



Accent

Volume 29, Issue 1

October 2025

Inside this Issue

President's Message	1
Editor's Note	2
Harnessing AI in EAL Education: Insights, Strategies and Effective Prompting	3
Philosophizing Among Refugee Students in the High School ELL Classroom	6

President's Message

by Gaylene Mackay

Happy fall, everyone!

As I write this message, we do not know what lies ahead with the start of the new school year. As we navigate these uncertainties, I want to emphasize the importance of prioritizing your well-being. No matter the circumstances, please remember to take care of yourselves during these unpredictable times.



During the past school year, the Council for English as an Additional Language (CEAL) had some exciting transformations! We officially changed our council's name and unveiled our new logo, which we were thrilled to share at our conference in Canmore this past May.

Traditionally, our annual general meeting has been held in the fall. However, with our conference now officially moving to the spring (May), our next executive election will also take place in the spring. We're always eager to welcome new members to our executive team. If you're interested in being more involved, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at president@cealata.com for more information.

I want to extend a huge thank you to Diane Pham, Joan Miles and their incredible committee for organizing the truly amazing conference in May. This event brought together educators from across Alberta, and even some delegates from eastern Canada, for a weekend of exceptionally valuable professional learning. I personally gained so much from the keynotes and breakout sessions, but I equally appreciated the opportunity to connect with so many of our members through valuable conversations.

President

Gaylene Mackay
Bus 403-343-1405
gaylene.j.mackay@gmail.com

Editor

Annie Fung
Bus 780-429-8000
publicationsdirector@eslcata.com
and annie.fung@epsb.ca

ATA Staff Advisor

Jeff Huculak
Bus 780-447-9400
jeff.huculak@ata.ab.ca

Complete contact information
for the ESLC executive is avail-
able at www.eslcata.com.



During the conference, members of our executive piloted two new workshops we've been developing: "Welcoming and Supporting Refugees in School" and "Vocabulary Development Across Disciplines." These workshops are available for booking as full-day, half-day or two-hour sessions. You can find more details on our website at www.cealata.com.

Finally, we're excited about some new professional learning and networking opportunities that will be available to CEAL members this year. While these are still in development, keep an eye on our monthly "Tidbits" and our website for more information soon!

Editor's Note

by Annie Fung

Welcome to the fall edition of *Accent*! We are still buzzing from our phenomenal spring conference in Canmore, a weekend of exceptional professional learning and connection. It was a true pleasure to see so many of you engage in conversations and workshops that will shape our practice for the new school year.



This edition of *Accent* reflects the richness of those discussions. Inside, you'll find my article, "Harnessing AI in EAL Education," a practical guide that offers strategies and prompting tips for using AI to support diverse proficiency levels in the classroom. From Sean Steel's article, "Philosophizing Among Refugee Students in the High School ELL Classroom," you will gain valuable insight into how storytelling and philosophical inquiry can be powerful healing practices for refugee students.

We hope these articles inspire and equip you as you continue your incredible work with EAL learners this year and beyond! As always, thank you so much for those who have submitted ideas and articles. This newsletter is for YOU, our membership, so please contact me (annie.fung@epsb.ca) if you have questions, suggestions and contributions for *Accent*.

Harnessing AI in EAL Education: Insights, Strategies and Effective Prompting

by Annie Fung

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a powerful tool, particularly for supporting English as an additional language (EAL) learners. Shelley Schwarz, my colleague, and I recently shared our presentation, “AI in Action for EAL Learners,” at the ATA CEAL conference in May. We held some insightful discussions about how educators can integrate AI effectively and responsibly into EAL instruction, and the following includes highlights of the topics we discussed.



There are many great resources available online for teachers to learn more about AI. However, nothing can substitute for a live conversation with colleagues in the staff room (or at a professional development event like the CEAL conference!) to discover the latest and greatest tools. You can utilize these tools to advance your practice safely and meaningfully. You will also find useful resources at the end of this article for your reference. Happy AI-ing!

What is AI? And Where Is It Found?

At its core, AI refers to “machines capable of imitating certain functionalities of human intelligence,” including perception, learning, reasoning, problem-solving, language interaction and even creative work (UNESCO 2019). AI tools are diverse and widely accessible. They vary in their data amounts, customization options (eg, import features) and availability (free versus paid versions).

Educators can use AI to generate a wide range of materials, from graphic organizers and worksheets to new lessons and assessments and even to critique existing plans.

Key Considerations for EAL Learners

When integrating AI, it’s crucial to understand its implications for EAL learners. The presentation highlighted Cummins’ (1979) concepts of BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive

Academic Language Proficiency). BICS, or “everyday speech” (eg, about weather, grocery shopping), typically develops in about two years. In contrast, CALP, or “academic language,” can take five to nine years to develop and varies significantly across subjects (eg, mathematical terms like “circumference” versus scientific terms like “metamorphosis”).

Currently, English language learners (ELLs) in Alberta are only funded for five years. This may not be enough to provide the additional language support that some ELLs need as they advance in their English proficiency.

Educators should also refer to EAL Benchmarks 2.0 (Alberta Education), specifically the three key competency indicators (vocabulary, sentence structure and connections & transitions) and supporting competency indicators. This will help them identify language goals that can be targeted in lessons with the help of AI tools. AI can support numerous research-based EAL strategies, including the following:

- Teaching language and content simultaneously
- Accessing and building background knowledge
- Translating text
- Generating listening, speaking, reading and writing activities
- Recycling language and vocabulary and creating multimodal activities with the same content
- Providing explicit instruction and activities in grammar
- Facilitating BDA (before, during, after) reading activities
- Scaffolding writing activities
- Aiding in formative and summative assessment (Benchmark 2.0)
- Creating lessons using specific educational models (eg, the Picture-Word Induction Model—PWIM).

Navigating Guidelines and Limitations

While the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) does not have a specific AI policy, it passed a resolution in May 2023 emphasizing student and data safety, evaluating AI tools for bias, accuracy and potential harm, and creating an understanding of the benefits of AI versus concerns associated with it (ATA 2023). School boards, like Northern Gateway Public Schools, are developing their own policies, often in collaboration with the ATA. These policies focus on harnessing the potential of AI, while keeping teachers at the centre of instruction and safeguarding student well-being. Artificial Intelligence Policy Guidance (ASBA) also serves as a guide for school boards to set their own policies (ASBA 2024).

Key considerations for boards include building AI literacy and professional development, addressing academic integrity and copyright, ensuring age- and needs-appropriate tools, equitable access, stake-

holder collaboration and having up-to-date information. *Data privacy is paramount, and educators must NEVER SHARE student and personal information. Check with the ATA and your school board for specific guidance!*

Nonetheless, it's vital to be aware of the limitations of AI tools:

- Their data sets may only go up to certain dates, leading to varied results based on the model or version.
- They may provide “hallucinated” answers that sound confident and plausible but are incorrect.
- They may ignore students’ cultural diversity, human emotions and the specific nuances or contexts of your input when providing output.
- They can provide biased or inappropriate information.
- AI tools often target top students who are already engaged, potentially leading to student disengagement.

