

# **Alberta Teachers' Conventions!**

## **Do You Know Where Your Teachers Are?**

During February and March, more than 30,000 teachers from all parts of Alberta will begin the annual trek to Teachers' Convention 2014. For more than 100 years, teachers have been making this pilgrimage to one of ten Alberta Teachers' Conventions held across the province of Alberta. Teachers from our school division will be attending their two days of convention on February 13 and 14. So what do the teachers do for two full days once they get there?

At one time, Teachers' Conventions were organized by the Department of Education. With the passing of the Teaching Profession Act in 1935, the Alberta Teachers' Association accepted the responsibility of improving the teaching profession by organizing and supporting groups that advance the knowledge and skills of teachers. Convention Association boards are subgroups of the A.T.A. and currently plan, conduct, evaluate, govern and fund the teachers' conventions held across the province.

In fact, all organizational costs associated with each convention are paid for by teachers from the assigned Alberta Teachers' Locals. Through their Association dues, teachers pay for all of the expenses associated with planning, organizing, delivering and evaluating all ten conventions.

This Mission Statement, as outlined by the Alberta Teachers' Association, provided the guiding light for all convention associations when work began to organize Convention 2014:

*Teachers' conventions support professionalism and enhance student learning by addressing teachers' professional needs, supporting professional collaboration, advancing effective teaching practices and motivating reflective practice by exploring research and emerging educational issues.*

Conventions encourage educators to investigate new skills, ideas and foundations for what they do in the classroom. The convention provides teachers with an opportunity to hear and interact with many inspirational speakers, connect with other educators, explore exhibits and investigate resources. The convention is also a time for teachers to reaffirm their commitment to the teaching profession and to be encouraged within a community of professional educators.

During these two days, teachers will be able to choose from a schedule packed with sessions, ranging in content from professional to inspirational to personal development. Many sessions offer strategies for teaching specific skills in mathematics, student reading and writing, effective communication and literacy. Speakers, many of whom are experts in their fields, will travel from across North America to Convention 2014 to share their stories and their wisdom.

All Teachers' Conventions are organized by teachers, for teachers with the intention of improving teaching practice. The quality professional learning opportunities planned for Convention 2014 would not have been possible without the commitment of the dedicated teachers who volunteer to serve on convention associations.

Every teacher in Alberta attends a convention annually therefore all students directly benefit from the professional growth realized at conventions. Despite the ever-changing current practices and often difficult political environment, teachers remain flexible and deeply committed to public education. Professional development is especially important in today's rapidly changing and increasingly challenging society. Teachers play a pivotal role in helping students prepare themselves for a successful future. The three "R's" for teachers attending conventions are Reflect, Rejuvenate and Reaffirm!

All conventions host an Exhibits Display where literally hundreds of companies display educational resources and equipment for teachers to investigate and purchase. For many teachers, this is the time they purchase those resources to make their classes interesting and stimulating for students. Students benefit from all kinds of wonderful ideas and resources following teachers' convention.

So, in February and March, when your teachers disappear from their communities you now know where they are! They will be attending Teachers' Conventions, going to lectures and learning how to become better teachers in their chosen profession. For two days, teachers from across Alberta will experience a role reversal and will once again become students in the journey of life-long learning.

For an overview of the Professional Development your teachers will be receiving, please check the convention's website at <http://netca.teachers.ab.ca>.