

# LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 3

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 1

## Weston Foundation and the Fraser Institute cooperate to promote right-wing agenda

The Fraser Institute, with the assistance and support of the W Garfield Weston Foundation, has launched new initiatives to promote standardized testing, school ranking and privatization of public education in Alberta.

"These organizations are very focused and very effective in promoting their particular view of the world," says Dennis Theobald, political and legislative affairs officer of the Alberta Teachers' Association. "They will seek every opportunity to co-opt school administrators and teachers in an effort to advance policies that are destructive of public education."

Theobald cites as an example the W Garfield Weston Outstanding Principals Awards. Each year, a small number of Alberta schools are selected for recognition based on the results of the Fraser Institute's widely publicized "High School Report Card," and the principals of those schools are invited to attend an awards luncheon held in Calgary. Similar events are staged in Vancouver and Toronto.

The problem, according to Theobald, is that administrators participating in this event are inadvertently providing moral support for a methodology that is seriously flawed. "The ranking of schools exaggerates differences between schools, measures student achievement based on very narrow criteria and ignores important contextual factors," says Theobald. "The worst part is that the exercise is ultimately designed to undermine public confidence and support for public education by profiling elite private schools and by

suggesting that the majority of public schools are failing their students."

The Fraser Institute's consistent objective has been to expand private schooling across the country. To help achieve this objective, the Fraser Institute has brought the *Children First: School Choice Trust* to Calgary and is providing the families of 50 elementary students with grants of up to \$2500 to pay one-half of the cost of attending a private school. The trust operates with financial assistance from the W Garfield Weston Foundation and, in Alberta, from the Hunter Family Foundation, Laurence Dare and an anonymous donor. The *Calgary Sun* and the *Western Standard* magazine are media sponsors.

The most recent foray by the Fraser Institute into the field of education policy illuminates the organization's ideological underpinnings. In a report titled "Why Canadian Education Isn't Improving," ([www.fraserinstitute.ca](http://www.fraserinstitute.ca)) the Institute says "too much government, too much regulation and too much power in the hands of special interest groups," by which it means the teaching profession, are to blame for "Canada's stagnant educational record." The report goes on to observe that schools, as "politically controlled systems, lack the timely, quality information conveyed by market prices" and lack appropriate incentives to improve.

The report's Texas-based authors go on to argue that only "market accountability will help Canada's education system evolve from its 19th century origins into a system that can meet the challenges of the 21st century." They contend that "the public sector is sheltered



**Respect and a  
belief in the  
honesty,  
reliability, and  
competence of  
one's  
colleagues  
help shape  
trust among  
teachers.**

—Anthony Bryk and  
Barbara Schneider



# Online Support for Teacher Professional Growth Plans Now Available

This fall the Association launched an online tutorial to support the development and implementation of teacher professional growth plans. Teachers and school administrators who access the site will find

- the provincial policy requirements,
- *Teaching Quality Standard* and descriptions,
- tools for self-reflection,
- a list of PD strategies,
- sample TPGP templates,

- information on how to write SMART goals,
- sample questions for review meetings and
- frequently asked questions.

School administrators will find helpful tips and sample questions for review and end-of-year meetings on professional growth plans.

Some principals have allocated time during a staff meeting or PD day for teachers to meet in the computer lab and develop their professional growth plans. This has

proven to be an excellent opportunity for teachers to develop collaborative PD goals and discuss PD opportunities.

The teacher professional growth plans online tutorial is posted on the ATA homepage at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca). Professional development staff are interested in receiving your comments or suggestions for improvement about this new resource. Please e-mail [pd@ata.ab.ca](mailto:pd@ata.ab.ca) or speak to Jacqueline Skytt, Coordinator, Professional Development.

## Weston Foundation and the Fraser Institute

*continued from page 1*

from competition so public schools can resist change even when they are providing poor service.”

Theobald has a warning for school leaders: “Clearly the Fraser Institute is seeking to manufacture a crisis of confidence in our schools so that it can promote a market-based solution that will be good for private schools but disastrous for public education and for the hundreds of thousands of students who attend public schools. Principals should be aware of this organization’s agenda and respond appropriately.”

