2024 Teachers' Convention
Better Together
REACHING NEW HEIGHTS
Calgary

Keynote

Andrew Watson
President, Translate the Brain
CALGARY & VIRTUAL

Join AISCA this February and get ready to be inspired!

February 16, 2024 | 9:00am-3:40pm

Best Western Premier Calgary Plaza

The Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta Teachers' Convention: Better Together is an annual highlight on the Professional Development calendar. This year's theme, *Reaching New Heights*, will both educate and inspire attendees.

Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia
Adult learning for students' sake

AISCA
Association of Independent Schools & Colleges in Alberta

Calgary Regional Consortium

Concurrent Sessions A | 11:00am – 12:00pm

Autism in the Classroom	*Amy Tatterton*	All levels
Elevate Their Writing: Teaching Revision Skills	*Charlotte Nixon*	Middle, High
Honoring Indigenous Knowledge: Practical Applications in the Classroom	*Denise Peterson*	Elem, Middle
Introduction to Building Thinking Classrooms	*Wanda Dechant*	Grades 2-12
Literacy Games - Supporting Structured Literacy Through Play	*Karen Braun, Janine Bruce & Kaitlyn McKay*	Elem
Low Arousal	*Jane McKeown & Melanie McMaster*	Elem
The Surprising Science of Classroom Attention	*Andrew Watson*	All levels
Why is School So Hard? Building Understanding for How ADHD Can Impact Academic Learning	*Lauren Brown*	Elem

Concurrent Sessions B | 1:30pm – 2:30pm

From Research to Classroom: Translating Broad Insights into Teaching Strategies	*Andrew Watson*	All levels
Learn to Play, Play to Learn	*Michelle Johnson & Jennifer Lohuis*	Elem, ECS
Leveraging AI in an ELA Classroom	*Charity Helman*	Middle, High
Mental Math in the Primary Years	*Aaron Renert*	Elem, Middle
Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) Culture in the Classroom	*Andrea McHugh*	Grades 10-12
Tips for Tackling the New Science Curriculum	*Cheryl Babin*	K-6
Universal Design to Support the Mind	*Mateo Huzeo*	All levels
Using AI to Support Inclusive Learning Environments	*Curtis Slater*	All levels

Concurrent Sessions C | 2:40pm – 3:40pm

Academic Frustration: What it Means and Why it Matters	*Jared Froese & Heather Boon*	All levels
Drama Games for the Doers and Dreamers	*Alfi Forsch*	All levels
Embracing Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Fostering Inclusive Education	*Dr. Amanda Smith-Demers & Colleen Drybrough*	All levels
Enhancing Differentiation in the Classroom through Theme-Based Lessons	*Natasha Goddard*	Elem, ECS
Growing Alberta History - Communities in Canada: Montefiore Unit	*Reva Faber*	Elem
How to introduce Virtual Reality & Augmented Reality Coding in the Classroom	*Sue Mylde*	Elem, Middle
Ring Your Way to a New You	*Harold Hoffmann*	Elem, Middle
Starting a Speech Competition at your School	*Neshali Weera & Suneet Sandhu*	All levels

Session Descriptions

KEYNOTE Thinking Creates Learning: The Essentials of Working Memory
Andrew Watson
It just makes sense: to learn, students have to THINK. This simple insight leads to important questions: where does "thinking" happen? How does it work? Why doesn't it work the way we – and our students – wish it did? To answer these questions, this talk will explore an essential cognitive function: working memory. Students use working memory to connect new information to their prior knowledge. They also use it reorganize their knowledge into new mental structures. When teachers understand working memory – its function, importance, and limitations – we can anticipate, recognize, and solve the memory problems that hinder learning. Lively and practical, this conversation uses psychology research to make learning easier and teaching more effective.

Academic Frustration: What it Means and Why it Matters
Jared Froese & Heather Boon
In this session, Jared and Heather will discuss the connection between frustration and a student's academic performance. Based on their professional and personal experiences, Jared and Heather will provide an understanding of learning challenges within the classroom and offer strategies to support students who are struggling. In particular, this session will discuss the different types of learning disorders that students may present with at school and help identify some of the early, and often overlooked, signs of difficulty.

Autism in the Classroom
Amy Tatterton
Session attendees will gain a better understanding of autism and neurodivergence through a neuro-affirming, strengths-based lens. We will discuss characteristics of autism and explore how these differences can show up in educational environments, like the classroom. This foundational information will then guide us into applying some key realistic and attainable strategies that support all students, including your Autistic and neurodivergent learners.

Drama Games for the Doers and Dreamers
Alfi Forsch
This session is for anyone interested in supporting a classroom culture where there is room for boisterous activity as well as introspection. Both are valued and necessary for student success. Be prepared to spend some time in this session playing games that will help your students to have fun, think fast, or think slowly, and broaden their own understanding of what makes them an interesting human being!

