



Tackboard

Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

Volume 30
Number 4
2016-01-28

President's Message

The VSTA has been active on many fronts in the last three weeks and the Winter Holiday break seems like long ago... In-House-Table Officers visited all secondary schools and spoke to colleagues about three important issues.

We addressed the importance of attending the Vancouver Teachers' Federation (VSTA and VESTA) Special General Meeting on February 2, 4:00 p.m. at Tupper. Members will take the opportunity at the meeting to exercise their franchise and vote on a recommendation from the VTF Executive Committee. The **recommendation is to allow the VSB to amend the standard school calendar** that includes a one week Spring Break to a school calendar that includes the one week Spring Break plus an additional 5 days of school closure. Passing this recommendation from the VTF Executive allows the board, on a without prejudice basis, to breach the terms of the Collective Agreement and deviate from the standard school calendar of a one week Spring Break. To make this arrangement possible, and in keeping with the practice over the last few years, teachers work extra minutes in each instructional day to make up for the extra five days at Spring Break. The recommendation is to allow this change for the next three school years. As there seems to be differing opinions on the issue, it is important that as many secondary teachers attend and contribute to the discussion.

Secondly, Katharine, Trish (filing in for Sylvia) and I spoke with school staffs about the importance of keeping vigilant in our collective opposition to the **VSB Attendance Management Program**. The program, rolled out in February of last school year, targets teachers whose absence from work due to illness exceeds a number of days in excess of 95% of their peer-group's absences for illness. Promoted as supportive, the program forces teachers with health issues into conversations with their principal that have universally been reported to us as shame inducing, awkward and overly personal. It has been reported to us that many principals express their discomfort with the meetings as well. Information given to teachers at these meetings includes data that indicates how many different TOCs worked in their position while they were absent. This particular information, while in no way supportive, also suggests that TOCs are, in some measure, inadequate. **We maintain our advice to not divulge any medical information in these meetings and to attend the meeting (teachers must attend) with a staff rep. We also request that the VSTA be entrusted with a copy of**

VTF GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

4pm at Tupper Auditorium

Agenda: **SCHOOL CALENDAR**

Please make every effort to attend this important meeting.

the document provided to teachers at the meetings so as we may best advance our work against this intrusive and offensive attack on our collectively bargained sick leave.

Thirdly, we spoke of a process that has now begun to unfold in earnest, that being the **VSB Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP)**. The interim version of the Plan, passed at the January 25th Board meeting, sets out a process that could see many schools closed or repurposed, at least two of them secondary schools. The VSTA is engaged fully with the Board on these issues and is actively involved in consultative processes that will keep the concerns of teachers in sharp focus through the upcoming months of planning for the release of the full LRFP in June of this school year. The LRFP is inextricably linked to the Ministry of Education's insistence that VSB schools move from 84.6% capacity to 95% capacity over the life of the Plan. The Ministry has yet to publicly justify the reasoning behind this insistence and has restricted the release of any Seismic Mitigation Program monies until the LRFP is fully established. Astoundingly, this amounts to the Ministry keeping students and teachers in unsafe buildings until the VSB makes firm plans to close schools. Please feel free to contact the office with thoughts, ideas or concerns as we move through the next five months of this process. We will keep members of the Association updated as the LRFP unfolds.

Finally, we spoke to school staffs about the importance of taking care of each other and working collegially and productively as we move through the middle of the year, a time that typically sees everyone in the system working hard to fit in all the exciting ideas and planning in their curricula. The VSTA has noted an increase in teachers requiring support for issues largely stemming from intense demands on their time and resources. We urge all teachers to look out for one another and offer support as needs become apparent. Of course, please reach out to us in the office if we can be of any assistance.

Take care,

Rory

It's a Go!

The Supreme Court of Canada will hear the BCTF's appeal of the 2015 BC Court of Appeal ruling. So once again teachers will take the fight for fairness forward – this time to the highest court in the land.

"It's been 14 years since the original unconstitutional legislation that stripped our collective agreements, but BC teachers are still very committed to our efforts to win back those important working conditions for teachers, which are also our students' learning conditions," Jim Iker said.

Iker also emphasized that government should not wait until the court processes are finished but rather act now to properly fund public education and address teachers' longstanding concerns.

"A month from now, the BC Liberal government will deliver its 2016 budget. Enrolment is starting to increase after years of decline and we know there are more students with special needs, refugee students, and others with unique needs entering the system. This is the year for government to make a real shift. It's time to invest in BC's kids again."



Compassionate Care Leave

The teachers' provincial collective agreement provides compassionate-care leave for all members.

BCTF members are entitled to eight weeks of leave in units of one or more weeks to care for a member of their family or their spouse's family, including a parent, child, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, foster child or anyone who is considered to be like a close relative regardless of whether or not they are related by blood, adoption, marriage, or common-law partnership.

Members taking Compassionate Care Leave are entitled to Employment Insurance benefits, and the Collective Agreement requires the school district to supplement those benefits to 100% of the member's salary for the duration of the leave.

A medical certificate may be required to substantiate that the purpose of the leave is for providing care or support to a family member having a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death.

Seniority accrual and benefit coverage continues during the leave.