Therefore, educators must reflect on the possibilities for student disengagement, examine how thinking can be made “visible” by using AI to help understand how ELLs approach tasks and identify specific language challenges, and empower students by designing AI learning with varied entry points and scaffolding.

Practical Applications and Specific AI Tools

The presentation highlighted specific AI tools, such as Khanmigo (by Khan Academy), which is a non-profit that offers personalized student guidance and support, valuable assistance for teachers in lesson planning and assessment and user data protection. Other tools mentioned include DIFFIT (Google Classroom/PDF friendly) and Twee.

These tools can be used for the following:

- Creating original content for readings and differentiated text (relevel or customize)
- Targeting vocabulary and generating questions
- Translating text into multiple languages
- Populating student-ready activities (eg, Frayer model, vocabulary practice, short answer, quizzes)
- Generating a pool of sources and pictures (but requires vetting)
- Creating questions for YouTube videos, dialogues, stories or articles
- Generating facts, quotes, vocabulary lists and fill-in-the-blank exercises with word banks
- Targeting grammar elements for practice and working with synonyms

However, tools like DIFFIT and Twee also have limitations:

- They often serve as tools to quickly populate information into templates, requiring editing and further differentiation.
- While they may use “more reliable sources” like government sites and encyclopedias, they do not always filter irrelevant information or images and can cite Wikipedia.
- Displayed readability levels may not be accurate, necessitating cross-referencing with a readability calculator after inserting the original text into a tool like ChatGPT with a target reading level.
- Generated questions may be too simple or complex for students, requiring teacher vetting.
- They may be unable to ask subsequent questions based on already generated activities.

Effective Prompting for EAL Educators

The effectiveness of AI tools relies heavily on the quality of your prompts. A key area for improving prompts, especially for EAL learners, is to specify English language proficiency levels.

Specify English Language Proficiency Levels:

- While a prompt like “Four children who are learning English” is a start, it is more helpful for the AI to know their approximate proficiency levels.
- This includes levels such as “beginner, early intermediate, intermediate.” Providing such details helps the AI tailor the complexity of generated games, activities and writing to better suit students’ specific language needs.
- Example of an improved prompt: Instead of “I am a teacher of Grade 3 science, and I have four children who are learning English in my class. Generate two class games to teach vocabulary, two activities to practice this vocabulary, two pieces of writing that explain about matter at a Grade 1 level and include all of the vocabulary,” a more effective prompt would be: “I am a teacher of Grade 3 science, and I have four children who are learning English in my class: two are at a beginner level, one is early intermediate and one is intermediate.”

Leverage Guiding Principles for Effective Prompt Writing:

- University of Calgary’s “Maximizing Learning with Effective GenAI Prompt Writing” (Pletnyova, Anselmo and Keyhani 2023) offers a comprehensive site for instructors (see link in references). This resource emphasizes how effective prompt writing can enhance skills development.
- It highlights the clear, logical, explicit, adaptive, reflective

(CLEAR) method as the guiding principle for writing effective prompts. This suggests that your prompts should be

- clear: unambiguous and easy to understand
- logical: follow a coherent thought process
- explicit: provide specific details and instructions
- adaptive: allow for adjustments based on the AI's output
- reflective: encourage critical thinking about the generated content
- The University of Calgary resource also covers “Meta-prompting (finding what you don’t know)” and provides prompt templates for students and discipline-specific examples.

One of our favourite discoveries when working with chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini is that you can also ask the bot for feedback on your prompts. Remember, you are “chatting” with the bot, and you can direct it to ask you for feedback and, vice versa, to clarify prompts and questions. After you provide an initial prompt and the bot gives you an answer, you can always ask if it has any questions for you. Even better, explain that you want to learn how to create more effective prompts as a teacher and ask for its feedback on the prompt you’ve just written. You will be amazed at the specific feedback and suggestions it may provide. But don’t forget—you are the professional driver and user of this information. Take what is useful and appropriate to your teaching contexts and leave what you don’t (no hard feelings from your bot!).

Include Key Elements in Your EAL AI Prompts:

- Consider incorporating specific elements that align with EAL research and teaching practices.
- You can also add requests for “research-based ways to practice this vocabulary in writing” or specify educational models like “PWIM (Picture-Word-Induction Model), QSSSA (Question-Signal-Stem-Share-Assess), Talk-Read-Talk-Write (Motley 2016)” for lesson creation.

By applying these strategies—especially by being specific about proficiency levels and following established prompting principles—educators can significantly improve the quality and relevance of AI-generated content for their EAL learners.

AI presents significant opportunities for EAL educators to enhance teaching and learning, from lesson creation and assessment to tailoring content for diverse proficiency levels. By understanding its capabilities, acknowledging its limitations, adhering to policy guidelines and mastering the art of effective prompting, educators can thoughtfully integrate AI to enrich the EAL learning experience.

References

- Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA). 2023. *Administrative and Educational Policy*. ATA. https://teachers.ab.ca/sites/default/files/2024-02/TES-MS-11b_%20AdministrativeandEducationalPolicy_2024-03.pdf.
- Alberta School Boards Association. 2024. *Artificial Intelligence Policy Guidance* (Version 1.0). Alberta School Boards Association, September 13. <https://www.asba.ab.ca/uploads/files/Documents/Artificial%20Intelligence/ASBA%20AI%20Policy%20Guidance.pdf>.
- Cummins, J. 1979. “Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency, Linguistic Interdependence, the Optimum Age Question and Some Other Matters.” *Working Papers on Bilingualism*, no 19: 121–29.
- Motley, N. 2016. *Talk, Read, Talk, Write: A Practical Routine for Learning in All Content Areas*. 2nd ed. San Clemente: Canter Press.
- Pletnyova, A, L Anselmo and M Keyhani. 2023. *Maximizing Learning with Effective GenAI Prompt Writing: An Instructor’s Resource for Students*. Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary. <https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/resources/maximizing-learning-with-effective-genai-prompt-writing>.
- UNESCO. 2019. *Steering AI and Advanced ICTs for Knowledge Societies: A Rights, Openness, Access, and Multi-stakeholder Perspective*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367823>.

Philosophizing among Refugee Students in the High School ELL Classroom

by Sean Steel

Introduction: Mythic Consciousness and Philosophy

Philosophy is commonly misunderstood as one subject among many that you might take up in school; it is often confounded with whatever “Doctors of Philosophy” know about, and colloquially it has come to mean whatever each of us professes when we tell others our opinion about what is important. However, the word “philosophy” originally meant the “love” (*philia*) of “wisdom” (*sophia*). At its inception, philosophy was thought to arise most especially in the soul whenever we are led to wonder about *who* we are and *why* we are.

