



Tackboard



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President's Message

Almost there! Firstly, I want to encourage teachers to pace themselves over the next two weeks. It is an incredibly busy time of year and we all need to be reminded to not let the demands of the job and our home life overrun our health and happiness.

The VSTA has been active on many fronts since our last Tackboard. In discussions with the school board and with our sister local VESTA, it is apparent that we will need to again hold a VTF (VSTA and VESTA combined) general meeting to provide democratic voice to the issue of the school calendar for 2016/17. This meeting will be held at Tupper Secondary on February 3 (see sidebar). Our Collective Agreement language allows us to veto proposed changes to the standard school calendar (one week Spring Break) and as a result of conversations on the topic, teachers will need to assemble at a meeting to vote on any proposed alternative school calendars. It is essential that teachers take this opportunity to have their voices heard. Please mark your calendars now.

The VSB Long Range Facilities Plan is beginning to take shape and the VSTA is actively involved in discussions on how this plan will be communicated and how it will affect teachers and learning in Vancouver secondary schools. The plan, due in June of 2015 and currently behind schedule, is particularly complex as it is inexorably linked to any Seismic Projects that may or may not be approved by the province. Please expect more information on this topic in the coming months.

Planning is well underway on the Curriculum Implementation in-service days on March 4 and April 15 made available for teachers through negotiation between the BCTF and the Ministry of Education. School Union Teams have been asked to submit up to eight names of teachers from their school who would be willing to engage with the new curriculum immediately and be released for two additional days to assist in planning how the district-wide release days are shaped. We encourage teachers to review the curriculum documents on the Ministry of Education website and leave feedback for the writing teams. We also continue to lobby the Ministry of Education in all available venues to publish both the graduation program and the assessment strategy that will complement the new documents and allow full engagement by teachers in BC.

Please take care of yourselves over the next few weeks and enjoy your well-deserved break with friends and family. Here's wishing you a happy and restful holiday season from everyone at the VSTA office!

Rory

VSTA GENERAL MEETING

**Tuesday, January 26
4pm at Tupper Auditorium**

**AGENDA: ELECTION OF
DELEGATES TO BCTF AGM**

The BCTF Annual General Meeting is scheduled from Saturday, March 12, to Tuesday, March 15, at the Hyatt Regency in Vancouver. If you are interested in participating, please attend the General Meeting and see your Staff Rep or www.vsta.ca for the delegate nomination form.

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor of our general meeting.

All teachers are encouraged to attend to elect delegates to the BCTF.

VTF GENERAL MEETING

**Tuesday, February 2
4pm at Tupper Gymnasium**

AGENDA: SCHOOL CALENDAR

VSTA SIF fees are now Overdue

Members who have not paid their 2015-16 VSTA-SIF fees yet are advised to do so **promptly** as the payment of fees is required to maintain membership in the fund and to qualify for benefits. Members paying the fee after receiving a reminder notice in January will be required to pay an additional **\$20 late fee**.

If you are unsure about your payment of the current fee please contact Kim at the VSTA office, kim@vsta.ca or call 604-873-5570. Fees are payable to VSTA-SIF by cheque or bank draft.

Note: This is the **optional** top up plan offered by the VSTA, and not to be confused with the BCTF's Salary Indemnity Plan.



TOGETHER 2015

ORGANIZING, INNOVATING, LEADING

November 16 to 18, 2015
Vancouver

The BC Federation of Labour held its 2015 organizing conference in mid-November. Over the course of three days delegates were engaged in workshops, political panels and presentations focused on the changing nature of work and how to organize ourselves. Two recurring themes were the need for the labour movement to recognize and adapt to the changing and more precarious nature of work for many British Columbians and the significant shifts occurring in the political landscape that provide an opportunity for a re-examination of more worker friendly economic policies.

On the opening day, Unifor economist Jim Stanford made the case for Collective Bargaining as the essential leveling agent that allows working people to gain their fair share of the pie. With the decline in union density since the 1970's, employers have more aggressively sought to limit their obligations to their employees and shifted the risk to workers in the precarious part-time, contract-based, "gig" economy. Rather than being obsolete, Stanford argues that in fact unions are an essential agent in a healthy society.

This message was reinforced in a workshop on Workers' Action Centres which have been developed in Toronto as alternatives to the traditional union for workers no longer formally connected to the labour movement. These centres have become focal points for campaigns to raise employment standards for all such as the campaign to raise paid sick day entitlement to seven per year for all workers.

