

President's Message



Glen Hansman (BCTF 1st VP) and Debbie, Metro West Zone Meeting Richmond, October 17, 2013

IN MY SEPTEMBER MESSAGE, reference was made to the many challenges that will undoubtedly develop throughout the course of the school year. And, while it is only October, it is sadly true that the prediction is already taking shape, both at the local and the provincial level.

Not unexpectedly, the overriding challenge is directly related to the provincial government's continued

underfunding of public education. As was reported in the media, our CUPE colleagues reached a Provincial Framework Agreement with BCPSEA on September 18 with wage increases totalling 3.5% over a two year term (July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2014). While there is no question that the wage increase was long overdue and well deserved, the Province mandated that Boards of Education fund the incremental costs related to the support staff agreements and that they submit a "savings plan" (which was due by October 15) to fund the increases *without impacting core services!* The expectation that the VBE fund an additional cost of \$2.43 million for 2013/14 and \$4.25 million for 2014/15 without incurring further reductions is of course unrealistic; therefore, the proposed savings plan recommended a loss of 25-40 FTE of *non-core* staff, in addition to a list of other reductions in supplies and services. Absolutely absurd is the government's assertion that school districts have anything left but core as we have been pared down, ad infinitum, to the bare bone: a truism that was confirmed by the VBE's restoration budget document which showed that the 2013/14 operating budget would need approximately \$40 million in order for the district to deliver an equivalent level of service as existed prior to the 2002/03 budget cuts. At this point, the VBE's projected budget shortfall for 2014/15 has been adjusted from \$24.1 million to \$28.35 million, approximately 5.8% of the current operating budget.

It is also the time of year when we compile data on class size

and composition to determine how many classes exceed the limits of our stripped language from 2002. Our data is incomplete at this time, but I can confirm that there are over 1000 classes with 3 or more students with IEPs. Classes over 30 number just over 100, primarily because of the infusion of staffing (approximately 25 FTE for secondary schools) from the Learning Improvement Fund (LIF). That the LIF funding has alleviated some of our stresses is clear, but the \$5 million we receive is nonetheless woefully inadequate. Hopefully, the remedy that was awarded to the BCTF from the 2011 court victory will be realized in the near future when Justice Griffin rules on the "repercussions" case.

Secondary teachers can also anticipate significant changes to the end of the school year. Amendments to the School Calendar Regulations (effective July 1, 2013) require secondary schools to provide 952 hours of instruction, rather than days in session. In a nutshell, this means that examination days are no longer defined as instructional days; consequently, students not writing final exams (during the last two weeks) must be offered some form of learning activity in order to meet the requisite number of instructional hours. The local has met with district management to discuss the process for addressing this change as it will significantly alter past practice and well-established school culture. Administrators will work with their Staff Committees to collaboratively develop a plan for their particular worksite, and Human Resources will continue to consult with the local office as the process evolves.

Other issues requiring our attention include such topics as the curriculum redesign process and an update on provincial/local bargaining, subjects which I will tackle at a future time. For now, however, I encourage you to "keep your eye on the ball" and to focus on what you do best: working with your students and celebrating the joy of teaching. While the undisguised assault on our profession continues, our commitment to the value of public education is unwavering. Challenges (and frustrations) aside, we remain united in our resolve to oppose the neo-Liberal agenda and to protect and improve public education. As always, many thanks and most importantly, take care.....

Debbie



BCTF Conference for New Teachers,
Student Teachers, and New TTCs
Nurturing the Love of Teaching
February 28—March 1, 2014
Radisson Hotel, 8181 Cambie Road, Richmond
Registration opens January 2014

Bring Your Own Technology: Equity as “essential ingredient” or “pure wind”?



George Orwell once argued that “Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.” Orwell’s specter haunts me every time I see “Bring Your Own Technology” - linked with an equitable approach to transforming teachers’ work. In a nutshell,

BYOT is often pitched as an innovative approach to schooling which empowers students to choose to use more of their own technology in schools.