Famously, Socrates is said to have claimed that philosophy begins with wonder (*thauma*; *Theaetetus* 155d). Wonder is a key experience for us; it cuts through our pretenses to knowledge; it awakens our spirit of inquiry (*zetesis*), and in precious moments it reveals to us through flashes of insight the intricacy and profundity of our relations to all other beings throughout time and space, as well as our identity with the eternal. In narrative form, myths are designed to conjure and recapitulate these experiences of wonder. This is why Aristotle told us long ago that the “lover of wisdom” is not dissimilar to the “lover of myth” inasmuch as both are enthralled by wondrous sights (2001, 982b18).

Now as then, stories or *mythoi* remain a source of wonder for human beings. Myths connect us to what is timelessly old, boundless and unfathomable both in the world and in ourselves. Consciousness of these precious, foundational elements of existence is precisely what aspiring lovers of wisdom seek to cultivate. Mythic speech and storytelling are quite unlike many other modes of communication, for what we express and what we receive through myth does not simply concern the small or the large; neither does myth pertain to one particular thing, nor to a myriad of things. Rather, *mythoi* invites us to wonder about *the whole* of being. Not coincidentally, this is also Josef Pieper’s most succinct definition of the nature of the philosophic pursuit. For him, philosophy is best described as inquiry into “reality as such.”¹

Myths direct our attention toward the eternal in the temporal and the immortal in the mortal. They divulge to us how manyness is recon-

ciled with oneness; how beauty undergirds all ugliness; how evil is reconciled to good; how justice abounds in a world rife with injustice; how hatred and fear are only illusions; and how love is the ultimate source for all that *is*. The vision (*theoria*) provided to us by myth astonishes.

Mythic consciousness is characterized by astonishment. As such, myths are particularly well-suited to cultivating the “love of wisdom,” for philosophy thrives in such astonishment. When myths are told earnestly, and when they are listened to both openly and attentively, they can ripen our minds and our hearts so that we may begin to learn deeply what we did not know and what we have not understood. Myths astonish in order to educate, and they educate in order to heal; for in helping us to see *who* we are and *why* we are, myths make available to us a divine gift (*donum*). This gift is a kind of seeing (*theoria*) that clears away our false understandings. The proverbial scales fall from our eyes all at once in a vision that reorients our minds, our hearts and our actions in relation to others and the world around us.

Mythic seeing can undo much of our pain, fear and anxiety. It can remedy our sense of isolation, as well as help to resolve our deep feelings of sadness by reconciling us to *what is*. Without attunement to mythic consciousness, we may often feel the presence of a great, unbridgeable chasm between ourselves and other people, as well as between *what is* and *what should be*. It is easy to find ourselves incapable of overcoming this rift that we recognize between ourselves, each other and the world; moreover, the variety and intensity of suffering and injustice that permeates the world may have broken each of us in many ways so that we are left feeling alienated and unable to embrace any notion of the world (let alone ourselves!) as *cosmos*. Although we may have learned from reading books or from hearing speeches about a “good order of things” that has been generated by a wholly perfect and loving God, without seeing this cosmic order for ourselves, such words seem entirely abstract, merely intellectual or patently naive. However, when the gift of mythic consciousness or seeing attends the hearing of such stories, a Nietzschean love of fate (*Amor fati*) may come to us effortlessly and joyfully. All fissures between ourselves, the cosmic being and the divine are healed through the direct experience afforded by such a vision. This is why openness to mythic speech is crucial for our happiness as human beings.

Myths can work these transformations within us because they are *revelatory*: they reveal to us *who* and *why* we are. They bring us precious self-knowledge. Various philosophers, cultures and religious traditions say that myths are a “medicine” (*pharmakon*) for soul care.² Stories perform their healing work by shaking us out of ordinary consciousness, which is a lived ignorance that is much akin to sleep. Amidst ordinary consciousness, we take much for granted; we live by dint of habit, and we make decisions by a kind of shorthand assessment. Most

especially, we generally suppose that we already know *who* we are and *why* we are.

Myth challenges the dull and ordinary state of consciousness in which we regularly find ourselves. We are affected by myth in our experiences of amazement (*thauma*) and perplexity (*aporia*). Wonder pierces through our eggshell-thin suppositions, which previously appeared so solid and well-established. *Thauma* expands our awareness and broadens our consciousness. In wonder we are delighted, for having come to realize what we do not know—and, in particular, that we didn't know what we thought we knew—we thereby experience a kind of *liberation of the spirit*. As the saying goes, “the truth will set you free.” There is healing in this experience of truth.

Myth attunes us to our true nature. It awakens in us the search for our true centre: the eternal source that lies past death, and that is discovered on the other side of ego dissolution. Mythic inquiry takes us deep into ourselves. In principle, the practice of investigating myths is similar to philosophizing. During ancient times, Socrates was known to have called philosophy, “the art of dying,”³ whereby we come to know our true selves. When we philosophize, our inquiry (*zetesis*) drives us *through* and *past* all that is transitory, divisible and finite towards apprehension of that which always *is*. Put simply, we leave behind mortal things in search of what is immortal. This is also why Aristotle referred to philosophy as “immortalization.”⁴ The “art of dying” and “immortalizing” is the true, original character of philosophy. And just as philosophy is a kind of descent or *katabasis* into death or being dead, so too is myth. Perhaps it is as children that we are first told tales of wonder, including myths about the underworld. As children, we initially hear such stories, and then all through life thereafter we remain beings in love with storytelling. This is how we become initiated into our storytelling and story-listening nature!

It is as lovers of myth (*philomytha*) that we first learn to delight in *katabasis*. This ancient word names the sacred movement of the soul in search of itself. It is important to understand that *katabasis* is not “owned” by any culture, religion or time period; it is a timeless part of the lives of all human beings who seek to know themselves. The word *katabasis* means “going down,” and it connotes the spiritual descent we all must make into the depths of our being whenever we seek to know ourselves.

Greek peoples, in particular, knew how vital *katabasis* was for self-knowledge and the pursuit of wisdom. Each year, for two thousand years, during the spring and autumn festivals, they practiced collectively the mysterious art of dying in order to experience rebirth through a sacred vision of mythic reality. Writing about the ancient mysteries of Eleusis, Carl Ruck points out how initiates learned first-hand that “dying is a higher art than eternal life.”⁵ Heraclitus likewise emphasized

the importance of *katabasis* in spiritual journeying when he famously remarked how this “going down” is simultaneously a “going up” or *anairesis*. The ancients understood that death and dying are the routes toward immortalizing (*athanatizein*), or discovering our true nature in the eternal. This up-down movement of the soul in between (*metaxy*) death and deathlessness characterizes the love of wisdom. For millennia, human beings held the mysterious pursuit of wisdom in the highest esteem, and it was cherished as the most significant component of a humane education. We ought to learn from our ancestors. Loving wisdom is a spiritual practice in which we must imbibe each day.

