

The Pandemic Pulse:

ATA Rapid Research Evidence on COVID-19 Impacts Across Alberta K-12 Schools

Dr. Phil McRae



Summer Conference 2021-08-10

Alberta Teachers



Heroes of the Pandemic

COVID-19 Pandemic in Alberta



Research Chronicles

ATA Pandemic Research Studies

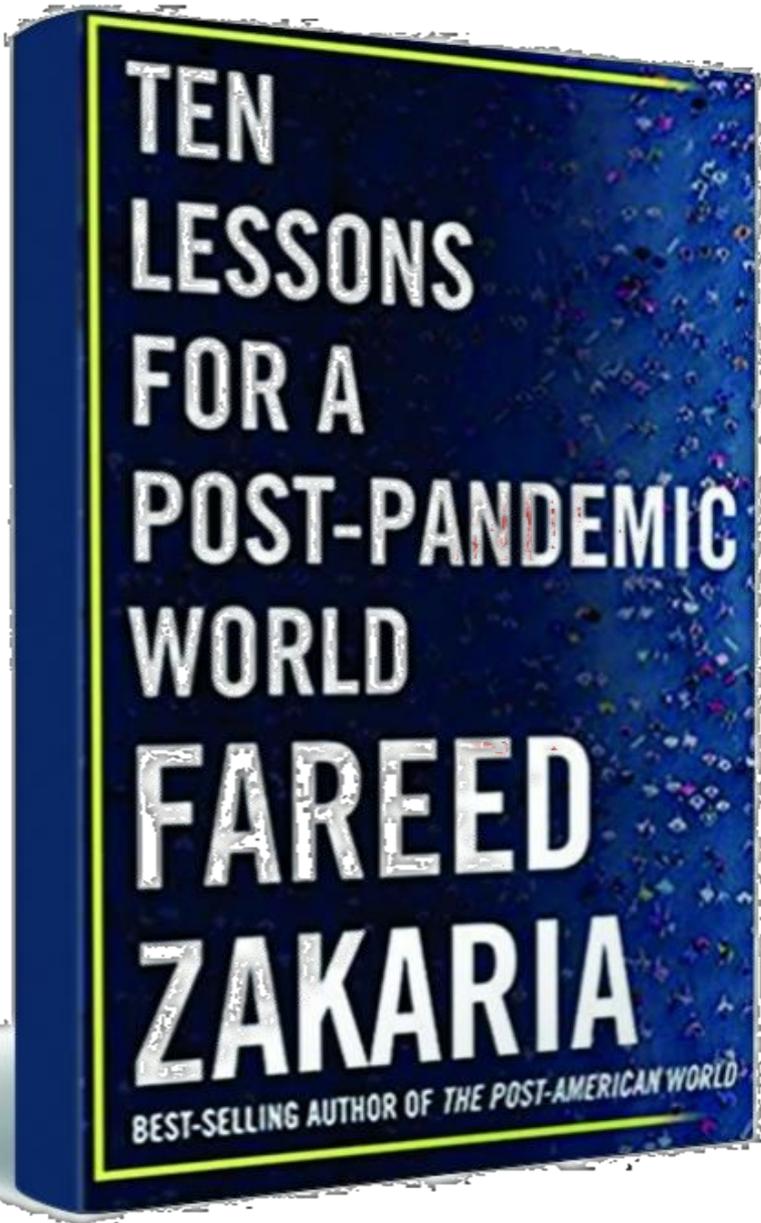
Random Stratified Samples

**Alberta Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID19):
Spring 2020 Pandemic Research Survey Study**

<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/News%20Room/Issues/COVID-19/2020-School-Re-entry/Pages/Covid-19-Survey.aspx>

**ATA Pandemic Pulse Surveys & Findings:
Fall 2020, Winter & Spring 2021**

<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/News%20Room/Issues/COVID-19/2020-School-Re-entry/Pages/Teacher-Pandemic-Pulse-Survey-Results--Fall-2020.aspx>



TEN
LESSONS
FOR A
POST-PANDEMIC
WORLD
FAREED
ZAKARIA

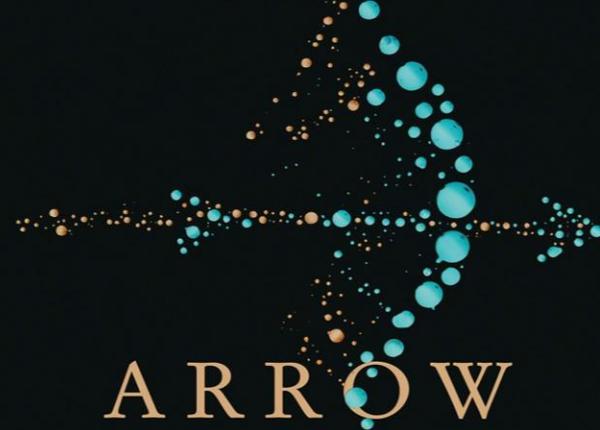
BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *THE POST-AMERICAN WORLD*

"Astonishing." —Paul Farmer "A must-must-read." —Daniel Gilbert

NICHOLAS A. CHRISTAKIS

New York Times bestselling author of *Blueprint*

APOLLO'S



ARROW

THE PROFOUND AND ENDURING

IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

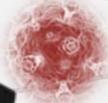
ON THE WAY WE LIVE

ON THE WAY WE LIVE

IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

2019-2024: Three Phases of the Pandemic

2019-2021



Infection

Acute Phase

**Epidemic Force
& Power Crests**

2022-2023



Recovery

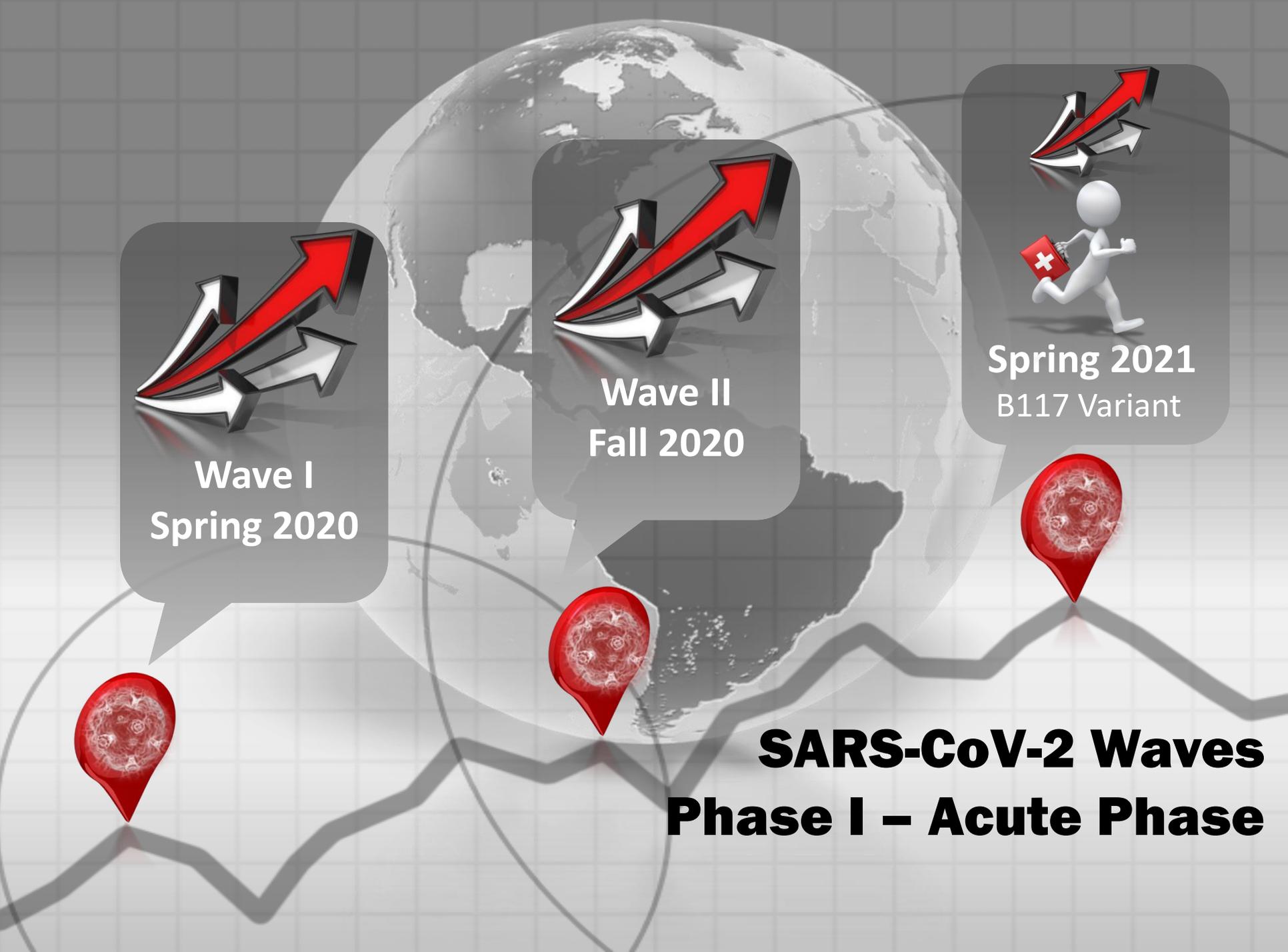
**Confronting the Psychological,
Social & Economic Fallout
Mental Health Consequences**

