

ATA A GLANCE

November 2004 Volume 17, Issue 2
This Month: The Political Teacher

ATA, Local 38 Welcomes New Teachers

Dirk Huysman
Vice President

On October 25, 2004, 85 new teachers gathered at the Calgary Winter club to be welcomed into the Alberta Teachers' Association. Inspirational messages were presented from our President, Larry Liffiton, Chief Superintendent Brendan Croskery, and Trustee Carole Oliver. Karen Rogers from Clarence Sansom, a survivor of her first year of teaching, shared her perspective, with a touch of humour and wisdom. Denise Legge, District Representative, added a wonderful message on professionalism, politics, and the joys of teaching.

New teachers are often the energy of the school. They bring creative novel ideas, a vision of a career in teaching, and the willingness to learn and contribute in our schools. Many of us are mentoring a new teacher, officially or unofficially. Remember to continue the support to our new teachers throughout the year, as there is no easy time in our first year of teaching.

Welcome to Calgary schools, new teachers. We are proud to have you join us, and wish you the best in your career.



Denise Legge, District Representative, welcomed the new teachers into the Alberta Teachers' Association.



Karen Rogers, Clarence Sansom, shared her perspective on surviving her first year of teaching.



Hehr Lines

Dick Hehr
Executive Assistant

I think it was early in 1989. I was President of Local #38 at the time. A provincial election had been called for March. A young teacher whom I had known for some time had sought and won the Liberal nomination in my riding and was prepared to take on an entrenched Tory incumbent. He had given me a call and asked to drop by and chat.

The meeting was most enjoyable. We reminisced a little about when I was his University Associate during his practicum. We talked about when he had taught both my kids - Kent and Kristie - at F E Osborne, and of course we talked about how he could maximize his efforts and do as well as possible in the election. Finally however, I somehow felt it necessary to say "You know Frank - you can't win. At least you certainly can't win this time."

He immediately replied, "It really doesn't matter. I want to win. I'm going to give it my best shot and we'll let the chips fall where they may."

On election night an amazing thing happened. Frank won!

So what does that little story mean besides the patently obvious fact that your humble servant doesn't have a sniff about electoral politics?

Quite simply it validates the obvious. You can't win - if you don't play. In politics, as in life, there are no guarantees. But opting out guarantees you can't win.

Opting out can occur at many levels. We can do it in many ways. Not voting is one of the most obvious.

You don't have to be a candidate to make a difference. With public schools being one of the major political footballs in Alberta, I urge teachers to get involved politically and stay involved. Naturally, we have a personal agenda - but we also have a

public and professional agenda. Teachers should advance these agendas at all times and with any political party they choose: particularly during election campaigns. Teachers who don't get involved and certainly teachers who don't vote, essentially have given up their right to complain about what happens.

I am aware of five Calgary Public Teachers-- Harry Chase, Herb Coburn, Dirk Huysman, Eric Leavitt, and Jason Nishiyama-- who are running in this election. I wish them well and urge friends and colleagues to assist them in their efforts.

Some readers might be interested in whatever became of Frank after his win in 1989. Well, he was re-elected in the next election, and then my initial prediction came to fruition and he was defeated. He returned to teaching and became involved in ATA politics. In that sphere he has done quite well and is now our Provincial President. It's a good thing the prospect of losing doesn't scare Frank Bruseker.

The Political Teacher

Mary Ann Richards
Communications Committee

The provincial election is a vital time for teachers. At this time, Albertans determine how they want to manage the public education system by electing candidates and the party which best represent their values. All teachers are concerned with how education is managed. Some teachers are so concerned that they commit themselves to a party platform, work on candidate campaigns, and even stand for election. During this election campaign, we are profiling Calgary Public teachers who are running for provincial office. We encourage any other teachers who are involved in this election to write to us to explain your commitment.

Harry B Chase

Alberta Liberals – Calgary
Varsity
Retired/Substitute Teacher

Why did you decide to become a candidate in this election?

My political involvement has been ongoing throughout my 34-year teaching career. I was a CSR rep for a

number of years, and served on a series of strike committees beginning in 1979/1980. I served as a member of EPC from 1988 until 1998. I was also a member of the NSC for two series of collaborative bargaining contracts in 1993, and again in 1994 when the cut-backs to education were first introduced. I am most proud of having been part of the team that negotiated the ERIP clause. Many teachers would have difficulty recognizing me without the shadow of a microphone in front of my face, either at CSR or at a general meeting.