A kit to help teachers and principals respond to Fraser Institute school rankings is available from the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Contact Dennis Theobald at [dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca](mailto:dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca); phone: (780) 447-9416 or 1-800-232-7208 for more information.

## The Council on School Administration Presents 45th Annual Western Canadian Educational Administrators’ Conference



October 18 - 21, 2006

Delta Kananaskis  
Lodge, Kananaskis,  
Alberta

### Keynote addresses will feature

- John Izzo: *Second Innocence: Rediscovering Joy and Wonder*
- David Irvine: *Authentic Leadership: Heart and Soul Back to School*
- Doon Wilkins: *Personal Resiliency Through Chaos and Adversity*
- John Dyer: *Head, Heart and Humour*
- Maggie Reigh: *Turning on De-Light in your Life, your Schools and your Community*

To view the complete program, please go to <http://www.wceac.org/>

*For further information, visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) or contact Member Services at the Alberta Teachers’ Association, 447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta).*

# Provincial Advocacy Group Launches Campaign to Improve Teaching and Learning Conditions

On September 13, 2006, Public Interest Alberta (PIA) launched a provincewide advocacy campaign calling upon the provincial government to deal with urgent issues in education and to “develop the full potential of all Alberta students.”

Public Interest Alberta is a provincewide organization focused on education and advocacy on issues related to the public interest. PIA exists to foster in Albertans an understanding of the importance of public services, institutions and spaces in Albertans’ lives, and to build a network of organizations and individuals committed to advancing the public interest. The nonpartisan organization is supported by the Alberta Teachers’ Association as well as other professional organizations, public and private sector unions, postsecondary faculty and student groups, nongovernmental organizations and individuals.

PIA’s K–12 education initiative is being undertaken with the full support and participation of the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Parent advocacy groups, the Public School Boards Association of Alberta, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union (CEP) representing school support staff, teachers and school administrators all helped in the design of the campaign.

There are two main components of the campaign. First, Albertans are being asked to send a printed postcard or to use PIA’s website ([www.pialberta.org](http://www.pialberta.org)) to send an electronic postcard to Education Minister Gene Zwozdesky

and their MLA about the key improvements they want to see in Alberta’s education system.

The second part of the campaign asks people to complete an independent online survey about important aspects of public education. This will be one of the most comprehensive surveys ever conducted on public education in Alberta. The survey can be completed until mid-October and the results will be announced later in November. The survey can be accessed on PIA’s website or directly at [www.schoolsurvey.ca](http://www.schoolsurvey.ca).

Commenting at the launch on the campaign, ATA President Frank Bruseker observed: “Teaching is all about helping students to achieve their full potential as learners, citizens and

human beings. Every school day, over 33,000 teachers go to work with this objective in mind. But to do our jobs properly, we need to have classroom conditions that support and enhance teaching and learning. While some progress has been made toward achieving this objective, much remains to be done if we are to realize the full potential of this province’s young people.”

Copies of the PIA postcard have been distributed to teachers in a special school mailing. Additional postcards and bookmarks promoting the campaign are available from Dennis Theobald ([dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca](mailto:dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca); (780) 447-9416, 1-800-232-7208). Please encourage members of your school community to participate.

## Council on School Administration (CSA) – Why Join?

The CSA advocates for school administrators and speaks on behalf of children through the Alberta Teachers’ Association. The CSA supports the professional development of its members through the creation and delivery of a variety of events and activities. A special program acknowledging contributions to the field of educational administration recognizes and rewards excellence among members at both the local and provincial levels. CSA develops and maintains national and international links with other school administrator organizations. In addition, the CSA promotes lifelong learning and strives

to maintain and foster close relationships with the colleges and universities of Alberta. To foster knowledge and professionalism in the field of educational administration, the CSA encourages and supports both theoretical and practical research. As a member of CSA, you are automatically a member of the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP), which is a founding member of the International Congress of Principals. Further, as a member of the Alberta Teachers’ Association, you are part of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, which is a member of Education International.