

AISCA Teachers' Convention

ONLINE 2026

# Better, Together: Teaching in the Age of AI



**Keynote**  
Mairéad Pratschke

# AISCA Teachers' Convention 2026 AGENDA – Online

8:00-9:00	Registration and Trade Show Opens
9:00-9:15	Opening & Welcome
9:15-10:30	KEYNOTE: <b>The New Hybrid: Teaching Practice as Design for the Age of AI</b> – Dr. Mairéad Pratschke
10:30-11:00	Wellness Break
11:00-12:00	Concurrent Sessions A
12:00-1:15	Lunch Break
1:15-2:15	Concurrent Sessions B
2:15-2:30	Transition
2:30-3:30	Concurrent Sessions C

11:00 – 12:00		Concurrent Breakout Sessions A					
Writing Without Roadblocks: Supporting the ADHD Writer Elementary Colleen Drybrough	Basic Fact Mastery for Junior High Without a Calculator Middle School Sheri Christoffersen	Enhancing EAL Learning: Effective Strategies for Young Learners Elementary Lynn Farrugia	Scaffolding the CART Essay in 30-1 English Language Arts High School Lindsey Birrell	Intro to the Indigenous Culture Based Learning in Alberta Curriculum Website All levels Jason Bigcharles Kim Barker-Kay	Inquiry-Based Learning (Advanced Strategies), Assessment Reform Elementary/Middle Mubeen Safura	Make the Most out of Microsoft Office All levels Robert MacDonald	

1:15 – 2:15		Concurrent Breakout Sessions B					
Off-Campus, On-Track: Career Pathways That Work! High school; Grade 9 Christy Filgate	Numeracy and Young Learners: A Developmental Affair ECS Sheri Christoffersen	AI as Assistant, Not Expert: Practical Ways to Use AI to Support Speech, Language, & Literacy Elementary/Middle Jade Lewis, Emily Brett & Julia Lavender	Honouring the Gold Mountain Dreamers – A Look Back at the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act Middle/High School Jacqueline Louie	Engaging Student Minds: Spelling Games Elementary Tricia Pope	Early Literacy: K-2 The Power of a Poem Elementary Angela DesBarres	The Important Art of Critical Thinking in Social Studies Grades 4-12 Cheryl Babin	

2:30 – 3:30		Concurrent Breakout Sessions C					
Relationship Based Advocacy All levels Keith Penner	Counting on Fun: Leveraging UNO Cards for Literacy & Math in Early Education Pre-K-Grade 2 Sheri Christoffersen	Sing, Move, Read! Multimodal Phonological Awareness Instruction for English as EAL Learners Elementary Jade Lewis Julia Lavender	Unpacking Concepts in Gr. 4-6 Science through Project Based Learning, Activities and Investigations Elementary Chris Zarski	Engaging Student Minds: Math Games Elementary Tricia Pope	Tools for Access: How Assistive Technology & Communication Supports Can Help Students Better Engage with Their Curriculum All levels Janice Lam Lauren Richardson		

**KEYNOTE: Dr. Mairéad Pratschke****The New Hybrid: Teaching Practice as Design for the Age of AI**

## All levels

Research shows that students around the world have integrated generative AI into learning. From homework to brainstorming, they are using AI as a partner for learning and support. But while students have forged ahead, they have done so without formal guidance, leaving them vulnerable to over-reliance and other forms of unintentional misuse that can undermine critical thinking and deep learning.

AI is now ubiquitous, and education is on the front line of this shift. But how can we ensure that AI strengthens learning rather than replacing it? In this keynote, Mairéad will discuss the new hybrid, a new human-AI partnership model defined by collaboration with AI but aligned to the values of education, and lay out a pathway for educators to rethink their teaching practices so that students continue to learn deeply while using AI.

**Sheri Christoffersen****Basic Fact Mastery for Junior High Without a Calculator**

## Junior High

Are your junior high students still struggling with basic facts? This session will show you a simple yet effective approach to help your students develop fluency including “chunking” facts into groups for ease of learning, developing efficient thinking strategies for each chunk, and the importance of practice. You will leave this session with a tried-and-true approach for achieving basic fact mastery.

**Lynn Farrugia****Enhancing English as an Additional Language (EAL) Learning: Effective Strategies for****Young Learners**

## Elementary

Join Lynn for an engaging and interactive online session focused on effective strategies to support young English as a Second Language (ESL) students. This workshop will provide educators with practical tools, techniques, and resources to enhance the learning experience for young ESL learners.

