

TACKBOARD

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President's Message



Paul Bae (Killarney) & Debbie Pawluk
World Teachers' Day Celebration

AS CLASSROOM teachers and students have settled into the school year, so has the VSTA Executive and IHTOs. Since district and site based meetings with management were verboten last year, much of our energy thus far has

focused on reengaging in conversations specific to district policy, practice, and initiatives. Policies related to volunteers in schools and healthy living, for instance, are but two recent examples. Additionally, VSTA teacher-reps (many from the hardworking Executive) are taking time from their hectic schedules to provide "voice" on a variety of committees, ranging from a replacement system for BCeSIS to aboriginal education to information/communication technology. Joining this year's Executive are Darren Gock (PW) as Member-at-Large and Phil Lee (Van Tech) as Health and Safety Chair, both of who were elected at the September Council Meeting. On behalf of the entire membership and the IHTOs, I wish to extend a heartfelt thanks to all of our executive members (full-time teachers) for their selfless commitment and dedication to the collective. Without their support, the work of the union would be seriously compromised.

Many thanks also go to the "bug eyed" Rory Brown and Shaun van der Hoop who have been diligently combing through the class size/composition data. Although still a work in progress, we can report that approximately 2800 secondary classes exceed the limits as were articulated in our stripped language from 2002. Only a handful of classes exceed the Bill 22 requirements, but there are close to 100 classes from the "prescribed category" that exceed the limit of 30, particularly in subjects like planning and visual/performing arts. Even more troubling is our estimate that 1040 classes exist with 4 or more students with IEPs despite the \$5 million dollars from the Learning Improvement Fund (LIF). Egregious examples of classes with composition issues include a section of Communications with 25 students including 12 IEPs, PE with 26 and 13, and Metalwork with 17 and 16 (think digits)! That working and learning conditions continue to suffer from a decade of cuts is clear. While education funding as a percentage of the GDP (in 2001) was higher in BC than in the rest of Canada, spending on K to 12 (in 2012) has fallen below the Canadian average. The BCTF

has calculated that for B.C. to meet the Canadian average we need an additional \$609 million.

Bargaining has been a priority for the union this fall and has been the focus of two VTF General Meetings. At the September meeting, members voted overwhelmingly to retain our current language on unpaid personal leave (Article G.21.26.a.) and our extended health benefits' plan, both of which are superior provisions. The 5 items negotiated at the local bargaining table were also approved. The process of contract melding is now underway between the BCTF and BCPSEA, and we hope to have a printed copy of the new Collective Agreement early in 2013. In contrast, the October meeting brought VTF members together to ratify our list of local bargaining objectives for the next round of negotiations (2013). The VSTA's provincial bargaining objectives have been forwarded to the BCTF for discussion and debate at the upcoming Bargaining Conference in early November. Thanks to everyone who took the time to provide their feedback by completing the survey. Lastly, you have undoubtedly heard Christy Clark's announcement regarding the government's review of the teacher bargaining process and the MOE's desire "to create a more stable learning environment..." by ensuring long-term labour stability (which includes reference to a ten-year deal!). Unfortunately, the government's (overly?) ambitious goal is guided by an extremely tight timeline with consultations occurring through October and early November. Our hope is that the consultation process will be genuine and that the BC Liberal government has learned from past mistakes. We are still waiting, for example, for the government to respond to the B.C. Supreme Court ruling that found Bills 27/28 to be both unconstitutional and invalid. Settling this case and restoring classroom conditions would go a long way to mending the relationship with B.C.'s teachers.

