferences for school leaders will take place in Banff in March, 2015!



uLead Preconference— March 15, 2015

There will be two full-day preconference workshops at the Banff Springs Hotel prior to the opening of uLead 2015. Corinne Gannon and a team of early childhood education experts will lead a full-day workshop on leadership for early childhood education that will provide delegates with a broad range of information, ideas and strategies for the development of powerful and transformative early childhood education programs in their schools. Corinne is a dynamic presenter and is highly respected worldwide in the area of early childhood programming. This is a stand-alone, full-day event which you will want to send your kindergarten and prekindergarten teacher-leaders to as a team. It takes place on a Sunday, so expenses will be lower for those attending. Registration for that event is open now at <http://tinyurl.com/uLead15-PRECONFERENCE>, with more details being added to the site in the days to come.

An additional full-day workshop on school redesign will be added to the main conference site in the days to come.

Alberta Teachers on iTunes U

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 in the creation of multi-touch iBooks that will be part of many courses. Once trained, these colleagues will be working on creating a range of courses that will populate the site, connect directly to Alberta's Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders and 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. Watch for upcoming training opportunities in creating interactive multi-touch iBooks and iTunes U courses and in becoming a course contributor for the ATA's iTunes U site.

Users can install free iTunes software on their devices (PC, Mac and 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, which provides enhanced capabilities, such as note-taking for students participating in a course. Each course is conveniently divided into Info, Posts, Notes and Materials sections. Interactive assignments can be made part of a course during its design or even after a course has been launched. Interactivity can be further enhanced as students/participants can share their notes with one another.

This month one of the courses created by Alberta school leader Derek Hatch, *Connecting with Your School Community Using Social Media*, is being highlighted on iTunes U worldwide as an exemplary course for Connected Educators Month. To access the site, please visit tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes, or scan the QR code on this page.



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.