2024



Relief

The Roaring 20's



Wave I
Spring 2020

Wave II
Fall 2020

Spring 2021
B117 Variant

SARS-CoV-2 Waves Phase I – Acute Phase



Delta Variant

COVID-19 as Accelerant

Mental Health

Technology

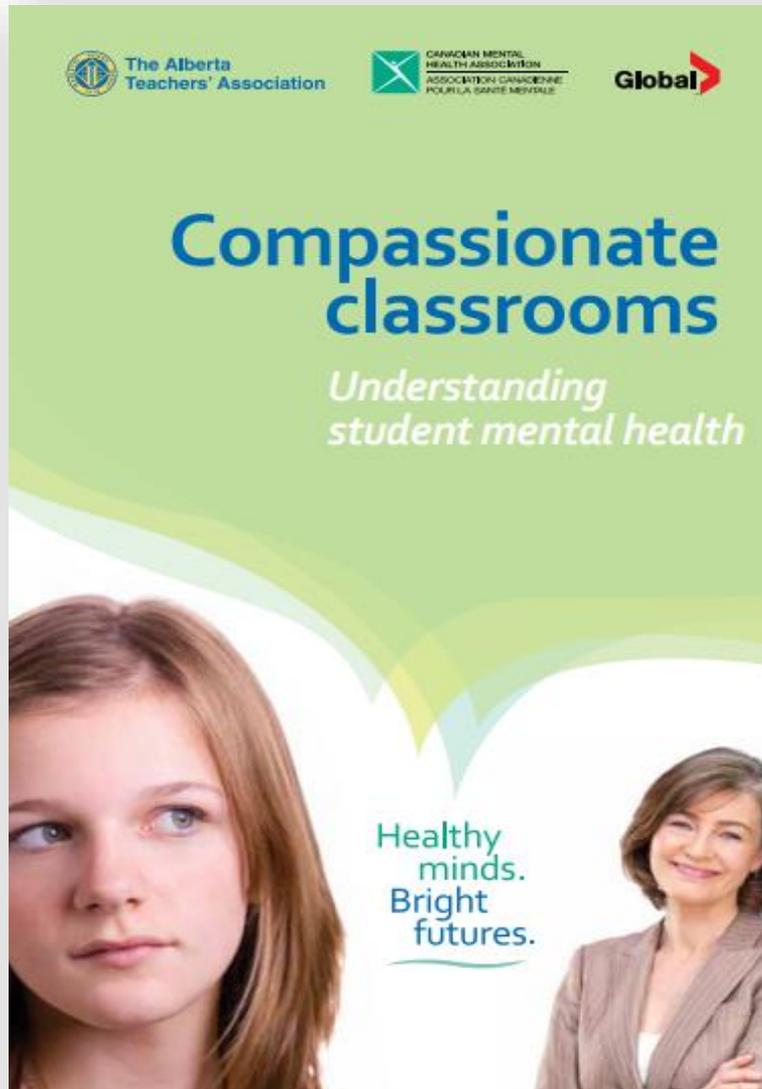


Inequity

Acute on Chronic!



Pre-Pandemic Partnerships



WARNING SIGNS

- **Physical symptoms** (lack of energy, frequent headaches, loss of appetite)
- **Social withdrawal**, intolerance, constant anger, aggression
- **Inability to concentrate**, difficulty coping with regular daily activities, anxiety/depression
- **Changes in behaviour** (repetitive movement or tics)
- **Wearing long sleeved shirts** hiding scars, injuries, scabs
- **Frequent trips to the washroom**

ATA Pandemic Pulse Research



ATA Research
JUNE 2020

ATA Research
2021

Alberta Teachers' Association
June 2020 Pulse Survey
Alberta, Canada

Reporting on the
Alberta
ATA Pandemic Research Study
Pulse Survey #3 (June 2020)

Reporting on the
and Cont
ATA Pandemic Research Study
Fall 2020

Reporting on the
and COVID-19
ATA Pandemic Research Study
Pulse Survey #3 (Fall 2020)

Reporting on the
Curriculum Co
ATA Pandemic Research Study
Pulse Survey #4 (November 2020)

Reporting on the Third Acute Wave of
COVID-19 in Alberta K-12 Schools (Spring 2021)
ATA Pandemic Research Study
Pulse Survey #5 (April 23 to April 30, 2021)

The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association

www.teachers.ab.ca

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Spring 2020 Study



Random Stratified Sample
7200+ teachers and 900+ school leaders

Survey administered between April 27, 2020 and May 15, 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. 8128 Alberta teacher respondents.

WHAT ARE THE TOP 3 CONCERNS FOR ALBERTA TEACHERS?



School safety, including:

- Personal protective equipment
- Physical distancing measures
- Reducing large class sizes
- School cleanliness and hygiene



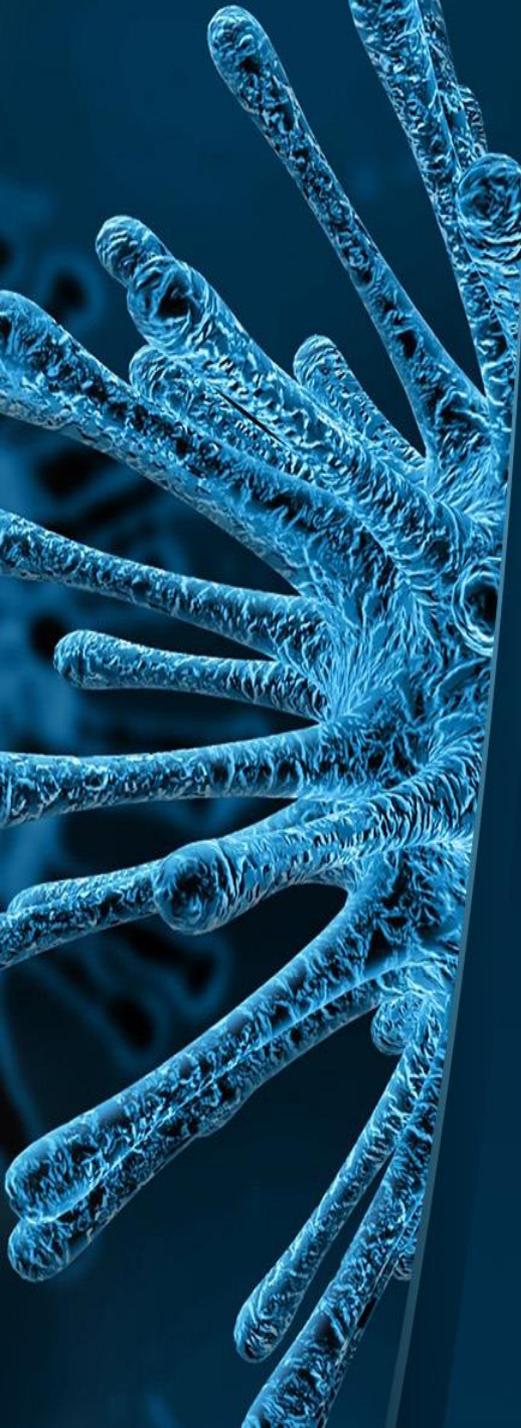
Student learning needs for school re-entry, including:

- Support for vulnerable populations, child poverty and growing inequity
- Student engagement and motivation
- Curricular gaps when schools “go back”
- Less high-stakes testing and more authentic assessments



Well-being for all, including:

- Mental wellness and health supports
- Greater focus on relationships
- Social-emotional learning
- More physical activity and play

