

Annual Reports 2020

President's Report - Katharine Shipley



Although the year is ending in a strange and troubling way, the VSTA office has been engaged in many endeavors this year. As the VTF, we successfully bargained local language with our Employer and of course, on the Provincial front, have ratified a new contract. In terms of supporting new members, we once again held a New Teacher welcome/induction at the Italian Cultural Centre as well as a full day New Teacher's workshop. The VSTA

organized a Pro-D series on "The Future of Public Education" in conjunction with Dr. Jason Ellis from UBC discussing topics such as the future of inclusion, public funding for private schools and LGTQB+ education. The VSTA EC created an ad hoc committee for VSTA Teachers of Colour and our Standing Committee chairs kept our site-based reps up to date and engaged on a District level. There are of course projects we anticipated, but could not implement due to COVID 19, such as a VSTA Indigenous Ed committee and a Pro-D workshop on controversial topics in the classroom.

On a governance level, the VSTA now has a living Policies and Procedures manual; we also have developed a Staff Rep manual and a Staff Committee Chair manual – all available on our revamped VSTA website which is mobile phone friendly.

The Union runs largely due to volunteer support and I want to thank all of our Union activists who volunteer their time and energy – our Executive Committee, our Standing Committee chairs, and our site-based Union reps. These volunteers keep the membership engaged and connected to the Union. The Union is always recruiting and looking forward to engaging the next generation of teachers to connect with.

On a personal note, it has been a privilege to serve the membership in the VSTA office over the last five years with many wonderful colleagues. The value in having a Secondary teacher only Union – the only one in the BCTF – gives us the luxury to focus on Secondary issues like no other Local. We bring our Secondary experience and expertise to the BCTF and to VSB management which is of benefit to the membership. Thank you to VSTA members for your incredible work on behalf of Public Education and for what you do every day for your students, colleagues and school community.

Health & Safety Committee - Michael-Don Borason



To say this past school year in Health & Safety has been a roller coaster ride is an understatement. In my second full year as Committee Chair, I found myself immersed in more aspects of Health & Safety that I originally imagined, and in a position where I've learned to thrive and contribute in meaningful ways. As a member of the Provincial Health & Safety Advisory Committee (HSAC) and a Health & Safety Facilitator, I had the opportunity

to travel to various school districts throughout the province delivering SURTs and presentations. This experience has been truly rewarding, and it allowed me to meet fellow colleagues in their backyards and learn first-hand how smaller districts conduct Health & Safety protocols. In travelling BC, it was evident that the problem of violence in our schools exists everywhere and not just in our larger districts. During those presentations, I was able to provide information, clarification and guidance to educators, administrators, support staff, and senior management on what constitutes violence, incident reporting, and their rights as workers as documented by WorkSafe BC. Moving forward, it is vital that we as teachers strive to become more aware of our

rights to a safe working environment and what we need to do to protect ourselves and each other.

It goes without saying that the most unprecedented event of our school year, and our lives, is having to navigate ourselves during the COVID-19 Pandemic, cancelling such annual H&S initiatives such as "The Big One at 2" and the Day of Mourning Project for this year. As your Committee Chair, I have tried my best to be a source of reassurance and as much information I could learn from this ever-evolving situation. I value the great work that our Health & Safety Reps do for their colleagues at their respective sites during this global health crisis. Keeping colleagues informed while trying to deliver a continuity of learning is no easy task, and I thank them for their efforts. At this writing, we are at the cusp of entering a phase of provincial recovery only made possible by the reaction of all British Columbians to this virus. We face a potential re-entry into our schools and an eventual return to work and a new "normal" working environment. While our province and district plan for this, I encourage you to stay informed, advocate for the best possible outcome for all, and continue to look after yourselves and one another. Right now, our work is secondary...our well-being is paramount.

Stay safe! Stay well!

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Professional Development Committee – Kathryn Walks



The Professional Development Committee was very active in the 2019-2020 school year with new members and opportunities. The meetings were very well attended, with the majority of schools represented at every meeting. Between meetings, school pro-d reps collaborated informally using Teams chats and VSTA email. Assisting the collaboration was the new list of speakers and workshops collected from

participants in the pro-d planning days reinstated in May of 2019.

Much of the ongoing discussion at our meetings was focussed on the new Temporary Supplemental Pro-D fund. With overwhelming support of the committee, we passed motions to recommend to the District Professional Development Committee that the funding period for Temporary Supplemental Pro-D funds be extended into summer pro d activities and to approve those applications already submitted for summer 2019 so that members could be reimbursed.

In order to move forward, we passed a motion in EC and Council to split the fund (60%VESTA / 40%VSTA) so that

secondary members would be able to access pro-d funding for summer opportunities. Additionally, the District Pro-D Committee decided to carry the fund forward, accepting applications until January 2021 from members that have yet to access a maximum of \$1000.