Elevate Their Writing Skills: Teaching Revision Skills
Charlotte Nixon
English classrooms are complex, fast-paced, and effective writing is vital to student success. However, the journey to becoming a proficient writer doesn't end with the first draft. Revision is where the magic happens, transforming raw ideas into polished masterpieces. Join our "Elevate Their Writing" workshop to discover the art of peer feedback loops and empower your students to engage in the feedback process. Whether you're a veteran teacher looking for fresh ideas or a new teacher looking to empower your students with essential writing skills, this workshop will equip you with the tools to transform revision from a chore into a craft.

Embracing Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Fostering Inclusive Education
Dr. Amanda Smith-Demers & Colleen Drybrough
Neurodiversity is a concept that celebrates a diverse range of neurological differences. As educators, it's essential to create inclusive classrooms where all students, regardless of their neurodiversity, can thrive. This presentation aims to shed light on the importance of understanding and embracing neurodiversity in educational settings.

Enhancing Differentiation in the Classroom through Theme-Based Lessons
Natasha Goddard
Thematic teaching offers an innovative approach to differentiation, catering to the diverse needs of learners while fostering engagement, understanding, and motivation. By incorporating relatable and exciting themes into numeracy and social studies lessons, educators can create an inclusive learning environment where all students can thrive. Through this presentation, participants will gain practical strategies and inspiration to implement theme-based differentiation in their classrooms, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes and promoting a love for lifelong learning.

From Research to Classroom: Translating Broad Insights into Teaching Strategies
Andrew Watson
We have talked about the science of working memory and attention. What do teachers do with this new understanding. This workshop – lively and practical – focuses on translating cognitive science into specific classroom strategies.

We will begin by looking at a specific classroom example: a classroom teacher working effectively with their students. With our new perspectives, what areas for improvement can we identify? What specific strategies would we use to accomplish those goals?

We close by applying these new ideas to our own classroom contexts, so that all teachers leave with new, practical ideas.

Growing Alberta History - Communities in Canada: Montefiore Unit
Reva Faber

This session will provide an overview of a Social Studies Unit focusing on pioneer life in Alberta with relevance for grades 2, 4 and 5. The unit is complete with stated AB Education Curricular Outcomes, Knowledge, Skills and Processes. In addition, the unit focuses on the camaraderie and collaboration of the inhabitants of the Montefiore Colony (along with the much valued assistance by the surrounding settlers and First Nations People) to enable the pioneers of Montefiore Colony to thrive and survive. At the end of the session, participants will receive information as to how they will be able to access this free for loan unit, together with all related resources.

Honoring Indigenous Knowledge: Practical Applications in the Classroom
Denise Peterson

Participants will have an opportunity to see examples of hands-on projects, designed under the guidance of Elders, suitable for use in their classrooms. See how the making of smudge pots and moss bags honour 'Ways of Knowing' and how tipi teachings might enrich the understanding of Indigenous life in today's world. Learn practical applications for developing sustainable partnerships to carry on the work of Reconciliation.

How to introduce Virtual Reality & Augmented Reality Coding in the Classroom
Sue Mylde

In this session, you'll learn how to bring VR and AR Coding to life in your classrooms. The versatility of this platform means that it can be introduced through different subjects or on its own within Coding. As a Coding teacher, the presenter will share her teaching and learning experiences with VR Coding and demo how to get started.

Introduction to Building Thinking Classrooms (BTC)
Wanda Dechant

If you are new to Peter Liljedahl's Building Thinking Classrooms work, and you are interested in learning more, then this session is for you. In our 60 minutes together, you will experience toolkit #1 which includes:

- Begin with a problem
- Visibly random groups
- Vertical non-permanent Surfaces

You will experience the process and then we will talk about the "why" and the "how" (macro and micro moves) of toolkit 1. No previous experience with this BTC is necessary to join this session.

Learn to Play, Play to Learn
Michelle Johnson & Jennifer Lohuis

Play is essential for early childhood development. It contributes to the growth of everything from fine motor skills to creativity to problem solving. As adults, we tend to assume play is an innate ability that children thrive at under their own direction. But this is not always the case.

This session presents play as a skill which, like other skills, children learn, develop, and slowly come to master over time. Learning to play is the first step when educators organize opportunities to learn play skills through setup and classroom. Educators may then leverage those foundational play skills to create teachable moments and curriculum-based outcomes.

Leveraging AI in an ELA Classroom
Charity Helman

ChatGPT is on the minds of all educators these days, and with good reason. There is no need to fear it - harness what it and other AI tools can do for yourself and your students.In this session, we will look at how ChatGPT can be used as a writing assistant for your students, and how you can use it to inform your assessment. We will also look at how AI can be used to make your life more efficient, as well as how we can properly engineer prompts and teach students how to do so in ChatGPT. Finally, we can have open discussion about how to talk to students about AI (it's pros and cons!), and share how we have been using it in our own classrooms.