For full details, contact the VSTA office or see *new* Provincial Collective Agreement, Article G.2.

Long Range Facilities Plan

The Board has released its draft report ahead of the January 31 deadline imposed by the Ministry. As rumoured, the VBE has been given a mandate by the province to get schools from the current 84.6% capacity up to 95% before money will be released to complete the Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP).

The key issues addressed are:

- Capacity utilization
- Priority SMP projects
- Temporary accommodation strategies
- The process for identifying schools for repurposing and closure

In order to achieve the 95% capacity utilization target Vancouver would need to close the equivalent of 11-12 elementary schools and one secondary school over the next 15 years. These closures would be in addition to the up to 8 school sites (potentially 6 elementary and 2 secondary schools) that may be repurposed for

temporary accommodation to support the SMP. If the VBE does not comply it is unlikely the MOE will fund seismic upgrades for every existing school that is at high seismic risk. So, what does that mean? High risk schools with low capacity utilization open without upgrades OR funding the cost of seismic mitigation for these schools from VBE (lack of) funding sources. Now that your interest is piqued and you want to know more (including the names of some of the schools likely to be affected) you can go to the VBE website and check out the Long Range Facilities Plan link below:

<http://www.vsb.bc.ca/vsbengagement>

As always call us here at the office for information and advice – we are engaged with the employer and are available to answer your questions on this seismic upheaval to teachers' and students' lives.



CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION DAYS FOR ALL TEACHERS

March 4 and April 15 – locations TBA

Curriculum Implementation Days

What they are and what they aren't...

Technically in-service, the two days teachers negotiated with the government will be used more like Professional Development. Teachers should come prepared to engage with their colleagues in examining the new curriculum documents as well as to discuss and develop ideas for implementation. It will be an excellent forum for teachers to share what they are already doing in the classroom. Let's face it – the "new curriculum" isn't necessarily all that new... Teachers will decide to work on what they need to work on and they will be able to do it together. It's a rare opportunity to connect with other professionals all over the district as we face (embrace?) this new challenge.

Curriculum Implementation Planners

The VSTA would like to thank all the teachers who volunteered to participate in the first of the two planning days. These teachers will be joined by others from their school for a second day of planning in February. On March 4 and April 15 all teachers will benefit from the advanced planning when they are released to examine the new curriculum in their subject areas and at their schools. We are well aware of the concerns around the lack of clarity on assessment, reporting structures and the proposed graduation program. In spite of the invitation to teachers to provide feedback to the Ministry on its website it is difficult to articulate specific concerns and constructive feedback with such a nebulous framework of information. Teachers know that courses cannot be offered without planning, assessment cannot be meaningful without structure, and students cannot graduate if requirements are changed without reasonable notice. The BCTF continues to meet with the Ministry of Education and pressure them to finalize the Grad Program. We hope this information is released before the new curriculum is fully unleashed.

Jan Unwin and Maureen Dockendorf (both seconded to the Ministry of Education) presented the following 8 "mythbusters" about the state of the Grad Program, soon to be known as the Graduation Learning Years:

- The grade 10-12 curriculum is NOT complete. Continue to give feedback.
- Grad requirements have NOT been decided.
- NO courses have been removed from the Curriculum. Discussions surrounding the future of Planning 10 and Socials 11, for example, are still ongoing.
- Nothing yet has changed in regards to reporting and letter grades.
- The Ministry IS engaged with Post-Secondary institutions to make sure that our students have the requirements they need.
- For the 2016-2017 school year, NOTHING has changed in terms of course planning and timetabling from the current year.
- There will NOT be a new Grad Program in place next year.
- There are currently NO requirements to assess Core Competencies.



EMPOWERED

**Our rights
Our movement
Our strength**

**BCTF Conference for New Teachers,
New TTOCs and Student Teachers**

February 26 – 27, 2016
Radisson Hotel, 8181 Cambie Road, Richmond, BC V6X 3X9

**Workshops
Networking
Resources fair**

For information: bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2016 

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

FEB 17	Richmond	APR 14	Vancouver
MAR 1	North Van		

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.

Seminar Dates and Locations

FEB 9	Richmond	APR 26	Delta
FEB 13	Vancouver	APR 27	Coquitlam
FEB 18	Surrey	MAY 3	Langley
MAR 5	North Van	MAY 4	Burnaby
MAR 10	Langley	MAY 10	Vancouver
APR 12	Vancouver		

Pre-registration is required.

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



School Visits

You may have spotted Rory, Katharine or Trish who have been out and about visiting schools January 15 through to the 22. Teachers were reminded of the **VTF General Meeting TUESDAY, FEB 2, 4 PM** at the Tupper Auditorium. Issues around the calendar, the Board's Long Range Facilities Plan, Curriculum Planning days, upcoming SURT workshops in Conflict Resolution and the Attendance Management Program were the main topics covered. As always, it's interesting to talk to teachers throughout the district, and we appreciate the opportunity to connect with all the secondary schools in Vancouver. We are looking forward to a really great turnout at the Feb 2 VTF meeting to vote on next year's calendar!



Trish Mugford at John Oliver/VLN School Visit