



TACKBOARD

President's Message

"Great things are done by a series of small things brought together."

Vincent van Gogh



WELCOME BACK from your well-deserved, albeit too short, Spring Break. However you spent it I hope it was restful and rejuvenating. For 18 VSTA members the first half of the Spring Break was spent in attendance at the BCTF AGM. I want to formally thank those members who

attended and participated in this important work. They are: **Susan Gallpen** (TEMP), **Treena Goolieff** (EH), **Anne Guthrie Warman** (VSTA office), **Kathy Hartman** (JO), **Rosalind Kellett** (EH), **Gena Kolson** (KITS), **Perry Mathias** (VLN), **Malcolm McTaggart** (DT), **Sylvia Metzner** (JO), **Spirit Lavallee** (BRIT), **Susan Inglis** (PG), **Mike O'Neill** (JO), **Young Cheng** (PG), **Christine Stewart** (BRIT), **Shelley Sullivan** (VSTA office/DT), **Rory Brown** (VT), **Mark Reid** (VT).

Apart from the leadership reports around BCTF direction over the next year and many much debated resolutions, two Vancouver teachers were also elected to the BCTF Executive. Glen Hansman, President of VESTA, was elected as well as Christine Stewart, a VSTA member who is the first Aboriginal teacher to serve on the BCTF Executive. We congratulate both Glen and Christine and are happy to have two members from Vancouver representing us at the Executive table. Our special thanks as well to Mark Reid for his very able and effective chairing of the delegation.

This week the VTF (VESTA and VSTA) has signed off with the Board the new Post and Fill language for the Spring Transfer process. We are very pleased with what we have achieved in the Mid-Contract Modification process on this important issue. For years teachers have been telling VSTA and Human Resources that the practice of having to submit a transfer card before they could apply for jobs was counter-productive to mobility and equity. Although

it has taken over two years of discussions, we now have a process where members will not have to vacate their position before applying for positions posted in the Spring process. There will also be 5 posting periods in June as well as August postings which is a considerable improvement on past practice. A letter will be sent out (one per member) detailing the new language, process and timelines, and it will be on our website (www.vstaweb.ca).

The other major event coming up is the Board Budget process. After getting feedback from schools through Council, the VSTA presented a preliminary document to the Board at the end of February. Not surprisingly, our main message was that the Board commit sufficient instructional staffing to ensure full compliance with the class size and composition limits as outlined in Bill 33/Section 76 of the School Act. We also made very clear that this adequate staffing needed to be provided from the beginning of September and not in the dribs and drabs we had for the whole of the fall term for the last two years. This shortsighted method of staffing was disruptive and unhelpful for all, and we have made this very clear to the new Board. Since there is a projected shortfall, we also encouraged the Board to keep the cuts away from the classroom and to examine the full divisional budget including the considerable increases to the VBE bureaucracy and Administrator positions over the last three years. On Monday, March 30, we will receive the preliminary budget proposals and will have the chance to provide input again on April 9.

Our school district will be facing tough choices. The provincial budget for education is only 1.26% over 2008/2009 which is less than inflation and does not cover negotiated wage increases. Watch this space for their final decisions.

Anne

FACEBOOK and CYBER SAFETY

Facebook and other online social networking sites are the web destination of choice for more and more people to connect, communicate and share personal information with others. At the same time the practice of employers looking for background information on current employees or employees whom the employer believes may have crossed the line in cyber space is also growing.

We strongly advise members to take steps to protect their on-line privacy.

What should you do to protect yourself:

1. "Think hard before you click" to post texts or photos to groups or discussion boards or on anyone else's pages that you would not want to discuss with your current employer. *Inappropriate demeaning or defamatory comments relating to your work should be avoided.* Cyberbullying such as publishing a defamatory libelous comment that is designed to insult a person or likely to hurt a person's reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule is considered a criminal act.
2. Review what it out there about you on social networking sites, on business sites and HR sites such as ZoomInfo and LinkedIn, and through search engines such as Google. Some of it might be completely fictional. Others may refer to someone with the same name as you, but you need to know about it.
3. Remove, if possible, anything you would not

want to discuss with your current employer, or in a job interview; ask friends to take down items such as questionable photos of you. But be aware that the effects of some information may continue. Information removed could still live on in cached or archived copies of the website, which can be located by internet users who are determined to find them.

4. Remove names and photos of present or former students that you might have on your Facebook or other social networking tool. Students are not friends and should not appear on teachers' social networking site. This applies to parents of your students as well.
5. Implement privacy controls over your personal information on online social networks. These can be tricky to use, so once you've set them up, make sure you test them-have someone try to look at your profile or search it yourself on a public search engine.

REMEMBER

Nothing is truly private when you use digital communication. When you are using Board equipment and communication links, the Board can access all your messages and online sites visited if this communication went through Board servers or has been accessed through Board equipment. VSTA always asks for an alternate email address when communicating with members.

AGW with thanks to Glen Hansman for his assistance.

VSTA SCHOLARSHIPS

Application forms for VSTA Scholarships are available from the VSTA office, staff reps at schools, and the VSTA website at www.vstaweb.ca. To be eligible, the 2008-09 graduate must be a child or legal ward of an active VSTA member in good standing or a retired member. A total of four scholarships will be awarded: 1 x \$1,500 award, and 3x 1,000 awards. The deadline for applications is May 8th, 2009.

Department Head Postings
come out April 14-20



Newly elected member of BCTF Executive, Glen Hansman, visits VSTA table for junk food. BCTF AGM, March 2009.