Literacy Games - Supporting Structured Literacy Through Play
Karen Braun, Janine Bruce & Kaitlyn McKay

Come and join in the fun as we explore easy games to support our students as they learn to read.

Low Arousal
Jane McKeown & Melanie McMaster

Low Arousal is research-based and clinically tested by Studio III Training Systems, European leaders in the field of behaviour management. Low Arousal approaches includes interaction, diffusion and distraction strategies; coping with challenging behaviour, managing versus changing behaviours, physical avoidance skills and physical intervention. Foothills Creative Beginnings adapted this program 6 years ago. This gives our Educational Assistants as well as classroom staff more knowledge and confidence in handling complex children.

Mental Math in the Primary Years
Aaron Renert

Following the smashing success of this session in 2022, it is BACK!!!

Basic numeracy is at the forefront of mathematics education. Without developing mental math agility, the learner is destined to years of frustration and fuzziness in the math classroom. At Renert School we are deeply committed to coaching our children to acquire this fluency by using various methods and techniques. In this presentation I will discuss some of the most effective techniques we have developed for allowing kids to rely on the most powerful calculating aid they have: their brain.

Niitsitapi (Blackfoot)Culture

in the Classroom
Andrea McHugh

The Niitsitapi Literacy and Adult Upgrading Program Teaching Team uniquely designs cultural and academic curriculum that prepares learners for a successful future. Our team of teachers prepare and deliver learning lessons and classroom instruction that honour Niitsitapi traditional knowledge and language. Our team parallels Niitsitapi learning concepts to western education curriculum.

In this session, participants will have the opportunity to engage in lesson planning activities that honour First Nations people, specifically the Blackfoot tribes. Participants receive resource and lesson planning materials.

Ring Your Way to a New You!
Harold Hoffmann

If you are looking for a new, old way to engage your music students at the Elementary and Middle school Levels, look no further! My students love learning how to play handbells and chimes, and do a great job at creating music on their first try! Come join me as we explore how to give your students musical success and enjoyment that they will carry with them for a lifetime through learning How to Ring!

Starting a Speech Competition at your School
Neshali Weera & Suneet Sandhu

At Khalsa School Calgary we have a yearly school-wide speech competition (kindergarten to grade 9). This has been a huge success at our school and provides our students with the opportunity to shine and learn great writing and speaking skills. This session will provide a step-by-step guide on how to create a speech competition at your school, how to scaffold it to make it age appropriate and, most importantly, how to make sure it's not too much work for teachers! We will provide you with potential topic lists that are appropriate for each grade, rubrics for judging and all the other resources needed to get started.

The Surprising Science of Classroom Attention
Andrew Watson

All teachers have asked this baffled question: "why don't students just *pay attention*?"

Decades of neuroscience and psychology research have shown that – surprise! – attention is not one unified brain process. Instead, the behavior we call "paying attention" results from a just-right balance of three (yes, 3! distinct mental functions.

When teachers foster those three cognitive processes, children find that ideal cognitive balance where they can focus: in the classroom, while doing homework, and at home.

Tips for Tackling the New Science Curriculum (K-6)
Cheryl Babin

This session will provide an overview, resources and strategies for digging into the new Science curriculum. Together we will:

- Explore practical ways to weave scientific methods into all organizing ideas.
- Uncover easy-to-use resources to address computer science outcomes.
- Focus on the hands-on ways we can bring this curriculum to life.

Universal Design to Support the Mind
Mateo Huzeo

What do you do when you reach the limits of an Independent Learning Plan? Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a hot topic in K-12 and postsecondary education. UDL is about designing curricula that can be applied universally in the classroom to meet the needs of a wide diversity of students. But did you know that UDL can also be used to support student's wellbeing and self-regulation?

In this session, we will review the ways in which UDL principles can be applied to minimizing barriers for students and optimizing brain processes that are foundational to learning and mental health. Learners in this session will walk away with practical strategies and ideas, using UDL, to promote mental functions like focus, attention, memory, self-control, and emotional health in their own schools and classrooms.

Using AI to Support Inclusive Learning Environments
Curtis Slater

In this session we will explore the use of AI to assist with adaptation, modification, personalization, and differentiation of learning to promote inclusive classroom environments for all students. Practical examples will be provided and attendees will walk away with a better understanding of how AI tools can be leveraged to create more inclusive classrooms and discover specific strategies to help make course content more accessible to diverse learners.

Why is School So Hard? Building Understanding for how ADHD can Impact Academic Learning
Lauren Brown

In this session, Lauren will discuss the psychological processes related with types of academic learning. Many of the processes needed for academic learning can be areas of significant difficulty for a child diagnosed with ADHD. We will discuss why specific tasks can be so hard, and how teachers can support students with ADHD in their classrooms to feel successful.