

# LEADERSHIP UPDATE

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A publication for Alberta's school administrators

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## February has arrived and spring is just around the corner! (Have faith — it will come.)

We hope that you have entered 2015 with a positive outlook and your eye on great things for your learning community. This edition of the Leadership Update contains valuable information to support you in the work that you do and to inform you of some ways you can access very high-quality professional learning activities for school leaders in Alberta throughout the year.

### 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 phrase — **www.uLead.ca** — in order to access up-to-date news about school leadership in Alberta, provincial and regional professional learning events and 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.



**Those who can, teach;  
those who can't, go  
into some much less  
significant  
line of work.**

— Todd Whitaker



Council for  
School Leadership

# Supporting Optimum Teaching and Learning

In Alberta, the monitoring and maintaining of practice standards is in accordance with the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy (Policy 2.1.5) and the Teaching Quality Standard. Principals play a crucial role in the process, and this has many implications for principals as they perform their duties. This article is intended to provide a brief overview of the implications but is not intended to replace the more comprehensive two-day workshop offered by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) for school administrators, which is highly recommended.

Professional competence as a teacher means that the quality of the teacher's professional practice meets the requirements of the Teaching Quality Standard (Ministerial Order 016/97) and is monitored in accordance with Policy 2.1.5. Although Policy 2.1.5 emphasizes the professional growth component of supervision, there are times when evaluation is necessary. It is one of the mechanism by which the public interest is safeguarded.

## The Teaching Quality Standard

Quality teaching occurs when the teacher's ongoing analysis of the context, and the teacher's decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply, result in optimum learning by students.

## Teacher Growth

Policy 2.1.5 requires all teachers employed under probationary or continuous contracts to complete an annual growth plan. The plan is submitted to the principal for review and approval. The teacher is expected to base the plan on an assessment of learning needs, and it may be a multi-year plan. Delegation of responsibility for reviewing the plan may occur. More specifically, a principal may delegate this to a body of teachers in order to facilitate mentorship and collaboration opportunities for teachers.

It is the principal's role to establish conditions to maximize the potential for teachers to target areas of professional improvement by playing a supportive role in the growth plan process. Guiding the professional growth of teachers is contextual, based on many factors such as years of teaching experience and newness of assignment. Establishing trust, providing support and guidance and offering ongoing and relevant feedback is fundamental to the principal's role in terms of leading professional growth in a school.

## Supervision is Ongoing and Fundamental to Alberta Policy

Supervision means the ongoing process by which the principal exercises educational leadership and carries out duties with respect to teachers and teaching required under section 20 of the *School Act* or section 197 of the *Education Act*.

Policy 2.1.5 is based on an assumption of teacher competence. Principals are required to supervise teachers, and when there are concerns about the teacher's teaching, to provide support and guidance to remedy the issues or to conduct an evaluation if the issues persist. Supervision, in other words, is a fundamental component of Alberta policy and is pivotal to its success. Policy 2.1.5 makes it clear that principals must conduct ongoing supervision of teachers. Supervision includes providing support and guidance to teachers, observing and receiving information about the quality of teaching and identifying behaviours that for any reason may require an evaluation. It is crucial that all information received by the principal about the quality of teaching is shared with the teacher in question.

## Moving to Evaluation

Evaluation is a formal process of gathering information or evidence regarding the teaching of the teacher. An evaluation of a teacher on continuing contract is initiated for diverse reasons but they should not be frivolous. Reasons should have merit, be reasonable, be honourable rather than vexatious and must at all times be professionally defensible. In other words, evaluation is seen as a last resort, used only if the principal has reason to believe the teacher is not meeting the Teaching Quality Standard and only after other attempts to remedy the situation have not been successful.

Teachers on probationary contracts must be evaluated two or more times, culminating in two or more evaluation reports before being recommended or offered a continuing contract.

