

Local Communications Officer: 2021-2022 Year End Review

June 1, 2022

To the members of ATA Local 10:

The 2021-2022 year has presented a number of significant challenges for the ATA, specifically in regards to our relationship, or lack thereof, with the current Government of Alberta. COVID has continued to have an impact on the classroom experience for teachers and students and the GOA has continued their push to move ahead with their curriculum roll out for Fall of 2022.

In November, the ATA held their first Local Communications Officer Meetings since the COVID pandemic began with concerns around the current draft curriculum dominating much of the agenda. ATA Local 10 was represented by our Local Communications Officer Justin Anderson.

Bill 15 or the Education (Reforming Teacher Professional Discipline) Amendment Act was introduced into the legislature on March 31, 2022 and was passed on May 4, 2022. The stated intention of this bill is to create an Alberta Teaching Profession Commission with the appointment of an 'arm's-length commissioner' to oversee teacher and teacher leader conduct and competency complaints for the profession. A major concern here is that the Minister of Education determines who the commissioner is, determines the code of conduct, populates the recommendation committees, and adjudicates the complaint based on the recommendations that are put forward. This leaves the process upon to political interference and the influence of partisan politics.

The ATA has essentially been completely cut out of the curriculum redesign process. The current draft that was released was received by the ATA at the same time that it was released to the public. Implementation of Grades 1-3 Language Arts, Math, and Phys Ed and Wellness will be mandatory in September. Unfortunately, the French Math, Phys. Ed, and Wellness curriculums have not been piloted but will still follow the same mandatory implementation schedule beginning in the Fall of 2022. Along with the curriculum roll out this Fall, the government will be introducing mandatory literacy and numeracy screening assessments. Grade 2 and 3 students will complete literacy and numeracy screening assessments in September 2022 followed by Grade 1 students in January 2023. School authorities will have some flexibility to choose from a recommended list of approved assessments OR they may submit an application for approval if they wish to use an alternate assessment tool.

The ATA continues to work tirelessly to provide feedback to the government through curriculum reviews, curriculum circles with specialist councils, and member surveys; they are working with members of the media to ensure they are receiving the teacher's perspective on the issues that are being brought forward by the government; and they are engaged in ongoing

media campaigns intended to educate the public about issues in education. The ATA has joined with the Alberta School Councils Association in a campaign called: Stand for Education. The key messages in this campaign are around funding, class size, class composition, and curriculum. Check out the key messages @ standforeducation.ca. The ATA has been very active in the media as well, with President Jason Shilling participating in over 600 media interviews.

Our Central Table Bargaining Committee (CBTC) has worked diligently to advocate for teachers in their latest collective bargaining sessions with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA). Your CBTC held firm on positions that our membership communicated was important and the negotiations came to an impasse. A third-party mediator was required and mediation began mid-April. On May 6, 2022 the mediator issues recommendations to some of the outstanding items which can be found on the members online section of the ATA website. The ATA has hosted several in-person and online Member Information Meetings over the past several weeks to provide the details – and impact, of these recommendations to teachers across the province. Between June 5-8, 2022, teachers will vote to accept or reject the mediator's proposal.

When considering the current relationship between the government and the teaching profession, it would be easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of issues that we are currently faced with. As we watch policy continue to be pushed through the legislature despite our ongoing advocacy, we may even find ourselves at a place where we feel that nothing that we do is having any influence at all – that nothing will change. On her blog 30-seconds, Eliza Schmitz suggests that the best thing that we can do when we feel overwhelmed, or start to feel a sense of apathy, is to pause, determine one issue that is currently of most concern to us, and choose to take one action – write a letter, make a call, share a social media post, or educate a friend or colleague. Our advocacy does not have to be perfect, but it needs to be consistent in messaging and persistent.

If a series of talking points would be helpful, the ATA has developed a number of talking point documents related to recurring and emergent issues in education. You can review these documents on the ATA website at: <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/Talking-Points/Pages/index.aspx>

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving our membership in this role during the 2021-2022 school year. I look forward to continuing this journey with you for the 2022-2023 school year.

Justin Anderson