



TACKBOARD

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President's Message



AS MARCH APPROACHES the VSTA table officers and Executive have been working on our Budget proposals for the VSB budget setting process. As there was a surplus this year the current proposal is to make up the projected deficit with this year's 3.54

million surplus. This means, we at least, start with a balanced budget with no projected deficit for the 2008/09 school year. A Staff Rep Bulletin with our preliminary proposals and supporting statements was sent to the schools last week and we look forward to hearing feedback from you via Saff Reps at our February Council Meeting. Once we have this feedback we refine our presentation and priorities and the President then presents that as part of the stakeholder delegations to the Board.

On another matter, I want to address the issue of professional autonomy and teacher collaboration. Collaborating with colleagues is fundamental to our professional growth. The BCTF supports collaboration models which respect teachers' individual professional autonomy while encouraging a vigorous pursuit of good teaching practices. Note that I did not say "best practice" since there isn't (only) one. We need to be wary of any model that exalts 'collective' teacher autonomy, since that term is an oxymoron. Teachers who work as part of collaborative teams or Professional Learning Communities should work on a consensus model among themselves as to the choice of topics to be discussed and, should equally, be very wary of creating simply quantitative data for school or district accountability goals.

On Saturday, January 26, the BBC website reported on a conference that examined the question, "What makes a good teacher?" The evidence from international studies showed that the highest quality teaching and learning comes

when we have the greatest autonomy for the teacher and the learner. The good teacher.....was someone who was left to get on with what they think their students need." The literature from Finland around this issue is equally compelling. (And they have completely jettisoned high stakes testing.) The complete article can be found on the following site: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7209096.stm>

Finally, I want to thank the (18) teachers who have volunteered their time during Spring Break to attend the BCTF AGM to represent VSTA. We appreciate this commitment and look forward to interesting debate and discussion as well as some fun.

Have a great and well-deserved Spring Break.

Anne

Important Upcoming Deadline: March 31, 2008

Teachers on continuing appointments are reminded of the upcoming deadline for the following requests:

- Increase in Teaching Time
- Decrease in Teaching Time
- Personal Leave Without Pay of One Year or Longer
- Intent to Return to Work for the Terms Beginning September 01 or January 01 for the Coming School Year

Please ensure that the required paperwork *is received by Human Resources* by March 31, 2008. Forms for requesting an increase or decrease in teaching time are available at your school and the VSTA office. Do not hesitate to contact the VSTA office if you have any questions.

**Congratulations
and THANKS to the
following VSTA
members elected as
BCTF AGM Delegates**

Michael-Don Borason, TOC
Rory Brown, VT
Moiria Ekdahl, DLS
Susan Gallpen, Temp
Jim Gill, Exec
Treena Goolieff, EH
Anne Guthrie Warman, VSTA
Kathy Hartman, JO
Louis Jefferson, WC
David Kay, GLAD
Rosalind Kellett, EH
Alita Krickan, DT
Sylvia Metzner, JO
Michael O'Neill, JO
Debbie Pawluk, VSTA
Mark Reid, VT
Tom Ross, KLN
Leo Strong, CT
Shelley Sullivan, KITS
Marcy Toms, TEMP
Shaun van der Hoop, VSTA

**SFU Launches
BC's Only Education
TV Program**

The Faculty of Education is producing BC's only television program dedicated to in-depth analysis of education issues. The show premiered on Monday, January 21 and is hosted by Paul Shaker, Dean of Education. Each half-hour episode of *Your Education Matters* airs on the first Monday of every month at 6:30 pm on ShawTV, Channel 4. ShawTV rebroadcasts each new episode three times a week: Mondays at 6:30pm and Sundays at 9:00am and 7:00pm. Programs are archived and can be viewed at www.youreducationmatters.ca

Bill 22: An Overview

In March, 2007, the provincial government tabled Bills 20, 21, and 22. Overviews of Bills 20 and 21 appeared in the November and December issues of *Tackboard*, respectively.