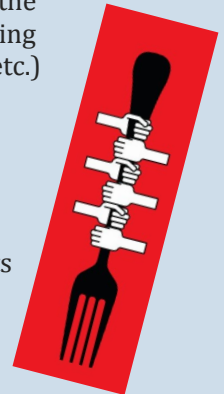
During a later political panel hosted by Vaughn Palmer, Gil McGowan, leader of the Alberta Federation of Labour, outlined a key premise of the campaign for progressive change in their recent Provincial election which led to the first ever NDP majority in Alberta history. The case was made that the neo-liberal agenda of successive Conservative governments was proven to have failed and that the people of Alberta could feel it "in their guts". This, for the first time, opened up political space for progressive parties to embrace more positive economic arguments.

A new perspective on the changing nature of work

On Tuesday, November 17, I attended Dr. Guy Standing's talk on the new emerging class, the Precariat. This lecture coincided with BCFED's fall conference and Irene Lanzinger the president of BCFED and others including Stephanie Smith (BCGEU), Ivan Limpricht (UFCW) and Kendra Strauss (SFU) were on the panel to discuss Dr. Standing's lecture.

Guy Standing argues that globalization and the flexibilization of labour have created new class structures. On top is a small Elite class (less than 0.01%) who control virtually everything, while at the bottom is the Precariat class, a group defined through chronic insecurity.

This Precariat is an emerging class consisting not only of precarious workers such as migrants and immigrants who have always worked under precarious conditions, but also of people who in the past have worked in traditional working class jobs (manufacturing, factories, etc.) under conditions of job security and unionization. These jobs are rapidly disappearing, leaving many caught between unstable service sector jobs with ever harder to access, means-tested benefits. A third group consists of the highly educated middle class caught chasing contracts and short-term temporary jobs which offer little to no security and no career advancement.



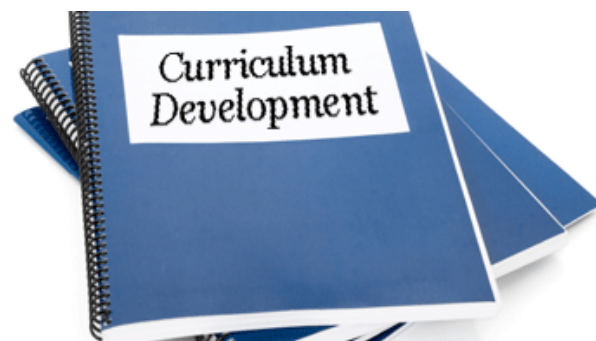
Workers in the second two groups do not have nor may they ever have a career that offers the steady continuous and secure full time work which leads to a lack of any occupational identity (such as a teacher). These precarious workers have been growing in numbers since the 'globalization' of labour started in the 1980s.

Dr. Standing challenged the labour collective to embrace these precarious workers in the labour movement but cautioned that the collective must listen to these workers and to learn from their experiences to create a new labour agenda for the future.

Reference: Guy Standing's latest book is entitled "A Precariat Charter: from denizens to citizens."

Phil Lee is a teacher at Van Tech Secondary

As you know, teachers have negotiated two New Curriculum In-Service days with the government for this year and the next two years as well. Although there are many questions regarding the Grad Program, as well as how resources needed to follow through on the New Curriculum design will be funded, the fact that the BCTF was able to secure these days should be considered a success. It is important to note that these two days will be taken out of instructional time and are in-service, not Pro-D. This means that it is not appropriate to engage in self-directed Pro-D, as it important to differentiate between autonomous Pro-D and employer mandated in-service.



From the BCTF New Teachers Handbook:

Professional development activities	In-service activities
<p>Professional development assumes teaching is a profession with a focus on the development of expertise. It is initiated by teachers rather than by outside sources and can be informal and take a variety of forms.</p> <p>Professional development should be rooted in practice, research-based, collaborative, long-term, aimed at instructional improvement and is more effective in changing the classroom practices of teachers when a cohort or collective of teachers from a school department or grade are involved as a unit.</p> <p>Professional development goals should emerge from the needs of the teachers.</p>	<p>In-service has a long history in education but is not always regarded with enthusiasm by teachers.</p> <p>In-service is often more for satisfying legal or managerial requirements and less for professional growth.</p> <p>In-service is often mandatory, formal, planned and scheduled by administration.</p> <p>In-service has been characterized as a “tell, sell and practice” format and a “sit and get” method where information presented by experts is not associated with changes in teacher practice.</p>

Below are two examples from the curriculum document entitled Curriculum Overview: What’s new? What’s the same?

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/redesign.pdf>

Core French

What’s New?

- Flexibility of the new curriculum to support a wide range of modern approaches to language instruction
- Integrated nature of the new curriculum: there are no “stand-alone” pieces, but rather all elements are linked and interconnected
- Notion that culture is not just something to learn about, but is seen as a vehicle for acquiring deeper understanding of the language, of others, and of oneself

What’s the same?

