



ATA CENTRAL EAST DISTRICT REPORT

Year End 2021

*By Murray Lalonde
District Representative*

HAPPY PRIDE MONTH!

- See page 3 for DEHR report

"Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds. Won't you help to sing these songs of freedom? 'Cause all I ever have: Redemption Songs."
- Bob Marley

Tempus Fugit - I have no idea where the time flies to. My oldest daughter is setting to graduate high school, my Goddaughter/niece just turned 18, I turned 50, our 25th wedding anniversary is this summer...

This past year was not so different if you noticed that the ATA's Annual Representatives' Assembly 2020 and the NHL playoffs took place at the same time. However, it was quite different as the world was completely changed and both of these events happened in AUGUST. 2020-21 has been like no other school year.

This was a year full of questions. With COVID-19 wreaking havoc and an Education Minister downplaying it with her "Robust Plan" for a return to school (with some hand sanitizer and two fashion masks that were made by her campaign sponsor), teachers were left asking: "What happens if I am sick?"; "What if my child is sick?"; "What does our local do about inducting new teachers?"; "How can I split my time between teaching students in class and students at home?"; "Why can't I have a substitute if I am sick while my students are online?"; "Why was my school leader threatened with death?"; "Why has the government taken control of my pension?"; "Why are my student numbers increasing?"; "Why are school leaders forced to be COVID contact tracers?"; "Why are teachers not considered front-line workers and put at the front of the line for vaccines?"; "Why won't my MLA answer my questions?"; and "Why is our provincial government trying to break our spirit with hijacking our pension, Bill 32, not caring for LGBTQ2S+ students and teachers, and coming up with a horrible joke for a draft curriculum that is harmful to students?"

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it sure is exhausting. Teachers reported three weeks into the school year "feeling June 2022 tired". We know that everything we do in our professional lives is for the students. We don't do it for the pay, we don't do it for the summers off: WE DO IT FOR THE STUDENTS!

No one can ever thank you enough for how well you have persevered over the past 15 months. Every teacher had to adjust their teaching styles, supervisory duties, discipline procedures, lesson plans and assessments, and classroom cleaning routines, just to name a few. School Leaders have been working since last July to ensure their schools are safe for students and staff. Local ATA councils had to deal with new ways to make decisions, hold online meetings, and invent new ways to advocate for their teachers. Some exciting and positive developments are that locals are in the process of developing and/or strengthening new committees for their members, such as Women In Leadership (WIL) and Diversity Equity and Human Rights (DEHR).

Concerns? Questions?

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Through all the difficulties that the COVID pandemic has thrown at us, teachers are highly successful and resilient in all aspects of education.

Teachers' Conventions were a huge success. The Endless Skies Teachers' Convention Association (ESTCA) originally planned for an in-person convention, then turned on a dime and held a fantastic and well-received, ravingly reviewed online convention. Teachers have said they were able to get more out of their convention, especially with the ability to view the recording of many other sessions up to a month after the event. A lot of hard work goes into planning a convention, and teachers from our district were well-served by our Convention Association. Thank you, ESTCA!

Your Local Council and Executive has been very busy this year and represents you well. Your local is elected but please remember they are volunteering their time and effort. They spend their extra time in your service and have been very vocal in their advocacy for teachers, students, and public education. Local Council Members and Executive: Thank you so much for all your hard work, dedication, and time.

In review, I have LOVED every second of representing you at the Provincial Executive Council (PEC). Your stories and concerns have been heard, and in a lot of cases shared, by teachers across Alberta (in his almost 600 interviews and countless meetings, ATA President Jason Schilling has fuelled his interviews and reports with field member stories and concerns). As a member of the Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC), I can assure you that we are fighting hard for your next collective agreement. From last July through to the end of this June, I have attended (or will attend soon) 77 local and executive council meetings, 27 days of PEC meetings, 25 special committee meetings, 7 Local Presidents' formal and informal meetings, 21 CTBC meetings, 7 ESTCA meetings, 18 Teacher Welfare and local bargaining meetings, 8 ARA and ARA planning meetings, 6 French Language Learning sessions through Alliance Française, and 1 retirement seminar. Zoom and Google Meets have made it easy for me to attend multiple meetings in a day, and I am grateful for this technology to allow me to meet with you, but I cannot wait until I again get to see you in person. Please take care of yourself and those you love.