Just as it is the religious duty of all Muslim peoples to attend the Hajj once during their lifetime, all Greek peoples were similarly expected to participate once in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Plato was certainly no exception in this regard, and he is known to have participated at Eleusis.⁶ He would most certainly have been familiar with the ancient chthonic myth of Persephone and Demeter, and like all the other initiates, he would have spent many months walking along the sacred road and through the sacred geography of Eleusis, first as one whose eyes were closed to the world (a *mystes*); only later, upon receiving the vision (*epopteia*), would he have become someone who had truly seen what *is*, an *epoptes*.⁷

Philosophy is a continuation of the mysteries. Like the mystery rites themselves, Plato's dialogues too foster the love of wisdom, or the philosophic spirit. Plato's vision of the whole in the “Myth of Er” is no doubt a product of the transformative revelations he received at Eleusis through his own mystical experiences of death and rebirth, or *katabasis* and *anairesis*. Plato's concern in philosophizing is to see and to lead others toward the most true seeing (*theoria*) of what *is*. His dialogues are structured as long, preparatory roads winding through a sacred geometry that very often culminates with a grand vision of the whole. It is not surprising, therefore, that his works are full of amazing stories ripe with mythic consciousness.

In my past as an academic and a university researcher, I spent a good deal of time immersed in learning about “philosophic pedagogy.” I have come to think that the best way to invite students toward philosophic self-inquiry is by means of storytelling that connects deeply with their own personal experiences, for our lives too are stories. Following the ancients, I envision the practice of philosophy as a kind of initiation into the mysteries of our being. As at Eleusis, so too in the Platonic dialogues do we undergo long periods of preparatory work. Stories must first be learned by rote. But then they must also be lived or enacted in a sacred geography prior to the revelatory vision.

Educationists are always “re-visioning” what education ought to look like nowadays. Plan after plan arises in the Ivory Towers among education elites and government executives, but all for naught, unfortu-

nately. We modern human beings lack any sense of the sacred, or how to enact the sacred. Our lives in the public square are almost entirely secular and devoid of spiritual content. The public school (and for that matter, the private school) is no exception. We have destroyed so much in our rapaciousness and ignorance. During the colonial genocides we have wrought, we long ago stripped Indigenous Peoples in the Americas of the spiritual traditions and languages in which they carried knowledge of their own *cosmic centre* (in Pueblo, the word is *sipapu* or “navel”); we likewise polluted and desecrated their sacred geographies like the Black Hills, carving them up for our own short-term economic gain, having long ago lost sight of our own cosmic centre (in Greek, the word for this “navel” is *omphalos*) and its geography.⁸ Without any awareness of sacred things or sacred geography, how are we to philosophize? How are we to embark upon our own *katabasis* and *anairesis*? How can we once again offer a democratic, widely available, healing and humane education for wisdom?

Philosophizing in the classroom—if it is to start anywhere—must begin with recollecting lost stories. We must resuscitate our collective memories of the past in order to understand who we are. We must learn these stories by heart so that we can ruminate upon them. Furthermore, we must practice living with these stories. We must come to see ourselves as participants in these *mythoi*. We must learn to walk for months through their sacred geography in order that some inkling of the grand vision (*theoria*) will come out clearly for each of us, and so that we might receive the healing benefits of self-knowledge. Stories and practices in the classroom must recreate a sacred geography for students. Students must walk a sacred road. They must journey and journal as they move through many months of preparatory work so that a healing vision might be received. This is the underlying intent of my philosophic work with English language learning (ELL) and Literacy Education and Academic Development (LEAD) students in the classroom.

Wonders in the LEAD/ELL Classroom

Recently, I returned from postsecondary teaching to public education, this time as a novice English as a second language (ESL)/ELL educator. Lately, I have been working at a local high school right here in Calgary, Alberta, happy to be one of three teachers in the LEAD program. This is a specialized educational program for new Canadians and refugees who have experienced “significant gaps” in their education. And let me tell you, such a teaching placement is *perfect* for an aspiring “lover of wisdom”; there are ample opportunities for astonishment and wonder on a daily basis. Among some of our students, I have had the privilege of witnessing their first-ever exposure to school, which can be both shocking and beautiful. It must be akin to watching a fish at the moment it is released from captive waters into an ancestral stream: envision its gills

flushing suddenly with life! We can only stand there gobsmacked as observers with no adequate words, watching it dart and rocket forward in a flash of silver lightning as innate and mysterious powers come alive all at once and full of vigor. The high school LEAD classroom is full of precious moments like this where students first encounter a formal education. For teachers, such wondrous experiences are not as likely at the college or university level, unfortunately.

In many other cases, however, LEAD learning does *not* come with eruptive, primordial force. Indeed, quite the opposite may be true. Often, it is as though intellectual growth and development among our students remains frozen in amber since the time of their traumatic childhood experiences. Many of our students have suffered through horrors, and they have lost a great deal that is precious to them. Their journeys to Canada have generally been long and hard. Some have lived for long stretches in refugee camps; a considerable number of them continue to face difficult struggles with poverty, mental health, PTSD, isolation, survivor guilt and self-regulation in their everyday behaviours. If there is a metaphoric *switch* that flips in all of us when we are in danger, for many of our students, this switch seems permanently turned toward “fight” or “flight.” Learning can be slow and uncertain. Quite often, what is taught one day will be forgotten the next, just as sandcastles that are built during the day will invariably be swept away by tides the following night.

Rigorous learning is particularly difficult for LEAD students even after they transition into ELL programming. Imagine trying to focus on reading, writing, math or science in the middle of a war zone, or as the walls and ceiling of your house are collapsing all around you. This is how our teenage students can be affected by events that transpired when they were only small children. Their challenges with integrating into school and peaceful society can be extreme. Such difficulties were things that I did not previously understand. Teaching in LEAD has helped me to become a better person. It builds empathy and a sense of connection with other human beings.

LEAD students may be broken in many ways, but they also demonstrate incredible strength and courage. As survivors, they have been resilient through the most difficult ordeals imaginable, and now they carry with them to Canada a hope for better things. LEAD students also love and respect their teachers. Their life experiences have generally made them empathetic toward others who are suffering; they recognize and identify with underdogs by second nature, and each one of them has an incredible story to tell. Many of these stories about their respective journeys are full of suffering, loss and tragedy. But within each story there is also light, hope and love.

The stories of our students’ lives are ripe with manifestations of *katabasis*. Their personal journeys through darkness drive into psychic

depths, provoking the most difficult human questions that have no adequate responses in textbooks, theorems or scientific methods. In their stories, we encounter all the wealth of myth: intimate experiences of faith, hope and love for one's family, friends and countrymen; experiences of kindness in strangers as well as betrayals, slavery, abuse and persecution; the darkest violence and hell that human beings have ever devised for one another; and always at issue is the silence of a God who would permit such torture and genocide to exist on Earth among His or Her children. Drawing connections between their own personal journeys and myths can help our students begin to see and to understand their own lives as stories. Myth can enable them to find meaning and connection between their own difficult and dark life experiences on the one hand and the order of cosmic goodness in which we are all enfolded on the other. When students find themselves able to recollect their connection with goodness, truth, justice and beauty, and when they are able to recognize themselves in a grand vision (*theoria*) as part of a greater, loving and perfect whole, opportunity arises for their reintegration into a world that has been blackened and fragmented by pain. In mythic consciousness, students can be reconciled to an existence that otherwise seems wholly purposeless, cold and uncaring. Myth may serve as a powerful healing *pharmakon* for soul care in the ELL classroom.