But is equity truly an essential ingredient of BYOT? Let us be clear that I understand equity as fairness; it is about equal access – to education, to employment – and equal opportunity to succeed in these domains. Equity is not the same as formal equality. Formal equality implies sameness. Equity, on the other hand, assumes difference and takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome. From here I think it’s worth remembering that Vancouver recently toppled New York City to become the most expensive city in North America (<http://www.vancouverobserver.com/city/vancouver-beats-nyc-most-expensive-city-north-america>). More broadly, the latest data from Statistics Canada paint a bleak picture of poverty numbers in BC (<http://www.policynote.ca/latest-statscan-poverty-numbers-paint-bleak-picture-for-bc/>), and there is widespread agreement that “Canada, among many other advanced industrial countries, has a serious and growing inequality problem. Experts at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (the OECD) and the Conference Board of Canada have shown that we have become a much more unequal and divided society over the past generation” (http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/towards_a_more_equal_canada.pdf).

Against this backdrop, I would suggest that it is questionable - if not “pure wind” - to assert that BYOT and equity are compatible. Students enter classrooms with all sorts of technological gizmos. That’s true today, it was true yesterday, and I’m fairly certain it’ll be true tomorrow. These inequalities, as framed in the current discussion of BYOT, are characterized as “choices.” This means, for one thing, that BYOT elides the needs of the disadvantaged and favours the privileged. It also means that BYOT stands to aggravate inequalities within and among schools. At a minimum, BYOT ignores the impacts of policy choices that have resulted in: (a) the worst per-student funding in Canada, approximately \$1,000 below the Canadian average, (b) BC has the highest student-to-teacher ratio in Canada, and (c) the removal of classroom composition assurances for students with special needs. At best, what BYOT functionally accomplishes is a distraction from the deeper, more substantive needs of students - and teachers: resourced classrooms with varied supports. Given these points, it is clear that we should be vigilant in contesting the compatibility of BYOT with equity.

Tobey Steeves teaches at Kitsilano Secondary and is a TTOC

Health and Safety Updates

Rulings related to extra-curricular activities continue to be a concern.

The BCTF has received a WCAT panel decision denying a claim for a teacher who was playing in a staff versus students soccer game at lunch time in the school gymnasium. The claim was disallowed on the basis that the soccer game was not part of the worker’s employment. A similar claim was denied at WCAT last year when the injury occurred during a lunch time students vs. staff softball game.

The BCTF is considering making a submission to the WCB regarding their policies on coverage for extra-curricular activities such as this one, but in the meanwhile, **teachers should be aware that if they choose to participate in recreational, exercise, or sports-related activities outside of instructional time, their WCB claim may not be accepted if they are injured.**

**Please note that this decision does not affect coaches or supervisors of school teams.*

Communication of student information: Prevention of violence-related injuries

WorkSafeBC requirements, Section 115 of the Act, require employers to inform their workers about all known or reasonably foreseeable health and safety hazards including workplace violence.

Section 4.27 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation defines violence as “the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury.”

Privacy law supports the sharing of student information in a way that respects an individual’s privacy and yet allows worker safety to be protected. Disclosure is required if you answer “yes” to the question “Is disclosing this information necessary to help protect this worker’s safety?”

For more information please contact your school-based Health and Safety Rep or the VSTA office at 604-873-5570.



*Alan Lee, Chris Stewart, Shannon Less (BRIT), Omar Kassis (VASS), Brad White, Heather Jensen, Colin Kam, Jean Quon, Mike Griffiths (WRE)
VSTA School Union Rep Training, October 29, 2013*

A Race to the Bottom



Over the past 30 years, and accelerated in the past decade, there has been an increasing level of attack on unions in general, and the very concept of workers organizing to protect the rights of workers and indeed all citizens. One need look no further than the re-defining of previously positive statements such as “flexibility and choice” or the double-speak of terms such as “gold-plated” being applied to workers’ pensions (contributed to throughout a lifetime of productive work) as opposed to the salary + bonuses + stock options that CEOs of public or semi-public corporations receive. What is often lost in this conversation involving figures in the millions and billions is the correlation between the progress unions have achieved over decades to the standard of living of not only union members but all members of society. In Canada, unionized workers earn, on average, \$4.97/hour more than non-unionized workers. When this group of workers with fair wages and benefits go out into their communities this translates into significant contributions to the local economy. Nonetheless, this progress has not been without opposition even though union values go much deeper than achieving for our own. Union wages also help set the standard of compensation for non-unionized workers in comparable industries. The goal is to raise the standard of

living for all, and union supported initiatives such as the *living wage campaign* is an example of this. The underlying principle that unions work for is bringing greater equity to all in society.

