



PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA™

THE ADVOCATE

January 31, 2024



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In this edition of *The Advocate*, you'll find the President's message, upcoming events for 2024, a lineup of some of our guest speakers, two board chair messages, information about the 2024 Special Recognition Awards, NEW Articles of Potential Interest, along with our regular updated features. Enjoy!

Next issue: February 29, 2024

ONLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROVIDE PUBLIC EDUCATION®

New Beginnings and Shared Success! Setting the Course for 2024

As we face the start of a new year, I am honored and humbled to extend my warmest greetings to all PSBAA members. The journey we've taken together up until this point has been marked by challenges and triumphs, and as we usher in 2024, I am filled with excitement for what we can achieve this year.

The past year tested the resilience of public education in Alberta. Despite the continued challenges, the unwavering dedication of our trustees, teachers, students, and staff has been nothing short of inspiring. Together, we have made our voices heard and emerged stronger and more united. It is this collective spirit that will guide us as we venture into 2024.

At the forefront of my aspirations for this year is the unwavering commitment to elevate the quality of public education in our province. The value of trusteeship in the school system, I believe, lies in its ability to cultivate a sense of accountability and responsiveness to the community. Trustees act as advocates for the students, parents, and educators, working collaboratively to address challenges, implement policies, and enhance the quality of education provided. This ideology will keep PSBAA on track to ensure talks with the minister and the UCP government will bring about positive change for our communities. Our students deserve nothing less than the best, and I know that together we will spare no effort to guarantee they have the tools, resources, and support needed to excel.

PSBAA will also continue to bring our members the professional learning tools and opportunities we pride ourselves on. It is with the upmost importance that our team puts our members in contact with people that bring new ideas, passion, and key skills that can be utilized and brought back to the communities you serve. Enhancing the educational experience, equipping our students with the skills necessary for success, and providing ample professional development opportunities for our members, are at the top of my list for this year.

Beyond academic excellence, PSBAA recognizes the importance of fostering supportive and inclusive school communities. This involves creating spaces where every student feels seen, heard, and valued. We will continue to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives, fostering an environment that celebrates the unique talents and perspectives each individual brings to public schools, while at the same time, ensuring teachers and staff have the correct resources and support to do so.

As we embark on this new chapter, my resolutions include embracing the spirit of collaboration, innovation, and perseverance. Together we will continue to pave the way for our students and our schools as a whole, and we will advocate for those we hold dear with the same level of passion that I have seen from all PSBAA members.

May this new year be one that we can look back on with a sense of pride, achievement, and growth within our communities and at PSBAA.

Wishing you all a prosperous and joyous New Year!

DENNIS MACNEIL, PRESIDENT





Mark Your Calendars for the 2024 February and April PSBC

• February 8-9, 2024

We are looking forward to welcoming you back in February to the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel West Edmonton, and after a very successful November PSBC meeting filled with great discussions, we are excited to give you a glimpse into what's to come for our February PSBC.

We are pleased to welcome political journalist Graham Thomson as our dinner speaker who has over three decades of experience covering Alberta politics. Graham will provide insight into the current political climate Albertan's are facing today. During the day we will get to hear from many passionate individuals who have education at the forefront, starting with Sandra Relling and Lorraine Champagne from the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta. Then Allison Purcell, Jesse Sadlowski, and Koji Nagahama, from the Lethbridge School Division will focus on 'Integrating competitive esports into schools.'

PSBAA Consultants Pam Boytinck and Joni Avram will bring to the table their expertise and knowledge in the efficacy of programs and avoiding negative outcomes from anti-bullying campaigns. Followed by Holli Smith and Cam McKeage from Prairie Land Public School Division. It's going to be a very insightful professional development meeting and we look forward to having all our speakers join us in February.

For more information or to register please [CLICK HERE!](#)

• April 11-12, 2024

The April PSBC kicks off on Thursday, April 11, 2024, with registration at 8 a.m. and the Professional Learning Day to follow.

On the Thursday night we will once again have our Dinner and Lecture with guest speaker information to follow.

PSBAA exists to promote and protect public school education, so we want to make sure that education issues are top of mind to help equip all trustees with the information they need to help promote and amplify our message.