Annual Representative Assembly - The 104th ARA took place this past May long weekend. Each ATA local sends elected delegates to make decisions for their local teachers. Resolutions are either passed to become policy, or not passed and become a memory of a May long-weekend spent with 450 other teachers and ATA Staff from across Alberta. The headlines of most media outlets covered Emergent Resolution 4-1/21: "Be it resolved that the teachers of Alberta have lost confidence in the Education Minister Adriana LaGrange," of which 99% of delegates voted in favour. Even with the overwhelming support for this resolution, the Education Minister's office replied, "It was disappointing that the union 'continues to play politics' with student education." After having discussed this with Greater St. Paul's Local President Leon Ward, we realize that she is right: It IS disappointing that we must play politics to get through to the Minister (who, by the way, is a politician, and anytime you must talk to her, it is a "political play"). This resolution was not taken lightly: the debate took over an hour. One teacher had most of the assembly in tears as she described how she feels "broken" because of this government's attack on teachers and public education and the handling of the pandemic

Please help me thank all of our ARA delegates for their time and energy spent in the preparation and attending of the ATA's most important meeting of the year. I hope beyond all hope it will be in person next year.

Diversity, Equity, and Human Rights (DEHR): in celebration of Pride Month, the ATA PD/DEHR has developed and is distributing promotional items such as new Safe Space posters and stickers, pronoun stickers, rainbow-framed sunglasses, temporary tattoos, buttons and more. Please ask your local DEHR committee or school representative for ordering information.

COVID update: At the June 10/11 meeting of Provincial Executive Council, the Table Officers Committee announced that the restrictions on ATA activities at all levels will be lifted 4 weeks after the start of stage 3 of the Alberta Government's "Open for Summer Plan". Any previous decisions made to hold a virtual meeting, conference, convention, or activity will remain in a virtual format.

ESTCA 2022: Planning for a successful teachers' convention takes almost a full year of preparation and planning. All provincial convention associations have been patiently waiting for a decision on how next year's conventions will be held: in person; virtually; or a hybrid model. After careful deliberation and having listened to the advice of convention associations, the decision was made to hold all 2022 teachers' conventions in a virtual format. "Looking ahead to spring 2022, great uncertainty remains regarding the health and safety of members including the level of protection and longevity of vaccines, potential future strains of COVID-19, and the future of vaccinations for students. Uncertainty also remains regarding gathering restrictions and related distancing and masking regulations. ... Maintaining one more year of online conventions brings with it the lowest COVID-19 health risks to members and the greatest certainty for convention planners in a model that has now been proven to be successful."

Public Interest Alberta: PIA won an award for their video "One Kid" in which they ask, "How much child poverty are we okay with?" Please take a few minutes to watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBGhL23OytA>

ATA News: Speaking of awards, the ATA News was nominated for 6 awards from the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association: best cover; best print editorial package; best feature design; best illustration; best profile; and best photograph (landscape, still life and architecture).
Congratulations!

Research: Our own **Dr. Phil McRae** has been named as one of eight representatives worldwide to the United Nations' International Labour Organization's technical meeting on the future of work in the education sector. Congratulations on being recognized as a big name in education research and advocacy, Dr. Phil! Please see the ATA website for research reports on Pandemic Pulse Survey #5, Substitute Teacher Study, Compassion Fatigue, and Essential Conditions for Curriculum Implementation.

Inclusive Education Research Report: key findings in this research are:

1. Increased sense of belonging and community for all,
2. Need for adequate funding and resources to meet students' diverse learning needs,
3. Increasing class size and complexity continues,
4. More self-selected PD and high-quality inservicing opportunities, and
5. Require more time for collaborating and for implementing supports needed for students.

Please see the ATA website for more information.

My DR Calendar

July

14-15 - Canada Teachers' Federation Annual General Meeting

August

10-11 - ATA Summer Conference (online)

Please visit the ATA website (teachers.ab.ca) for:

- updates in bargaining (follow the Bargainers' Blog),
- information on PD webinars (time is your only cost),
- Speaker Series (Women In Leadership, Leadership, DEHR, PD, etc),
- News releases,
- Association Calendar, and more.

I TRULY hope that you are able to recharge over the summer. You deserve the best of holidays after having the toughest of years.

Great advice can always be found in music. For this summer, I look to Gordie Johnson for the best advice:

"For when the sun begins to rise, I don't wanna see it through my tired eyes.
I ain't got nothing on my plate, please let me sleep in late.
Don't know the time, I don't know the date, please let me sleep in late."

- *Sleep In Late* by Big Sugar