

Government

1. ATA staff have been directed by the executive secretary to **attend events virtually wherever and whenever possible**. If in-person attendance is necessary all necessary precautions should be taken (social distancing, masking, hand-washing, etc.). Provincial Executive Council (PEC) passed recommendations that PEC members and ATA committees, locals, and sub-groups take the same approach. Here are the reasons for taking this approach:
 - i. Virtual meetings are the most effective approach to reducing the risk of breaking cohorting and contributing to an outbreak.
 - ii. In-person precautions like those noted above reduce the risk of transmission, but not as effectively as meeting virtually.
 - iii. The possibility of ATA staff becoming a vector of transmission and contributing to outbreaks represents a biological risk first and foremost (we don't want to find ourselves wondering if our actions led to someone becoming ill or passing away) but it also represents a reputational risk to the Association (we don't want "teacher meeting" or "ATA staff" identified as the source of an outbreak).
 - iv. The advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMoH) is clear: avoid gathering in person whenever possible.
 - v. Note: in response to the above some might say that "teachers are teaching in person; we should expect no less of ATA staff." To be blunt, that thinking misses the point. The goal is to manage and contain risk; it isn't to make the risk equal or spread the risk out evenly:
 1. In-person teaching is more risky than virtual teaching. That's a fact, but other considerations have led Alberta Education and society to tolerate

those risks. Teachers, EAs, and students are left to manage and contain those hazards. We weren't given a choice.

2. In-person inservicing and PD is more risky to all participants than virtual inservice and PD. Also a fact. In the case of ATA PD sessions, we DO have a choice.
2. For the reasons above, **Locals and sub-groups are strongly encouraged to opt for virtual meetings whenever possible until further notice.**
3. The "governance emergency" which allowed Annual General Meetings to be postponed is over! **Hold those AGMs ... virtually!**
4. Electoral ballots are coming out (your secretary should have received an email). They change the rules of the ATA. Read them! We'll chat about them if you have questions.
5. We have some [vacancies on ATA Provincial Committees](#): Francais 30 Diploma Exam, Indigenous Education, and Pension, Benefits and Insurance Committees are all looking for new members.
 - a. Priority for ATA committee placements will go to people who are not already serving on a committee. This probably should have happened some time ago, when you think about it.
 - i. Strange fact: about 63% of committee members are female, even though about 75% of teachers are female. Boo!
 - ii. Fun fact: the northwest represents about 5.6% of teachers but we have about 6.1% of committee spots! Yay! We win!
 - b. Some committees and other Association entities have been disbanded, their work being done or their role having been taken over by other bodies: Well being of Children and Youth Committee (rolled into DEHR by the Annual Representative Assembly/ARA, Teacher Welfare Services Committee (due to the creation of the Bargaining Advisory Committee). Pension

Consultants and Economic Consultants have also gone by the wayside.

6. **Local Presidents will be held virtually on the evening of 23 October 2020 and during the day 24 October 2020.** A \$25/day/child subsidy for child care will still be made available.
7. This is a Provincial Executive Council (PEC) election year. If you've spent the last 3+ years quietly resenting how much I talk, now is the time to take action! [Click here to find out how.](#)
8. ATA Research continues, pandemic be darned!
 - a. There have been [Pandemic Pulse](#) surveys on readiness for school restart, and preventative health measures in schools. Another survey on OHS issues is pending.
 - b. Research on **Compassion Fatigue** has revealed a normalization of stress, increased burnout, and a stigmatization of emotional/mental health distress. Teachers expressed an interest in PD about these topics.
9. PEC passed a rec. Adding the following program emphasis for ATA government staff: to **“Develop and prompt information and messaging to members concerning their identity, rights, responsibilities and opportunities for action as unionized public employees.”**

Professional Development (PD)

1. **Teachers Conventions will be virtual events this year.** Why was this decision made? Why weren't teachers consulted?
 - a. Under the current orders of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) large conferences and events are not permitted. Although that may change, Convention Boards need to have some certainty as they plan their events. Essentially, we just needed to make a call and this is the only call we could really make right now.
 - b. The Association is erring on the side of caution in terms of COVID transmission, for the same reasons described above.