For more information or to register please [CLICK HERE!](#)



PSBAA WEBINAR

Choice in Alberta Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Public Schools

• Friday, March 1, 2024

Join us for the presentation of the latest PSBAA research paper, Choice in Alberta Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Public Schools. This zoom session is free for all members.

Online registration is now open, and required! Please register asap! The zoom session takes place on March 1st from 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION REMINDER

This is your friendly reminder to fill out the PSBAA Recruitment and Retention survey that was sent out on January 2nd, 2024. It is very important that each board participates, as the results from this survey will be incorporated into the research paper that is currently underway. Your feedback is valuable and we cant wait to hear your thoughts!



GUEST SPEAKERS

2024 February Professional Learning

Joni Avram
PSBAA Consultant



Joni Avram and Pam Boytnik
'Social Programs in Schools: Managing Risks and Opportunities from a Governance Perspective'



Pam Boytnik
Marketing Communications

Sandra Relling, President
60's Scoop Indigenous Society
of Alberta



Sandra Relling and Lorraine Champagne
'Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities'



Lorraine Champagne
Secretary/Treasurer
60's Scoop Indigenous
Society of Alberta

Holli Smith, Board Chair
Prairie Land Public School
Division

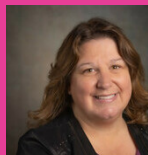


Holli Smith and Cam McKeage
'Transformative Governance: A Roadmap to Redefining Our School Board'



Cam McKeage,
Superintendent
Prairie Land Public School
Division

Allison Purcell
Board Chair
Lethbridge School Division



Allison Purcell, Jesse Sadlowski and Koji Nagahama
'Integrating Competitive Esports into Schools: A Strategic Approach'



Jesse Sadlowski Director of
Technology Learning
and Innovation
Lethbridge School Division

Koji Nagahama
Esports Coordinator
Lethbridge School Division



[Click here for more information!](#)



A Visionary Community Conversation in Canadian Rockies Public Schools



In May 2022, **Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS)** embarked on a visionary community conversation to explore and expand the aspirational programming at **Canmore Collegiate High School** and **Banff Community High School**. The workshops gathered community members from across the Bow Valley corridor to brainstorm immediate and future educational possibilities, aligning with CRPS’s vision to create a better world through transformational education that celebrates nature, diversity, and well-being.

The discussions, attended by over 35 community members, were divided into two segments: immediate aspirations and future goals. The immediate ideas centered around trades and environmental/outdoor options, resonating with the division’s emphasis on nature and well-being. The suggestions not only focused on academic variety but also emphasized mental health and practical life skills, weaving a connection to meaningful activities.

For future programming, the conversation shifted towards developing competencies like critical thinking and problem-solving in real-world contexts. Participants envisioned education that transcends classroom walls, advocating for a cross-curricular approach that embraces community links, environmental stewardship, and inclusive practices, particularly for Indigenous and newcomer families.

The division acted on the feedback by immediately hiring two STEM/STEAM educators, who introduced experiential courses that have since thrived and expanded. By September 2023, CRPS boasts a diverse curriculum including:



- Communication Technology, enhancing students’ media literacy and critical thinking.
- Cosmetology, delving into beauty skills coupled with theoretical knowledge.
- Culinary Design, where students master culinary arts in a fast-paced environment.
- Environmental Sustainability, exploring the ecosystem through aquaponics.
- Fashion Design, combining creativity with practical garment creation skills.
- MakerSpace, fostering innovation through design and technology.
- Synthetic Biology, challenging students with the ethics and potential of genetic engineering.



The array of courses currently offered at CRPS not only embodies the division’s vision but also has inspired the hearts and minds of high school students, with each course experiencing high demand. These programs exemplify CRPS’ commitment to educational excellence, fostering an appreciation for the natural world and nurturing the innate potential within each student. The development of these courses was greatly enhanced by proactive stakeholder participation, highlighting the pivotal role of community feedback in crafting a dynamic and progressive educational landscape.