Why did you select the political party you represent?

By 1997 I was so angered by the actions of the Klein government that, although I had never been affiliated with a specific party, I became involved with the Calgary Foothills Liberal Constituency Association who at that time was having difficulty finding a candidate. Had former Sacred MLA, Albert Ludwig, not volunteered to run I would have most likely sought the nomination, although I was a political neophyte. Albert mentored me during the campaign while I wrote the majority of his educational policy as well as editing pamphlets and brochures. Calgary Buffalo Liberal MLA Gary Dickson encouraged me to run in 2001. I did, and ran against Finance Minister Pat Nelson, during which time I received one of the highest numbers of votes for a Liberal in Alberta. Although I only managed to capture a third of the vote, I felt empowered by the number of people who supported an alternative viewpoint to the Conservative business-model-dominated ideology willing to sacrifice people for profit.

What issues are important to you as a teacher? Personally?

When I retired in June of 2003 I was approached by the Calgary chair of Friends of Medicare (FOM), Dr. Avalon Roberts, to become a Calgary FOM director. In January of 2001, when Avalon declared her intention to run federally, I assumed the role of Calgary Chair. I was then asked by the provincial FOM directors to assume the role of Provincial Chair. I was the primary spokesperson for Friends of Medicare in the fight against P3s and two-tiered, for-profit health care. I saw a parallel in the pummeling public health care was receiving to the sorry plight of public education at the hands of the private-agenda-preferring Klein government.

What insights can you offer about why it is important for teachers to be politically involved, and how they can make a difference politically?

Far too often teachers become so worn down by the increased class sizes, lack of preparation time, parents' expectations and public pressure that they don't have the energy to take on the system. However, the exhilaration that you can experience through fighting back in the form of donating your time and talents to a political campaign is immensely rewarding as well as self-empowering. It is similar to the realization that the ATA is not some distant organization which simply collects dues, but is actually a force to be reckoned with politically if each teacher recognizes that group strength is achieved through individual commitment. Teachers have a voice which they only lose if they allow themselves to be beaten down, divided, and conquered

Herb Coburn

Alberta Liberals – Foothills-Rockyview

Principal of Christine Meikle School

Why did you decide to become a candidate in this election?

I have been involved in federal and provincial campaigns since I was 18. When I undertook to organize the new constituency of Foothills-Rockyview for the Alberta Liberal Party my sweetheart suggested that I run. When I realized she was serious I undertook to gain the nomination.

The fabric of our society is worn and unraveled. The reason for this wear and tear is that the current provincial government appears satisfied to simply offer a basic program of services for the citizens of Alberta. This is in contrast to the implementation of best practices that former generations have pursued throughout our history. If we were a business, our competitors would have passed us long ago. A best practice that has been ignored is the protection of , and investment in, assets. Alberta's greatest asset is its people. Again, the current government has deprived an entire generation of the experience of receiving best practice in the social science domain. It is my desire to be part of the reweaving of this fabric.

Why did you select the political party you represent?

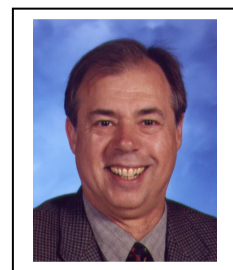
The Alberta Liberal Party attracted me because it has the largest umbrella; that is, it is an inclusive party that works for all segments of society.

What issues are important to you as a teacher? Personally?

Our school board has focused recent infusions of funding on our K-3 population. Considering the correlation between language acquisition and academic success in Grade 3 this is a very worthwhile focus. This correlation continues throughout a student's academic life, and well into their adult life. I want to see further funding used to recognise the need for late literacy and reasonable class sizes, as well as having appropriate personnel such as guidance counsellors, librarians, and technical experts on site wherever there is need. The Alberta Liberal Party embraces the concept of Funding Adequacy, where the need for these positions and for administration is outside the class-size ratio.

What insights can you offer about why it is important for teachers to be politically involved, and how they can make a difference politically?

There is an imperative for "those who know" to speak out and clarify the concerns that afflict our education system. Teachers are on the front line of these concerns and can have tremendous influence on others within their sphere of influence. These others include parents, grandparents, business owners, and the community in general. It has taken 23 years and four strikes (in Calgary) to finally have the current government officially recognize the importance of class size. We need to stay active and work within the systems we have in order to bring about the best possible education system. This is the legacy that all Albertans should strive towards.