2. **PD Area Conferences (aka PDAC, which sounds dirty) will occur virtually** as follows
 - a. One day only on Saturday 28 November 2020
 - b. The evening of April 23rd and during the day April 24th 2021
3. Two virtual specialist council meetings were held in June. Details are available at the Specialist Council Collaborative Site:
<http://specialistcouncils.atapd.ca>.
 - a. Contact PD for information about the other sessions that they offer, including some online sessions developed to “bridge the gap” left by cancelling Summer Conference.
 - b. Some Specialist Councils are creating Powerpoints (hopefully good ones) to highlight what they do. They will be made available for Local Councils to view and (possibly) distribute. Stay tuned.
4. The Educational Leadership Academy’s “Building Back Better: How School Leaders and Teachers can Navigate from Crisis to Renewal” was held virtually. A number of the sessions were recorded and are being added to the uLead podcast feed as they are edited. [Dr. Lynora Saxinger’s presentation](#) is available along with others, with more to come.
5. [ATA PD staff still have a very active twitter feed](#)
6. The [Northwest Regional Learning Consortium](#) is also worth keeping an eye on.

Teacher Employment Services (TES)

1. By way of reminder, **Member Services and Teacher Welfare have been unified into TES**, with bargaining as a sub-area of this program.
2. **Question:** How much control does our employer have over our social media posts and, specifically, can a principal make a teacher take down a post, as they’re not my employer.
 - a. **Answer:** A principal can encourage a teacher to remove a post. The employer can direct a teacher to remove their post if the

content reflects poorly on the employer as teachers have a duty of fidelity to their employer. Teachers should always use caution when posting material or comments on any social media platform. And, as always, teachers should reach out to TES for advice in such circumstances.

- i. Would there be any interest in some PD on how to safely advocate for teachers and the public sector on Facebook/Twitter/Instagram? Sort of a “**How to Spit Fire on Social Media Without Getting Burned**” session? Let me know.

3. **Question:** How much information is our employer entitled to regarding COVID?

- a. **Answer:** The employer has a right to know whether or not a teacher is fit to work. They do not need to know if a teacher went for a COVID test or what the result is. Simply, can a teacher work or not. This is similar to any medical test results, teachers are not required to disclose the results to the division. If asked, teachers can simply state whether or not they are fit for work. This information was included in the memo to local presidents in August.

4. **TES Bargaining area:**

- a. TWAC is no more. The new TWAC is the Collective Bargaining Conference (CBC, although I think that acronym is taken ...).
 - i. Keep your TWAC materials from last year; they are now collectors items!
 1. I will miss the TWAC acronym because it sounded dirty but wasn't, much like the word “escutcheon” or any of these [50 bangers from Mental Floss](#).
- b. The Pension Committee is now the Pension, Benefits, and Services Committee; as noted above, it has vacancies!
- c. There may be some federal changes that will affect teachers:

- i. A possible increase in deductible expenses for teachers; this would likely require employers to check off a box on a T-2200 form
 - ii. A possible "[Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit](#)" which might be of use to teachers who don't have 90 days of sick leave who need to self-isolate; the legislation is tabled but still hasn't been passed into law at this time.
- d. **We are now down to 12 local bargaining tables.** Again, most folks are getting that Health Spending Account/Wellness Spending Account split.
- e. Central Table Bargaining is about to begin.
- i. It seems that the issue of class size counts may become a Central Table (and potentially) TWC responsibility. We shall see.

Other Stuff

1. The Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) will be wrapping up operations at the end of this school year. Just FYI.
2. [ASEBP's Wellness Sandbox](#) has a lot of good resources.
3. [The ATA's 2020/21 Calendar](#)
4. [My District Representative Calendar](#)
5. [Alberta Education's revised Guide to Education](#)
6. [Alberta Education's School Re-entry Plan](#)

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

1. What's working?
2. What isn't?
3. What do teachers need/want from their Association?
4. Are there any confirmed/suspected COVID cases in your communities? Your schools?
5. What are SCHOOL BOARDS doing with their federal money?

6. Is your school division administration maintaining good communication with the local?
7. Is your school division opting to do Provincial Achievement Tests?
8. Is your school division using the "[COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#)" to screen staff? Students?
9. Other questions ...