The month of October brought VSTA members together as we gathered at Toby's Pub and Grill to celebrate World Teachers' Day. Our own Paul Bae, a headlining comedian and Killarney teacher, entertained everyone present with his take on "The Joy of Teaching." From all reports, everyone had a great time and we hope to host another social event in the near future. Approximately 80 VSTA members also gathered at the Holiday Inn for our annual fall SURT to learn more about our collective agreement, the role of the staff rep, self-directed professional development, and how to motivate and engage school staffs in developing actions designed to complement the BCTF

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WCB ruling on teachers vs. students' games

In a ruling dated October 9, 2012 the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal (WCAT) ruled that a teacher's injury suffered during a fun staff versus students' softball game at lunch did not arise out of and in the course of his employment. The vice-chair, Randy Lane, placed great weight on a WCB policy that states, "The organization of, or participation in, recreational, exercise or sports activities or physical exercises is not normally considered to be part of a worker's employment under the Act." The vice-chair made the following findings which did not favour WCB coverage:

- The lunch hour is not a normal working hour.
- As a social studies teacher, the worker was not involved in an activity that was part of his job.
- The activity was voluntary.
- The supervisor did not directly supervise the activity.
- Fitness was not a job requirement.

Basically, non-P.E. teachers who play in students vs. staff games outside of instructional time will likely not be covered by WCB if they are injured.

Teachers may want to think twice about participating in any recreational or physical activities outside of instructional time. The WCAT decision number is 2012-02607. You will be able to obtain the full decision on the WCAT website at: www.wcat.bc.ca/search/decision_search.aspx in about a week.

Participants needed for UBC toddler nutrition study

Researchers at the University of British Columbia are seeking babies between 12 and 14 months old to take part in a **one-year Nutrition study**, focused on omega 3 fats. The research team is led by Dr. Sheila Innis, Professor in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of British Columbia.

What's involved: Participation in the study involves 3 visits over about 12 months (when your child is 12-14 months, 18 and 24 months old), We will ask about your child's diet, measure growth, and use games to assess your child's development. The study involves giving a nutrition supplement each day. The supplement is approved by Health Canada. Each participant receives an honorarium for helping us with this important study.

Please visit our website www.cfri.ca/nutrition or contact us for more information: gsieber2@cw.bc.ca or call 604-875-2345 ext 4896.

Ed May Social Justice Grants

Individuals or groups of teachers may apply for Ed May grants of up to \$2000 for school-based social justice projects.

Application forms **MUST** be signed by your social justice contact and local president. Please make sure you include the evaluation page that incorporates an analysis of your project using the social justice lens.

Application forms are available online at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/public/AboutUs/ServicesHandbook/4EdMay.pdf.

The criteria for applying is at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/GrantsFunds/SJGrantInfo.pdf.

Here is the abbreviated version:

- may be classroom or school-based, or may involve the community and school
- can be a current or new initiative
- funds may be used for release time, materials, publicity, communication, coalition building
- funds may not be used for travel, overseas projects, purchase of food or school hardware (computers, furniture, etc.)
- a budget must be included with the proposal.

Priority will be given to projects that

- are new rather than repeat proposals
- are innovative
- actively involve students
- have major impact on learners
- are collaborative (with funding from other sources)
- represent a geographical and topical balance.

The BCTF receives many applications each year; therefore, attaching additional information about the scope of the project to the online form/application is very helpful.

APPLICATION DEADLINE is November 23rd at 4pm. Applications are **NOT** accepted via e-mail.

Salary Indemnity Fund Important Reminder



Continuing members of the VSTA SIF are reminded to submit their fee for the 2012-2013 school year **no later than October 31st**.

New applicants for membership to the VSTA SIF must be made within *two months* of continuing appointment with the VBE in order for membership during the current year. In addition, new VSTA members *age 30 or older* may join the SIF during the *first year* of VSTA membership. Otherwise, the Age Clause Limit will bar them from future membership. If a SIF member "drops out" of the SIF after his/her 30th birthday, he/she *cannot rejoin* the fund. **If you have been an SIF member and are currently on the recall list, please contact the VSTA office for your options.**

IMPROVEMENTS TO LEAVE PROVISIONS

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF IMPROVEMENTS to leaves of absence that teachers should be aware of. One is the result of local bargaining in the last round and the rest are the result of the Provincial Memorandum of Agreement ratified in June 2012. Our contract covers the period from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2013, but the parameters of retroactivity of new provisions are still being determined.

