The Alberta Teachers' Association Develops Specialist Councils

c. 3000 BC

Ancient Babylonians use cuneiform (wedge-shaped) symbols

for their number system based on 60.

The Babylonian base-60 system persists today in the division of hours and degrees.

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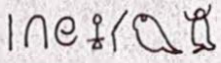
Ancient Egyptians use hieroglyphics to write numerals.



This section originally appeared as Chapter 1 of A History of the Health and Physical Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association *by John Takahashi and Marion Irwin (Edmonton: ATA, 1986), pp. 1–2.*

HISTORICALLY, THE ALBERTA Teachers' Association has always had among its objectives the advancement and promotion of education and the raising of the status of the teaching profession in the province.

The seed from which specialist councils developed was sown at a 1958 meeting of the provincial inservice education committee of the Department of Education. This committee, first established in 1957, was organized to consider what could be done to sponsor and motivate inservice education activities and to coordinate the efforts and activities of the various groups.

From the discussions that took place, it soon became evident that there was much interest in expanding inservice education programs, especially in the subject fields. Many school boards were thinking of offering courses for teachers. The Department of Extension of the University of Alberta had proposed noncredit courses for teachers. The Faculty of Education was looking at the organization of summer seminars in selected subject areas.

The Alberta Teachers' Association representatives, as a result of discussions, conceived the idea of specialist councils. It was considered desirable for the welfare of teachers and the teaching profession that the major inservice education activities for teachers be organized, or at least coordinated, under one large umbrella. This would prevent disorganization of the profession. If the teaching profession was to grow in status and prestige, the profession would have to organize and conduct its own inservice programs and activities and not expect, nor tolerate, outsiders doing these things for it.

The Provincial Executive Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association, therefore, decided that the only group which could, and should, take on the task of initiating special interest groups of educators was the professional association.

Alberta teacher representatives to the provincial inservice education committee of the Department of Education prepared a general plan for establishing specialist councils which was presented to, and accepted by, the Provincial Executive Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association. The Council then named a committee to bring in detailed proposals. The proposals presented by the committee were studied and approved, with minor modifications, by The Alberta Teachers' Association curriculum committee and the Provincial Executive Council.

The following resolution authorizing the establishment of specialist councils was passed at the 1960 annual general meeting of the Association:

> Resolution C47-60–Be it resolved, that the formation of the specialist councils be approved for the purpose of improving practices in the various specialties.

Following the 1960 annual general meeting, Provincial Executive Council adopted a model constitution for specialist councils and passed a resolution governing their organization and operation.

The following proposals were included in regulations and/or the model constitution governing specialist councils which provided the working relationships between specialist councils and the Association:

1. Specialist councils were to be semi-autonomous organizations for the purpose of improving instruction, the curriculum, and teacher competence.
2. Membership was to include all interested educators (teachers, Department of Education personnel, university educators) in an effort to coordinate the work of different factions. Membership was to include teachers from all grade levels so as to maintain the necessary unity in the profession and to maintain the desirable coordination of subject matter through the grades.
3. Specialist councils were to be left free to organize and conduct activities consistent with their constitutions and the policies of the Association.
4. Guidance and help as well as liaison with the Association were to be exercised in the following ways:
   - all representations to other bodies were to be made through the Association;
   - amendments to specialist council constitutions were to be approved by the Provincial Executive Council of the Association;
   - the Association would provide financial assistance; and
   - the Association would provide a liaison representative on the executive of all specialist councils.

During the summer of 1960, applications were received for the organization of six councils: School Administration, English, Mathematics, Modern and Classical Language, Science, and Social Studies.

Provincial Executive Council approved these applications and named provisional executives at its September 1960 meeting. In October 1960, applications were received and accepted for the formation of councils in business education, home economics, and industrial arts.

During the winter of 1960–61, the provisional executives of all nine councils were busy planning inaugural conferences, the annual conference being one of the requirements of specialist councils. At these inaugural conferences, the adoption of a constitution and election of officers established the formation of the Council and made it eligible for assistance from the Association.

Early in 1961, the Alberta Guidance Council and the [Health and] Physical Education Council applications were received and approved.

In the fall of 1984, there were 20 specialist councils of The Alberta Teachers' Association. Most of the councils meet their responsibilities through the following major activities:

1. Holding annual meetings and conferences
2. Producing publications (journals, newsletters, lesson aids, special projects, executive handbooks and so on)
3. Holding regional conferences

c. 1700 BC

Numerical, algebraic and geometrical systems are in place in Babylonia (Hammurabi dynasty).

c. 500 BC

Bead-and-wire abacus is in use in Egypt and the Roman and Greek empires and later spreads to Orient (common in China by AD 600).

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Greeks develop base-10 numeral system, use 27-letter Greek alphabet to represent numbers.