In Alberta, teachers are assumed to be competent. Generally, evaluation is not used or required with teachers who have demonstrated competence during the supervision process. For this reason it is crucial that principals engage in active and ongoing supervision to ensure competent teaching is occurring and to support and guide teachers if there is a need. When supervision is occurring as per the expectations of provincial policy and a teacher's practice is competent, cyclical evaluation is not required. In fact, cyclical evaluation is inappropriate as it would be inconsistent with provincial policy.

There are only four reasons for evaluation according to Alberta policy, and inventing reasons, such as cyclical evaluation or evaluation due to a transfer and so on, fall outside of the reasons in Policy 2.1.5 and will not likely hold up to legal scrutiny. Having said that, it is important to restate that ongoing supervision is expected by a principal of all teachers, and if a principal has reason to believe that the teaching of a teacher may not meet the standard, a notice of evaluation can be issued by the principal.

## Rules of Fairness and Natural Justice

Where a board or decision maker acts in an administrative capacity, there exists an obligation to act fairly. Any evaluation process must be reasonable and based on the rules of procedural fairness and natural justice. Procedural

rules are based on precise legal concepts that govern the actions of public bodies such as school boards and apply in any situation where an individual's rights may be affected by the actions of the employer. What does that mean in terms of the principal's role? Principals who are well versed in procedural fairness will ensure that

1. the teacher knows the expectations to be met and that this has been clearly communicated;
2. the teacher receives written notification that an evaluation is to be undertaken and the reasons for it;
3. the teacher is able to participate fully in the process of evaluation;
4. the basis for the evaluation is identifiable data that is made available to the teacher;
5. the teacher is made fully aware forthwith when expectations of the position are not being met;
6. if there are performance concerns as a result of information from a source other than the principal or superintendent, the information is provided forthwith to the teacher in sufficient detail for him/her to understand the concern and have an opportunity to respond. This means that the principal should provide all copies of notes or letters to the teacher and that the teacher is provided with the full content of any complaints made;
7. the teacher is provided with appropriate assistance and time to address any identified performance deficiencies; and
8. the teacher understands the possible outcomes of a failure to improve performance, including possible

termination of contract or a review of his or her professional practice by a Professional Practice Review Committee.

## Right to Representation

The right to representation is triggered by the potential for employment action and when facing an employment action, every teacher has the right to seek assistance, including representation when necessary, from the Association. It is always wise for the principal to advise a teacher of the right to assistance or representation at the onset of an evaluation so as not to jeopardize the process, because evaluation may result in an employment action.

## Reasons for Evaluation

1. Upon written request of the teacher;
2. For the purpose of gathering information related to an employment decision (eg. probationary contract, certification);
3. For the purpose of assessing the growth of the teacher in the specific areas of practice (as per notice of remediation);
4. When, on the basis of information received through supervising, the principal has reason to believe that the teaching of the teacher may not meet the standard.

## Seek Assistance

School administrators may seek assistance from the Association for help in the supervision, evaluation and remediation processes. As evaluation is a highly legalistic process, it is recommended that administrators contact Member Services early in the process, ideally prior to serving notice of evaluation, to discuss a situation in order to avoid potential process issues. Member Services staff officers are happy to help principals and to answer any questions they may have. Remember, the only stupid question is the question that was never asked.

## Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation (TGSE) Workshops

The ATA hosts two-day TGSE workshops at Barnett House in Edmonton several times each year. The workshop is intended for assistant or vice-principals, principals and district office administrators. If you wish to attend, or if you have administrators who would benefit from this workshop, please consider registering for this event by going to the ATA's website.

The workshop focuses on provincial Policy 2.1.5, which deals with accountability and process as well as the Teaching Quality Standard, which defines the competencies for professional practice.

The workshop reviews with principals their critical role and the duties they must perform as outlined in the *School Act* and Policy 2.1.5. This workshop also provides an overview of the practice-review process, which begins with supervision and/or evaluation to determine whether a teacher is meeting the Teaching Quality Standard and includes a formal procedure for determining whether a teacher is suitable for continued certification.