The State of Education Today

Prior to coming to LEAD and ELL, I had been a high school English language arts (ELA) teacher. Although I enjoyed that teaching specialization very much, it has long dismayed me how the efforts of English teachers are so commonly misdirected by institutional and collegial pressures that, in the name of quantifiable measurement and "accountability," require students to perform "learning tasks" that demonstrate their proficiency in relation to a narrow band of government-mandated multiple choice reading tests and hackneyed writing forms. An official at Alberta Education tells me that each year, about 10 million dollars is spent on developing, field testing, administering and then marking the Grade 12 provincial diploma exams. This investment provides Albertans with "data" that supposedly indicates how well students are being educated, and a spokesperson for the Learner Assessment branch assured me that the public money spent on these tests provides good value to Albertans.

However, it is worth noting here that there are entire vistas of meaning and purpose in education that are *not* captured by these tests, and furthermore, that such a testing regime skews our attention toward the "outcomes" deemed most important while veering us away from other, more classical, liberal-arts focused or philosophic goals. In the ancient world, Socrates is known to have said that a life without self-knowledge is not worth living;⁹ however, nowhere in the

government-mandated objectives is any attention given to the pursuit of wisdom or *sophia*; moreover, neither reading nor writing is undertaken with a view to "knowing thyself," in obedience to the old Delphic command that has motivated lovers of wisdom since antiquity.

Ask officials and most teachers and they will tell you that this assessment system functions well as a means of testing for literacy. Even the Alberta Teachers' Association has congratulated taxpayers for financing one of the top ranked education systems in the world.¹⁰ However, I suspect that in actuality, institutional pressures toward conformity with standardized assessments and bulleted lists of "outcomes" breeds among teachers an acquiescence to the belief that we all must do things similarly in order that the summative data gleaned from our exam results will be "optimal." Indeed, I have long felt that these measures for "accountability" in teaching serve more than anything to shut down on other delightful and more humane possibilities: that they stifle both teacher and student creativity, discourage bold classroom explorations and experimentation, and especially inhibit the possibility of approaching education more authentically as personal inquiry for self-knowledge among everyone involved. After all, why would teachers lead students on such a journey if they lack any awareness or understanding of its significance? Our education systems, and particularly our teacher preparation programs, are entirely silent about philosophy. Indeed, most programs have moved to eradicate "Philosophy of Education" or "Education Foundations" courses from their itineraries.¹¹ It is therefore not surprising if students and teachers generally have a deadened relationship to both the reading and writing of stories for inquiry into wisdom as a result of their exposure to widespread high school learning procedures and systems.

Rather than being taught to ask their own questions or to engage in *zesis*, the lion's share of student reading and writing is focused instead upon learning how to respond effectively to the contrived, uninspiring, disconnected and abstract questions generated by provincial "experts" and ELA assessment specialists. The result is that student learning becomes focused on how to write "well" in a format that teachers are indoctrinated to believe is the best indication of "writing proficiency." In my experience, this fixation with accountability toward mandated forms does little to encourage any love for the art of composition. Certainly, it may produce a kind of "excellence" at conforming to educational standards and expectations, but it does nothing to entice students toward the joys of writing or the life of writing. It is, moreover, an entire disservice to the time-honoured "liberal arts" tradition through which we gain liberty from ourselves in our search to know who we are. This is the most saddening thing to me about our modern educational systems.

Students who may have enjoyed reading in elementary or middle

school regularly have their love of reading quashed by high school assessments and the expectations they reinforce. In Alberta, for instance, “reading comprehension” has largely been reduced to multiple choice responses from students in relation to a canned set of questions in a test bank that take a specific form, have a specific length, target specific elements of learning following Bloom’s taxonomy, and of course, that are all “field-tested” as successful approximations of measuring to the mean level of student achievement. Teachers are pressured to suppose that adept performance in relation to these measures constitutes “excellence” in education.

Similarly, the standards for good writing are uniformly enforced, with attention to modelling using levelled student exemplars, and then through the practice of “standard setting” among colleagues. Scarce public dollars are taken away from the classroom every year and spent instead by our provincial masters to create, maintain and administer these accountability structures. And for the most part, teachers seem to buy in to this system, often marking Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) and diploma exams for the added monetary compensation, but also as part of their “professional development.” I know of many good teachers who take considerable pride in being able consistently to peg or score student compositions without significant “discrepancy” from their colleague markers.

It is doubtful, however, that all these conformity-enforcing assessment practices result in better, more thoughtful, authentic or engaging compositions. What *does* result most certainly from such processes is that student composition simply follows a few prescribed forms that teachers are pressured to deliver and habituated to expect. The core value of education as a liberating force for the human spirit is easily lost. Teacherly openness to alternative modes of articulating, questioning and investigating ideas is often eroded through years of “experience” with ELA assessment. Mostly, this means that teachers stop being able to see or to hear students except for how they conform or fail to conform with expectations. It may be the case that these exams provide comfort for teachers, who no longer are beholden to ask themselves the difficult philosophic questions, “What is quality?” or “What is the good?” Answers to such questions are already provided for them by the closed system of our accountability structures. Sadly, there is much about public education that is antiphilosophic by design.

The “Myth of Er” Writing Project

Formerly as an ELA teacher, and more recently as both a LEAD and an ELL teacher, it has remained my intention to find some manner of making “the writing life” available authentically for students. Certainly, LEAD and ELL students must learn the fundamentals of English grammar in relation to speaking, listening, writing and reading. However, these

technical elements should only be a means to an end so that students might be encouraged toward the life of the mind, and so that they might engage in self-inquiry.

A little while ago, I taught a level three group of ELL students who had already passed through the LEAD program.¹² We engaged in a number of smaller literacy projects together, moving from unit to unit while practicing reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, throughout that semester, we were engaged for a period of time each week with Plato’s “Myth of Er” in Book Ten of the *Republic*. It was my intention to lead students on a journey through this myth, and then to make connections between Plato’s tale and their own personal journeys. Along the way, we would practice myth-telling as a form of self-inquiry and soul care, first using Plato’s story, then drawing upon students’ stories and artwork, and finally by incorporating readings and retelling practices from a selection of Indigenous myths, including a special visit to our classroom by a Blackfoot Story Keeper.¹³

Our work together on myth would culminate in a published book in which each of the students would be able to see and share the results of their literacy growth with others. I chose to guide students through this foray so that they might begin to see how their own individual stories could be integrated and, in some way, understood in relation to a grand cosmic story or vision (*theoria*). Moreover, it was my hope for the students that, having written a *real* book and having become published authors, they would be emboldened; I wanted very much to boost their confidence as they were about to make the difficult transition into mainstream English classes the following semester.

