

## Government

1. The Budget came down on Thursday 24 October. The government is characterizing it as providing stable funding for education. That's not really true:
  - a. **Funding is frozen**, meaning that teachers, programs, and resources will have to be found from existing dollars.
  - b. By the formula, this means that school boards will receive about \$200/student less than last year. That looks like a funding cut
2. The information above was unwelcome but unsurprising. **Alarmingly, the budget also described an unexpected change to our ATRF pension, pending legislation.** Details are in the TW section.
3. There is still a strong desire to develop a **rural education strategy** to address the teacher/staff recruitment/retention challenges being felt across the Northwest
  - a. The focus has shifted away from the Rural Education Symposium (<https://www.albertaruraleducation.ca/>) to reaching out to local and provincial media, along with other potential venues (<http://www.growingthenorth.com/>, 19/20 February 2020). We may also highlight how this is affecting teaching/learning and student success and health.
4. The **Disconnect Challenge** (<http://disconnectchallenge.ca/>, site still under development) will be running in February of 2020. This will be a "can you drop the tech for a bit" event which might be of significant benefit for some.
5. There will be a **Women in Leadership Summit** 8/9 March at Barnett House (yes, this is a Sunday/Monday, which is weird). Details will be forthcoming. Grant in Aid will be provided for 2 attendees per local.
6. The date for the **Well Being of Children and Youth** conference has moved to 9 May 2020 (it was 1 May, which conflicts with Spring TWAC in Edmonton).
7. The **ATA's proposed budget will involve some interesting changes.** ARA will have a lot to talk about.
8. **PISA results will come out on 3 December 2019.** This year's focus is literacy. These results are often used to cast public education in a bad light. Just fyi.

9. Regarding locals and the ongoing (never ending?) task of gathering data and contact information about your teachers, some information to note:
  - a. Yes, local officials are able to store and use this info per PIPA; this means that the info needs to be stored in a way where it can be deleted/destroyed; that means no google storage.
    - i. Yes, I know, this will raise questions and hackles.
  - b. Apparently Local Secretaries can have access to the ATA's contact info for their teachers. This would include email contact info, provided that the teacher has kept their ATA profile updated. (note: I'd be interested to hear how this information is shared)
  - c. TW also gets info re: teacher name, contact info, and school site. This could be handy, IF locals can access it.
  - d. Contact the ATA's privacy officer Maggie Shane ([Margaret.Shane@ata.ab.ca](mailto:Margaret.Shane@ata.ab.ca)) for guidance regarding all of this

### **Professional Development**

1. Do you miss 2learn.ca? If so, you can still visit it, kinda, via the wayback machine: <https://web.archive.org/>
2. The **Committee on Convention Review** has wrapped up their work and now staff are developing an implementation plan to be reported to PEC in January.
3. **New publications:** "Promoting Success with Immigrant Students" and "Trauma and Refugees" should be on the site soon. Good luck finding them. I'll give links when I can.
  - a. A future publication on intergenerational trauma is being considered.
4. Contact the folks at PD if you want to book a session with an Association PD instructor.

### **Member Services**

1. The **School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee** will be looking in detail at **OHS matters** in December. In the meantime, teachers are advised to faithfully report incidents via their division's OHS reporting system.

2. **Violence in classrooms** continues to be a hot topic across the province and then nation:

<https://www.whsc.on.ca/What-s-new/News-Archive/Violence-harassment-in-elementary-schools-at-crisis-levels-report>

## **Teacher Welfare**

1. **The 24 October 2019 Budget announced that investments of ATRF are to be transferred to AIMco**, a much larger investment fund for public sector pensions and the like. AIMco, which controls the assets for the Heritage Savings Trust Fund along with other pension funds, invests over \$100 billion in assets; ATRF has about \$15 billion. Moving to AIMco does not mean that we lose pension, or that benefits are in jeopardy. It does mean that we have less control and (if past performance bears out) that our investment returns may decline (and contributions will therefore go up).
  - a. The Teacher's Pension Plan Act says that the Alberta Teachers Retirement Fund (ATRF) is the trustee and administrator of our pension fund. That money is managed by ATRF's investment fund managers; they do a very good job. We need to see the legislation to determine next steps. **In the meantime, please contact your MLA and let them know that you are not happy with the change, nor with how it was communicated to teachers** (we heard about it on budget day).
    - i. For every dollar of pension paid, at the moment, investment income pays around 75 cents.
    - ii. Again, if the investment returns go down, your contribution (and government's) goes up.
  - b. Teachers are very much up in arms about all of this, understandably.
    - i. The ATA has rolled out a very direct response:  
<https://www.handsoffmypension.ca>
    - ii. Social media on this issue has blown up as well.
2. **Salary Arbitration for the 2018-20 round of Central bargaining will proceed in mid-November.** We hope to hear the arbitration panel's decision before Christmas but there are no guarantees.

3. **ASEBP announced some plan changes** (they added glucose monitors). Complaining works!
4. We can expect to see another **Joint Interpretation Bulletin on Part-time teachers** in the near future.
5. If you are interested in labour market trends in the province you can find current **“Bargaining Updates”** here:  
<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/1192-9146>
6. So far **5 agreements have been reached in the 2018-20 bargaining round**. We have yet to see a post-budget agreement. Stay tuned.
  - a. What has been achieved? Lots of Wellness Spending Accounts/HSA splits; some 60% for a half day of subbing
  - b. We shall see if the bargaining looks different post-budget
7. **There is a lot of frustration and “what can we do” talk among teachers.** Teachers are reminded that we are currently under a valid, ratified collective agreement; we need to honour that; labour action is not an option for us right now. However, our agreement ends in August of 2020. Teachers need to prepare for that moment in a number of ways:
  - a. Have their **financial houses in order** or get there in 18 to 24 months
    - i. A date for a Capital Estate planning session on this topic is being finalized; it looks likely to occur in Grande Prairie on a Saturday in January.
  - b. **Take part in advocacy for the profession, for education funding, and for the government to honour the collective bargaining process**
  - c. **Make sure your TWC has your contact info**, and stay informed

**Other Stuff:** Peter MacKay’s [Northwest DR Calendar](#) and the [ATA Calendar](#)