Short Term Leaves (without pay) (G.21.b)

Teachers may now apply for two new short term leaves of less than one year.

Previous Leave Provisions:	Current Leave Provisions:
Sept 1 to Dec 31	Sept 1 to Dec 31
Jan 1 to June 30	Jan 1 to Mar 31
	Apr 1 to June 30
	Jan 1 to June 30

This allows for improved access to short term leaves without pay. The existing practice of allowing only one leave for every three years has been brought into the Collective Agreement with the recognition of Temporary Contracts included into the calculation.

Family Responsibility Leave

This moves a right in the BC Employment Standards Act (Parts 6-52) into our Collective Agreement.

An employee is entitled to up to 5 days for unpaid leave during each employment year to meet responsibilities related to

- A) *the care, health or education of a child in the employee's care, or*
- B) *the care or health of any other member of the employee's immediate family.*

This leave is an entitlement rather than a leave you must apply for.

Bereavement Leave

Bereavement Leave has been increased by two days and its applicability has been broadened. There is also the addition, at the superintendent's discretion, of the possibility of additional unpaid leave.

Five (5) days of paid leave shall be granted in each case of death of a member of the employee's immediate family.

The definition of family has been expanded to include:

- B) *Any person who lives with an employee as a member of the employee's family.*

Compassionate Care Leave

The old provision allowed teachers to apply for up to 8 weeks of **unpaid** leave if they met the criteria for EI compassionate care leave (a separate process). The new language improves the leave to 100% top up of pay by the employer to cover both the 2 week waiting period and the up to 6 weeks of EI payments for an eligible teacher.

Compassionate care leave supplemental employment insurance benefits: When an employee is eligible to receive employment insurance benefits, the employer shall pay the employee:

- a. *one hundred (100%) of the current salary for the first two(2) weeks of the leave,*
- b. *for an additional six (6) weeks, one hundred (100%) of the employee's current salary less any amount received as EI benefits*
- c. *current salary shall be calculated as 1/40 of annual salary where payment is made over ten months or 1/52 of annual salary where payment is made over twelve months.*

Leave for Union Business

The limit of 20 days per school year (unless otherwise approved by the Board) for individuals on union leave no longer applies.

"Any union member shall be entitled to a leave of absence with pay as authorized by the local union of BCTF and shall be deemed to be in the full employ of the board."

And for both short and long-term leave -

"Such leave will be granted subject to the availability of a qualified replacement and educational needs of the school district. The request shall not be unreasonably denied."

TTOCs Conducting Union Business

Previously, there was no specific language related to releasing TTOC's in our Collective Agreement.

With the new language time spent conducting union business will not be considered a break in service with respect to payment on scale and will be recognized for the purpose of seniority and experience recognition up to a maximum of 20 days per school year.

"Where a TTOC is authorized by the local union or BCTF to conduct union business during the work week, the TTOC shall be paid by the employer according to the collective agreement."

Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP)

All teachers eligible to retire at the end of December may do so and receive the ERIP which is normally available only at the end of June. To receive the ERIP, all the normal rules will apply (see below) except that notice of retirement must be in by 2012 November 30 to begin retirement, with pension, on 2013 January 01. Contact the VSTA if you have further questions.

Rules of Eligibility:

- be on a continuing appointment
- be retiring with a pension
- have a minimum of ten (10) FTE years' service with the Vancouver Board of Education.
- be at the maximum of their scale
- have been in active service for the previous four (4) years, during which there may be a maximum of one year leave not including leaves under Article G.21.30., and/or leaves granted due to disability (within the meaning of *The British Columbia Human Rights Code*)
- be a minimum age of 55, and a maximum age of 64 as of 2011 December 31st in the year of retirement
- submit his/her request to retire, in writing, **on or before 2012 November 30** for a retirement date of 2012 December 31.

More specific details on the amount of payout will be communicated once they are made available by the employer.

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Provincial Year of Action. Another SURT is planned for November 2nd on *Creating Cultures of Professionalism* and will be facilitated by Mary Filleul, the VSTA Professional Development Chair.