The results were heartening. My students knew that they had done something very special by reading and interpreting a Platonic text. They were very proud of their accomplishments throughout that semester, and when they finally received their own personal copy of their book the following year, they carried it with them on display all through the school, almost using it like a talisman to remind them of their newfound abilities toward inquiry and the writing life, and so that they might not lose heart when the more formalized writing they would encounter in their upper classes posed difficult challenges for them.

To set up this project, it was necessary for me first to create an ELL-friendly translation of the original Greek text (which itself is included in the book alongside the English retellings of the students). Having this goal in mind, I sat down with the pertinent Loeb volumes, a Liddell and Scott dictionary, as well as a number of translations of the *Republic* in order to make comparisons. Over the course of several days in the summer, I hammered out a “kid-friendly” version of Plato’s text that I might read aloud to the students. Next, I created an accompanying Word/Google Doc that could be projected onto my classroom Smartboard, which included Plato’s text along with explanations, associated stories

or myths, as well as helpful visuals related to key images and figures in the story. This working document allowed us to move slowly and carefully through each of the moments in the story.

In the span of around three weeks, I had read the entire story of Er's journey aloud in small, daily chunks to the students. We stopped frequently during each class to think about Plato's rich imagery and to discuss turns of phrase in the tale. As their teacher, I modelled what asking and responding to philosophic questions looks like so that students could follow my lead, and in order that they might try it out for themselves. I employed other simple techniques like "think-alouds" and drawing diagrams or taking notes on the board to record student input where appropriate. We also examined and discussed associated ancient, medieval and modern artworks, debating the extent to which each accurately depicted Plato's myth. To begin each class, students would write in their journals about something they remembered from the previous day's reading, often using a prompt that I had supplied for them to get started. At the end of each class, students would draw, colour or paint in their sketchbooks, attempting to depict particular scenes and images from that day's readings. All this was done in order that they might recollect the myth, visualize its various scenes and learn the story well enough to be able to tell their own version of it accurately in written form.

The telling and retelling of sacred stories with fidelity has been a highly prized skill in all ancient and tribal societies throughout the world where oral traditions are strong. Such stories are widely recognized as *not* coming simply from the creative imaginations of human beings but as having been received from beyond through inspiration, by way of revelation, or else as having been given to human beings by divine forces. Unlike other forms of literature, myths are distinct in that they are understood as divine gifts, and numerous world cultures also recognize them as medicine. Experience has taught them that when we come to understand a myth in relation to our own lives, we are empowered to overcome many problems: troubles like fear, hatred, greed, addiction, intemperance, lasting sorrow, resentment and pain. Sacred stories have been a source of strength, health and wisdom for countless generations of humanity, and so the importance of conscientious attention and respect for the integrity of stories, as well as the ability to tell stories skillfully has been long affirmed among those concerned with the preservation of traditional knowledge.

Many of the students in my level three class understood the significance of oral storytelling well, as it had long been a key value in their own respective cultures. For instance, some of them had practice with memorization and recitation of the Holy Koran; others had done similar things with the Bible; still others knew and could tell the traditional stories handed down in their tribes. But even apart from these things, all of

the students carried important memories and tales about the difficult journeys they had made with their families—or sometimes alone!—through adversity and toward their new life in Canada.

Reflecting upon personal journeys in light of Plato's myth was our main task. We came together at the beginning of the semester as a team during our work on the "Myth of Er." I asked each of the students to choose a passage from the story and to become a master of telling that portion of the myth in their own words. The key here would be to demonstrate fidelity to the text (ie, not adding anything, and not leaving anything out), while at the same time creating easy-to-read, grammatical constructions and complementary artwork that we could publish as a book together. These measures would help us to complete the first part of our book, which would be a collective student retelling of Plato's myth. The second part would consist of personal retellings of student journeys to Canada. These narratives would be gathered through the use of individual student conferences after our myth retellings had been drafted and were on the way to completion. Three full weeks were devoted to intensive reading and discussion of the myth, student composition and artistry in relation to the images and events in the story. However, every Friday throughout the semester after this intensive period was set aside for follow-up work, discussions, revisitations and the preparation of our manuscript.

Authentic writing and processes for self-inquiry are not generally part of formal education. Mostly, students are prescribed what to write by their teachers, who themselves take their pedagogical marching orders from government dictates in programs of study. Students ordinarily are given all the assessment criteria for individual assignments in advance. Formal instructions and a rubric typically lay out the teacher's expectations in relation to the assignment, and each assignment is usually timed in order to pressure students to complete assignments but also in order to expose them to the harsh reality of testing so that, at the end of the semester, they will have had some practice with exam-based writing prompts.

However, when the love of wisdom or *philosophizing* takes precedence over typical classroom processes that are designed to serve the formal, mandated education "outcomes" which are, undoubtedly, of *less* value than wisdom, a different approach toward the development of literacy must be implemented. Such a shift envisions literacy developing through genuine engagement in the writing life, as a wisdom-seeking activity. When wisdom-seeking is our pedagogical intent, students must adopt daily writing practices and attitudes that are harnessed for the purpose of self-inquiry; this means thinking about writing *not* as a product at the end of a rigid (and normally quite short!) time constraint but as a process that unfolds slowly and uncertainly. Normal accountability structures for "getting things done" and

“staying on schedule” do not apply here; indeed, anyone who writes for self-knowledge knows how days and nights may pass dryly and lack productivity while inward processes churn mysteriously, as we move through periods of both barrenness and frenzied activity. Teacher expectations around writing must shift considerably if a love of wisdom is to be nurtured in a classroom environment.

Teachers are taught that the achievement of formal curricular outcomes must be clear and “evidence-based.” We require hard data, proof of accomplishments, facts, certainty and accuracy in our assessments. Real philosophic work with writing processes, by contrast, is *mysterious* because it enquires into the unknown. In the activity of philosophizing, even the teacher does not know! *Real writing* in search of self-knowledge requires far more time and patience than is acceptable for typical school writing in relation to canned prompts and bulleted lists. Nor do students relate to philosophic writing in the same way as they do canned writing. Generally speaking, canned prompts turn students off; more than once I have overheard them mocking the ridiculously convoluted and vapid questions that are posed in exam-based writing. Of course, certain other students, like their teachers, appreciate these canned prompts because they are predictable and familiar; there is a simple formula for their solution, and students who can apply themselves to these gymnastic exercises generally fare quite well.

Unlike in canned writing where the goals are obvious—ie, just look at the teacher’s expectations and meet them!—the focus in *real writing* should *not* be on the check marks made by the teacher in relation to an array of benchmarks or outcomes but rather upon what the story *inside of us* wants to say and how we ought to say it.¹⁴ This can be more terrifying and frustrating both for teachers and students, however. *What if I don’t know what story is inside of me? What is my story? What does my story mean? How is this myth we are reading also my story? Who am I?* As writers, we must attune ourselves to the story that lies within. We learn about ourselves as we listen to this story and work with this story. This process of listening to, telling and retelling stories is mysterious and ongoing. It demands considerable *time* and *patience*—two things that are not ordinarily nurtured by our education systems.

