Welcome Back - A letter to teachers from the minister of education

September 7, 2010 Dave Hancock

I hope all of you had a pleasant and rewarding summer. As another year in classrooms begins, I want to take this opportunity to wish you all the best during the upcoming months. I am sure your commitment to excellence, combined with all the good work you do, will create yet another cohort of active, engaged learners.

Teaching has many personal and professionals rewards, but I also understand that it also has distinct challenges. For example, there was much discussion about the September 1, 2010, implementation of the amendment to Alberta’s *Human Rights Act* and its potential for creating a “chill” in the classroom. But as was pointed out in an article in the last issue of the *ATA News* (August 24), we have worked to address concerns and do not expect any significant change in classroom practices.

The human rights legislation amendment, though, has presented an opportunity to open a door to a healthy dialogue among parents and teachers about the day-to-day events of the classroom. Parents that are better informed and more actively engaged in their children’s education can be a positive force. Conversations about curriculum subject matter, the kind of questions that arise in the classroom and how teachers deal with them create the environment for developing constructive relationships with parents, and as a result support your good work in the classroom.

We know that maintaining and sustaining a dialogue on the importance of education with parents is key to the success of our students. Just as local conversations build positive outcomes, public engagement initiatives that we have undertaken have shown parents and the public want a voice in guiding the future and transformation of education. *Inspiring Action on Education* is the next step in ensuring that is the case.

Part of the process is a series of transformation discussion guides that are available online at *Inspiring Action*, including *Parental and Community Engagement and Student-Centred Education*. If you have not already done so, I encourage you to complete these guides so that the voices of teachers are heard on these issues. You may also want to use your discussions with parents, friends and neighbours as an opportunity for them to make their voices heard as well. It is important that all those with an interest in education understand what is happening and why.

The agreement between the ATA and the government has enabled us to work together in a collaborative manner and has produced positive results. We have always put Alberta’s children first and focused on developing their passions and potential. By continuing to work together, we can bring the promise of *Inspiring Action* to fruition for our children.

Have a great year in your classrooms.