



TACKBOARD



The monthly newsletter of the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

We've so far had at least two teachers ask us when the Winter Holidays start – it is definitely that time of year. Dark and stormy nights, report cards and colder than usual classrooms due to the natural gas shortage following the pipeline explosion near Prince George this fall all contribute to looking forward to a much deserved break just around the corner.

At the office, we are preparing for local bargaining. We will have appointed our bargaining team by the December 11th VTF General Meeting where we will be ratifying our local bargaining objectives. We expect to commence local bargaining in January. We have had several productive meetings with the Employer about staffing and timetabling season with the goal of improving this process and the actual timetables themselves. Thank you to the Staff & WLC/B Reps who have volunteered time to be a part of those meetings. We hope that teachers are having more success this year than last in terms of accessing Remedy. It is very disappointing to see that we have hundreds of more classes in violation of the restored language this year than we had last year – clearly, things need to be improved at the school level when it comes to timetabling.

On the horizon for the New Year will be the Board's updated Long Range Facilities Plan, which will have implications for many schools in terms of how the plan intersects with ongoing seismic mitigation and new builds. The VSTA has been asked by the VSTA Council to formulate a position on seismic projects, so the VSTA Executive will be sending a recommendation to January's Council meeting for debate.

Please attend the January 22nd General Meeting where we will be electing our BCTF AGM delegates (if you haven't been, please consider putting your name forward), some amendments to our By-laws and Constitution and an update on our building.

The VSTA office wishes everyone a restful winter break. We hope you are able to unplug and forget about work worries for a couple of weeks. We look forward to seeing you in the New Year!



Terry, Treena, Katharine & Shelby

VSTA GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, January 22, 2019

4:00 pm at Tupper Auditorium

AGENDA

1. Election of VSTA Delegates to the BCTF AGM

The VSTA recommends that every teacher attend at least one BCTF AGM during their teaching career. It is an incredible opportunity to work alongside over 600 teachers from all over BC and to fully understand how the BCTF works. Please consider putting your name forward as a delegate for the 2019 BCTF AGM. The voting of the BCTF AGM delegates will be occurring at the January 22 General Meeting. The 2019 BCTF AGM will be taking place in Victoria from March 16-19, 2019. 17 delegates and 2 alternate delegates will be elected.

2. Motion to Amend the VSTA By-Laws to add a TTOC Standing Committee and Chairperson.

3. Election of Social & Environmental Justice Committee Chair which also involves a seat on the VSTA Executive Committee. Shelby Calman has stepped down as the SEJ Chair, and the SEJ Committee has endorsed Shannon Moore from Killarney as their new chair.

February 15th Curriculum Implementation Day

The Board will be organizing a CI Day in February themed around Assessment. Please consider putting your name forward to host a workshop if this is something you have been experimenting with. Presenting is excellent Pro-D experience.

You do not have to be an expert – it is simply an opportunity to create a space for colleagues to discuss assessment practices and for you to share your learning. If interested, email Denise Johnson at djohnson@vsb.bc.ca

SCHOOL SUPPLY TAX CREDIT FOR TEACHERS

In 2016, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) announced a tax credit for Teachers and Early Childhood educators who spent personal money (not reimbursed through PAC, school or classroom enhancement funding) for supplies used in their classroom. The maximum expense amount is \$1,000 worth of supplies (\$150 max. refundable tax credit) per calendar year (Jan-Dec).

A form is available on the VSB Printing Digital Storefront for employees to download and complete themselves if they are eligible to take advantage of the tax credit. It is each employee's responsibility to download the form, complete and request their school based administrator to sign if they are eligible and wish to take advantage of this federal tax credit. Employee's should have the receipts attached to the form to prove the purchases and maintain in case the CRA randomly audits their personal income tax filing.

Please find the form on the VSB Printing Digital Storefront at <http://printing.vsb.bc.ca/DSF>. You will need to login with your VSB login information and look for form number CLA-PA-012.



What exactly is a Grievance?



What exactly is a grievance? According to the preamble to the Grievance Procedure in our Collective Agreement (CA):

The parties agree that this article constitutes the method and procedure for a final and conclusive settlement of any dispute (hereinafter referred to as "the grievance") respecting the interpretation, application, operation or alleged violation of this Collective Agreement, including a question as to whether a matter is arbitrable.

Did that clarify it? Probably not! The VSTA In House Table Officers (IHTOs) file a grievance when the language of our Collective Agreement is not being met or when there are issues regarding past practice with the Employer. Grievances are not about issues like teaching loads or room allocation, rather they address issues such as denial of leave (bereavement, parental etc.), excessive discipline, failure to accommodate, improper post and fill processes, or class size/composition and staffing ratios just to name a few.