If you have questions regarding this workshop, or if you wish to host a workshop in your district for administrators, please do not hesitate to call Joyce Sherwin at 780-447-9453 or at 1-800-232-7208, ext 453.

## Rural Principal Professional Learning Opportunity

In 2012 Battelle for Kids assembled educators from Finland, Hong Kong, Singapore, Long Beach, California and Ontario to embark on an unparalleled learning experience. The results of the conversation can be found at [www.battelleforkids.org/initiatives/initiatives/global-education-study](http://www.battelleforkids.org/initiatives/initiatives/global-education-study).

Battelle for Kids is now engaging rural schools in the dialogue. If you are a principal/vice-principal in a rural school and you are interested in sharing your experience, please e-mail [CSL-Events@ata.ab.ca](mailto:CSL-Events@ata.ab.ca).



# Distinguished Leadership Awards

The Council for School Leadership is pleased to invite nominations from throughout Alberta for the CSL Distinguished Leadership Awards, with recipients being honoured in May.

The CSL Distinguished Leadership Awards create a learning community of outstanding principals throughout Alberta who can share professionally, interact collegially and act as mentors to new colleagues. They provide avenues for research and the sharing of best practices. The cadre of distinguished Alberta school leaders are people who are looking to challenge the status quo, improve learning in their contexts and be equipped for higher levels of leadership. These individuals will become role models in a vibrant network of educational leaders with the confidence and capabilities to lead innovative change for 21st century learning — the Council for School Leadership.

Please consider nominating a deserving school leader for consideration for this honour.

To nominate a school leader click on the following link and complete your nomination online: <http://tinyurl.com/CSL-Leadership>.

Once you have entered the nomination site, you will be asked to make a short comment related to your nominee's leadership in each of Alberta's Principal Quality Leadership dimensions. The CSL Distinguished Leadership Awards primer below will provide you with additional information about how to complete the nomination form once you click on the link to nominate a colleague.

The deadline for nominations is midnight, March 31, 2015. All nominees must be active members of the Council for School Leadership to be eligible to receive the award.

## What will I need to do?

- Once you have entered the nomination site you will be asked to make a short comment related to your nominee's leadership in each of Alberta's Principal Quality Practice Leadership dimensions.
- You will be asked to provide an indication that your nominee has consented to being nominated (required) and provide the nominee's school name, school telephone number and email address. Your nominee must be a

member of the Council for School Leadership to be eligible to receive the award. Nominees can join the CSL now at [bit.ly/joincsl](http://bit.ly/joincsl).

- You will then be asked to enter your supporting evidence (several sentences) for your nominee's leadership in each of Alberta's Principal Quality Practice Competencies including
  - fostering effective leadership,
  - embodying visionary leadership,
  - leading a learning community,
  - providing instructional leadership,
  - developing and facilitating leadership,
  - managing school operations and resources, and
  - understanding and responding to the larger societal context.

Detailed information about the Principal Quality Practice Competencies can be found at [bit.ly/AlbertaPQP](http://bit.ly/AlbertaPQP).

Prior to submitting the survey, you will also have an opportunity to enter additional comments regarding the nominee, should you wish to do so. Please consider nominating a worthy candidate today.

To find archived issues of *Leadership Update*, go to [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://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](mailto:jeff.johnson@ata.ab.ca).

# International Education Exchange Program

Short-term administrator exchanges are available as two-week job shadow experiences for Alberta school leaders. You are billeted by your exchange counterpart and work shadow in your exchange partner's school for one to two weeks. You then host your counterpart for one to two weeks so he or she can experience the Alberta education system. Administrators arrange cultural visits to correspond with the interests of both parties. Opportunities exist in Australia, Germany, Spain, Denmark and the United Kingdom. You exchange during the summer months, and you typically host your counterpart in September or October. Participants require an Alberta Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate and the approval of their superintendent. For a successful, engaging experience, participants should be flexible, adaptable, positive, open to other cultures and comfortable with ambiguity. They should, of course, have demonstrated leadership quality. Interested? Find out more at [www.ieep.ca](http://www.ieep.ca).