One of the highlights of the year was the Dr. Jason Ellis Future of Public Education Series hosted by the VSTA in partnership with UBC and with funding from the Temporary Supplemental Pro-D fund. Also, several groups of teachers accessed Collaborative Inquiry funds to carry out extended projects with some groups continuing work started in previous years.

Despite the disruption caused by Covid-19, the District Pro-D Committee is close to approving a mechanism for teachers in district positions (those members not associated with specific schools) to access joint conference funds and school-based pro-d funds. This new structure will require ‘school’ based pro-d committees to facilitate the distribution of contractual pro-d funds to these members. Finally, the work of updating the VTF/VSB handbook continues to help inform and assist the valuable work of all the professional development representatives and committees are carrying out on behalf of our members.

Social & Environmental Justice Committee – Madeline Brewster



This year the Social and Environmental Justice Committee engaged in many powerful discussions around how to make our schools more equitable spaces for our students and colleagues, as well as our union. From attending the BC BIPOC Educators Conference, the first Antiracism Conference for educators in BC, to joining up with VESTA for several double-SEJ meetings,

to having difficult conversations about the reality of racism in our schools, it has been a motivating year for SEJ Committee members.

In the fall, the Committee passed a motion urging the district to implement a Sanctuary Schools policy. Such a policy gives families with precarious immigration status the ability to access public school services for their children without fear of their status being revealed. SEJ reps Lorena Duran and Michael Rosen advocated tirelessly for this motion, and the committee heard directly from Sanctuary Health about how important such a policy is to the wellbeing of affected families.

Another highlight this year was the creation of two equity seats on the VSTA Executive. At the November General Meeting, members voted in favour to reserve one Member-at-Large position for a teacher in the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and one Member-at-Large position for a teacher of colour. These two equity seats were a big victory for VSTA members from equity-seeking groups, thanks to the members who worked on this movement. In the 2018-2019 school year, Britannia SEJ rep Cynthia Ganatra, along with members Preet Lidder, Karine Ng, Lee, Veronica Ma, and Phil Lee formed an Ad-Hoc Committee to recommend these equity seats to the SEJ Committee. These members worked together to create the motions that made these two equity seats a possibility. They fine-tuned the wording, and shared stories of their lived experiences as union members from equity-seeking groups, first to the SEJ Committee, and then to the VSTA Executive Committee. It became clear that intentionally making space in the form of these two seats was a positive step forward for our union. Now, we can proudly say that these seats are officially part of the VSTA Executive Committee. The SEJ Committee gives thanks to those members for their advocacy, and enthusiastically looks forward to seeing the equity seats filled at this year’s AGM.

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Finally, this year the committee welcomed representatives from the Sustainabilityteens to discuss ways that teachers can meaningfully engage their students in climate action. This group of Vancouver teens is at the forefront of the youth climate justice movement, and are responsible for coordinating the Climate Strikes that thousands of BC youth participated in this school

year. Climate Change is at the forefront of our students' minds, with their very futures in question. The Sustainabilityteens urged the SEJ Committee to remind teachers that climate change transcends all subject areas and curricular competencies, and must be addressed in the classroom on a consistent and ongoing basis. The future depends on it.

Teachers Teaching-on-Call Committee - Lindsay Donaldson



Fall saw many openings for TTOCs to get involved in our local. Monthly meetings provided opportunities for TTOCs to hear the most up-to-date information on bargaining and to share their working and learning conditions. Experiences and concerns with the SFE call out system were regularly shared and communicated to district management.

In October, VSTA and VESTA jointly held the New Teacher Induction at the Italian Cultural Centre where new teachers were welcomed into the union by Carole Gordon of the BCTF. VSTA also hosted a New Teacher Workshop that was open to all teachers within 5 years of their careers. Opportunities continued with grants afforded to TTOCs to attend professional development events like the BIPOC Educators Conference and for TTOCs to earn a paid day leafleting MLA's offices.

Discussions began at the executive level this year about ways to best support both Early Career Teachers and TTOCs. Since TTOCs are often required to move between both contract and on-call work, ideas on how best to connect with everyone was examined. Ensuring that all teachers have a voice at the executive table continues to be a priority and next year will see further discussion about how best to do this.

In March, the VSTA hosted another workshop geared towards TTOCs on Contract Awareness where members were provided

with paid release time to attend. This was an invaluable experience as members learned many intricacies of the CA and what provisions are there to safeguard them. The following meeting hosted Carl Janze, the VSTA Technology Chair, where TTOCs were able to share the barriers to providing lessons in the classroom without adequate access to technology. Thank you to Carl for your support in this area!

Since March, the focus has been on advocating for TTOCs at the local and provincial levels for employment opportunities and ensuring TTOCs have the most current information on financial supports from both the provincial and federal governments. TTOCs have been hit hard by school closures and it is especially difficult given the as of yet, unknown future and return to school.