In very general terms, a grievance starts at Step One with a Staff Rep at the school level speaking with the administration about an issue. Often they are resolved at this level which is why the role of Staff Rep is so important and why having a positive working relationship with administration helps to enforce the language of our CA. If the issue cannot be resolved at Step One, or if the issue is something happening at the Board or is a systemic issue, then it moves to a Step Two, which is filed by the In House Table officers. A VSTA Grievance Officer meets one on one with a member of the VSB Labour Relations department where questions are asked and there is an attempt to resolve the grievance. If it is still not resolved, it would move to a Step Three, where two of the VSTA IHTOs meet with two members of the VSB Employee Relations in an attempt to resolve the issue. If it cannot be resolved at this point, it is sent to the BCTF who looks at the facts of the grievance and decides to take it on or not and send it to arbitration.

Just for perspective, the VSTA currently has seven active grievances with the Board.

Why I attended a BCTF AGM



I have been asked by many members why I gave up 4 days of my *precious* spring break last year to attend the BCTF AGM. Normally, I laugh and say "*It was actually a REALLY good time!*" I had no idea what I was getting into when Rory and Katharine suggested I put my name forward last year. In fact, I had to ask questions like "*As someone whose wardrobe consists mainly of overalls, do I need to bring nice clothes?*" to which they laughed and said no. But in reality, attending the AGM was one of the most enlightening experiences I have had in my teaching career. It was incredible to hear debate about issues ranging from equity on Executive, to education finance and policy, to the health, welfare and safety of teachers from members from all over the province. I had my eyes opened to many issues facing members that I was completely unaware of. Yes, the days are long sitting in a ballroom with recycled air, and some of the resolutions may seem monotonous, and the thought of people debating which type of comma to use

(WAIT, WHAT? THERE IS MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF COMMA?) might make you want to pull your hair out, but these are the people and the resolutions that are *creating positive change* within our union – and YOU can be a part of that change. Since the AGM, I was inspired to run for Executive and become much more actively involved in our union. It truly was a life changing experience! I hope to see some new faces there this year.

Alyssa Reid - Windermere

BC Ministry of Education Funding Formula Review and Prevalence Funding Model

Rob Fleming, BC's Minister of Education, took a lengthy amount of time to respond to Glen Hansman via conference call and a letter regarding the BCTF's concerns around the much awaited Funding Formula Review. The VSTA, along with a number of education stakeholders, made a submission to the Ministry regarding our concerns last spring.

There is speculation that we may see a movement to funding Special Education with a prevalence funding model. That is, school boards would be funded based on the incidences of special needs in a population as an alternative to the current assessment and reporting-driven model. In the current model, a student's designation drives direct funding to their school and classroom. In a prevalence

model, funding is allotted to the district based on the prevalence of a designation in the general population.

There may be benefits to this change, but BCTF/VSTA are concerned that cost containment is the motivation for the change rather than improving the system to provide the necessary supports to ensure student success. Other jurisdictions, such as Ontario, that have moved to prevalence funding have noted the consequence of uncoupling a student's designation from the funding the district receives to support them. Prevalence funding forces a shift in focus at the district and school level from meeting the special education needs of students to rationing a fixed allocation of funding from the provincial government.



Parents are encouraged to speak to their MLAs to ask questions and seek clarification regarding a movement to a prevalence funding model.

The November/December Issue of the BCTF Teacher Magazine has a comprehensive article also – see <https://tinyurl.com/newfundingmodel>.

For further reading, see Patti Bacchus' article in the November 8, 2018 edition of the Georgia Straight for commentary on the process. <https://tinyurl.com/patti-bacchus>

Cannabis in the Workplace



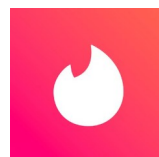
Workplaces across Canada are reviewing their drug and alcohol policies now that cannabis is legal. Teachers should be aware of the laws as well as the expectations of teacher conduct when using recreational cannabis. Standard Two for Educators in BC from the BC Teacher's Council states that: *Educators act with integrity, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the profession. They understand that their individual conduct contributes to the perception of the profession as a whole. **Educators are accountable for their conduct while on duty, as well as off duty, where that conduct has an effect on the education system.** Educators have an understanding of the education system in BC and the law as it relates to their duties.*

This means that it would not be wise to use cannabis recreationally in public where one could be seen and identified as a teacher, or to post images on social media using recreational cannabis as, unfortunately, a member of the public could lodge a complaint. This is not so different from the use of alcohol, except that cannabis still carries a stigma, despite being legal.