Dirk Huysman

Alberta New Democrats - Calgary Nose Hill

Assistant Principal at Sir William Van Horne High

Why did you decide to become a candidate in this election?

I have always voted for the political party that best reflects my own beliefs. Since the government of Ralph Klein has come into power, I have found the gap between my beliefs and that of the government had increased dramatically. It was not enough to say I did not vote for this government. After four years of Klein, I became so angry with the budget-cutting rampage, particularly in education, that I had to take a more active role, which resulted in my running in that election. The situation remains, and so once again I found it important to step up and work to try to bring about change, not just with a single vote, but with a commitment to once again run against this government.

Why did you select the political party you represent?

I selected the Alberta New Democrats because they best represent my own beliefs. I believe that public education is very important to the well-being of the citizens of Alberta, and the province itself. I did not see that reflected to the degree I wanted in any other political party. Actions in the Legislature and their party platform demonstrated that the Alberta New Democrats reflected my own beliefs and wishes for Alberta and the quality of life I think Albertans need and deserve.

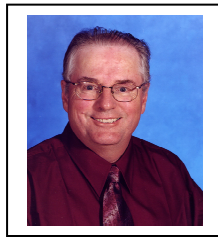
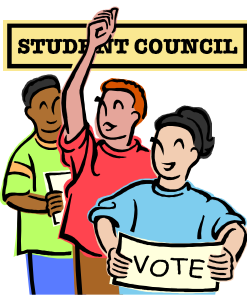
What issues are important to you as a teacher? Personally?

As a teacher my major issues relate to the well-being of the students I teach and the state of public education. Witnessing, at a very personal level in my school and classroom, the impact of budget cuts to education, to the support of children, to the health of the communities I have lived and worked in, has left little doubt in my mind that support of public education is essential to maintaining a healthy citizenry and society.

On a personal level, I believe that Alberta belongs to all Albertans. Albertans own the resources, the public spaces and public places, and this must never be forgotten. For too many years, we have seen the erosion of those public spaces and places. Our ownership of Alberta's resources appears to have been lost to the marketplace. Even our voice in Alberta decisions has been lost as democracy in this province is diminished, swept aside in the name of greater efficiencies. It is time for Albertans to reclaim that which is rightfully ours: this province, its public institutions, its resources, and the democratic values that we cherish.

What insights can you offer about why it is important for teachers to be politically involved, and how they can make a difference politically?

I believe it is important for teachers to be politically involved for a number of reasons. Our mandate as educators is to help create the next generation of citizens. Part of that responsibility is to role-model that which we strive to bring about in our students. Teachers, despite the slamming by the media we take at times, hold a valued position in our communities. We are spokespeople for this important institution of public education, not just out of self-interest. We know what impact our activities have on children, and what the consequence of not educating those children to the best of our ability will have on both the individual child and society at large. We do important work. Collectively we fight for public education through the ATA. This work must also be done at an individual level. That is not to say we must all run during elections. There are many ways to be politically involved. One may ask to what end? At the least, as educated citizens ourselves who have such knowledge of the importance of education, it is vital that we take a stand in support of that work. An active citizenry makes a difference. That is the foundation of the democratic enterprise.



Eric Leavitt

Alberta New Democrats – Calgary Fish Creek

Teacher at Queen Elizabeth Jr/Sr High

Why did you decide to become a candidate in this election?

Partly it was because we needed a candidate, another part was that I believe that it is important to offer an alternative to four more years of Tory rule. My experience so far is that there is a significant number of people who are ready for a change and are looking for an alternative.

Why did you select the political party that you represent?

I joined the NDP about 1 1/2 years ago after finally deciding that I needed to get off the side lines and get involved. I picked the NDP because of the match between my values and the core values of the party.

What issues are important to you as a teacher? Personally?

When I started writing my brochure I quickly discovered that I could fill several pages with concerns that need addressing. I edited them down to: support for the Public Health system, added investments in Public Education, lower tuition and more spaces in Post-Secondary institutions, a sustainable environment, and equity for citizens. The latter includes increases in the minimum wage, and increased support for families and singles in need. I really hate the phrase, "a hand up, not a hand out." It is so patronizing and smug, and so wrong.

What insights can you offer about why it is important for teachers to be politically involved, and how they can make a difference politically?

It is important that all citizens be politically involved, but perhaps more so for teachers because we are role-models for our students. My students are fascinated by my running for office and are very curious about the whole process. Hopefully this will inspire some of them to become politically involved. Also, I have noticed that people who are active politically, regardless of party, are much happier with the system than people who are not involved.