- Development of all of the language competencies—reading, writing, listening, speaking and interacting
- Use of authentic documents and tasks to support the development of communication skills
- Notion that acquiring French includes learning about Francophone culture
- Inclusion of many of the skills and competencies of the “can do” statements from the 2011 draft curriculum, which was based on the philosophies and principles in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). These skills have been woven into the Curricular Competencies

Mathematics

What’s New?

- Foundational skills are clearly indicated in the Content for each grade
- Content has been further aligned to support the developmental progression of students
- Aboriginal perspectives are infused in the learning standards and elaborations at each grade
- The curriculum is designed for students to become financially literate and able to make sound financial decisions

What’s the same?

- Foundational skills and processes of Mathematics remain an integral part of the Mathematics curriculum and reside in the Content and Curricular Competencies
- Application of foundational skills to problem solving continues to have a strong focus in the curriculum’s goal of developing well-educated citizens

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

JAN 20	Burnaby	MAR 1	North Van
FEB 17	Richmond	APR 14	Vancouver

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

JAN 13	Burnaby	MAR 10	Langley
JAN 19	Coquitlam	APR 12	Vancouver
JAN 26	Delta	APR 26	Delta
JAN 28	Langley	APR 27	Coquitlam
FEB 9	Richmond	MAY 3	Langley
FEB 13	Vancouver	MAY 4	Burnaby
FEB 18	Surrey	MAY 10	Vancouver
MAR 5	North Van		

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



Highlights of the Fall Rep Assembly

The Fall Rep Assembly (Nov 6 & 7) this year had the distinction of dealing with all agenda items including unfinished business! I have never seen such a remarkable feat. Perhaps it was the rare state of not having to reflect on, endure, or plan for job action that helped the motivation and efficiency of this year's Local Representatives which included Phil Lee, Trish Mugford and Rory Brown.

Highlights included Recommendations passed without dissent: That locals not accept the Ministry "cash for kids" scheme, that the BCTF state its opposition to "conversion therapies" which is a form of abuse against LGBTQ students and that the BCTF oppose the ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) because, among other things, it would "place corporate rights over the rights of citizens, limit the ability of government to control the price of pharmaceuticals and allow corporations to extract from government a payment for the "loss of profits" if a business is restricted by laws to protect the environment or social objectives of the country."

Closer to home was a Resolution passed that all released officers (both local and provincial) bear the same hardships as the general membership during any strike/lockout – Vancouver already has a local policy on this: Like the BCTF our in house table officers do not get paid during strike action.

While our class size and composition issues remain before the courts another Resolution passed was that the BCTF make it a priority to address the workload issues of DL teachers – currently with no set class size numbers!

An eye-opening report on MyEducation BC and Information Policy issues was presented and should be shared with all teachers, students and parents in the province. PAC reps in particular may wish to check it out at the following link: <http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Issues/Technology/MyEdBC-PolicyIssues.pdf>

Sick Leave: Use and Abuse

The close proximity to hundreds of children and adults in conjunction with the daily stress of our jobs makes teaching, most undoubtedly, one of the occupations most prone to employee illness. Consequently, that is why we have our sick leave benefit and why teachers should never shy away from using their sick leave or ever come to work when they are not well.

The misuse of sick leave, however, is considered a serious offense in the eyes of the Board. Simply put, from the employer's perspective, fraudulent use of sick leave constitutes both theft of time and a breach of trust on the teacher's behalf. Teachers who take personal time off and claim it as an illness can expect to be disciplined with a deduction of pay for the day(s) off and an **additional suspension without pay equal to or greater than the time claimed as ill**. Additionally, such a discipline is also reported to the Teacher Regulation Branch of the Ministry of Education which can mete out further discipline.

Teachers wishing to take a *short term personal leave of absence* must apply in writing to Human Resources. Such leave is without pay and is limited to up to ten (10) days per year (at least five (5) of the days must be taken sequentially). Such leaves will normally not be attached to a school break unless unusual circumstances prevail (Article G.26.a.).

Please contact the VSTA office if you have any additional questions about how to apply for a short term leave of absence.

Violence Against BC Teachers Survey

Simon Fraser University and BCTF invite you to complete a survey on your experiences of workplace violence and bullying during your career as an educator. Information from this survey will be used to help estimate the incident rate of violence against teachers and to identify steps that can be taken to prevent incidents of violence and aggression and deal with incidents if they occur. Participation is entirely voluntary and all information you provide will remain confidential.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a 30 minute survey. This survey can be accessed by visiting the link below and can be completed from any location using a computer connected to the Internet.

<https://survey.psyc.sfu.ca/2.00/index.php/335988/lang-en>

Thank you in advance for your time and participation.