If members choose to purchase recreational cannabis, be aware that the only legal suppliers are through the BC Liquor Distribution Branch's (BCLDB) online store or the single registered retail store in Kamloops. All dispensaries in Vancouver are now fully considered to be part of the black market and completely illegal.

Members that have a legal medical cannabis prescription (prescribed by their GP) should speak to their Doctor to make sure that it does not impact their ability to work safely given their specific teaching assignment. If any members have any further concerns around medical cannabis prescriptions, they can phone the office for more information.

Teaching and Tinder



The public and government both regard teaching as a profession in which teachers are expected to uphold certain ethical standards that have been highlighted in this month's "Cannabis in the Workplace" article. This means that with the exponential growth and use of technology, specifically with social media, teachers are vulnerable to criticism and potential discipline when social media activity and professional standards collide.

One such area of concern is online dating with dating apps like Tinder. Some people post pictures on Tinder that could be deemed inappropriate by those who investigate and enforce teacher professional standards. There have been accounts of individuals being "catfished" (luring someone into a relationship by means of a fictional online persona). There have been incidents involving teachers in other countries, such as cases that made the news in the U.K. where school workers found pictures of themselves shared on social media after having been catfished by a student. (<https://tinyurl.com/tinderwarning>)

While there are laws in Canada that protect citizens from cyberbullying and non-consensual distribution of intimate images, teachers should be cautious about what they post online. Due to the exceptionally high standards by which teachers are measured, there could still be grounds for disciplinary action by the Employer or the TRB if they were to find out about a case where a teacher shared intimate photos or made sexually explicit comments on a dating app.



As a teaching aid... use this free booklet on canned food

"The Canned Food Handbook" contains authoritative answers to these and many other questions about canned foods. It's all yours at no cost.

There are 3 other booklets on

canned foods and commercial canning which we feel will be of great use to every home economics teacher. They are all free. Just fill in the coupon and mail it to us.

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Home Economics Section, Dept. 12-12-49
92 King St. E., Hamilton, Ontario

Please send me **FREE** English ☐ French ☐

...copies of "Canned Food Handbook,"
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...copies of "Help Make Canada Strong."

Name Please print plainly
School
Address
City Prov.
(Please use 4¢ postage on your enquiry)



An example of visual teaching in this booklet. Here is the two-step use of the liquid in canned vegetables.

All 4 booklets
available in
English or French.

Pre-Retirement Workshops

Workshop 1—FEB 5

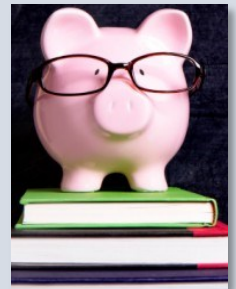
THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN MONEY

This workshop covers the non-financial aspects: Developing a broad perspective, Meeting the challenges and risks, Assessing your retirement needs, Finding happiness in your retirement, Building an action plan for tomorrow.

Workshop 2—FEB 13, APR 24

THERE'S ALSO THE MONEY

This workshop covers: Government Pension Benefits, Government Health Benefits, Non-Government Group Benefits, Key online planning tools.



For more info, look for posters in schools or check www.vsta.ca. Register with Mo at mo@vsta.ca or call 604-873-5570.

Co-sponsored by the BC Retired Teachers' Association and VSTA

BCTF Online Museum

Within the virtual walls of the BCTF online museum, you'll find stories of strikes and solidarity, as well as stories of people and places that played important roles in the history of public schooling in BC. The exhibits depict our collective struggles in building BC's public school system. <https://bctf.ca/history/>



The East End Food Co-op

is Vancouver's only community owned alternative to the five corporate conglomerates that control 80% of the grocery market in BC.

Now the Co-op is facing an unprecedented crisis and you can help. Last year Choices Market, which had moved across the street, was purchased by Jimmy Pattison as part of his growing food empire (Save-On, Buy-Low, PriceSmart, Quality Foods, Urban Fare, Choices, Nesters).

By providing healthy, locally grown and produced and fair-traded food to our members and the public and a living wage to our staff, the Co-op is building community and protecting food security.

Here's what you can do:

1. Shop Co-op first before going to other stores. 1034 Commercial
2. Become a member. Lifetime shares are \$20 .
3. Visit east-end-food.coop for notices of specials, to volunteer or make a contribution.

VSTA members are encouraged to visit the store and shop.

There's no better place to shop for groceries and keep your money circulating in the local economy!