Jason Nishiyama

Alberta New Democrats - Calgary Montrose

Teacher at AADAC

Why did you decide to become a candidate in this election?

I was frustrated with the lack of representation the local MLA was providing my area. I was further frustrated with the provincial government's apparent hostility towards the weakest in our society, children, the poor and elderly, and the sick. Running in the election is a way for me to show this frustration to the government, as well as providing the people of my riding an alternative to the current government and MLA.

Why did you select the political party you represent?

The NDP's philosophy and platform match very closely my own personal philosophy and what I think the government should be doing: such as respecting those who have little or no voice in society, a desire to ensure that Albertans aren't left financially vulnerable due to illness or injury, and providing Albertans with an affordable public education system that will give our children the competitive edge they will need in the future job market.

What issues are important to you as a teacher? Personally?

As a teacher I see the chronic under-funding of public education in the Province of Alberta to be the major problem. There aren't enough resources available to school boards to ensure small class sizes, properly equipped classrooms, as well as the teaching and support staff, both in and out of the classroom, that are needed to ensure that EVERY child succeeds to the best of their ability.

What insights can you offer about why it is important for teachers to be politically involved, and how they can make a difference politically?

It is important for teachers to be politically involved for three reasons. First, teachers are the front-line workers in the education system and can see first-hand the result of government action or inaction. By being politically active, teachers can advocate for their

students and education in general to ensure that our education system is second to none.

Second, by being politically active, teachers provide an example for our students to follow. Without participation, democracy fails to work, and by being politically active, teachers are showing the next generation of voters that being involved with the political process is important. This is essential if we wish our democracy to flourish in the future.

Third, you get to meet a lot of great people who also care about their community!

Making Democracy Work for Alberta's Future

By Donna Swiniarski,
*Coordinator, Communications ATA,
Barnett House*

Political engagement does not require a lot of time and money. By becoming politically engaged with the political party of your choice, you can help determine the conditions under which you teach and your students learn. Perhaps most importantly, your engagement will help demonstrate to them through personal example the values of citizenship and democracy.

Making a Political Contribution

If you don't have the time or inclination to participate actively in the provincial political process, you might want to consider making a monetary contribution to the registered political party, constituency association or candidate of your choice. Your contribution will serve as a tangible expression of support, and you will recoup a big chunk of that contribution when you file your income taxes.

"There's no question that you need funds to run a political campaign and to run a political party, and no amount is too small," says Laurie Blakeman, deputy leader of the official Opposition and MLA for Edmonton-Centre. "Some people go, 'I can't donate \$5,000, so it's not worth me donating at all.' Twenty-five dollars is good. That's five lawn signs."

Blakeman points out that individual contributions democratize the political process. "If we don't have individuals

donating in support of political parties and/or individual candidates, then one tends to look to corporations," she says. "It's important to me as an individual that I'm raising money from my fellow constituents and that the money that I go into a campaign with is really reflective of the people I'm representing. It's the little guy supporting the little guy."

The amount of your contribution is up to you, but in the unlikely event that you are independently wealthy, you should know that you cannot donate more than \$15,000 in a non-election year and \$30,000 in an election year to a registered party. Contributions to registered candidates are limited to \$2,000 per candidate and \$10,000 in total to candidates of each registered party. You should also know that the chief electoral officer must make available to the public the names and addresses of all contributors who donate more than \$375.

If you don't want to make a huge dent in your bank account, you might want to take advantage of the preauthorized withdrawal plans offered by some registered parties. You can arrange to have a predetermined amount withdrawn from your account at the same time each month and receive a tax receipt at the end of the year for the total of your monthly contributions.

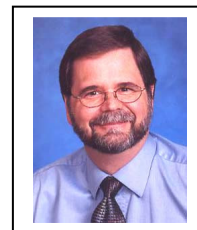
Blakeman highlights the importance of enrolling in the plans. "It saves wear and tear on everybody," she says. The contributions also add up. "If you do \$20 a month, by the next election you would have contributed \$1,000 to a candidate's campaign. Now that is serious money."

Political contributions are a boon at income tax time. You are eligible for a tax credit equal to 75 percent of the first \$200 you contribute, 50 percent of the next \$900 and 33½ percent of the next \$1,200 to a maximum credit of \$1,000. For example, a \$300 contribution would yield a \$200 credit, reducing your Alberta tax payable by \$200.