Arlene Rheaume, Board Chair - Canadian Rockies Public Schools



E-SPORTS - A GROWING TREND

When our Lethbridge School Division Board gets the opportunity to share about the great work happening in our Division, it is always so difficult to choose one thing. Seeing the evolution of something grow within a Division over the years is so remarkable to see and be a part of.

E-sports is growing across the country and certainly we feel our Division is now leading the path for so many others. Our Tech team, as well as a number of teaching staff, saw an avenue to reach a group of students, that might not otherwise be involved in sport. The staff and students of our Division have grown E-sports to be not only a competitive extra-curricular activity, but also a class in a few of our middle schools. During the time students play e-sports they are learning about team work, leadership, strategy, preparation, dynamics of sport all while playing video games. In our classes, the teachers work with the students on setting limits, on being a healthy athlete, work on strategy and game play. A great example of how they get the students beyond just 'sitting in front of a screen', is in a game called Rocket League, where the players are in a car, which is then used to hit the ball in a game of soccer. The teacher has the students in the gym, playing soccer and trying out different drills, passes and shots they can learn to then use in their esport competition later.

Our Tech team wanted to share the sport outside of our Division and to host the first ever Provincial E-sports competition. They worked together with other surrounding Divisions, including Kainai Board of Education and came together with Economic Development Lethbridge, Lethbridge Sport Council, Tourism Lethbridge, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge College, SAIT and other ESport organizations to be hosting a competition and conference for May of this year.

We are proud to be able to see where E-sports has gone within our Division as we support students and staff to grow in a sport they love. It has given us an opportunity to reach a group of students that might not otherwise have been given an opportunity to be part of a sport that can provide guidance for safe playing. As well, in a time that we see so many students struggling with their mental health, this is one way to support students to 'come out of their parents basements' and to be able to interact with other students/players both on screen and away from the screen. For the provincial competition, our Division will also have an onsite Wellness Team.

Allison Purcell, Board Chair
Lethbridge School Division



2024 SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS NOMINATIONS

It is that time of year again! Time to shine a spotlight on the hardworking public education advocates in your community who deserve to be recognized for their efforts. Do you know someone who has made a special contribution to public education this year? Advanced business initiatives in your school division? Or has just been an all around great mentor and supporter? Please check your email for the special recognition awards package that has been distributed! This package includes the nomination forms and the qualifications for each award. The nomination forms are also available on the member resources section of the PSBAA website. **Nomination deadline is March 31.**

Nominations forms are located in the
Member Portal of the PSBAA Website

[**CLICK HERE TO LOGIN**](#)





ALBERTA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

Artist and Education Funding

- **Deadline May 1, 2024**

This funding supports Alberta schools by subsidizing fees of professional Alberta artists of any artistic discipline that provide interactive arts residency projects for grades K-12.

The May deadline is for projects taking place in the next school year.

Eligible residency projects must meet the following criteria:

- engage either an Alberta-based individual artist, or a group of artists working together in any artistic discipline who has school residency experience to deliver a program
- provide students access to Alberta's professional artists and their work
- provide an opportunity for students to observe and actively participate in the creative process
- encourage students to discover and express their creative potential
- take place on school property during school hours
- be five hours to thirty days in duration
- be completed within three months of its commencement date

The maximum grant will not exceed \$15,000.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



MATH BURSARY PROGRAM

The Math Bursary Program intends to encourage current and future Alberta K to 12 teachers to take a qualifying math course and strengthen their knowledge, skill, and confidence in teaching the subject. This bursary is for teachers already working in the school system and Bachelor of Education students at an Alberta post-secondary institution.

The bursary is a financial award of \$1,000 that recipients may use to recover course costs and related expenses for successfully completing a pre-approved bursary-eligible course. Recipients will not have to repay any unspent funding. If the bursary does not cover all course expenses incurred, no additional funds will be awarded for that course.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

PROVINCIAL SATISFACTION SURVEYS

The Ministry of Education will be conducting its annual satisfaction telephone and online surveys to collect public and participant perceptions of Alberta's education system. The survey responses are completely confidential, and no individual responses will be reported.

Your participation is important! Your responses provide valuable information to help the ministry identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement, while helping to support a more effective and accountable education system.