I leave you this month with a reminder to maintain a healthy work-life balance. At the best of times, teaching is an incredibly complex and demanding profession, and our struggle this past year was a particularly stressful and challenging one. Stay in touch and most importantly, be well.

Debbie

Educational Leave: Opportunities and Deadlines

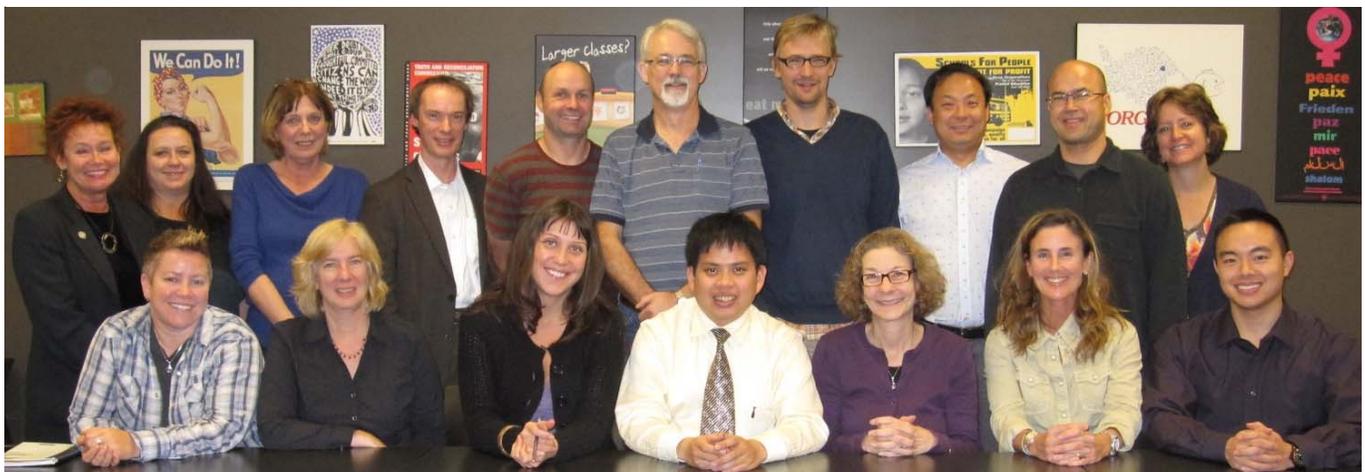
Continuing contract teachers with the VBE are eligible for a variety of educational leaves (G.9.):

Teachers with a continuing contract for at least five (5) consecutive school years immediately preceding the date of requested leave may apply for a paid (60% of annual salary and allowances) education leave of one (1) year. Teachers applying for an education leave of one school year must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent-Human Resources on or before December 15 for a leave commencing in September 2013.

- Teachers with a continuing contract of not less than one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the requested leave may apply for a paid (60% of annual salary and allowances) education leave of less than one (1) school year, but longer than ten (10) school days. Teachers must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent-Human Resources at least three (3) months prior to the commencement of the leave.

- Teachers with a continuing contract of not less than one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the requested leave may apply for a paid (100% of annual salary and allowances) education leave for ten (10) school days or less. Teachers must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent-Human Resources at least four (4) weeks prior to the date of the commencement of the leave.

Application forms are available from the VBE.



Front: Stephanie Lemmon (MAL), Sylvia Metzner (1st VP), Treena Goolieff (LR/SEJC Chair), Young Cheng (TOC Rep), Debbie Pawluk (Pres), Trish Mugford (MAL), Darren Gock (MAL) Back: Mary Filleul (PD Chair), Susan McIntosh (MAL), Moira Ekdahl (Tech Chair), Terry Stanway (Treas), John Silver (MAL), Shaun van der Hoop (2nd VP), Rory Brown (WLC/B Chair), Govan Keng (MAL), Phil Lee (H&S Chair), Brin MacIntyre (MAL) Camera shy: Lisa Pacheco (LR), Christine Stewart (MAL).