While the membership fees you pay to belong to a registered party are usually not tax deductible, the cost of the ticket you purchase to attend a political fundraiser can be. For tickets costing \$50 or less, you can receive a tax receipt upon request for half the price. For tickets costing more than \$50, you

will automatically receive a tax receipt for the amount over \$25.

If you are interested in contributing to a registered provincial political party, constituency association or candidate, contact information is available from Elections Alberta, 100 11510 Kingsway Avenue NW, Edmonton AB, T5G 2Y5, tel: 427-7191 (in Edmonton) or 310-0000 (from elsewhere in Alberta), fax: (780) 422-2900, e-mail: info@electionsAlberta.ab.ca, website: www.electionsAlberta.ab.ca.



President's Message

Larry Liffiton

We live in a political climate that increasingly abandons a sense of the common good in public policy, in favour of choosing between various interest groups who are competing with each other. The recent, and ongoing, attempt of Innovative Learning and Teaching Solutions (Inlets) to secure a \$50 million contract with the provincial government is an important case in point.

At the request of Dr Lyle Oberg, the Minister of Learning, Inlets presented a business proposal for the Centre for Educational Research Applications (CERA) to the Alberta government's standing policy committee on education. You may see the posted version of the business plan at www.inlets.net.

The plan also calls for the creation of schools in which educational research could be conducted. The business plan explains that CERA would need schools where conditions could be controlled for research purposes. It uses class size as an example where conditions in public schools could not be controlled to the extent Inlets would like. In essence, the request is for public funding of private research schools.

Defenders of the proposal have declared that privately funded educational research is necessary to avoid "vested interest groups." We've heard this argument before and it

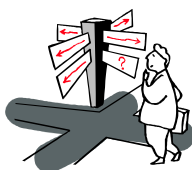
reveals the way many people perceive the political process; as a competition between competing interests. Somehow the term “vested interest” has come to have a pejorative connotation.

Who has a vested interest in education that threatens the work of CERA? The universities that carry on their own research? Parents? Teachers? Society at large? Are these the groups that threaten the government’s vision of the future of education? How? Well, if you hold the ideological view that the world is and *should be* a competitive place, you need to have someone to be in competition with. And who better than those groups that see education not as a competitive field but a critical contributor to the common good?

Education is a political issue. To exercise some influence on the direction that education will take in the future teachers must be political. As evidenced by the proposal to create CERA, there are fundamental political questions at the heart of the work we do. Do competing interest groups serve education best, or is education the fundamental common interest of all who would serve the common good? That is one of the questions of debate during this election. We all have a say in how that question is to be answered. The worst answer is silence.



Trustee Carol Bazinet and District Representative Denise Legge



ATA, Political Forum



Stephen Brown, Dirk Huysman, James Istvanffy and Jennifer Dazies



Trustee Pat Cochrane and Dirk Huysman



Round-table discussions about issues in public education

VISIONING EDUCATION’S FUTURE IN ALBERTA ATA Political Forum, 2004 November 11

By Mary Ann Richards
Political Action

On Remembrance Day a small group of teachers, parents, trustees and candidates gathered to discuss education issues and debate party

policy. This well-organized event was effectively timed to help focus candidate thought and party policy on education. Moderated by Larry Liffiton, the forum featured Stephen Brown, Liberal candidate for Calgary Elbow, Dirk Huysman, NDP candidate for Calgary Nose Hill and James Istvanffy, Alberta Alliance candidate for Calgary Bow. Progressive Conservative candidates declined to attend. CFCN and CBC provided media coverage.

The candidates outlined their party platforms. In brief summary: Stephen

WITH YOU TO THE POLLS. You have the power to make your voice heard!

**Remember Political Action Is Personal Action.
Now is the time to act.**

Calgary City Teachers' Convention 2005 -- 100 Years: Teaching, Learning & Spirit

The CCTCA has been working hard on your behalf and has put together a fantastic program for our next Convention, in February. You can view the program and all its details on their website: <http://www.cctca.com>

Here is a list of confirmed keynote speakers:

Arthur Black
Michelle Borba
Jim Carroll
James Delgado
Bob Ezrin
Bob Gray
Ted Harrison
Thompson Highway
Brian Keating
Mark Kielburger
Marvin Marshall
Ann Medina
James Orbinski
William Sampson
Lance Secretan
Eric Wilson
Lauren Woodhouse

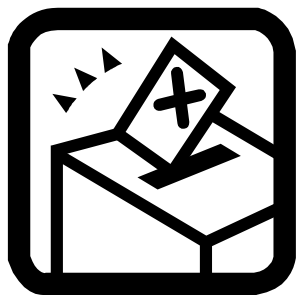
Celebrating 100 Years of Teacher Education in Alberta (Source: ATA Newsletter)

Who was your most influential Alberta elementary or secondary school teacher, and why? The Centennial Story Project will publish 100 essays to mark 100 years of teacher-education in Alberta. Alberta residents are invited to submit short essays celebrating the influence of teachers on their lives. The top 100 entries will be published in an anthology and distributed to Alberta's schools and libraries. Publication of the anthology will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Calgary Normal School, November 2005. Details about the essay project and centenary events are available from www.celebrateteachers.com.