There is a good deal of reading, rereading, rethinking and tweaking involved in the writing life. School practices generally militate against such processes. The busy school schedule and the demands of the curriculum (from the Latin root *curro*, meaning “a race course”) does not encourage teachers to slow down but pressures them to speed up for greater productivity. We therefore press students for faster writing that uniformly accords with exemplars. School writing routines teach writing processes (prewriting, drafting, revisions, editing and final copy), but these are practiced only in a cursory fashion. After all, when “the rubber hits the road” in an exam situation, there is no time

for extensive writing processes, and once a composition is completed in the allotted hour or hour and a half, it is done. There will be no further writing in relation to this assignment. Hence, students are indoctrinated to think of writing a story like having a bowel movement. Once it is done, it is done, and one should never look back! Recollecting, revisiting and retelling stories serves no purpose in school writing.

School writing, after all, is about meeting “outcomes” and hitting “benchmarks.” Although school systems and teacher training programs pay lip-service to “metacognition” in the classroom, generally speaking, this is code for *thinking-about-your-thinking in relation to the assignments that the teacher has given you as these assignments are measures of your achievements in relation to the mandated outcomes*. The purpose, in other words, is not self-knowledge but student performance in relation to bulleted lists of learning goals. Metacognition in schools has no stated relation to self-inquiry, which is never a finished task but is always ongoing. Working authentically with myth, by contrast, puts the stated outcomes and benchmarks aside as secondary considerations in favour of attention to self-knowledge and the pursuit of wisdom. Philosophy in the classroom is therefore a subversive activity that contravenes the stated functions of education and the legislated role of the teacher.

Literacy work must be reconceived when we are concerned with fostering philosophic *zetesis* through the writing life. Unlike in the mainstream ELA classroom where major writing assignments are most commonly timed in order to approximate the conditions that accompany diploma exams (which are once again under our new government worth 50 per cent of each student’s grade!)*, in a truly *zetetic* classroom, we must take our time. We first composed in our journals, asking daily questions and making connections between ourselves and the text under study. Next, we drafted our selected passages from the *Republic* in Google Docs, where I helped each student with revisions and editing. Sometimes, individuals stumbled with difficult passages—especially the part of the story where the whorls are discussed (616d–617c)! At such times, collaborations with other students and guidance from the teacher can be of great assistance to a young writer or artist who has encountered such challenging descriptions of the cosmos.

During each day’s writing and sketching period, I met with individual students for writing conferences. If a student had difficulty getting started with a retelling, I asked them to tell me the story out loud so that I could scribe it for them. Students often could speak a story far better than they could write it. When they see how what they have said aloud may be transferred onto the page with relative ease, this tends to lessen their anxieties and feelings of inadequacy as ELL writers. If their writing has stalled, scribing often will help them to overcome a blockage. Next, we

* Since the first publication of this article, the weighting of diploma exams has been changed to 30 per cent.

would go over some of the grammatical challenges students encountered, and often discussed questions posed by students concerning what each passage means.

Another valuable function of writing conferences is that they can be used to conduct student interviews. I made particular use of interviews after all the main drafting, revisions and editing work had been completed for the first part of our book. During these recorded interviews, I was able to ask students about their own life stories that we would include in the second part of the book. We would talk about some of their best memories and their most difficult times, as well as about what they think is most important. Personal narratives are powerful and impactful writing. When they are positioned alongside Plato's myth, students were able to find parallels and draw connections that helped them to deal with the pain, suffering and losses that they have endured. In my experience, refugee students demonstrate a great deal of compassion and understanding for the souls of the dead who wait in the camps on the Great Plain of Hades. They recognize the pain and suffering of those in Tartarus. They are wary of the foolish who, having gone to the Isles of the Blessed, come back and choose poorly for their next life, and they are enthused by the prospect of themselves picking a new life at the end of their own long, arduous journeys through Hell and back. Refugee students can identify with Plato's great myth more keenly than just about any group of students I have ever met. They are ripe for philosophy, and they take the lessons of Plato's myth about justice seriously.

At the end of his own telling of Er's story, Socrates comments, "Thus, a tale was saved and not lost, and it could save us if we were persuaded by it" (p. 621c). By situating their own experiences within Plato's grand cosmic vision, students gain a theoretic insight into their own existence. They can find meaning where before there was meaninglessness; they can spy hope where previously there was hopelessness; justice where there has only been injustice; and connection where before there was only fragmentation.

Notes

- ¹ Josef Pieper, In *Defence of Philosophy: Classical Wisdom Stands Up to Modern Challenges*, trans. Lothar Krauth (Ignatius Press, 1966), 41.
- ² Plato frequently writes about philosophic discourse as a pharmakon or medicine, and he has Socrates announce in his defence speech that the philosophic life is "caring for the soul" (Plato, Apology 30b, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1, trans. H N Fowler (Harvard University Press, 1982), 61–146. (Original works published ca. 399–360 BCE)). Joseph Epes Brown has likewise noted how native stories are viewed as sacred medicine for the soul. See Joseph Epes Brown, "Silence, the Word, and the Sacred: Evoking the Sacred through Language and Song," in *Teaching Spirits: Understanding Native American Religious Traditions* (Oxford University Press, 2001).
- ³ Plato, Phaedo 67e, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1, trans. H N Fowler (Harvard University Press, 1982), 193–404. (Original works published ca. 399–360 BCE).
- ⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X.vii.8, trans. H Rackham (Harvard University Press, 1926). (Original work published ca. 350 BCE).
- ⁵ R Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann and Carl A P Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (North Atlantic Books, 2008), 114.
- ⁶ Wasson, Hofmann and Ruck, 30.
- ⁷ Wasson, Hofmann and Ruck, 87–88.
- ⁸ See especially "Fixing a Center: Native American Sacred Geography," in Brown, *Teaching Spirits*, 23–40.
- ⁹ Plato, Apology 38a, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1, trans H N Fowler (Harvard University Press, 1982), 61–146. (Original works published ca. 399–360 BCE).
- ¹⁰ For instance, see Sarah Rieger, "ATA says education funding pays off as Alberta students rank near top of global survey" *CBC News*, Dec 04, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-pisa-2018-survey-1.5383111#:~:text=Alberta%20students%20rank%20among%20the,to%20a%20global%20education%20survey>.
- ¹¹ This is not to say that such courses would remedy the problem. Indeed, I know of very few professors in education with any understanding of the true character of philosophy, even among those who are still "lucky" enough to teach courses that pay lip service to philosophy. For a model of teacher education that attempts to keep the ancient sense of philosophy front and centre, see Sean Steel, *Teacher Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: A Practical Guide for Education Philosophy Courses* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2019).
- ¹² Level three means that students have a language proficiency roughly equivalent to Grade 5.
- ¹³ In this article, I have chosen not to discuss the extended, crosscultural element of this project and its Indigenous connections for lack of space.
- ¹⁴ I have written extensively elsewhere about the problem of assessment in relation to wisdom-seeking. See Sean Steel, "Designing Teacher Education to Promote the Love of Wisdom within a Competency-Based Assessment System," in Kim Koh, Cecille DePass, and Sean Steel, *Developing Teachers' Assessment Literacy: A Tapestry of Ideas and Inquiries* (Brill Publishing, 2019). Also see Sean Steel, "An Aporetic Ending? Assessment and the Pursuit of

Wisdom in Education,” in *Teacher Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: A Practical Guide for Education Philosophy Courses* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2018); Sean Steel “Oil and Water? Assessment and the Pursuit of Wisdom in Education,” *Voegelinview*, November 27, 2018; Sean Steel “An Invitation to Philosophizing: On the Challenges of Philosophy of Education Instruction in B.Ed. Programs,” *Voegelinview*, November 26, 2018.