**Jason Bigcharles & Kim Barker-Kay****Introduction to the Indigenous Culture Based Learning in Alberta Curriculum Website**

## All levels

Join Jason and Kim and learn how this website can be used within your classroom, in your planning, and to deepen your own knowledge and understanding of Nehiyaw (Cree) ways of knowing and being. Explore the rich content that includes general knowledge videos; videos that follow seasonal activities and events; videos and PDFs of stories and legends, some of which are in Cree; curriculum documents with direct links between outcomes and videos; planning templates, instructional supports, and much more. Learn about The 4 Foundations of Cree Ways of Knowing and Being that serve as your guide to holistic planning.

**Mubeen Safura****Inquiry-Based Learning (Advanced Strategies), Assessment Reform**

## Elementary/Middle School

This session explores how assessment practices can evolve to meet the needs of today's learners by focusing on creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. It emphasizes how schools can move from traditional grading models toward performance-based and formative assessments that promote authentic learning experiences.

Participants will leave with practical frameworks to design balanced, student-centered assessment systems that drive engagement, improve feedback quality, and prepare students for real-world application of skills.

**Robert MacDonald****Make the Most out of Microsoft Office**

## All levels

In this session, participants will learn some very helpful features of working with the Microsoft Office Applications, (Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, and Word) by an award-winning college instructor and high school teacher. From custom sorting an Excel sheet to designing a professional looking document in Word, this session will highlight key features of each application and provide resources you use in the classroom.

**Lindsey Birrell****Scaffolding the CART Essay in 30-1 English Language Arts**

## High School

Even after years of developing their writing skills, many students still find essay writing to be an overwhelming task. In this session, I will share how I use hands-on activities and clearly structured systems to guide students through each stage of the writing process. This session will focus on practical strategies I use to scaffold the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts, including:

- Hexagonal thinking for brainstorming, discussion, and creating visual supports in the classroom.
- Diploma exemplars and colour coding to teach structure and organization.
- Revision stations to actively engage students in editing and revising their work.

While the main emphasis will be on English 30-1 (drawing on insights gained from marking diploma exams), these strategies can be adapted for other high school English Language Arts courses.

**Colleen Drybrough****Writing Without Roadblocks: Supporting the ADHD Writer**

## Elementary

For many students with ADHD, challenges with writing don't reflect a lack of ideas or ability—they reflect the executive function demands built into the writing process. The load on attention, working memory, planning, and task initiation often creates barriers both to learning to write and to using writing to demonstrate learning. This session focuses on practical, differentiated strategies to reduce those barriers and help students share what they know. Participants will explore why writing is so cognitively complex and gain classroom-ready approaches to support idea generation, organization, sustained attention, and written output. Attendees will leave with actionable tools, strategies, and routines that increase clarity, confidence, and independence for diverse writers.

**Jade Lewis, Julia Lavender & Emily Brett****AI as Assistant, Not Expert: Practical Ways to Use AI to Support Speech, Language, and Literacy****Elementary/Middle School**

AI can be a powerful classroom ally but only when used with care and intention. This interactive session invites educators to explore how AI can support in fostering speech, language, and literacy development. Participants will learn practical, time-saving ways to use AI tools for educational planning: differentiating reading tasks, generating vocabulary lists, creating activities based on SLP goals and adapting classroom materials for diverse learners. Together, we'll practice "editing AI" outputs to ensure they are developmentally appropriate, evidence-based, and culturally responsive. Attendees will leave with a clear framework for recognizing when AI is helping as an assistant and when it's pretending to be an expert. Perfect for educators who want to use AI efficiently, ethically, and in ways that genuinely support communication and literacy growth.

**Angela DesBarres****Early Literacy: K-2 The Power of a Poem****K-2**

In this session, Angela will share with you a tried, true and tested weekly schedule and strategies for teaching Early Literacy Outcomes from the ELAL curriculum just by planning daily enjoyable poetry lessons with your students. Participants will walk away with activities, ideas and strategies.

**Tricia Pope****Engaging Student Minds: Spelling Games****Elementary**

Proper spelling and vocabulary are still skills that are held important amongst many education professionals even in a world where text messaging seems to be a vocabulary that is taking over. This lesson will present you with a variety of engaging activity ideas that will amaze your students (LOL) while keeping your parents and administrators satisfied.

**Jacqueline Louie****Honouring the Gold Mountain Dreamers – A Look Back at the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act****Middle/High School**

Calgary-based author Jacqueline Louie's new book, Honouring the Gold Mountain Dreamers, addresses a little known aspect of Canadian history, the century-plus since the passing of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act. Honouring the Gold Mountain Dreamers, which is focused on western Canada (Alberta in particular), was sponsored by Chinook Country Historical Society, which holds Historic Calgary Week each year and is dedicated to preserving history in southern Alberta. Jacqueline's presentation, Honouring the Gold Mountain Dreamers, reveals experiences of Chinese immigrant families (in Calgary, Edmonton, and central Alberta) who lived through the period of the Chinese Head Tax (late 1800s to early 1900s) and Chinese Exclusion (1923 – 1947). Her presentation also provides an overview of Canadian history leading up to the passing of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act; the Act's repeal in 1947; and some of the contributions of Chinese Canadian immigrants to Alberta and Canada.

