

# A Message from the MIDDLE



Volume 9, Number 2, March 2018

## President's Message

I hope that everyone is enjoying their school year. I have taught middle school for the last 25 years, and it is always exciting—there's nowhere else that I would rather be. Young adolescents never cease to amaze me with their energy, creativity, spirit and love for life.

Every year the Middle Years Council is proud to have our membership grow. We have just surpassed 500 people and hope to reach over 1,000 in the near future. If you know of anyone who could benefit from being a member of our council, please pass on our contact information (found on page 8.)

We are continually looking for new ways to support middle years teachers and for

feedback from you to help us out. We are committed to making sure that you, as members, receive as much as possible from your membership in the Middle Years Council. Please let me know if you have any ideas to make your years in the middle better by contacting me at [jeremy.spink@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:jeremy.spink@rdpsd.ab.ca).

We hope that you love being part of our council and that you have a great year "in the middle." I hope to see you in Banff in April.

*Jeremy Spink*



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### Messages for MLAs

The Middle Years Council (MYC) encourages its members to seek support for resources that meet the social, emotional and educational needs of middle years students and provide appropriate classroom support. If you have a story about unmet needs in your inclusive middle years classroom, we encourage you to share it in your spheres of influence, including through a message or visit to your MLA. Send your stories (about one paragraph in length) to MYC newsletter editor Emma Holota, at [holota.emma@gmail.com](mailto:holota.emma@gmail.com), for inclusion in our newsletter or on the website. Together we can raise awareness of the needs of students in the middle!

# New Standards to Help Build More-Inclusive Schools

## Professional Practice Standards

Since 1997, the professional practice of all Alberta teachers has been guided by the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS). Alberta Education has revised and updated the TQS to include a Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) and a Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS). These were signed as ministerial orders in February 2018, making all teaching professionals

accountable to the minister for their applicable standard.

The new standards will come into effect on September 1, 2019.

The full news release is available at <https://tinyurl.com/yct9l3cy>; to listen to the news conference, go to <https://tinyurl.com/ycfeo994>. Locate text for the standards at <https://tinyurl.com/yct9l3cy>. (Websites accessed March 27, 2018.)

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## Publishing Under the *Personal Information Protection Act*

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) requires consent to publish personal information about an individual. *Personal information* is defined as anything that identifies an individual in the context of the collection: for example, a photograph and/or captions, an audio or video file and artwork.

Some schools obtain blanket consent under FOIP, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. However, the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) and FOIP are *not* interchangeable. They fulfill different legislative goals. PIPA is the private sector act that governs the Association's collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

If you can use the image or information to identify a person in context (for example, a specific school, or a specific event), then it is personal information and you need consent to collect, use or disclose (publish) it.

Minors cannot provide consent and must have a parent or guardian sign a consent form. Consent forms must be provided to the Document Production editorial staff at Barnett House together with the personal information to be published.

Refer all questions regarding the ATA's collection, use and disclosure of personal information to the ATA privacy officer.

Notify the ATA privacy officer immediately of *any* incident that involves the loss of or unauthorized use or disclosure of personal information, by calling Barnett House at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208.

Maggie Shane, the ATA's privacy officer, is your resource for privacy compliance support.

780-447-9429 (direct)

780-699-9311 (cell, available anytime)

# AMLE Affiliation



The Middle Years Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association is affiliated with the Association for Middle Level

Education (AMLE), which is the international organization for middle years educators. The AMLE website (<http://www.amle.org/>) has a variety of resources and information for middle years education. There is a free membership option so you can access some materials without the full membership. However, the professional membership gives you full access to all resources as well as discounts on books, resources and conference registrations.

# AMLE Conference 2018

The 2018 AMLE conference takes place from October 25 to 27 in Orlando, Florida.

If you have the chance to attend, this is one conference *not* to miss. You will have the opportunity to have one-to-one discussions with leaders in education, network with teachers from all over North America, have technology explained and explored, and enjoy a variety of sessions in all subject areas.