I'd like to thank the BCTF for providing support and networking opportunities for me during Summer Conference and the October Zone meetings. Special thanks to the VSTA office particularly to Kim who kept TTOCs connected, coordinated, and fed at meetings, to Mo who produced surveys, updated the website, and kept us organized at the executive level, and to the IHTOs who know the contract inside and out and are only ever a quick phone call or e-mail away. And lastly, to TTOCs who provide invaluable service to education when teachers must be absent from their classes, thank you. Our schools will need you as much as ever when school re-opens.

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Technology Committee – Carl Janze



For the 2019-2020 school year, the VSTA Technology Committee met five times before Spring Break. This was a year of significant change related to Technology and the VSB. The committee started the year needing to elect a new chair, and it was not until the fourth meeting in February, that the committee formally met those responsible for Learning and Information Technology at the VSB, the Associate Superintendent (newly-appointed) and the District Vice-principal (a newly-created position).

In an extra meeting in December, the committee laid out the following directions for consideration:

- To keep the discussion of technology integration within VSB classrooms focused on Teaching and Learning.
- To develop clear guidelines, possibly extended to District Policies and Procedures, regarding device use in classrooms. This discussion needs to contemplate issues related to equity of access and regulation (when self-regulation) fails.
- To advocate for a suitable In-service/Mentor-release model to support teachers in their adoption of the Employee Portal and Digital Tools such as Teams, OneDrive, and Cherwell.

- To explore the possibility of expanding the number of technology-capable, bookable “Lab” spaces in each High School.
- To explore the possibilities of standardizing procurement, licensing, and related practice regarding course software.
- To explore the possibility of implementing a predictable schedule for upgrades to technology for Teaching and Learning.

In support of these directions, the first VSTA Tech Committee working group met in early March, with the goal of exploring issues related to teacher risk and liability stemming from their use of IT for teaching and learning. The members reviewed existing VSB, VSTA and external policies, developed initial guidelines, and reported back during the fifth Tech Committee meeting in the week before classes ended for Spring Break.

And we all know what happened next. In the months since Spring Break, members of the Tech Committee have worked hard to support their colleagues with the many challenges that arise from the sudden switch to teaching and learning via a digital platform. On a personal note, I must commend my colleagues on their tireless efforts this year in support of Teaching and Learning. It has been a pleasure to work with all of them on the Tech Committee, and I look forward to continuing this important work next year.

Working/Learning Conditions & Bargaining Committee – Scott McKeen



The 2019-2020 school year present unique and challenging situations for the WLC&B Committee. Changes in reporting was the next step in the redesign of the curriculum, bargaining at the Provincial level was meandering through mediation, until it wasn't, and then the whole apple cart tipped over. School systems around the world are adapting to the challenges of maintain physical distance, enduring lockdowns and still attempting to deliver

meaningful community connection and learning opportunities to students who are facing a myriad of social, economic, technological and intersectional challenges. At the same time teachers are trying to conduct Emergency Remote Learning while managing their own unique circumstances. The COVID-19

pandemic will continue to exert itself on public institutions for the foreseeable future and public education will not be spared. It is having a direct and immediate impact on our working and learning conditions.

On the more contractual side, the WLC&B Committee spent meeting time dealing with on-going Provincial Bargaining, Remedy in all its incarnations, the “Best Efforts” Arbitration, and the implications of the Jackson Arbitration. On the professional side, we worked on making school sites more welcoming for new teachers, both in their careers and at the site, and the reporting of student learning.

Throughout the fall Provincial Bargaining was a central component of Committee Meetings. The Committee acted as a conduit between the Executive Committee and its contacts with the Provincial Bargaining Committee and local school sites. The Committee embarked on public information campaigns and

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helped organize an information rally at each school in February. The other significant event in the school year for the Committee, prior to the pandemic, was the hiring of temporary teachers to make use of the 2018-2019 pooled remedy funds. At several meetings representatives shared the experience at their school with how the blocks were allocated and how decisions were being made.

After Spring Break, our work world changed dramatically and abruptly. Onsite classes were suspended. Teachers were instructed to work from home. Emergency Remote teaching and learning with an emphasis on connection was the order of the day. Slowly throughout April clarity emerged around assessment. Students could do no worse than their Term 1 and Term 2 average. Failing students would still have a chance to pass, and students could improve. We had a contract too.

The April WLC&B Meeting was held remotely. While getting the Ratification vote out was mentioned, the key issues had shifted to topics such as ergonomics, access to school sites, assessment

in the 3rd Term, and potential return to work sites. The Jackson Arbitration still looms over Timetabling and the potential impact on CEF applications, but so too does the sudden decline in International students.

During my time as Chair I attempted to open the discussions at the Committee meetings. Each meeting, I invited representatives to either address an issue or comment generally on what was happening at their school. These sharing circles or roundtables ensured that all members would have an opportunity to speak, and not necessarily be bound by strict agenda items. While it is important to note that this approach is time consuming, I believe it had benefits that warranted the investment of time. I would further argue that our rules of Order have room within them to allow such activities.

I would like to thank Treena Goolieff for mentoring me in my position as Chair, and all them members of the Committee for their support during my brief tenure. I found it a rewarding experience and hope to return at some point in the future.
