

## What's the buzz?

### 1. **Anxieties about what the fall will look like abound. What is the Association doing to clarify things? What is being done to help teachers face what will come in the fall?**

- a. It's important that teachers realize that we **DO NOT KNOW what will come in September**. The government is currently keeping three options on the table:
  - i. Near normal (the Minister said this is most likely)
  - ii. A combination of physically distanced in-class teaching + virtual
  - iii. Virtual teaching similar to the last few months)
- b. The government has vowed to announce **details on what teaching will look like in the fall no later than 1 August 2020**.
- c. Given the above, it's difficult for the Association to give definitive advice regarding what the fall will look like for teachers and students, however advice is and will continue to come out via several platforms in addition to email:
  - i. The Association Website: <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/Pages/Home.aspx>
    1. The COVID page on the ATA site:  
<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/News%20Room/Issues/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>
    2. The ATA News has articles like this one:  
[https://mydigimag.rrd.com/publication/?i=662796&article\\_id=3692176&view=articleBrowser&ver=html5](https://mydigimag.rrd.com/publication/?i=662796&article_id=3692176&view=articleBrowser&ver=html5)
- d. **Alberta Education has consulted the ATA regularly on plans for the fall**. We are hopeful that the Association's concerns are being considered fairly. For example:
  - i. ATA communication with the ministry thus far has made it clear that teachers cannot teach both in person and online in September as the workload issue would be unmanageable.
  - ii. Regarding costs, if the employer mandates teachers to work from home and a technology upgrade is required for this to be effective, teachers may request the added costs be covered by the employer.
  - iii. The Minister did give an update on 10 June 2020 regarding what the fall might look like. Details here:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NRRPy43pvDbNDuk-B-6kbNKx5xGrXeuwC8PB48WYFHg/edit?usp=sharing>

### 2. **Yeah, that's great but ... c'mon. That's not good enough. What can be done NOW?**

- a. Firstly, we (teachers) **need to hold it together**. We can't overreact to a relaunch plan that still hasn't narrowed beyond 3 possible options. COVID has created a lot of new stresses and concerns above and beyond the threat of contracting the

virus: economic impacts, isolation, etc., but dealing with uncertainty has been under-recognized as an issue. Some people are truly struggling to cope with not knowing what the fall will bring. We have to support each other through this anxiety.

- i. In particular, we can't overreact when boards try to plan for those three scenarios. Let's face it ... **we WANT boards to do some planning in advance**. If we need to do option #2 with physical distancing, how many students can we fit into each class? Where do we put the other students? How do we do that? We don't want those questions answered in a panic. What's wrong with administration doing some advance scenario planning? Nothing. We shouldn't freak out when they do it.
- ii. In fact, **we should take advantage of any opportunities to comment on plans and suggestions**. I'd suggest that the teachers do everything possible to get their concerns on record. And I do mean **on record**: in the minutes of staff meetings, recorded in an email, etc.
- iii. Moreover, I'd suggest that the teacher encourage their colleagues to put their concerns on record as well.
- iv. Basically, **we need to remember that we're professionals, and as such our judgement should be heard and attended to**. If an entire chorus of professional teachers expresses, ON RECORD, the same set of concerns about plans for the fall I'd like to think that those concerns would be listened to and considered.
  1. If the concerns were ignored and the worst came to pass it would make it impossible for administration to later say "we didn't see this coming." YES YOU DID. Look at the staff meeting minutes. Look at the emails. We told you.
- b. **All of the above has to be done professionally, of course**. So the teachers should be respectful, careful with their words, etc. When in doubt, they should contact Member Services and get them to look over their emails, etc. **before** sending them. That's why we pay almost \$130/month. Get your money's worth, teachers.

### 3. Things heard and remarked on:

- a. Some teachers are being asked to return to the school for the last week or two weeks of school. Some aren't happy. Call Member Services with concerns.
- b. Some teachers are being asked to have ultra-minimal classes in terms of "stuff on the wall" and "stuff in the room" for next fall.
- c. Some districts are conducting surveys of teachers and/or parents re: plans for the fall. Some of these surveys are good. Some aren't.