## Council for School Leadership

As an Alberta school principal or assistant principal you are encouraged to select the Council for School Leadership as your first specialist council. 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](http://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.

Council for School Leadership

JOIN THE CSL TODAY AT  
[bit.ly/joincsl](http://bit.ly/joincsl)

Council for School Leadership

# uLead 2015 Conference — March 15–18, 2015



We are excited to share that the upcoming uLead 2015 conference is shaping up to be one of the most significant moments in recent history for school leaders not only in Alberta, but in Canada. Over 800 school and district leaders from Alberta, across Canada and around the world have already registered for this watershed event.

uLead 2015 is sponsored by the Council for School Leadership, a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association, and we are excited about the coming event at the Banff Springs Hotel. A wide array of world-class keynote speakers will animate the dialogue of those attending. There is still room to join in a dialogue about best practices in educational leadership worldwide and in the leadership Alberta demonstrates as one of the highest performing school

jurisdictions in the world. This conference will be memorable and ground breaking.

Invitees include the premier of Alberta, Jim Prentice. Confirmed keynote presenters include Simon Breakspear (Australia), Pasi Sahlberg (Harvard), Dr. Andy Hargreaves (Boston College), Dr. Dennis Shirley (Boston College), Pak Tee Ng (Singapore), Abdul Chohan (Great Britain), Gordon Dirks, minister of education of Alberta, Peter Fassbender, minister of education of British Columbia, Illugi Gunnarsson, minister of education, science and culture of Iceland and talented educational leaders from Canada, Australia, Iceland, Singapore, Sweden, Finland, Norway, the USA, the UK and Nigeria. Find out more at [tinyurl.com/ulead2015](http://tinyurl.com/ulead2015) and join us in March in Banff.

# 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 your school. This event will also feature a mobile (motorhome-sized) portable early childhood learning classroom called the EMU that participants can tour and glean ideas from. Principals, you will want to bring a team of your early childhood teachers to this one-day Sunday workshop.

An additional workshop on school redesign is also available: Teaching the Jetsons! Relevant Practices of Today with an Eye on Tomorrow! Three Calgary high schools. Vastly different clientele. All attending to the needs of the 21st century learners in their midst. This session will share three varied learning models designed (and evolving) for student success. Registration for both events is open now at <http://www.ulead.ca/Conference.html>.

# Alberta Teachers on iTunes U

The Alberta Teachers' Association has joined Apple's iTunes University to offer free course content to educators in Alberta and beyond. With one billion downloads and counting, Apple's iTunes U is the world's largest online catalogue of free educational content, allowing teachers to create and manage courses for a customized student learning experience. In a recent training event on iTunes U, one delegate shared, "My brain is so full of ideas it's bursting!" "Learning and using new technologies to increase the level of engagement in my classroom is something that I'm really excited about," said Calgary teacher Shannon Roy, as she tapped through the iTunes U site on her iPad. "Students are always up for new and innovative tools to learn with, so I think this will go over very well."

Dozens of Alberta principals and assistant principals have already been trained to create courses in iTunes U that are populating the site. These courses will connect directly to Alberta's Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders and offer participating school leaders the opportunity to share their knowledge with others throughout Alberta, across Canada and around the world.

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 that 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 courses during their design or even after a course has been launched. Interactivity can be further enhanced as students/participants can share their notes with one another. Watch for upcoming training opportunities to create interactive iTunes U courses, and opportunities to become a course contributor for the Alberta Teachers iTunes U site.

This month we highlight a course called *Introduction to the Assistant Principalship*. It is well worth subscribing to and includes a multitouch iBook packed full of interesting ideas and things to consider for all those new to the assistant principal's role and also to those aspiring to enter a role in school leadership. To access the site, please visit [tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes](http://tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes) or scan the QR code on this page.