Bill 22, the Education Statutes' Amendment Act, includes the following amendments to the *School Act*:

Code of Conduct

- The legislation makes it mandatory for boards to establish a code of conduct for its students and requires that these codes comply with provincial standards established by the minister.

Changes to the College

- The College will be required to hold its AGM between September 1 and December 31 in each calendar year. It currently has its AGM in the spring.
- One provision states that "The College must distribute information requested by the minister to the members at the time and in the manner requested by the minister." It also requires the minister to reimburse the College for the expense in doing so.

School District Business Companies

- Bill 22 has many amendments designed to monitor and control the conduct of school business companies. Listed below are a few examples.
- Section 9 provides that the majority of directors of a company that is regulated under the *School Act* be at "arm's length."
- Section 11 adds provisions ensuring an annual general meeting of a company, provisions requiring proper notice of the meeting, and provisions requiring that annual general meetings be held in public so companies can no longer have such meetings behind closed doors.
- Consideration of the annual report and financial statements, the appointment of directors, and the appointment of the auditor, must also be done in public.

Private School Fee Reimbursement

- Bill 22 provides for the reimbursement of some private school fees, allowing private schools to enter into the public school system. It does this by having the minister designate certain educational activities as eligible allowing for expenses incurred for instruction, examination, or certification in those educational activities be reimbursed.
- Section 21 specifically authorizes the minister to establish the amount that a student may be reimbursed. The minister may place limits on the number of educational activities, or types of educational activities for which a student may be reimbursed. The student must be of school age, a resident of B.C., and must demonstrate a standard of achievement that is satisfactory to the minister in the designated educational activities.

Report from the Winter RA

The BCTF Winter Representative Assembly was held in Delta on February 1st and 2nd. Anne Guthrie Warman, Tom Ross from Killarney and I, Marcy Toms from Templeton, attended this two day meeting. Often, R.A.s, charged with making key decisions between Annual General Meetings, can be a bit fractious, with representatives enthusiastically debating motions about proposed political action, effective representations to the BC Ministry of Education and government, and the always-interesting finances of our federation. This meeting was refreshingly productive, a little lively and free from microphone manipulation, and so seemed to finish in record time. The few vote counts called were necessary. American scholar, David Berliner, gave an inspiring presentation on the perils of the 'accountability agenda', providing sharp lessons from the American experience.

As you know, VSTA has worked for some time to improve BCTF grants to large locals such as ours, to 'retire' gracefully from the administrator-dominated Canadian Teachers' Federation while continuing our national education advocacy through the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and to place class size and composition problems at the centre of BCTF activism.

VSTA Local Reps provided leadership on the CTF issue, along with our colleagues from VESTA,

persuading the assembly to agree that the BCTF will give "notice to withdraw" to the CTF. This will clear the way for a full debate on the issue at the 2008 AGM. Should we vote to withdraw, we will not face an \$800,000 financial penalty. While VSTA was less successful in obtaining an immediate financial shift to provide more dollars to large locals, we have set the stage, and this reform is on the horizon. Once again, VSTA emphasized through questions and comments at the microphone that significant, persistent Bill 33 violations mean the legislation is not working for either secondary students or teachers. We questioned the progress of the provincial grievance on this issue (moving slowly, very, very slowly) and urged our executive to prod the provincial opposition to publicize the class size crisis. While we support the high-profile opposition to the Foundation Skills Assessment, along with other locals, notably Victoria, we are convinced that class size and composition is an equally pressing problem, and one of great interest to the public.

As the RA ended, our new LR, Tom, was still with us, had made his first speech and seemed satisfied that the event was both interesting and worthwhile. For a meeting held at the start of the hardest, most yawn-inducing month of the year, this must indeed be high praise!