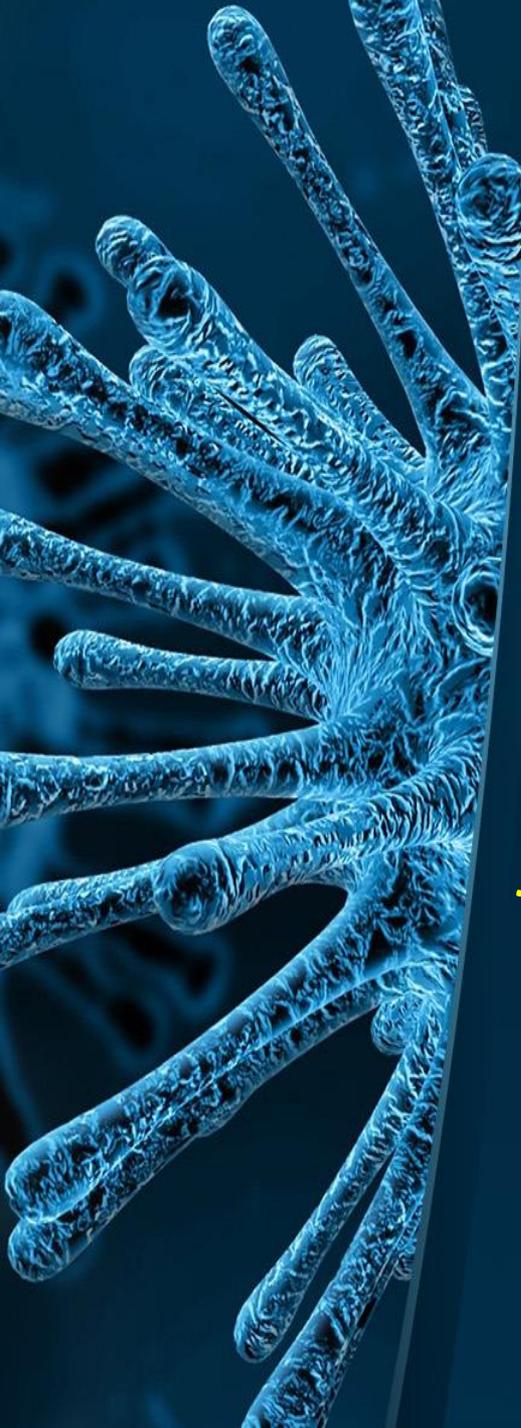


Pandemic Pulse – April 2021

What will you need for a
successful start to school
in September 2021?

Random Stratified Sample
2,800+ Alberta teachers and school leaders

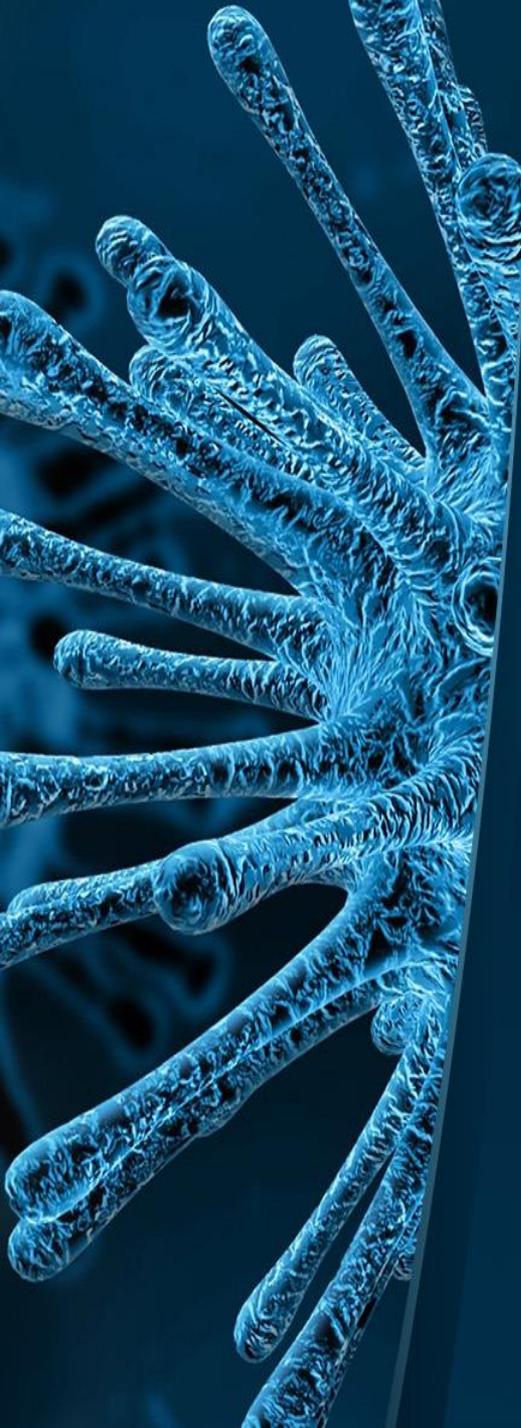
Survey administered between April 23 to 30, 2021 during the
third acute wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta.



Teacher Voices – April 2021

What will you need for a successful start to school in September 2021?

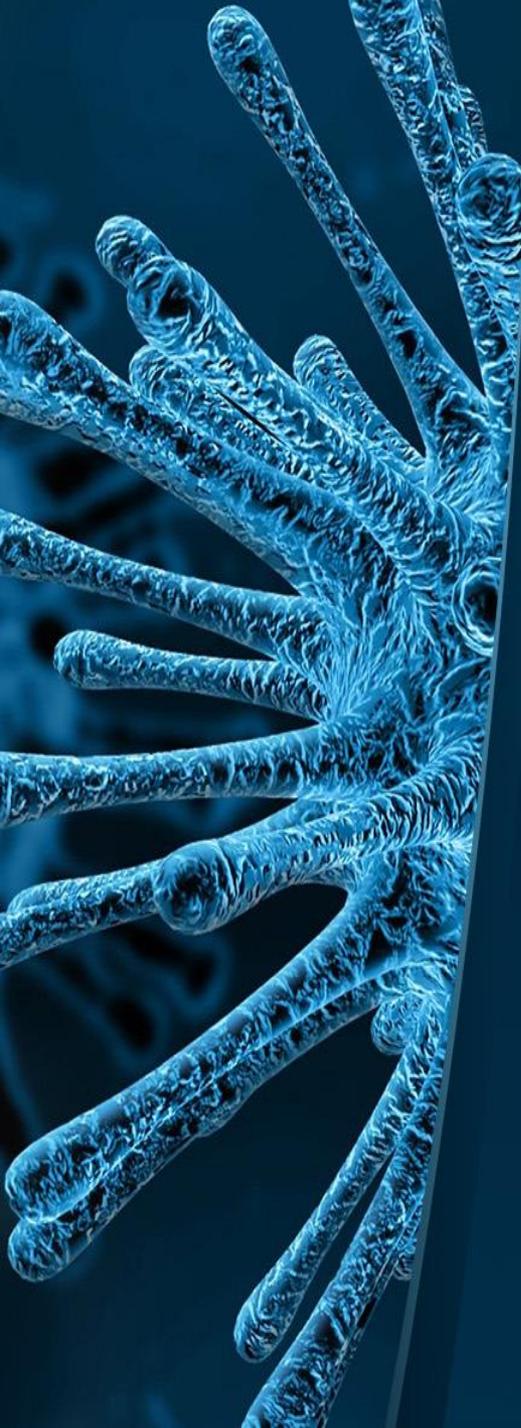
“Mental health supports for students, and government support for education that actually benefits teachers, students and staff.”



Teacher Voices – April 2021

What will you need for a successful start to school in September 2021?