4. Doing field service (institutes, conventions)
5. Putting on workshops and seminars
6. Sponsoring short courses
7. Organizing and supporting regional councils
8. Doing research
9. Making recommendations on policy, curriculum content and materials, facilities, staffing, professional qualifications and working conditions
10. Reporting on new programs and continuing education opportunities offered by outside sources

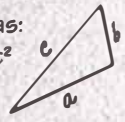
The institution by The Alberta Teachers' Association of specialist councils has had considerable impact on education in Alberta. The publications, inservice opportunities and conferences of specialist councils have been of an unusually high standard. The opportunities provided by councils for professional interaction and professional growth have been a positive outgrowth of the concept. The success of specialist councils rested specifically on the shoulders of Alberta educators who have commendably met the challenge.

[As of spring 1995, there were 23 specialist councils.]

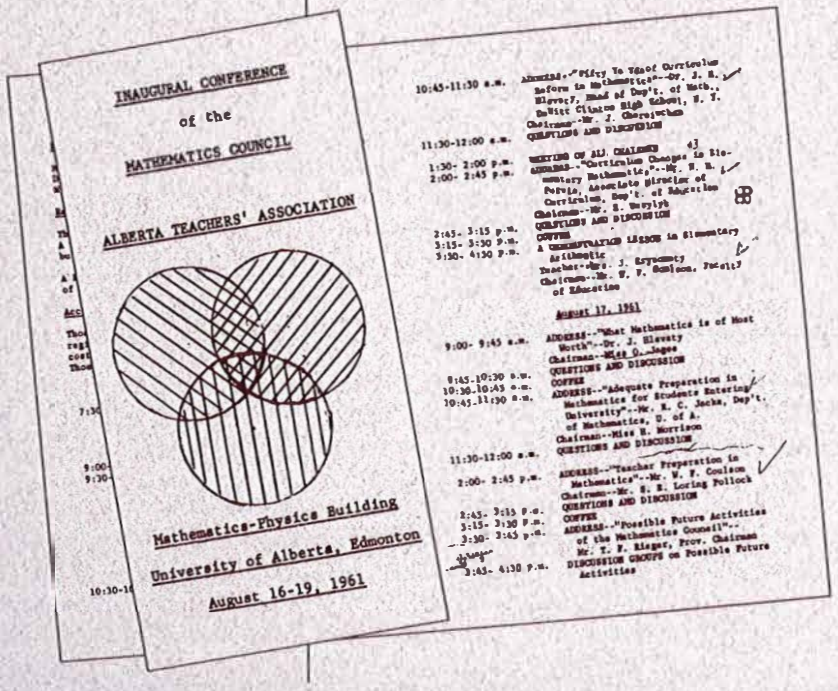
c. 500 BC

Roman numeral system uses letters as symbols for numbers.

Pythagoras:
$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$



MCATA's Formation and Inaugural Conference


INAUGURAL CONFERENCE
of the
MATHEMATICS COUNCIL
ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
Mathematics-Physics Building
University of Alberta, Edmonton
August 16-19, 1961

10:45-11:30 a.m. ADDRESS--"Fifty Years of Curriculum Reform in Mathematics"--Dr. J. H. Hlavaty, Head of Dept. of Math., DeWitt Clinton High School, N. Y.
Chairman--Mr. J. Chorostkan
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

11:30-12:00 a.m. MEETING OF ALL CHAIRMEN

1:30- 2:00 p.m. ADDRESS--"Curriculum Changes in Elementary Mathematics"--Mr. H. H. Fehr, Associate Director of Curriculum, Dept. of Education
2:00- 2:45 p.m. Chairman--Mr. S. Smyth
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

2:45- 3:15 p.m. COFFEE
3:15- 3:30 p.m. A CONSERVATION LESSON in Elementary Arithmetic
3:30- 4:30 p.m. Teacher--Mrs. J. Szymanski
Chairman--Mr. W. F. Coulson, Faculty of Education

August 17, 1961

9:00- 9:45 a.m. ADDRESS--"What Mathematics is of Most Worth"--Dr. J. Hlavaty
Chairman--Miss G. Inges
9:45-10:30 a.m. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
10:30-10:45 a.m. COFFEE
10:45-11:30 a.m. ADDRESS--"Adequate Preparation in Mathematics for Students Entering University"--Mr. R. C. Jacks, Dept. of Mathematics, U. of A.
Chairman--Miss H. Morrison
11:30-12:00 a.m. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

2:00- 2:45 p.m. ADDRESS--"Teacher Preparation in Mathematics"--Mr. W. F. Coulson
Chairman--Mr. S. E. Loring Pollock
2:45- 3:15 p.m. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
3:15- 3:30 p.m. COFFEE
3:30- 3:45 p.m. ADDRESS--"Possible Future Activities of the Mathematics Council"--Mr. T. F. Reiger, Prov. Chairman
3:45- 4:30 p.m. DISCUSSION GROUPS on Possible Future Activities

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE provisional executive of MCATA was held on October 29, 1960. Present at the meeting were T. F. Reiger (chair), L. D. Nelson, S. E. L. Pollock, Max Wyman, Helen Morrison and L. J. Scott (secretary). The meeting was devoted to discussion of the proposed constitution for the new council and initial plans for the inaugural conference. This group met again in March and May 1961 to finalize the constitution and the conference details.

The following are the Report to Executive Council on the Inaugural Conference, submitted by T. F. Reiger and an article from the *Edmonton Journal* (August 17, 1961).