Please check the AMLE website for additional information.

[www.amle.org/annual/Home/tabid/244/Default.aspx](http://www.amle.org/annual/Home/tabid/244/Default.aspx)

The following is from the AMLE website ([www.amle.org/AboutAMLE/AMLEataGlance/tabid/122/Default.aspx](http://www.amle.org/AboutAMLE/AMLEataGlance/tabid/122/Default.aspx)):

## AMLE at a Glance

**AMLE is committed to helping middle grades education.**

**Reach every student | Grow professionally | Create great schools**

**Mission:** The Association for Middle Level Education is dedicated to improving the educational experiences of all students ages 10 to 15 by providing vision, knowledge, and resources to educators and leaders.

**Core Values:**

*Integrity:* We practice the ethical, inclusive, and courageous behaviors that sustain an open and honest organizational culture.

*Future Thinking:* We are visionary and prepare for the future.

**Vision:** The Association for Middle Level Education is the leading international organization advancing the education of all students ages 10 to 15, helping them succeed as learners and make positive contributions to their communities and to the world.

*Respect:* We value human worth, dignity, diverse talents, and varied perspectives.

*Collaboration:* We seek active partnerships and shared leadership opportunities at the state, national, and international levels.

# What does AMLE provide to affiliates?



## Affiliate Leader Summits & Strands

- Affiliate Leaders Strand offered at the AMLE Annual Conference
- Summit for Affiliate Leaders provided each summer (budget conditions apply)



## AMLE Resources

- Print material & giveaways provided for affiliate events (currently 11 affiliates distributing AMLE materials)
- AMLE articles, resources, & programs provided for affiliate publications



## Affiliate Advisory Committee

- Organize and facilitate an Affiliate Task Force



## AMLE Discounts & Rebates

- Rebates for AMLE Events attendance  
4 affiliates received \$12,970.25
- Discounts on AMLE publications sold at affiliate events (8 affiliates sold books)  
\$8,491 in revenue from AMLE books sold by affiliates



## Exhibit Space

- Exhibit space available at AMLE Annual Conference at no charge (additional costs will be responsibility of the exhibiting organization—i.e., electricity, internet, furniture)



## Goal Setting Assistance

- Assist with Goal Setting and Long-Range Planning (if requested)



## Contact Information

- All affiliate contact information provided in an annual directory



## Dual Membership

- Dual Membership opportunity (*Dues paid \$22,232 – nearly 8% increase from last year*)
- Currently have 21 Dual Memberships



## AMLE Meeting Room Space

- AMLE Board Room available for affiliate organization (based on availability)



## Affiliate Website Links

- 45 listed affiliate websites on AMLE website (*41 linked to sites*)
- Affiliate conference dates on AMLE website (*4 in last fiscal year*)



## AMLE Mailing Lists

- Electronic mailing list of all AMLE Members within the geographic or professional area of the affiliate (*8 affiliates requested mailing lists*)



## AMLE Speaker for Conferences

- AMLE representative for affiliate conferences (travel & lodging provided by affiliate)  
9 speakers provided in 2016–2017



## Advocacy Tools

- Provide advocacy tools and up-to-date/relevant legislation
- Provide website of resources for affiliate leaders

# When Life Gets Hard ...

To say this has been a difficult year at our house would be understatement. It was that kind of fall, in which my family suffered one blow after another. You know the feeling—when you think to yourself, “Things can’t get worse,” and then, BAM!

Teaching is a stressful enough job when life is rolling along well, especially at the middle years level. Our students come each day with their own baggage and needs that teachers intuitively help with. I love my job, and I thrive on working with each student’s unique strengths and needs. But when I had to walk in with my bucket empty, I was forced to find ways to make work and personal needs balance. This is not an uncommon situation, one we will all deal with many times throughout our lives.