Brown emphasized teachers' needs for time and class size, chastising the current government for its waste and patronage while leaving Alberta's students to suffer. Dirk Huysman emphasized on the NDP's focus on people rather than profit, promising stable long-term funding for education to ensure confidence and the ability to plan. James Istvanffy berated the federal government's control over decisions and advocated more government control by citizens. He appealed for a more effective plan to find better ways to use money, rather than always begging for more.

Following presentations, round table groups discussed their visions for education, then asked the candidates questions. Important topics were support for special needs students, infrastructure issues and provincial equity.

The forum offered an excellent opportunity for us to discuss our beliefs and come to understand party positions. The political action committee hopes that if you did not get a chance to attend, you will contact your local candidate, become informed on issues, work to encourage voter participation, and VOTE! We believe that our voice does matter and that we each can make a difference. Remember, November 22 is election day.



An Even Dozen Reasons You Should Have Attended the Political Forum

By Dave Whiteside
Political Action Committee

Remembrance Day was a good time to gather and discuss democracy. You were nice and rested after a full day off school.

On November 22, you, unlike many in the world, get to choose your own boss¹. If you attended you would have known that you did your best to choose well by being fully informed.

A light dinner of sandwiches and cold cuts was served prior to the forum. You could have received a cool pencil, bookmarks and information. The forum was attended by candidates from the Alliance, Liberal and New Democrat Parties. You are a strong individual; the forum is sponsored by one of your local committees PAC38 (the Political Action Committee for Calgary Public Teachers).

You play well with others. The forum is also sponsored by two other important organizations: PAC55, the Political Action Committee of Calgary Catholic Teachers and CAPSC, the Calgary Association Parent and School Councils.

Media outlets attended to find out education issues. Your voice could have been heard.

You know the issues; you know what needs to be discussed.

Without your input your vision of the future of education in Alberta may never happen.

Even, or perhaps *especially* in a post Learning Commission world education is still an issue. It matters.

Next week you will have an opportunity to select candidates to affect education issues. We are better positioned now that we have been in recent memory to shape the government's influence on your classroom learning conditions. The Commission on Learning told the government that they have been underfunding education for a time. In the survey, *Its Your Future*, Albertans have named it as one of their top three priorities. We face a provincial election, and have an excellent opportunity to influence our new government.

It is my fear that if we do not tell the government and tell them again we will not see the kinds of change that we are all hoping to see as a result of this important alignment of the stars. Being aware of the issues will make a difference. Contact your local candidates. Ask important questions. VOTE! TAKE SOMEONE ELSE

¹ That's assuming you believe as I do that the Provincial government controls important aspects of our work environment.

MENTORING



Mentorship Program Off To a Good Start

On October 28, 2004, the Professional Development Committee of Local #38 hosted the first planning meeting of this year's Mentorship Program. It's all about experienced teachers working with teachers at their school who are new to the profession. The Calgary Board of Education has hired 251 new teachers, this fall, and the response was overwhelming, with more than 30 teams expressing interest in registering.



The meeting was held in Glamorgan Elementary School Library. Teams received background information, frames of reference, and suggestions for mentoring activities. Then the important work began in earnest. As these photos here illustrate, participants were totally engaged and thrilled to be there.

Originally, there was only space for 25 registering teams. However, a resolution was passed at the 2004 11 03 meeting of the Council of School Representatives, that approved an over-expenditure of the PD Activities budget. This allowed all teams that registered to be accepted in the Mentoring Program. Thank you PD Committee for this huge service.



ATA Glance is a publication of Calgary Public Teachers, Local #38 of the Alberta Teachers' Association. The goal of *ATA Glance* is to facilitate communication between and within our membership and local executive.
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Opinions expressed are solely those of the author(s) and not necessarily of Calgary Public Teachers, Local #38 or the Alberta Teachers' Association