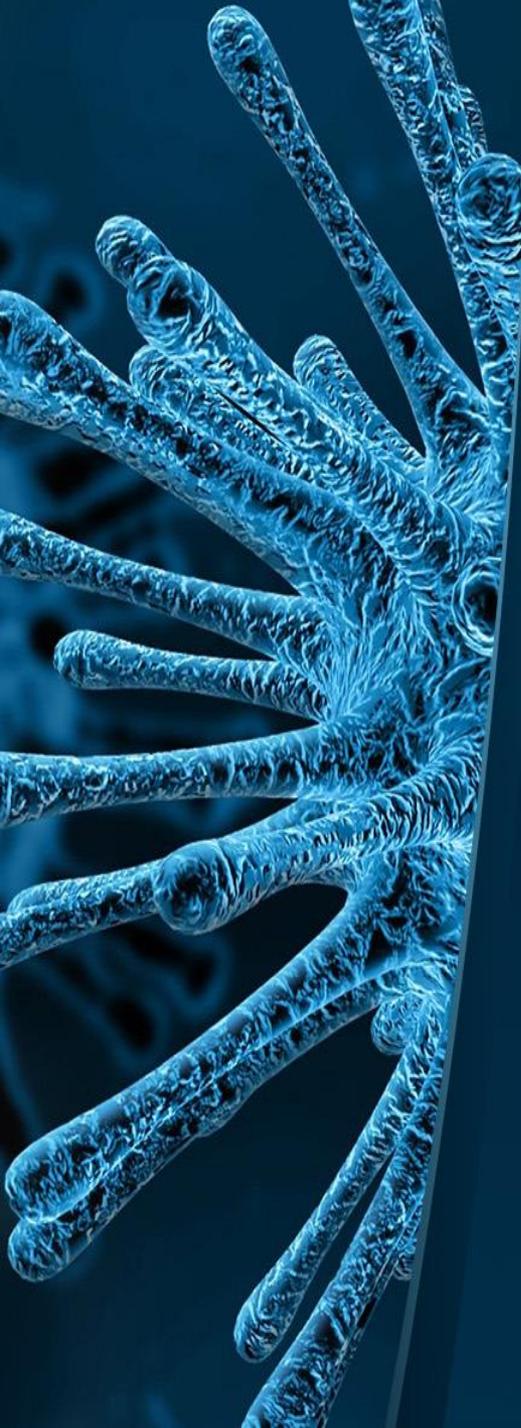
“Predictability and stability. There has been so much uncertainty this year... it would just be nice to know what is going on and what to expect.”



Teacher Voices – April 2021

What will you need for a successful start to school in September 2021?

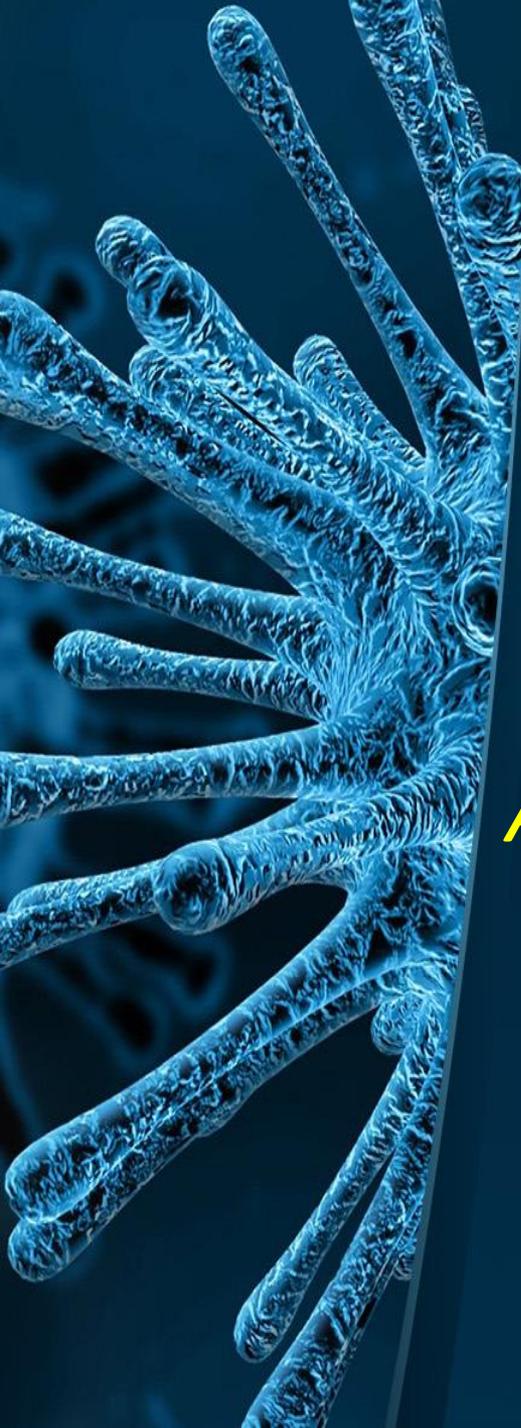
“I need to feel that my role as a teacher is valued. I have never felt so undervalued in my life. I blame the government.”



Teacher Voices – April 2021

What will you need for a successful start to school in September 2021?

“I need my health back after contracting COVID-19 from a student back in December. My stamina has been impacted; I can no longer work full days.”



Teacher Voices – April 2021

What will you need for a successful start to school in September 2021?

“Vaccinated staff and students and their families.

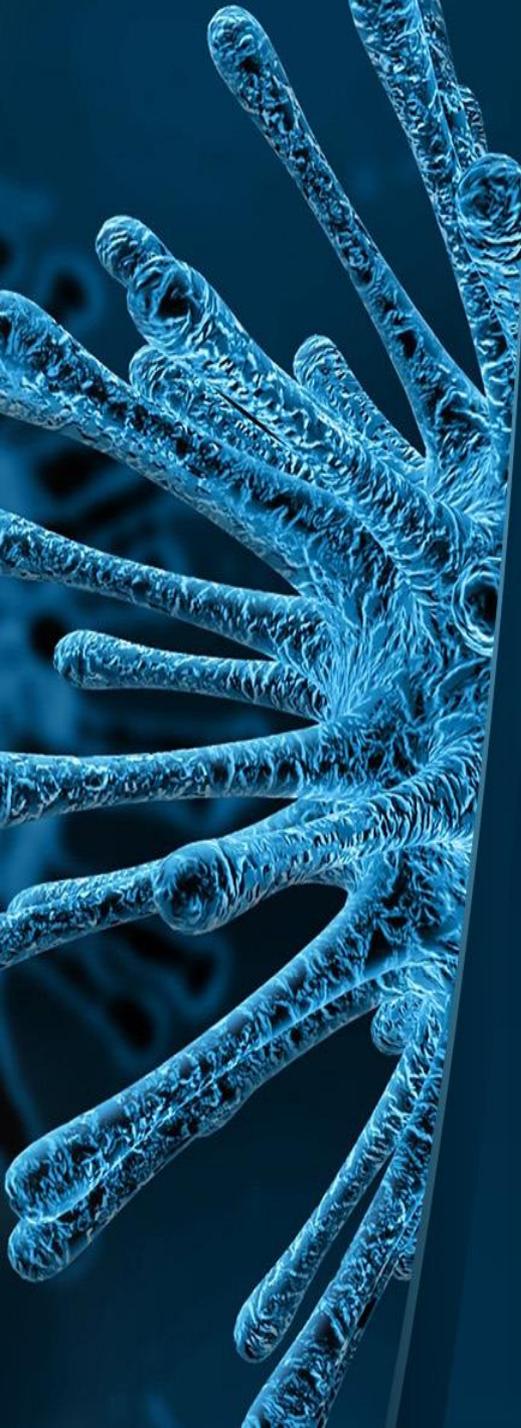
Additional funding. Small class sizes. Additional supports in classrooms to address academic gaps and other needs.”



Alberta's First Vaccination

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

ATA Pandemic Pulse Research Infographics & Reports



ATA Research
2020

Reporting on Well-Being
and COVID-19 Inform

ATA Pandemic Research Study
Pulse Survey #3 (October 2 to
Fall 2020

The Alberta Teachers' Association

Seven Key Findings COVID-19 Prevention, Infection and Control in K-12 Schools Reporting from 1,600+ Alberta Teachers and School Leaders

- 84%** of respondents do not receive daily confirmation of COVID-19 screening checklists completion before a student(s) enters the classroom.

“I am spending most of my day isolating sick students, and following the sick student protocol, contacting parents, re-explaining the COVID screening checklist and reassuring teachers.” - Alberta school principal
- Only 18%** of respondents believe that the **cohorting of students** in place at their school will prevent or contain COVID-19 infection(s). Teachers and school leaders are observing students intermixing at lunchtime, during breaks, on buses, and before and after school.

“The kids all have active lives outside of the building. They do not adhere to cohorting when off campus. As hard as we try we cannot keep them 2 m apart.” - Alberta classroom teacher
- 50%** of the respondents “never, rarely and occasionally” observe **physical distancing** occurring in their classrooms, hallways and on school grounds.

Large and growing class sizes are deemed a significant factor in limiting physical distancing as a preventative health measure.

