

There are lots of concerns about division-based responses to COVID-19. Some of the responses vary by school division, some by school, and some by individual teacher/EA.

- a. It's important to remember that this is everyone's first global pandemic. Responses will vary. Some folks will do better than others.
 - b. Also, we never had consistency between districts before. Why would we expect it now?
 - c. Lots of teachers are feeling anxiety, but so are people in the association, the ministry, central office, support staff ... everyone is affected. This is really testing the strength of public education as an institution in this province.
- 2. We all have new problems to face in this novel teaching environment:**
- a. PIPA and FOIP concerns (zoom bombing can happen)
 - b. When does my day end? How can I make it end?
 - c. What happens when a division combines classes when a teacher is sick/absent?
- 3. Add to all of the above the growing economic anxiety and the fear of what this government might do next, especially now that they've given Ministers the power to right and repeal law WITHOUT going through the legislature.**
4. Plus the weather SUCKS right now. It had better improve for Easter ...

Government

1. Provincial Executive Council discussed the upcoming **Annual Representative Assembly** and decided to postpone it. Afterward, the ARA steering committee and table officers decided the following:
 - a. ARA will be 15 (9 AM to 9 PM) and 16 (9 AM to 5 PM) August 2020 at the Hyatt in downtown Calgary.
 - b. The pre-vote deadline has been extended to May 15th.
 - c. Locals may need to change their delegates for ARA because of this date change.

- d. More details will follow. And all of this is subject to change due to COVID-19 and orders from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
 - e. Most locals responded to the budget workbook, and most elements got a collective “thumbs up.” The exceptions: #3. 6 additional Indigenous education PD facilitators (41%), #8. Expanding the Women’s Leadership conference (35%), #13. Special Emergency Fund Allocation of \$710 K (43%), and #15. Membership fee of \$1362/year (55%).
 - i. Regarding that last one, expect to see the increase reduced to \$81/member, to a total of \$1347/year.
 - f. A couple more resolutions will come to ARA, including one urging Boards to share a report of their Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee with their ATA Local President. More of these may follow.
2. But wait ... what about **summer conference**?
- a. Summer conference will become a 4 day event, running Monday 10 August 2020 through Thursday 14 August 2020.
 - b. The Friday break will permit those involved in both events to take a breath, and to travel to Calgary.
 - c. Like ARA, above, more details will follow, and all of the above remains subject to change.
3. **Other ATA conferences and committees have pretty much all been cancelled or postponed.**
4. Please encourage teachers to [CALL THEIR MLA](#) regarding the recent **cuts to education**.
- a. Teachers calling in might consider mentioning the doctor pay situation as well. Just while you’re at it.
5. There are opportunities a’plenty to **serve on an ATA committee**. [Click here to see details](#).
6. Regarding **women and educational leadership**, some insights from research:
- a. The top three impediments to women becoming more involved in their Association are family commitments (does your local pay for

child care?), a lack of encouragement to run for elected positions, and a perception that female candidates will not be taken seriously.

- b. The top three barriers to women entering school leadership positions are family commitments, not wanting to leave the classroom, and concerns about the time necessary to be a school leader.
 - c. The top supports for encouraging women to become leaders are networks of support for aspiring leaders, training opportunities to foster women in leadership, and publication of the work of teachers studying women in leadership in Alberta
 - i. Is it just me, or does that last one seem self-serving? Y'know, coming from a research report on barriers to and supports for women in leadership?
7. The ATA will be undertaking **research on the issue of compassion fatigue**, sometimes called Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder. It describes the mental, physical, and spiritual reactions that can be experienced by individuals when a person close to them is experiencing a traumatic event. This has been extensively studied with regards to social workers, nurses, and therapists, but there is a dearth of literature on this topic in the field of education. Sounds like a fun topic!
8. **In related news, the ATA has a [COVID-19 page](#) with links, supports, etc.**

Professional Development

1. **Barnett House may soon have a rainbow sidewalk/crosswalk! Stay tuned!**
2. **The PD people are still providing support to those working from home. Call them up, [or check out this google doc](#).**

Member Services

1. The ATA is working with the College of Alberta School Superintendents to develop template policies and procedures regarding **OHS regulations regarding violence prevention plans and procedures**.