I have no great answer, no perfect algorithm to getting through these difficult times. Perhaps what worked for me may not for you. I do know I needed to look at those around me and ask for help. I had to put pride to the side and ask my coworkers to bail me out; I had to check in with my administrative team for their support; I had to lean on my dear friends and family; and then I really had to dig deep and see my doctor to ask again. I ended up taking a short but much-needed leave to get my life back into some semblance of order. I took to the gym, which has long been my “happy place,” and beat on punching bags until my fists were black and blue and my heart and mind were temporarily at peace. I searched out a great counsellor and talked through

all of the roadblocks my family and I were facing until they became pebbles instead of boulders. I briefly became selfish until I could give my students what each deserved.

Life is cyclical, I think. We cycle through the good and the bad. At my house, we are cycling back to the normal that was. My family and I are on track and the puzzle pieces have begun to fit back together. Not every day is perfect, and that’s okay.

Upon reflection, I have mixed emotions—most of all, gratitude. I am beyond lucky to work in a building with such supportive people, to have friends and family who stood unquestioningly by my side, to have the physical capacity to sweat out the stress, and to have the health benefits that allowed me to access a leave and counselling services that were integral to my health and well-being. Not all are as well cared for as I was.

What I know now is that asking for help did not make me weak or less. It was hard. Being in a tough situation made me more aware, more compassionate about the needs of others. Like many, I despise asking for help because it means putting pride to the side. However, asking was worthwhile. Likely, you too have found or will find yourself in a heavy, burdensome situation. My advice is to take care of you first. Ask for help. Accept help. Work on being better. It is worth it—you are worth it.

*Editor’s note: the author has requested anonymity.*

CORRECTION: “MYC Conference 2017 Review,” which was published in volume 9, number 1 (December 2017), was written by Shauna Cunha.



# Teaching in a Differentiated Classroom

This year, my Grade 7 language arts class has 30 students with reading levels as low as Grade 3 and as high as Grade 12. Six of the students are on IPPs. You can imagine the scope of abilities and interests of this very diverse group. We have three distinct cultural groups: students who had been in French language instruction half time, some who were in Russian language half time and the rest, who had been in English language instruction full time. This trilingual language program has contributed somewhat to the varying levels in reading ability.

The biggest challenge is to reach all students and hold their interest no matter their reading level. In addition, there are the students who are keeners and those who seem to be just warming the seats because they have to be there. One difficulty is to provide multilevelled assignments on the same topic, so that we are all generally working on the same tasks.

The key to success in this classroom is to provide a variety of strategies and modalities. Since our students all learn in different ways, it is important to provide multiple ways of completing projects or assignments. Recently, students worked on an assignment in which they had the option of writing a report, creating a brochure, developing a slide show or producing a poster. Most of the higher-level students chose the report, and most of the lowest-

level students created a poster. The midrange students chose either the brochure or the slide show. All the students were working on the same project, but also working in a way that they would be successful. Did they all reach the outcomes? Yes—some with additional support and guidance from me and an educational assistant.

One of the best tools to help students with their writing process is Read & Write for Google Chrome. I have one student who had not produced any kind of writing assignments. When shown how to use the speech-to-text tool, she was excited but felt weird talking to a computer. We found a quiet place for her to work, and she came back to class very excited about the story she was writing. A few days later, she was able to complete it. The next step was the editing process. Most kids don't want to edit, but having the computer "read" the story back to her gave her the opportunity to hear where things didn't make sense, and she was more willing to fix her errors.

The most important thing is not giving up. Keep trying different ways to reach our students, and celebrate when they succeed.

*Emma Holota*  
*Emma Holota teaches at*  
*École Plamondon School,*  
*Plamondon, Alberta.*



# Resources

## Grade 8 Social Studies Video Resources on the Renaissance.

If you are like me, you regularly search for excellent resources for your class. In the fall, as I looked for some video links on the Renaissance, I came across a series of videos that are student friendly and have teacher guides and several activities that go along with them.