1 in 4 teachers have over 30 students in their largest classes. Over 9% have more than 35 students in their classroom.

1,600+ Alberta teachers and school leaders. Alberta Pandemic Pulse Survey (September 10 to 14, 2020)
Random stratified sample and longitudinal chain-referral sample.
Margin of Error +/- 2.5% on all questions (19 times out of 20).
Further information about the Association's research is available from Dr. Philip McRae at the Alberta Teachers' Association: e-mail: research@ata.ab.ca
- 86%+** of respondents report compliance of **mask wearing** when students are interacting with others in classrooms and hallways, but with some challenges at different grade levels.
- Student **hand washing** is rare, while **sanitization** and teachers' role and responsibility to disinfect surfaces in their classroom.
- 45%** of the respondents are attempting to create better **ventilation in the school** “frequently, usually, every physical school building.”

Teacher and school leader well-being is of critical concern given the reporting of extreme and unsustainable levels of **fatigue, stress and anxiety** within the profession.
- 94%** of respondents reporting fatigue

“As a school leader I am beyond exhausted. I see my [teacher] colleagues are stressed, anxious and already close to burning out.” - Alberta school leader

95% of respondents reporting stress

81% of respondents reporting anxiety

The Alberta Teachers' Association

Infographic: COVID-19 Prevention, Infection and Control in Alberta K-12 Schools

Seven Key Findings

COVID-19 Prevention, Infection and Control in K-12 Schools
Reporting from 1,600+ Alberta Teachers and School Leaders

1

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2

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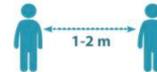


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4

86%+ of respondents report compliance of **mask wearing** when students are interacting with others in classrooms and hallways, but with some challenges at different grade levels.



5

Student **hand washing** is rare, while disinfectant use is more common.



Concerns about adequate staffing for **sanitization** and teachers’ role and responsibility to disinfect surfaces in their classroom.



6

45%



of the respondents are attempting to create better **ventilation in the school** “frequently, usually, every time,” but they are limited by the nature of the physical school building.

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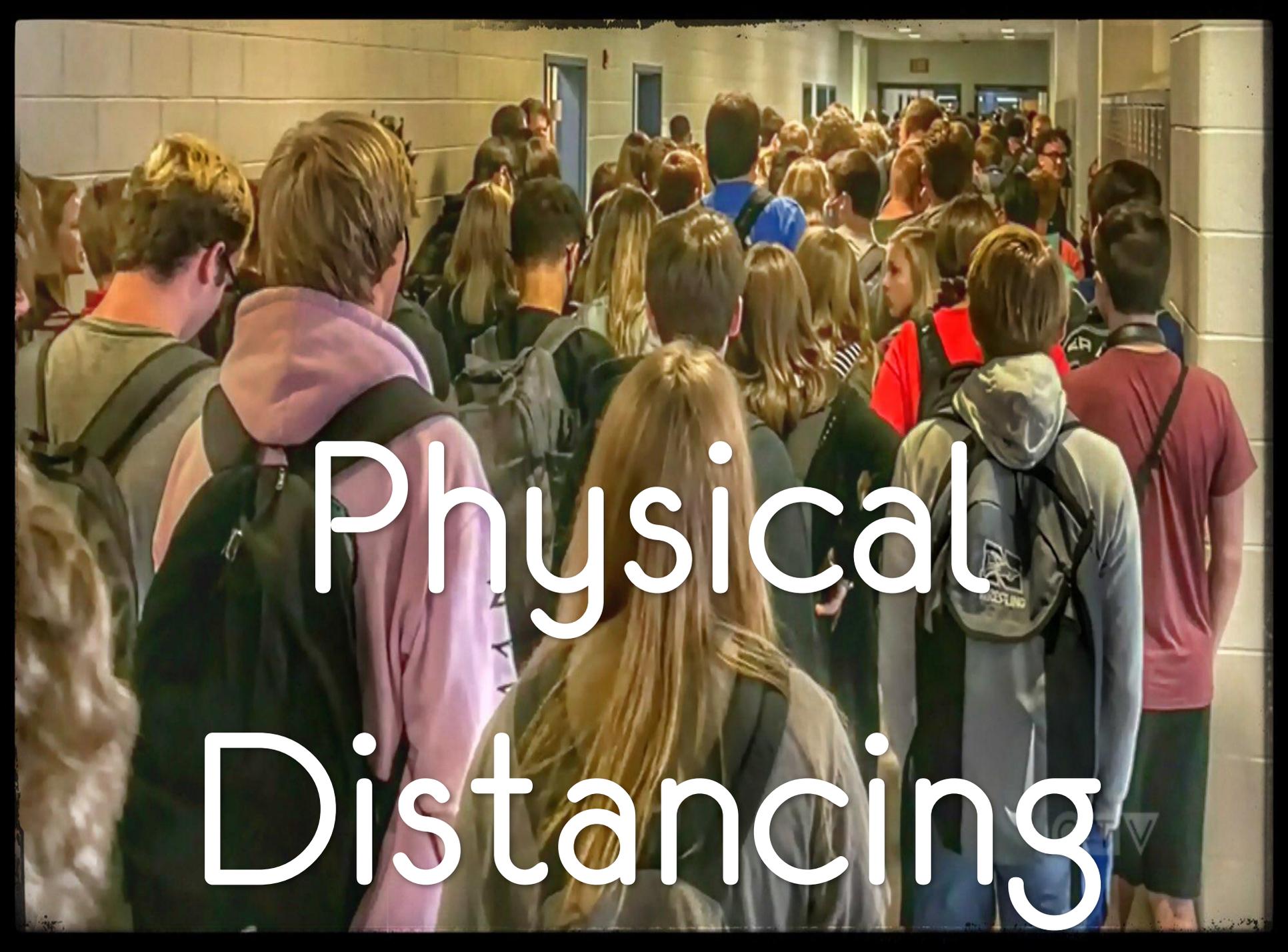
The Alberta
Teachers’ Association

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A photograph of a crowded school hallway. Students are walking away from the camera, filling the corridor. Many are wearing backpacks. The hallway has blue doors and lockers on the right side. The lighting is bright and even.

Physical Distancing



4

86%+ of respondents report compliance of **mask wearing** when students are interacting with others in classrooms and hallways, but with some challenges at different grade levels.



5

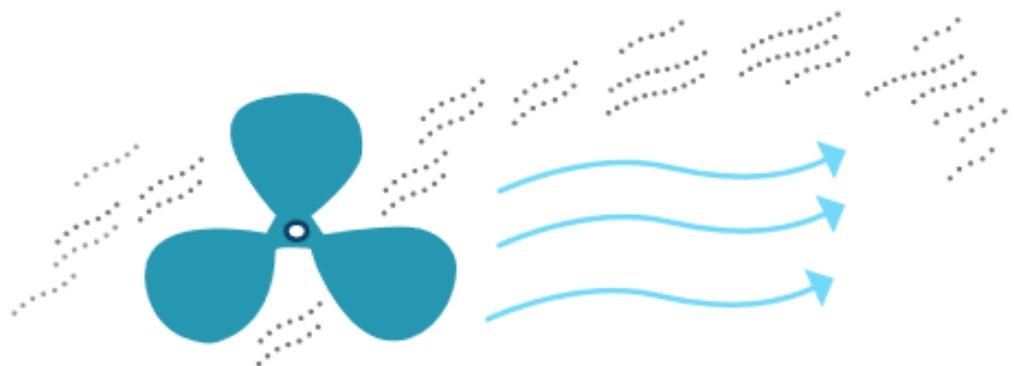
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Infographic:

COVID-19

Quarantines/

Isolations

Curriculum

Concerns

Mental Health

Indicators

Three Key Findings (November 23 to 27)

1) COVID-19 Quarantines/Isolations 2) Curriculum Concerns 3) Mental Health Indicators
Reporting from 1,590 Alberta Teachers and School Leaders

1 COVID-19 Quarantines/Isolations

75%

of Alberta classrooms have had students moved into **quarantine and/or isolation** due to COVID-19.

“At times I had lost about half of all my students in my three classes. Recently we had to send home all of our grade ten and elevens.”
– Alberta teacher

Teachers are **moderately to extremely concerned** about:

73%
student
mental health

60%
student
academic performance

“Huge impact on the quality and quantity of learning that has been difficult to catch up.” – Alberta central office

1 in 3 Teachers

have been **quarantined** and/or **isolated** due to COVID-19 infections or exposures.

