

Government

1. Provincial politics affect teachers and education:
 - a. MLAs took a rollback when the UCP took office. Now we're hearing that public sector workers, including teachers, should follow suit. [Don't buy that argument.](#)
 - b. Even more recently, Government political staff took a 7% rollback, followed by the same "you're next" argument outlined above. [Again, don't buy it.](#)
 - c. Someone in Alberta Education leaked some draft curriculum documents to the CBC. It's starting to look like the government's understanding of "removing politics from the curriculum" is very, very different from how many others think of that phrase. They also seem intent on including a LOT of memorization in the curriculum (which works well with standardized tests at every grade level).
 - i. [The CBC story.](#)
 - ii. [The K to 2 documents.](#)
 - iii. [The grade 3 and 4 documents.](#)
 - iv. [Some highlights \(lowlights\) of the 3 and 4 documents.](#)
 - v. [U of A professor Carla Peck responded and didn't pull her punches.](#)
 - vi. [At least one school board chair has spoken out against the government's curriculum direction in this case.](#)
 - vii. [The government seems to be backpedaling a bit.](#)
 - d. [The government seems to have burned through some of their political capital.](#)
2. The Aspen Foundation, a Labour Education organization that the ATA used to support and partner with (but don't any longer; budget cuts), has produced [a little video on equity and fairness.](#)
3. [School board elections](#), along with other local elections, will take place in a little less than a year. Some early planning for this might be worthwhile. There are rumours a'plenty that this round of elections will be more contentious and politically partisan than in years prior. Political Action Committees (PACs) and Third Party Advertisers (TPAs) are said to be preparing slates for local elections.

Professional Development (PD)

1. PD continues to move online. Conventions are already online, and now Specialist Councils are as well.
 - a. Some Specialist Councils have already cancelled their events for this year, others already chose to go online, and some have chosen alternate formats (e.g. a speakers series to be posted online). COVID prompts innovation!
2. Re: Conventions, PD sent out a memo recommending that teachers attend their conventions from home rather than from school. There are several reasons for this:
 - a. Conventions are teacher led and organized PD sessions and ideally the PD is delivered without employer involvement. As the folks from TES point out, any number of sketchy things could occur or obstacles could be faced if teachers opt to attend convention from school:
 - i. “Hey, let’s have a quick staff meeting!”
 - ii. Informal attendance taking (“Hey, is Bob here?”)
 - iii. Pressure to multitask (“Hey, let’s clean those chromebooks!”)
 - iv. Risk of distraction from the PD
 - v. It might not even be possible (the school division might be unwilling to clean or the school might be receiving a “deep clean” at that time)
 - b. Of course, there are potential risks, complications, and contradictions inherent in insisting that teachers attend from home:
 - i. “My home internet speed could be best described as ‘sub-dialup’ and attending from home would be idiotic; the school is the only local option for me to access decent internet ...”
 - ii. “Wait ... the Mighty Peace Teachers Convention is literally hosted at two or more schools. Is that a problem? If not, why not?”
 - iii. “If I don’t go to the school, and I can’t stay home, where do I go? Do I have to drive to a major centre? What of the expense? What of the COVID risk? What about the optics of sitting in a coffee shop to attend convention?”
 - c. Teachers might, understandably, feel frustrated upon reading “a” and “b” above. Teachers should proceed carefully and professionally, and

they should seek advice from their Association in making any decisions.

- i. I'd appreciate knowing about the struggles that individual teachers face in navigating this issue. Feel free to let me know with an email or a call.
3. The good people of PD continue to generate quality, timely content:
 - a. Vincent Mireau, a counselling psychologist, has provided [PD webinars on "Let's Get Back to Feeling Okay," "Finding Your Rhythm and Building Endurance," and "What to do When There's Little You Can Control."](#)
 - b. There are a bunch of [Professional Growth Resources focused on inclusive education](#) available.
 - c. There is an [Establishing Inclusive Learning Environments Facilitator Guide](#) to support school principals and PD/in-service leaders to work collaboratively with school staff to develop professional capacity in inclusive education per TQS and LQS.
 - d. And [PD is archiving all this good stuff](#).
4. A reminder that the ATA also has many quality educational partners, including [the Rupertsland Institute](#), the Metis Nation of Alberta's lead on educational, training, and research matters.
5. The ATA is attempting to get clarity from Alberta Education regarding practicum requirements for interim professional certification during the current pandemic emergency.
6. [Ivan Coyote](#) is a highly regarded speaker on LGBTQ2S issues
7. University Education programs are, by all accounts, packed. The U of C is at 102% capacity this year, for example.

Teacher Employment Services (TES)

1. Bargaining
 - a. Central Table Bargaining is set to commence after the COVID delay.
 - b. Local Bargaining is down to just 9 open agreements.
 - c. [Collective Bargaining updates and information](#) can be found here.
 - i. This includes [Worth Knowing](#) updates.
 - ii. And [Worth Doing](#) updates.
2. The committee on [Understanding Aggression in Alberta Schools and School Communities](#) has been published. Have a look.

- a. On this topic, [here's a nice reminder that the ATA will, indeed, back a teacher up in response to social media aggression](#).
 - b. [Other, older research](#) is also available.
3. [Survey data indicates that teacher stress levels are alarmingly high](#) (two to three times higher than the rest of the population, by some metrics). Absences from school are high, substitute teachers are hard to find, and the system is under growing strain. On top of all that, a second wave of COVID is hitting the province. Take care of yourself and take care of one another.
- a. [ASEBP's Wellness Sandbox](#) has a lot of good resources.
 - b. You can access Homewood Health via your division's portal.
 - i. Some teachers have reported long wait times with Homewood Health. Please let me know if you have trouble getting through.
4. Below is a list of links which might be useful if things go awry. You are, of course, strongly advised to seek advice from a TES staff officer before taking any action. Both of the following can be used anonymously.
- a. [Click here if you have concerns that the orders of the Chief Medical Officer of Health are not being followed](#).
 - b. [Click here if you need to file an OHS complaint](#).

Other Stuff

1. [The ATA's 2020/21 Calendar](#)
2. [My District Representative Calendar](#)
3. [Alberta Education's revised Guide to Education](#)
4. [All Government Relaunch Guidance Documents](#)
5. [COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#)
6. [Alberta Education's School Re-entry Plan](#)

Things I'm interested in hearing about ... (within the bounds of professionalism, of course)

1. What has your school district done with the [\\$262.8 million in federal dollars](#) that were dispersed to school divisions earlier this year?
2. Has your school division opted out of Provincial Achievement Tests?
3. Is your School Division's OHS Work Site Health and Safety Committee up and running?
 - a. Are site inspections being done?
 - b. Is the Committee represented in and reporting to your Local Council?