### Life in the Middle Ages—Videos

- **Social Structure**—[www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQBnYiiZeLs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQBnYiiZeLs)
- **The Noble**—[www.youtube.com/watch?v=utVpNjsRioQ&t=87s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utVpNjsRioQ&t=87s)
- **The Knight**—[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA8cbqms03o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA8cbqms03o)
- **The Monk**—[www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lN\\_vNS5z8Y&list=PLPosoEwbBNIVT2gQ\\_WzMtopBzyxenrGIR&index=6](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lN_vNS5z8Y&list=PLPosoEwbBNIVT2gQ_WzMtopBzyxenrGIR&index=6)
- **The Serf**—[www.youtube.com/watch?v=jN1GaI8KWHo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jN1GaI8KWHo)
- **The Doctor**—[www.youtube.com/watch?v=90zJZuwHnwY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90zJZuwHnwY)
- **The Merchant**—[www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1MNW4TR2zo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1MNW4TR2zo)

The teacher guides can be found at [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/Y7QNYZUE](https://tinyurl.com/Y7QNYZUE). (you will need to scroll down to Life in the Middle Ages).

*Emma Holota*

*Emma Holota teaches at École Plamondon School, Plamondon, Alberta, and is the Northeast representative on the MYC executive.*

*Editor's note: websites accessed on March 19, 2018.*

### Looking for Resources?

There are various groups on Facebook where Alberta teachers are able to share ideas, resources, and comments. There are groups for each grade level from ECS to high school. These pages are good places to go when you need to bounce an idea off someone or when you are looking for resources that follow the curriculum.

*Nathaniel Steeves*

*Nathaniel Steeves teaches at École Plamondon School, Plamondon, Alberta.*

# MYC Executive Council Contacts

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## President

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## Newsletter

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gaylene.schreiber@ata.ab.ca

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**For a full listing of the MYC executive council go to [www.ata-myc.com](http://www.ata-myc.com).**

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## Facebook page

Please visit, like and follow our Facebook page to find out the latest information about our conference. The page is called the Middle Years Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA).

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**THE MIDDLE YEARS  
COUNCIL WANTS  
YOU!!!**



**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS  
NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS**

### Join the Executive

We are always looking for volunteers from all over the province who would like to join the executive and promote middle years education. The executive meets five times a year; two meetings are via video conference and one is held at the annual conference in April. Please contact **Jeremy Spink at [jeremy.spink@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:jeremy.spink@rdpsd.ab.ca)** if you are interested in joining the executive.

### Request for links, games, lessons or cool activities

Do you have any website links, games, lessons or cool activities that you would like to share with other middle school teachers? Send them to **Emma Holota at [holota.emma@gmail.com](mailto:holota.emma@gmail.com)**. We will include them in upcoming issues of our newsletter.

**The MYC website is  
[WWW.ATA-MYC.COM](http://WWW.ATA-MYC.COM).  
Add it to your favourites.**

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# Middle Years Conference 2018

# TEACH LIKE A PIRATE



**School Tours:** Various Calgary Middle Schools (April 26)

**Date:** April 26-28, 2018

**Location:** Banff Park Lodge

**Friday Night Social:** 9 Second Ride

We are asking for breakout session presenters; please see the website.

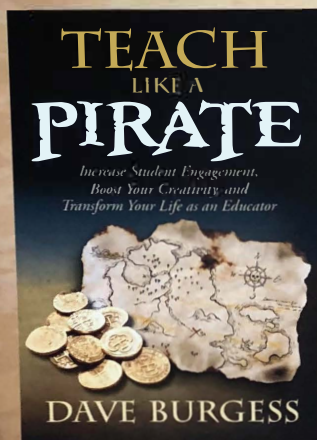


*Banff Park Lodge*

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Dave Burgess**

**Scott Hebert**



For more information, see our website at [www.ata-myc.com/annual-conference.html](http://www.ata-myc.com/annual-conference.html) or contact Tom Stones at [tstones@cesd73.ca](mailto:tstones@cesd73.ca).

Please register @  
**[www.ata-myc.com](http://www.ata-myc.com)**



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association