1 in 4 School Leaders

have been **quarantined** and/or **isolated** due to COVID-19 infections or exposures.

HALF

of Alberta **school leaders** have had to directly **contact families** in their communities due to **COVID-19** exposure(s).

77%

of **school leaders** indicate some level of **discomfort** at being asked to take on **contact tracing** activities.

“I’m not a public health official. I cannot rectify their concerns, expedite the process, share what I don’t know, respect privacy already violated by social media while being open and transparent. These are unrealistic expectations and our admin team has worked countless evenings, weekends and statutory holidays doing this [contact tracing] aspect of working during COVID-19.” – Alberta school principal

2 Curriculum Concerns

64%

of teachers state that **many students** in their classes are **struggling with learning**.

82%

of teachers state that student **assessment practices** are a **challenge** in the pandemic. Online teachers → strong agreement (91%).



9 in 10 Teachers ...do **not** think that Alberta schools will be ready to **implement** new programs of study in September 2021.

...have **no confidence** in the new processes for **curriculum development** just introduced by the Minister of Education.

3 Mental Health Indicators

92%
of respondents
reporting **fatigue**

91%
of respondents
reporting **stress**

62%
of respondents
‘extremely’ concerned about
teacher mental health

“I feel exhausted, depleted and discouraged every day. The toll this is taking on teacher mental health and wellness is a detriment and completely unsustainable. I love my students and want to be a positive light for them; that’s why I go to school everyday. I am considering leaving this system and profession...this could have been avoided by better planning, funding, resources, prioritizing and support.” – Alberta teacher

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Measuring Teacher & School Leader Mental Health

More than half the days, or nearly every day, this past week...

52%

...feeling **nervous, anxious**
or on **edge**

35%

...feeling **down, depressed**
or **hopeless**

“The current scenario is not sustainable. We don’t have enough drivers for buses, teachers for classrooms, custodians for schools, administrative assistants to answer phones. I’m exhausted and hopeless.”
– Alberta school principal

1,590 Alberta teachers and school leaders. Alberta Pandemic Pulse Survey (November 23 to 27, 2020).
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The Alberta
Teachers’ Association



November

COVID-19 Quarantines/Isolations

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November 2020

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1 in 4 School Leaders

have been **quarantined** and/or **isolated** due to COVID-19 infections or exposures.



November 2020

HALF of Alberta **school leaders** have had to directly **contact families** in their communities due to **COVID-19** exposure(s).

77% of **school leaders** indicate some level of **discomfort** at being asked to take on **contact tracing** activities.

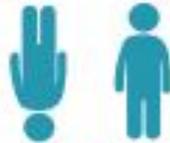
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April 2021

80% of Alberta **school leaders** have had to directly **contact families** in their communities due to **COVID-19** exposure(s).

*“ We have had 77 cases this year and **each case** is about **3 hours of work** for administration and office staff. I am **totally burned out**. – Alberta school principal*



1 in 2 Teachers & School Leaders have been **quarantined** and/or **isolated** due to COVID-19 infections or exposures.

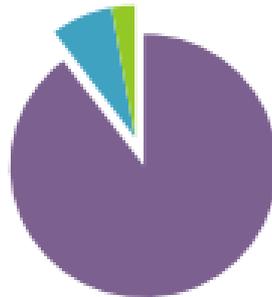


April 2021

COVID-19 Quarantines/Isolations

1

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of Alberta classrooms have had **students** moved into **quarantine** or **isolation** due to COVID-19 infections or exposures.





November 2020

2 Curriculum Concerns

64% of teachers state that **many students** in their **classes** are **struggling** with **learning**.

82% of teachers state that student **assessment practices** are a **challenge** in the pandemic. Online teachers--> strong agreement (**91%**).



9 in 10 Teachers { **...do not** think that Alberta schools will be ready to **implement** new programs of study in September 2021.

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3

Student Learning



76% of teachers state that **many students** in their **classes** are **struggling** with **learning**.

“I am worried about the long term mental health for the students and teachers. I am also worried about the gap in learning that has occurred in the past two years. I'm terrified of the ripple effect of the pandemic.

– Alberta teacher

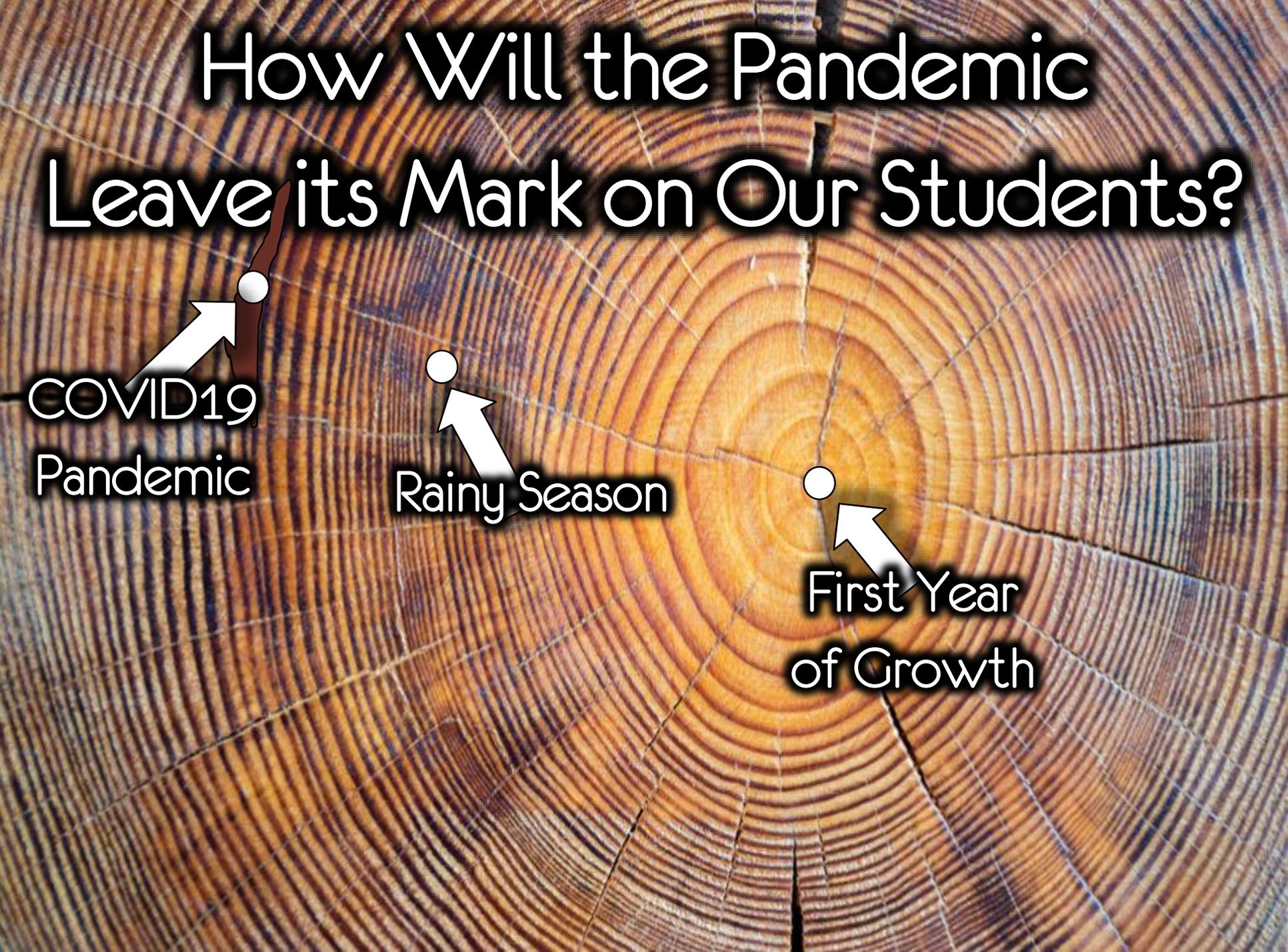


61% of teachers are **extremely concerned** about their **conditions of professional practice** (workload/balance/control).

92% of teachers are **concerned** about the **new K-6 draft curriculum**.

“The new curriculum is such a mess, to put it mildly.... It is so unrealistic and with no resources how will it be implemented?”

How Will the Pandemic Leave its Mark on Our Students?