These surveys began on January 15, 2024, with an expected conclusion in May 2024.

For further inquiries or additional information on the surveys, please contact Alberta Education's Corporate Planning Branch at performance_reporting.education@gov.ab.ca or 780-422-1963 (toll-free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000)



PINK SHIRT DAY

Pink Shirt Day falls on the last Wednesday of February every year; join us next Pink Shirt Day on February 28th, 2024 in our mission to create a more kind, inclusive world by raising awareness and funds for anti-bullying initiatives.



pink shirt

day February 28th



Show your support for anti-bullying with custom shirts for Pink Shirt Day!
No minimums. Customize a design and/or add your company logo.

Get in touch to explore pricing and options.
www.echopromotions.ca | info@echopromotions.ca |
780.784.3246



This conference is an opportunity to take part in conversations regarding economic reconciliation. It brings together both Indigenous and non-indigenous business and community leaders. Forward Summit takes place at the Grey Eagle Resort & Casino in Calgary May 14th-15th.

Register now!

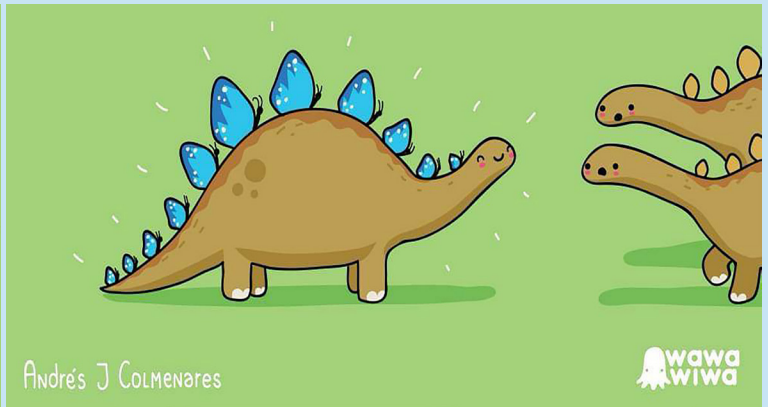
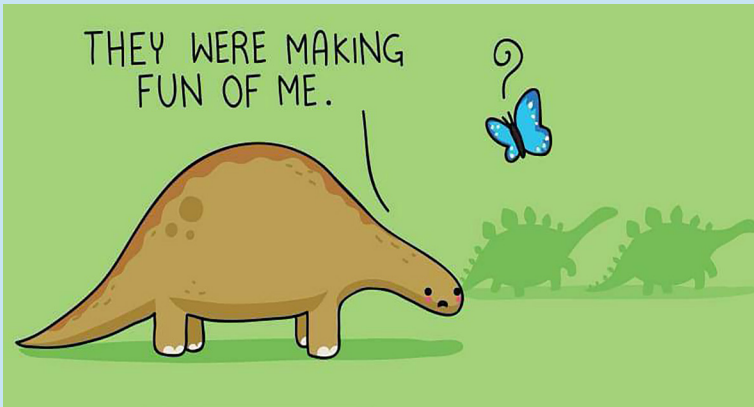
Website link: <https://forward-summit.ca/2024registration>

Receive 10% off your registration with promo code: **ABPUBIC10**

ARTICLES OF POTENTIAL INTEREST

Click on the links below

- [Alberta Education Minister stands by funding formula after spike in enrolment](#)
- [Want to guarantee failure and unfairness in Alberta schools? Just axe diploma exams](#)
- [Edmonton Public Schools teachers accept new deal, avert strike](#)
- [Ft. McMurray School Divisions struggle through staff shortages, crowded classrooms](#)
- [Supporting Indigenous student success](#)



PSBAA RIDDLE

This month's Riddle: I have cities, but no houses, I have mountains, but no trees, I have water, but no fish. WHAT AM I?

Every month PSBAA will add a new word puzzle to the Advocate. The first person who correctly answers the riddle and sends their answer to communications@public-schools.ab.ca will receive a PSBAA branded stainless steel water bottle (as shown), which is awarded exclusively to our prize winners! (Those who have won a prize in this contest during the past six months are not eligible.)