References

Aristotle. 2001. *The Basic Works*. Ed R McKeon. New York: Modern Library.

Brown, J E. 2001. *Teaching Spirits: Understanding Native American Religious Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Heraclitus. 2001. *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus*. Trans. B Haxton. New York: Viking.

Pieper, J. 1966. In *Defence of Philosophy: Classical Wisdom Stands up to Modern Challenges*. Trans. L Krauth. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Plato. 1961. *The Collected Dialogues*. Ed E Hamilton and H Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rieger, S. 2019. “ATA Says Education Funding Pays Off as Alberta Students Rank Near Top of Global Survey.” *CBC News*, December 4. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-pisa-2018-survey-1.5383111#:~:text=Alber>

[ta%20students%20rank%20among%20the,to%20a%20global%20educa-tion%20survey](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-pisa-2018-survey-1.5383111#:~:text=Alber).

Socrates. *Theaetetus*. <https://www.platonicfoundation.org/translation/theaetetus/>.

Steel, S. 2018. “An Invitation to Philosophizing: On the Challenges of Philosophy of Education Instruction in B.Ed. Programs.” *Voegelinview*. <https://voegelinview.com/an-invitation-to-philosophizing-on-the-challenges-of-philosophy-of-education-instruction-in-b-ed-programs/>.

_____. 2018. “An Aporetic Ending? Assessment and the Pursuit of Wisdom in Education.” In *Teacher Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: A Practical Guide for Education Philosophy Courses*, 319–40. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

_____. 2018. “Oil and Water? Assessment and the Pursuit of Wisdom in Education.” *Voegelinview*. <https://voegelinview.com/oil-and-water-assessment-and-the-pursuit-of-wisdom-in-education/>.

_____. 2019. “Designing Teacher Education to Promote the Love of Wisdom within a Competency-Based Assessment System.” In *Developing Teachers’ Assessment Literacy: A Tapestry of Ideas and Inquiries*, K Hong Koh, C DePass and S Steel. The Netherlands: Brill Publishing.

_____. 2019. *Plato’s Myth of Er: A Personal Journey Re-told by ELL and Refugee Students*. Halifax: Eaglespeaker Press.

Contents Copyright © The Eric Voegelin Society. Some punctuation and grammar-related changes have been made to align with ATA style.

ATA CEAL Conference 2026!

May 1 st to 3rd, 2026

**Chateau Lacombe Hotel,
Edmonton, Alberta**

***Watch out for updates & registration info
on our website & social media!**

Publishing Under the Personal Information Protection Act

Under the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)* of Alberta, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) requires consent to publish personal information about an individual. Personal information is defined as anything that identifies an individual in the context of the collection: for example, a photograph and/or captions, an audio or video file, and artwork.

School boards sometimes obtain blanket consent to publish students' and/or teachers' personal information under two new acts brought into force on June 13, 2025: the *Access to Information Act (ATIA)* and the *Protection of Privacy Act (POPA)*. However *PIPA*, *ATIA* and *POPA* are not interchangeable. They fulfill different legislative goals. *PIPA* is the private sector act that governs the Association's collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

If you can use the image or information to identify a person in context (for example, a specific school or a specific event), then it is personal information and you need consent to collect, use or disclose (publish) it.

Minors cannot provide consent and must have a parent or guardian sign a consent form. Consent forms must be provided to the Creative and Publishing Services editorial staff at Barnett House together with the personal information to be published.

Refer all questions regarding the ATA's collection, use and disclosure of personal information to the ATA privacy officer.

Notify the ATA privacy officer immediately of any incident that involves the loss of or unauthorized use or disclosure of personal information, by calling Barnett House at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208.

Maggie Shane, the ATA's privacy officer, is your resource for privacy compliance support:

780-447-9429 (direct)

780-699-9311 (cell, available any time)

Consent for Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information

Name (Please print): _____

☐ I am giving consent for myself.

☐ I am giving consent for my child/children or ward(s), identified below:

Name: _____

By signing below, I am consenting to The Alberta Teachers' Association collecting, using and disclosing personal information identifying me or my child/children or ward(s) in print and/or online publications and on websites available to the public, including social media. By way of example, personal information may include, but is not limited to, name, photographs, audio/video recordings, artwork, writings or quotations.

I understand that copies of digital publications may come to be housed on servers outside Canada.

I understand that I may vary or withdraw this consent at any time. I understand that the Association's privacy officer is available to answer any questions I may have regarding the collection, use and disclosure of these records. The privacy officer can be reached at 780-447-9429 or 1-800-232-7208.

Signed: _____

Name (Please print): _____ Today's Date: _____

Council for English as an Additional Language (CEAL) Needs Assessment

We are committed to supporting all of you as members of CEAL in your role of educating English as an additional language learners. To ensure the council's professional learning opportunities are relevant and impactful, we would greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes to complete this brief needs assessment. Your responses will help us understand the diverse backgrounds and professional development interests within our membership. Please complete the assessment by October 30, 2025. If you have any questions about this, or would like further discussion about any of these questions, please contact Gaylene Mackay at president@cealata.com. Thank you for your time and valuable input.



Copyright © 2025 by The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton T5N 2R1. Unless otherwise indicated in the text, reproduction of the material in *Accent* is authorized for classroom and professional development use, provided that each copy contains full acknowledgement of the source and that no charge is made beyond the cost of reprinting. Any other reproduction in whole or in part without prior written consent of the ATA is prohibited. *Accent* is published by the ATA for the Council for English as an Additional Language (CEAL). Editor: Annie Fung. Editorial and production services: Creative and Publishing Services staff, ATA. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the ATA or CEAL. ISSN 1201-3412 (Print), ISSN 2816-6983 (Online).

Individual copies of this newsletter are available at a cost of \$2 per copy plus 5 per cent shipping and handling and 5 per cent GST. Please contact Distribution at Barnett House at distribution@ata.ab.ca to place your order.

Personal information regarding any person named in this document is for the sole purpose of professional consultation between members of the Alberta Teachers' Association.