The BCTF is proud to be a Social Justice Union and issues of equity, respect and justice are core to our profession. Over the past century, unionized workers in Canada fought for a healthy, balanced and productive work-life for *every* member of society. Because unions work from the principle that *all* people are equal, they strove for pay equity for women, freedom from harassment and discrimination for all workers and a minimum wage (a first step to decent wages). Because we believe in the right to dignity and security after a lifetime of work, unions advocated for job security and pensions. They didn’t just demand this for themselves: They achieved Old Age Security (OAS 1952), Canada Pension Plan (CPP 1965) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS 1965) for *all* Canadians. Because we have a right to be safe at work, unions fought for Labour Code Standards and Health and Safety Regulations (Workers Compensation Act) that cover *all* workers. These are just the highlights of what has been gained through the work of unions. For more information go to <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/action-center/together-fairness-works> or check out the ads running on TV on the CLC home page www.canadianlabour.ca.



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 2014.

- 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.

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.

Information and application forms are available online at <http://tinyurl.com/17sn8uf>

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.

APPLICATION DEADLINE is Monday, November 25, 2013 at 5:00 pm. Applications are **NOT** accepted via e-mail.

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 2013 November 30 to begin retirement, with pension, on 2014 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 from January 2009, 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 December 31st in the year of retirement
- submit request to retire, in writing, **on or before 2013**

November 30 for a retirement date of 2013 December 31. Based on the salary upon retirement, excluding allowances, the minimum salary to be PB(5), step 10, the maximum to be 6M, step 10, minus PB(5), step 3, and to be adjusted by the applicable earnings as at age upon retirement date:

Age	4PC	5PB	5PA	6M	Payout %
55	\$19,038	\$19,038	\$25,102	\$26,173	100%
56	\$17,134	\$17,134	\$22,592	\$23,556	90%
57	\$15,230	\$15,230	\$20,082	\$20,938	80%
58	\$13,327	\$13,327	\$17,571	\$18,321	70%
59	\$11,423	\$11,423	\$15,061	\$15,704	60%
60	\$9,519	\$9,519	\$12,551	\$13,087	50%
61	\$7,615	\$7,615	\$10,041	\$10,469	40%
62	\$5,711	\$5,711	\$7,531	\$7,852	30%
63	\$3,808	\$3,808	\$5,020	\$5,235	20%
64	\$3,808	\$3,808	\$5,020	\$5,235	20%

Note: For more information on applying for the ERIP, please call the VSTA office or Human Resources.



George Yannakoulis, June Arnett, Natalie Wai, Jay Leveille (LB), Marlene Perrett (KITS) & Katherine Shipley (VT), Paula Saar & John Silver (JO)
VSTA School Union Rep Training, October 29, 2013

Upcoming Pension Seminars

YOUR PENSION, YOUR FUTURE. This free seminar is aimed towards new- and mid-career plan members. Join us as we explain your pension benefits and help you understand how decisions you make today can impact your future pension income, no matter how far into the future it may be.

Seminar Dates and Locations

NOV 19	Burnaby	6-7:30 PM
JAN 29	Vancouver	6-7:30 PM
MAR 25	Richmond	6-7:30 PM

THINKING ABOUT RETIRING. If you are within 5 years of retirement, then this free seminar is for you. Thinking about retiring and starting your pension may raise many questions for you. We can help you with this period of change.

Spring Seminar Dates and Locations

JAN 14	Langley	MAR 4	Vancouver
JAN 16	Burnaby	MAR 26	Langley
JAN 21	Delta	APR 10	Langley
JAN 23	Surrey	APR 15	Burnaby
FEB 1	Vancouver**	APR 23	Delta
FEB 15	N. Vancouver**	MAY 6	Vancouver
FEB 18	Richmond	MAY 8	Surrey
FEB 27	Coquitlam		

Sessions are 6-8 PM unless otherwise indicated
** 9-11 AM; 12:30-2:30 PM

Pre-registration is required. Dates and location are subject to change. To view the most current schedule and register online, visit tpp.pensionsbc.ca.

VSTA Executive

Front: Phoebe MacMillan,
Nancy Palejko, Trish Mugford,
Debbie Pawluk, Sylvia Metzner.
Back: Tobey Steeves, Chris Wong,
Leanne Hagglund, Phil Lee,
John Silver, Katie Leung,
Rory Brown, Darren Gock.
Camera shy: Mary Filleul,
Dan Hale, Christine Stewart.