- a. **Expect to see an OHS page on the ATA's website soon.**
 - i. If you can find it.
 - b. Also expect to see **Local Constitutions amended to include a clause re: how locals are to populate their Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committees.**
- 2. The School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee noted the following:**
- a. Economic and budget uncertainty are negatively affecting morale in schools
 - b. Site based school leaders are sometimes blamed for reductions in classroom supports (this varies based on the level of site-based funding)
 - c. Parent aggression towards teachers (especially online, but physically as well) remains a growing concern

Teacher Welfare

1. **Local bargaining is pretty much frozen (35 done of 62), for the moment.**

You can probably guess why.

 - a. Eight locals haven't even begun bargaining.
2. **Ditto for Central Table Bargaining.** We also agreed to extend dates to begin/conclude bargaining.
 - a. This is a practical necessity, but also probably tactically advantageous.
3. **Local TWCs may see an invite to participate in a class size data collection pilot project.** Stay tuned for more on that.
4. The **Teacher Welfare Liaisons and Pension Consultant corps are both wrapping up this year** (and, given COVID-19, they've essentially wrapped already).

Other Stuff: Peter MacKay's [Northwest DR Calendar](#) and the [ATA Calendar](#) have both become much less crowded.

So, I'm working from home, what should I be aware of?

ATA Member Services Staff

For teachers who don't normally work from home, the idea of doing so can be exciting — no traffic, no rushing around, no interruptions to the work day — but working from home in an online environment can also pose some challenges.

The first thing to remember is that our Code of Professional Conduct applies to your actions and behaviours at all times. This is no different whether you work from home or at school in front of students. And be mindful of division policies, as they still apply as well.

Here are a few tips to help you with working from home (#WFH). These suggestions also apply to teachers who are working from school with an online platform. By following these tips, teachers will reinforce their image as professionals whether they are working at home or at school.

Create a routine and take care of yourself

- Focus on routines that you can do at home.
 - Create a practical daily list to help keep you organized and focused. When following up on this, ask, “What have I completed today?” or “What is complete now?”
 - Get up at the same time.
 - Get dressed and ready as you normally would.
 - Create protocols for “working hours” regarding noise levels and how others in your household can interact with you.
 - Schedule social interactions. To guard against retreating into social isolation, schedule times when you will socially engage with others besides those you live with.
- Be aware of your own emotional state and know when you need to go for a walk or take a short break.
- Ensure you have a suitable workspace. This includes proper ergonomics, heating, lighting, sound and privacy.

Be a master of technology, mind your attire and always be professional

Whether you are using web-based communications with students or the telephone, here are some points to remember.

Microphone

Always assume your microphone is on unless you are sure you have it turned off or muted. When leaving the room, be sure the microphone is off and at the end of the day, be sure to log out of all programs and your computer.

Video

If using a webcam, be mindful of what the students can see. What is on the wall behind you? Can students see personal or private information about you or others? It is important to remember that even though you are at home, you need to present a professional image to your audience. And like the microphone, always turn your video off when you leave the room and at the end of the day, log out of all programs and your computer.

Accessibility

Teachers should be maintaining regular hours as directed by their employer. This is your teaching time and the time for you to contact your students and for parents to contact you. Errands and personal appointments should not be occurring during this time unless you have an approved leave (i.e. medical appointment). You are under no obligation to provide your personal home or cellphone number to parents, and should not provide these to students. Use division email for all communication with students and parents. Any other contacts should not be via personal accounts (i.e. Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Tik Tok, text messages, etc.)

Attire

You should dress for the online world as if you are in front of your students ... because you are. You may not be as formal as you are in the classroom, but you are a professional, so dress like one when online.

Feedback

The feedback you provide to students while online should be as professional as it is in the classroom. Avoid slang, jargon or emojis when replying to students as this takes away from the professional message you are conveying.

Tutoring

Remember that tutoring students in certain circumstances can be a violation of article 6 of the code of conduct. Teachers should not be actively trying to tutor students for remuneration during the current work-from-home situation.

Personal comments

It is essential to remember that your personal comments can convey a strong message to students and parents. Teachers have a duty of fidelity to their employer and must not be critical of decisions the board has made. Be mindful of what you post on any social media platforms or say to students and parents.

Student privacy

Remember that the same expectations for FOIP apply when working online. Teachers should not be posting screen images of their students while on a web-based application. Not all students or parents will want their image displayed virtually so respect everyone's privacy. Do not record any online sessions without the written permission of all parents involved.

Privacy settings

Regardless of the platform you are using, always ensure the privacy settings are set to the highest level and that the software uses encryption. Also ensure the software is not recording the session as it might be stored outside of Canada. Use encrypted external hard drives or thumb drives, and password protect student folders.