COVID19
Pandemic

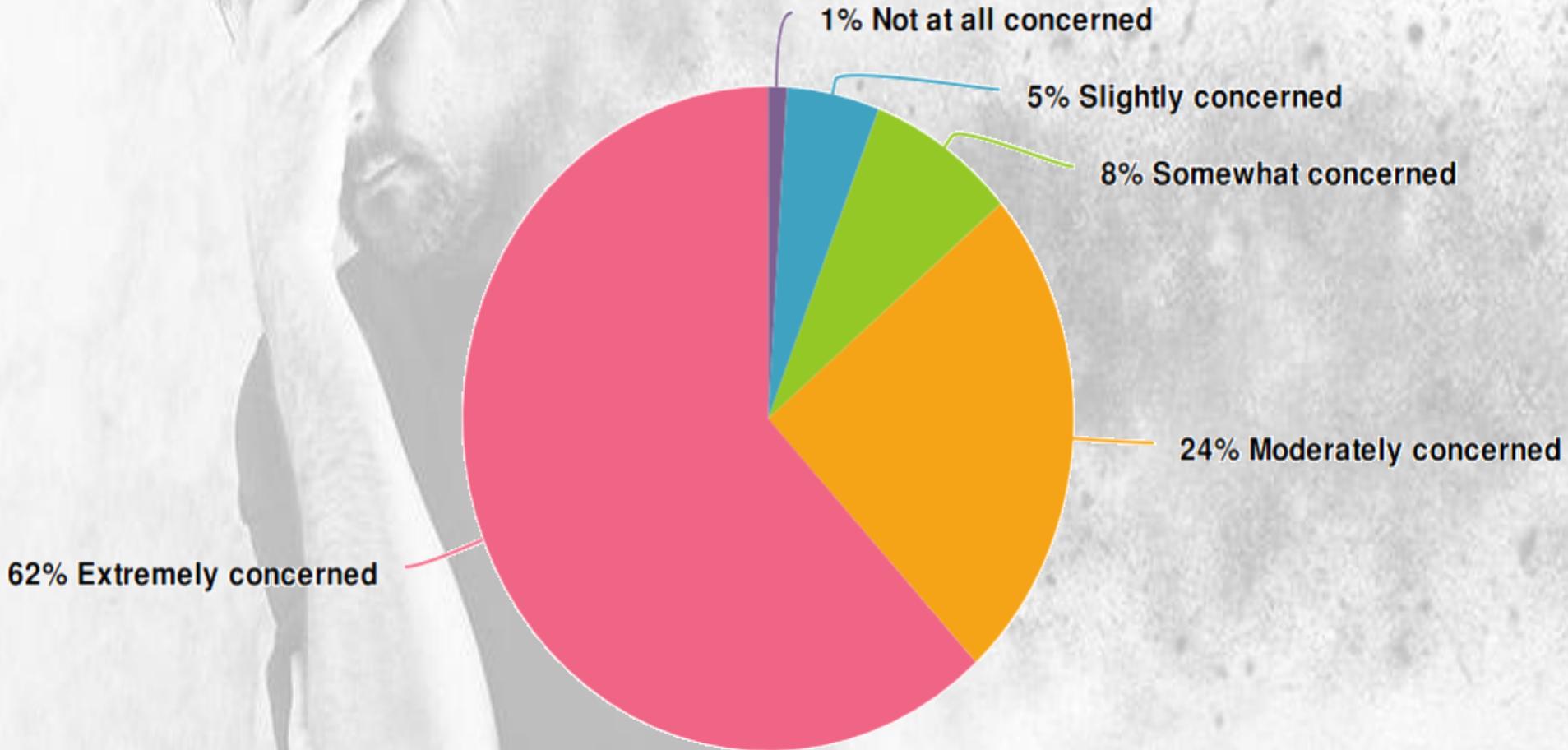
Rainy Season

First Year
of Growth

A man with dark hair and a beard is shown in profile, covering his face with his right hand. He is wearing a dark t-shirt. The background is a textured, light-colored wall with a dark, smoky or dusty gradient on the right side. The text "Mental Health" is overlaid in white on the right side of the image.

Mental Health

Teacher Mental Health Level of Concern





September 2020

concern given the reporting of extreme and unsustainable levels of **fatigue, stress and anxiety** within the profession.



94%

of respondents
reporting fatigue



95%

of respondents
reporting stress



81%

of respondents
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“As a school leader I am beyond exhausted. I see my [teacher] colleagues are stressed, anxious and already close to burning out.” – Alberta school leader



December 2020

Mental Health Indicators



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“ I feel exhausted, depleted and discouraged every day. The toll this is taking on teacher mental health and wellness is a detriment and completely unsustainable. I love my students and want to be a positive light for them; that's why I go to school everyday. I am considering leaving this system and profession...this could have been avoided by better planning, funding, resources, prioritizing and support.” – Alberta teacher



December 2020

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Measuring Teacher & School Leader Mental Health

More than half the days, or nearly every day, this past week...

52%

**...feeling nervous, anxious
or on edge**

35%

**...feeling down, depressed
or hopeless**

“*The current scenario is not sustainable. We don't have enough drivers for busses, teachers for classrooms, custodians for schools, administrative assistants to answer phones. I'm exhausted and hopeless.”*

– Alberta school principal



April 2021

Mental Health Indicators

2



93%

of respondents reporting **fatigue**



91%

of respondents reporting **stress**



65%

of respondents 'extremely' concerned about **teacher mental health**



“The trauma of the pandemic and fear of getting sick has a significant impact on the mental health of everyone in the school system.
– Alberta teacher



HALF of all respondents **feel hopeless!**

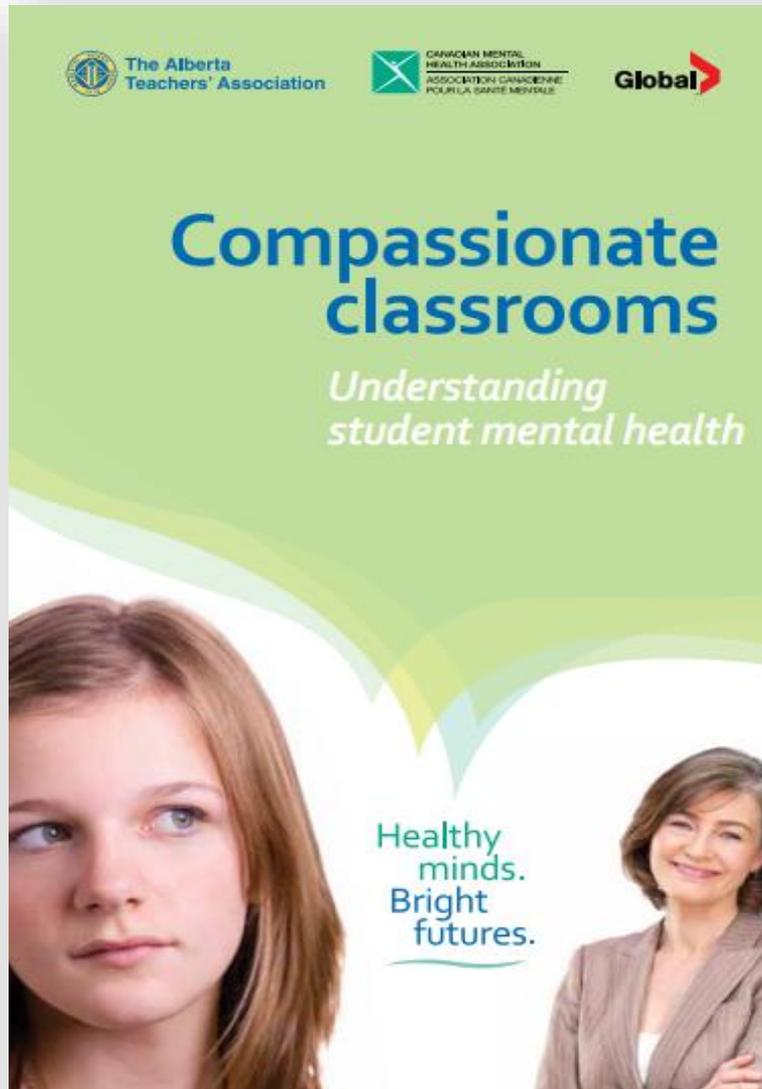
“There is the overwhelming sense of frustration and hopelessness – like everything is out of control.

On the Road Ahead...