**Sheri Christoffersen****Numeracy and Young Learners:****A Developmental Affair****ECS**

Have you wondered how to best teach your preschool or kindergarten students early number concepts? Come and learn the developmental approach to numeracy, using the Instructional Framework in Early Numbers as a guide. This session will provide you an appreciation of early number development, how to determine where your students are at, and Cross-Number puzzles you can use with your class.

**Christy Filgate****Off-Campus, On-Track: Career Pathways****That Work!****High School; Grade 9**

Make career exploration easy and engaging! Learn how to use off-campus programs like RAP, Work Experience, Dual Credit, and Green Certificate to connect students with real-world learning. Discover the academic counselling supports available through AISCA's Google Classroom, including detailed planning tools, credential checklists, and CAREERS internship resources. This session will show you how to streamline your school's off-campus processes while helping students find their path from classroom to career.

**Cheryl Babin****The Important Art of Critical Thinking in Social Studies****Grades 4-12**

In our complex world, how might we equip our students with the super skills necessary to be positive humans we know they can be? This session considers how social studies curriculum can be enhanced by powerful critical thinking strategies and engaging classroom experiences to help the learning come to life. Leave the mundane behind, and embrace an approach that helps students to think critically, activate their competencies and care about the world.

**Sheri Christoffersen****Counting on Fun: Leveraging UNO Cards for Literacy and Math in Early Education**

Pre-K–Grade 2

Join us for an engaging session presented by the MathImagine Foundation, where we will explore creative ways to use UNO cards as math tools to build foundational skills in early learners. Participants will discover hands-on strategies that integrate play into learning, fostering mathematical understanding and problem-solving. This session is designed for educators in Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Grades 1–2, aiming to make math learning interactive and effective.

**Tricia Pope****Engaging Student Minds: Math Games**

Elementary

In this session you will be given a variety of math made fun activities that will get children moving and or creating all while learning basic math facts! You will find your students bragging about you to others!

**Keith Penner****Relationship Based Advocacy**

All levels

This session explores the role that educators play in shaping dialogue with government and community. Participants will identify how to leverage their expertise, and steward their influence with clarity, integrity, and purpose.

Through practical strategies – storytelling, community mobilization, and proactive relationship-building – you will discover how to frame issues effectively, communicate with credibility, and engage in meaningful advocacy.

**Jade Lewis & Julia Lavender****Sing, Move, Read! Multimodal Phonological Awareness Instruction for English as an Additional Language Learners (and Everyone Else!)**

Elementary

Join this session to explore songs, movement, visuals, writing, and art as tools to make phonological awareness instruction engaging, accessible, and effective for every learner, including those learning English (EAL students) and student with reading delays/difficulties. Participants will discover why multimodal approaches help students remember and apply what they learn, and how phonological awareness skills can transfer across languages. The session provides practical, classroom-ready strategies to bring phonological awareness to life through singing, movement, and creative expression. Teachers will leave with ready-to-use ideas that make phonological awareness instruction dynamic, inclusive, and effective across subjects.

**Janice Lam & Lauren Richardson****Tools for Access: How Assistive Technology and Communication Supports Can Help Students Better Engage with Their Curriculum**

All levels

Assistive technology options are continuously evolving and improving; there are more options than ever available to help support students with a range of diverse needs including complex communication needs, learning challenges, and vision, hearing, or motor differences. Participants are invited to learn more about alternative access tools and how to use them to support access to the curriculum. The session will cover AAC devices, alternate pencils, alternative mouse and keyboard options, text-to-speech, accessibility settings available on iPads and laptops, and more. Participants will also learn practical ways to use AAC devices to support teaching in a variety of areas, including literacy learning through shared reading and writing, and how to use descriptive teaching in a variety of subjects.

**Chris Zarski****Unpacking Concepts in Grades 4–6 Science through Project Based Learning, Activities and Investigations**

Elementary

How do we engage students in learning all the new concepts in their science curriculum? Learning the terms and their definitions is always a starting point but it's just surface level learning. This session will look at ways that we can ask our students to become independent thinkers and start to draw connections between what they know and where we need them to go. A variety of student learning opportunities will be made available for participants to review and use in their classrooms. Currently available resources and support materials available to teachers will also be reviewed.