Marcy Toms

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Forum

On February 5th, 2008, I attended the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Forum held at the UBC House of Learning. After a dusting of fresh snow delayed the opening, Dr. Richard Vedan, a UBC professor from the School of Social Work, walked through the room, speaking about the rich history of the different First Nations of BC while interpreting the individual totems and art work in the room and the names and heritage of many of the artists involved. In addition, about 200 teachers, staff, students, and administrators listened to a panel of three speak from their life stories.

The first speaker, Chief Robert Joseph, spent 10 years in a Residential School at Alert Bay. After recounting some of his life experiences that started there, he has gone on to be a Hereditary Chief of the Gwa wa enuk First Nation, worked with provincial and national organizations, and in 2003 received an honorary Doctorate of Law Degree from UBC. Dr. Michelle LaFlamme from UBC Dept. of English spoke next. She told of her experiences as a student in school and university where she was at times the only visible First Nations person on campus. Jerilynn Webster from KAYA (Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association) spoke last. She is an advocate for aboriginal youth, as well as the youngest CEO in Canada and a Hip Hop artist.

Overall, it was quite thought provoking to hear what the speakers had to say. If you have the opportunity to attend a follow up forum or the signing of the agreement, I would strongly recommend it.

Shaun van der Hoop

Employer Pass Program (EPP) Expanded to Include 10-Month Employees

Effective September 2008, the Employer Pass Program, a program offered by Translink to encourage greater use of public transit by employees within the Greater Vancouver Region, will be expanded to allow for VSB 10-month employees on salary or continuing contract to participate in the program. Employees must commit to the program for a minimum of 12 consecutive months and pay a one-time administration fee of \$15.00 (payable to Translink). In return, they receive a personalized, non-transferable transit pass at a discounted rate of approximately 15% less than the cost of purchasing monthly passes. Because 10-month employees do not receive pay during the months of July and August, VSB will pro-rate the 12 month cost of the pass over the 10-month school year through monthly deductions. The pass will be effective over the 12-month period, including the summer months. More details will be forwarded to the schools by the VSB.

Situation in Province Worse for Special Needs

According to numbers released December 10, 2007, by the Ministry of Education, the number of classes this year with four or more students with special needs grew by almost 8% over last year. The ministry reports that 10,313 classes had four or more students with special needs this year, compared to 9,559 classes in 2006-07.

The number of classes with more than 30 students decreased only slightly compared to last year—from 3,242 last year to 3,179 this year. That means that only 63 more classes met the class size limit this year.

VSTA Scholarships

Application forms for VSTA scholarships are currently available from the VSTA Office, Staff Reps at school sites, and the VSTA website at www.vstaweb.ca. To be eligible, the 2007-08 graduate must be a child or legal ward of an active VSTA member in good standing or of a retired member. A total of four scholarships will be awarded: 1 x \$1,500 award and 3 x \$1,000. The deadline for application is May 9, 2008.

VSTA meetings & events



Council Thurs., Feb. 29, Mar. 27
Executive Thurs., Mar. 13, Apr. 10
Pro-D Mon., Mar. 3, Apr. 7
Health & Safety Mon., Mar. 10
WLC/Bargaining Wed., Mar. 5
Meetings begin at 4pm at the VSTA office.

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter continues to share information and encourage discussions on ending violence against women. Currently, they have collective members who are prepared to speak on a variety of topics, ranging from date rape to the trafficking of women into prostitution to the current state of policing in response to raped and battered women. Additionally, they have many pamphlets, articles on violence against women, and a selection of videos. Please call 604-872-8212 if you are interested in booking a Rape Relief speaker.



Always happy to hear from you!
Anne, Shaun, Debbie, Kim & Mo

Tackboard Member Feedback

Is *Tackboard* meeting your needs as a member? Do you have any suggestions, comments, or questions that you would like to pass along to the VSTA Office? If so, please visit www.vstaweb.ca and pass along your ideas to either Mo or Debbie. Feedback from the membership is greatly appreciated and valued.