Wellbeing & Wellness



Pre-Pandemic Partnerships



WARNING SIGNS

- **Physical symptoms** (lack of energy, frequent headaches, loss of appetite)
- **Social withdrawal**, intolerance, constant anger, aggression
- **Inability to concentrate**, difficulty coping with regular daily activities, anxiety/depression
- **Changes in behaviour** (repetitive movement or tics)
- **Wearing long sleeved shirts** hiding scars, injuries, scabs
- **Frequent trips to the washroom**

Teachers are feeling exhausted (70%) and isolated (63%).

“I feel overwhelmed by the expectations to be working full-time from home, while also working with my own children on their home schooling.”

— Survey respondent

Compassion fatigue is a deep concern for the profession:



35% of teachers are taking on some of the trauma their students are feeling...



“Are they safe? Are they fed?”

Survey respondent

Canadian Teachers



Canadian Teachers

Isolation.

A person is sitting at a desk in a dimly lit office, looking distressed with their hand to their face. The scene is dark and moody, with a window in the background showing a framed picture on the wall. The overall atmosphere is one of isolation and stress.

Compassion

Fatigue

Compassion

Satisfaction





Dr. Lisa Everitt
lisa.everitt@ata.ab.ca





Emotional health

Spiritual health

Sexual health

Cultural Identity

Self-management and self-awareness

Relationship skills

School connectedness

Food literacy

Injury prevention

ATA Research 2019

School Wellness and Well-Being Initiatives Across Canada

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN AND LITERATURE REVIEW



The Alberta Teachers' Association

www.teachers.ab.ca

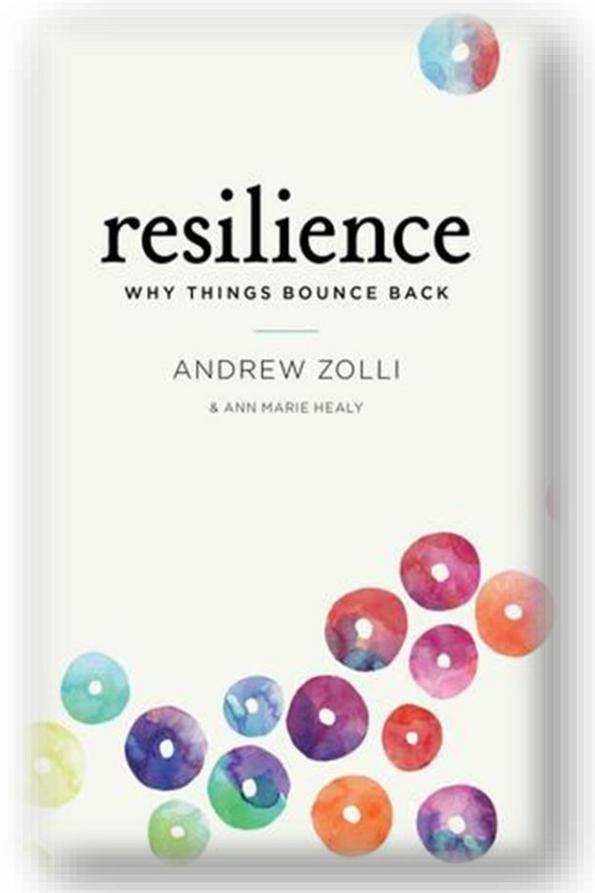
Resilience

*“The oak fought the wind and was broken,
the willow bent when it must and survived” ~ Robert Jordan*



Resilience

Andrew Zolli (2013)



- physical health
- quality of social networks
- quality of personal relationships
- access to social resources
- level of agency over actions
- optimism & positive outlook
- exposure to diverse ideas and experiences
- ability to embrace ambiguity

RESILIENCE

Bouncing back from adversity

"The oak fought the wind and was broken, the willow bent when it must and survived."

— Robert Jordan, *The Fires of Heaven*

RESILIENCE IN PARENTS

Molding the role model

Resilience is important for parents too. Our resiliency helps children in two ways. First, when things aren't going well, your resiliency assets help you get back more quickly to being the parent you'd like to be.

Secondly, one of the ways children learn how to be resilient is from the model their parents provide, which is as important as any guidance or teaching we give them.

How does parent resiliency work? Think about the four areas of childhood resilience: supportive relationships, emotional skills, competence and optimistic thinking.

Relationships
Parents can rely on relationships with friends and loved ones for

- emotional support,
- sharing the ups and downs of family life,
- help and advice, and
- good times that help us enjoy being parents.

Emotional skills
We can use our experience, knowledge and understanding of emotions to

- control our anger, frustration and alarm when we need to,
 - calm ourselves and help ourselves feel better,
 - remind ourselves that bad feelings are temporary, and
 - avoid making bad decisions when we are upset.
- Competence**
We can use our thinking ability and various life skills we've developed to
- understand and solve problems,
 - find information and answers to our questions about parenting,
 - control the parts of our lives that we can control, and
 - learn to live with and adapt to the things we can't control.
- Optimism**
Optimistic thinking can help us
- see the rays of hope in difficult situations,
 - find ways to help ourselves when faced with parenting challenges, and
 - make the most of our good times.



Resiliency boosters for parents
Adults can increase their parenting resiliency in two practical ways. One is to be not being afraid to ask for help. That could include professional help, but really, informal help may be even more important because we use it more often. No other society has

ever assumed that all the responsibility for raising children would fall on the shoulders of one or two people. Traditionally, relatives, friends and neighbours have always assisted parents with child rearing. We all parent better with the help of others.

Another way to boost your parenting resiliency is to learn more about raising children. Learning about child development

will help you understand and parent your kids through various ages and stages. Parenting courses are another good resource because they can help you increase the number of strategies in your parenting "tool kit."

These courses are not for "bad" parents, they are for all parents who want to boost their parenting skills. One of the greatest benefits of taking a parenting course

is discovering that you are not alone and that other parents struggle with the same kinds of issues that you face. That takes some of the pressure off and helps people feel better about themselves as parents.

Source: Parenting Resilient Children at Home and at School, The Psychology Foundation of Canada. Reprinted with permission.

Resources on resilience

There are many books available on the subject of resilience. Here is a list of but a few.

Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back
by Andrew Zoli and Ann Marie Healy

What causes one system to break down and another to rebound? Are we merely subject to the whim of forces beyond our control? Or, in the face of constant disruption, can we build better shock absorbers—for ourselves, our communities, our economies and for the planet as a whole?

Reporting firsthand from the coral reefs of Palau to the back streets of Palestine, Andrew Zoli and Ann Marie Healy relate breakthrough scientific discoveries, pioneering social and ecological innovations and important new approaches to constructing a more resilient world. Zoli and Healy show how this new concept of resilience is a powerful lens through which we can assess major issues afield: from business planning to social development, from urban planning to rational energy security—circumstances that affect us all. Provocative, optimistic and eye-opening, *Resilience* sheds light on why some systems, people and communities fall apart in the face of disruption and, ultimately, how they can learn to bounce back.

Source: Amazon

The Mentor's Guide to Promoting Resiliency
by Horacio Sanchez

The Mentor's Guide to Promoting Resiliency combines the most current research studies, scientific findings and brain-based strategies into a clear, concise explanation of why life's failures occur, and what can be done to improve the probability of success for even the highest risk child and adolescent.

Source: Amazon

Too Safe for Their Own Good: How Risk and Responsibility Help Teens Thrive
by Michael Ungar

Canadian children are safer now than at any other time in history. So why are we so fearful for them? When they're young, we drive them to playdates, fill up their time with organized activity and cocoon them from every imaginable peril. We think we are doing what's best for them. But as they grow into young adults and we continue to manage their lives, running interference with teachers and coaches, we are, in fact, unwittingly stunting them.

Internationally respected social worker and family therapist Michael Ungar tells us why our mania to keep our kids safe is causing us to do the opposite: put them

in harm's way. Continuing to protect our kids from failure and disappointment can cause many of them to miss out on the "risk-taker's advantage," the benefits that come from experiencing manageable amounts of danger. Ungar offers the support parents need in setting appropriate limits and provides concrete suggestions for allowing children the opportunity to experience the rites of passage that will help them become

competent, happy, thriving adults.

Source: <http://penguinrandomhouse.ca>

Web resources

These websites have information related to resilience

- www.apa.org
- www.bigbrothersbiggirls.com
- www.healthychildren.org
- <http://psychcentral.com>
- www.psychologyfoundation.org
- www.resil.ca
- <http://resilienceinstitute.org>
- www.research-institute.org

“learning team resilience Alberta”

Be Gentle with Yourself





Thank You

philip.mcrae@ata.ab.ca

philmcrae.com

Twitter: [@philmcrae](https://twitter.com/philmcrae)