- d. Teachers should keep their ears open regarding the Alberta Government's "Parent Help Line. Some suggest it may be more of a fishing expedition than a help line: <https://twitter.com/Blurg5/status/1265324264497885184>

## Government

1. **TO DO: The ATA is trying to [keep track of budget announcements for next year from school divisions](#) and they need your help. Please forward any relevant news stories, press releases, board minutes, and links to Pat Mah ([Pat.Mah@ata.ab.ca](mailto:Pat.Mah@ata.ab.ca)). You can also cc me on that info, if you're comfortable doing so. I'm interested in that sort of thing!**
2. **Provincial Executive Council made changes to Local Constitutions empowering Local Executives to appoint or elect teachers to serve on the division's OHS Health and Safety committee.** What will that look like?
  - a. "The language in the model constitution now provides a mechanism for a local to name someone to the committee, and this representative would attend local meetings. This individual can gather general concerns of the membership at a local council meeting and then report back on what the joint HSC discussed at their meeting. The individual named should demonstrate an interest in occupational health and safety and will be provided training by the employer to fulfill this role. If more than one person is interested, the local can determine who to select by whatever means they find appropriate (ie, nomination, election, etc)."
3. The Minister's press event on 10 June (link above) didn't provide much clarity on what things will look like in the fall, but it did clarify this: **THIS GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PLAN ON PROVIDING ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR SCHOOL DIVISIONS IN THE FALL.** As such, we're starting to see some school divisions make difficult budget decisions: program cuts, jobs lost, etc.
4. Given that there will be no summer conference, ATA Local Presidents, Executives, Councils, TWCs, etc. should consider **what kind of PD should be offered to fill in the gaps.** Possible topics:
  - a. How to run meetings/organize local events (for new Presidents/exec. members)
  - b. How to use social media to connect with members/the public
    - i. Please pass other suggestions my way (contact info below) and/or contact the appropriate program area. Both is best.
5. The **Choice in Education Act** was passed and will come into effect in September.
  - a. This will primarily affect homeschoolers and Charter Schools.
6. **ATA research** continues, COVID be darned!
  - a. Results of the [pandemic research study](#) are available
  - b. So is a [research brief on aggression in schools](#)

- c. As are [other research briefs](#)
  - d. [A study on “Compassion Fatigue” and burnout is ongoing](#)
  - e. Research is pending from the DEHR folks on maternity, parental and caregiving leave and how those affect career progression
7. **ARA will also occur (August 13/14) via ZOOM Webinar.** That means no video feed for most of you, so **don’t dress up.**
- a. There are some changes afoot. You’ll hear more in the days to come.
    - i. Mysterious, eh?
  - b. The proposed fee increase for next year stands at \$81/member, up to an annual total of \$1,347/year.
    - i. Some have suggested that the ATA has saved LOTS of money due to COVID. With all the cancelled events, etc. how much did we save?
      - 1. Answer: quite a bit. Just over \$1.5 million.
      - 2. Alas, there were also some unexpected costs: increased property tax and some extraordinary (hopefully one-time only) legal costs. The total tab: just under \$1.5 million.
      - 3. That puts **the balance for the year at about \$90 K to the good, relative to the budget.** Which is good, but not a bonanza.
        - a. Some may ask, “How can this be? Our local has saved a LOT of money!” Simple answer: salaries/wages are a FIXED COST for the provincial Association, and salaries make up a LOT of the budget. COVID saved the Association money on events (travel, hotels, etc.) but salaries and wages keep getting paid. Most locals don’t have staff; hence the difference.

### **Professional Development**

1. **June is National Indigenous History Month:**

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1466616436543/1534874922512>

- a. You’ll find good resources from the Association here:
  - i. <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/IndigenousEducationandWalkingTogether/Pages/WalkingTogether.aspx>
  - ii. <https://twitter.com/search?src=typd&q=%40ATAindigenous&lang=en-ca>
  - iii. <https://www.instagram.com/walkingtogetherata/>
- b. And here: <https://originalvoices.ca/>
- c. Here too: <http://empoweringthespirit.ca/classroom-supports/>
- d. Some good videos to peruse:

- i. From Justice Murray Sinclair:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b78rf6J7x4c>
    - ii. A student voice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kRRhODkSAE>
  - e. Given all the statues coming down these days, a look at John A. MacDonald may be in order: [what he said](#) (2016), [what he did](#) (2018), [a mock trial](#) (2018)
  - f. A relevant update about administrative guidelines: locals should note that Alcohol shall be prohibited during Association events, conferences and meetings where cultural protocols and items are included (Elder blessing, powwow and round dance drums, dancers, eagle feathers, and ceremonial pipes). This is considered best practice when hosting such events.
  - g. Finally, the book “**Aboriginal Rights are Not Human Rights: In Defense of Indigenous Struggles**” is recommended reading.
2. **Cutbacks are being felt at the post-secondary level as well as in K-12 schools.**
- a. **Honoraria for cooperating teachers have been cut for next year by both the U of A and the U of C.** Teachers should remember that the supervision of student teachers can be mandated by the board (Education Act Section 196, section 2):
    - i. “At any time during the period of time that a teacher is under an obligation to a board to provide instruction or supervision or to carry out duties assigned to the teacher by a principal or the board, the teacher must, at the request of the board, (a) participate in curriculum development and field testing of new curriculum, (b) develop, field test and mark provincial assessments, and (c) supervise student teachers.”
  - b. The U of A’s Faculte St. Jean appears to be in jeopardy because of cuts:  
<https://acfa.ab.ca/index-main/sauvonssaintjean/>
3. Universities are also struggling to deal with the impacts of COVID isolation on schooling. **The U of A’s Education department working groups have long felt that grade point average alone is “not a good enough indicator for admission.”** They are considering other metrics or measures which might be used. What will that look like? Good question ...
4. The good people of PD continue to provide sessions for teachers:
- a. [https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/ATA\\_PD/SupportsForOnlineLearning/Webinars](https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/ATA_PD/SupportsForOnlineLearning/Webinars)
  - b. Dr. Jody Carrington’s webinar is also available (viewer discretion advised):  
<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/Pages/Connecting-in-COVID-19.aspx>

### **Member Services**

1. Not much to report here. Lots of calls! Hang in there! June’s almost over!



**Teacher Welfare****1. Local Bargaining has resumed.**

- a. 38 of 38 agreements to date include a HSA/WSA split. Two of those agreements already had it; the other 36 were achieved this round.
  - i. Those Negotiating Sub-Committees facing resistance in their efforts to achieve the same are reminded that that is sometimes how the “whipsaw” works: everyone else getting “a” can help you make a stronger case for achieving “q” or “r” or even “z” if the board digs their heels in.

**2. General information about bargaining is [available here](#):**

- a. [Worth knowing updates](#) can help you in your social media battles.
3. The province has released the **new education funding formula**. It’s generally good news (kind of) for boards with shrinking enrolments and bad news for those boards still growing. Teachers should keep in mind that “bridge funding” is being provided for next year (2020/21). The full effect of the new formula won’t be felt until 2021/2022. Here are some examples:

	Funding per student				% change
<b>Board</b>	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-2022	2018/19 to 2012/22
Calgary Roman Catholic	\$9,843	\$9,461	\$9,384	\$9,206	-6.48%
Calgary School Division	\$10,099	\$9,587	\$9,451	\$9,378	-7.14%
Edmonton Catholic	\$11,161	\$10,681	\$10,533	\$9,830	-11.92%
Edmonton Public	\$10,655	\$10,231	\$10,012	\$9,577	-10.12%
Fort Vermillion	\$14,890	\$14,477	\$14,931	\$14,776	-0.77%
GP Catholic	\$11,593	\$10,983	\$10,809	\$10,734	-7.40%
GP Public	\$11,078	\$10,687	\$10,940	\$10,694	-3.47%
High Prairie	\$14,191	\$14,054	\$14,722	\$14,595	2.85%
Holy Family Catholic	\$14,056	\$13,828	\$13,883	\$13,719	-2.40%
Northland Schools	\$28,104	\$26,373	\$24,290	\$20,751	-26.16%
Peace River Div.	\$15,235	\$15,149	\$16,144	\$16,030	5.21%
Peace Wapiti Div.	\$12,880	\$12,508	\$13,035	\$12,946	0.51%

4. **Keeping that in mind, let's not forget that NW school divisions have done a stellar job of building up their surpluses.** 5 of the top 8! A dubious distinction indeed!

School Board	Surplus/student
Prairie Land	\$6,701
Fort McMurray Catholic	\$6,505
Peace River School Division	\$6,199
High Prairie School Division	\$6,108
Northland School Division	\$5,449
Grande Prairie Catholic	\$5,132
Northwest Francophone	\$5,091
Holy Family Catholic	\$4,532
East Central Alberta Catholic	\$4,438
Northern Gateway	\$3,712

5. Our folks at ATRF calculated how much less money we'd have in the pension fund right now if AIMCo had been in charge. [The answer: about \\$1.3 billion less. Details can be found here.](#)
- a. If you haven't signed up for ATRF's personalized "My Pension" portal, you should! Good info there: <https://atrf.com/>
    - i. ATRF also does a great job of keeping members up to date on pension matters.
6. **Central Table Bargaining has been postponed until the fall. No dates have been set.**
- a. The ATA's initial proposal for List of All Matters has been finalized.
  - b. Given the time lag and all that has happened, another bargaining survey will definitely occur in the fall.

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