Another chance for change

On May 12th we will be going to the polls one more time. In less than 50 days Vancouver teachers and others within our communities will be given the opportunity to seek and elect candidates who make meaningful commitments to quality public education.

In the coming weeks, candidates will be reaching out to you in your communities for your help and I urge you to dedicate some of your own time to their campaigns. Help candidates who respect, acknowledge and value the tremendous work of teachers to get elected. Collectively we have enormous potential to influence the outcome of this election and see a promising shift in the educational priorities of this province.

The VSTA will be launching an issues-based campaign to inform the public of our issues that will underscore concerns such as class size and composition, and we will work to see that public education is a vote-determining issue. However, with the strict and debilitating financial caps set out by Bill 42, the Gag Law, both the VSTA and BCTF will be unable to publicize our concerns through traditional forms of media advertising. This is why, more than ever, it is crucial we get involved individually to ensure supportive MLAs be elected.

How can you make change?

➡ Write a letter to a local paper or respond to an article on the issue of education. Highlight your perspective as a teacher. What are your concerns? What do you expect from MLAs that will be elected in May?

➡ Call or email radio talk programs. Very few voices frame the public debate. Getting our perspectives out will help to shape public discourse and inform others to what schools, students, teachers and quality public education truly need.

➡ Join our VSTA Friday campaign. Teachers across Vancouver will be gathering every Friday from 3-4pm at key locations around the city to get our message out to the public. Speak to your staff rep for more details or call the VSTA office to find out where we will be gathering in the coming weeks.

➡ Attend one of the upcoming all-candidates meeting in your constituency. Ask a question of the candidates about their personal commitments to public education.

➡ Contact the candidate in your constituency. Get involved on his/her campaign or you may want to get a lawn sign. Good people cannot get elected without help.

Most importantly, remember that getting political is not a ghastly deed but in fact, our democratic responsibility! Make a commitment to yourself and to quality public education that you will work, in some way, to effect change.

Treana Goolieff, VSTA Election Contact

New Spring Transfer Process!

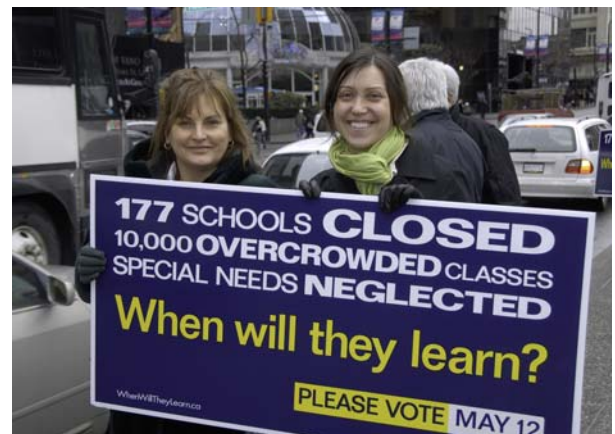
The VTF (VSTA and VESTA) has been bargaining with the Board in a process called Mid-Contract Modification for more than two years. This process enables the union and the employer to modify some parts of our contract that both parties have a common interest in. We are pleased to report that we now have a **new post-and-fill process** for this spring (2009) that will enable teachers to move schools without first giving up their current positions. This new agreement will be for a one-year trial basis and will be reassessed next year. If both parties agree, the agreement will be extended next year. There is no need to "put in your transfer card". There will be no B and C categories. All teachers may apply for and be eligible for jobs on an equal basis.

Increase in teaching time deadlines

Teachers on continuing contracts who wish to either increase or decrease their teaching time (FTE) for the 2009-2010 school year must apply in writing to Human Resources by March 31st. Forms are available in schools, and copies should be received by both Human Resources and your school principal by March 31st. For more information see Article C.20.3 of the Collective Agreement.

Want to relinquish your part-time teaching assignment and remain as an employee on call?

New language in the Collective Agreement lets you do this, but you must give notice before April 30th. See the Letter of Understanding on page 154 of the Collective Agreement for details.



Gena Kolson and Treana Goolieff take to the streets.

Questions About TQS?

Want to know how to upgrade your pay to category 5+? Visit www.tqs.bc.ca/faq3.html

Upcoming Pension Seminars:

Your Pension, Your Future for new and mid-career teachers. Pre-registration required.

Seminar Dates and Locations

March 28, 12-1:30pm, North Vancouver, Holiday Inn
April 30, 5-6:30pm, Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic
April 30, 7:30-9pm, Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic

Thinking About Retiring for members nearing retirement. Pre-registration required.

Seminar Dates and Locations

March 28, 9-11am, North Vancouver, Holiday Inn
May 2, 9-11am, Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic
May 2, 12-2pm, Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic

For more information, or to register, see the website for the Teachers' Pension Plan at www.pensionsbc.ca and click on the Teachers' Pension Plan button on the left hand menu bar.

Citywide Housing Coalition March April 4, 2009

To focus attention on the need for housing and to compel politicians to build affordable housing, the Citywide Housing Coalition is holding a GRAND MARCH FOR HOUSING in Vancouver and other locations around the province on April 4th.



Rory Brown and Mark Reid amuse themselves with scintillating debate.

Health & Safety: What is Form 6A?

If you experience a fall or other form of occupational injury, report it immediately to your supervisor, usually the vice-principal in charge of health and safety, by completing a WorkSafeBC Form 6A. If an initial injury is not immediately reported to WorkSafeBC, the employee may lose entitlement to WCB coverage. The forms are available at the school or can be downloaded from www.worksafebc.com/forms. On both pages of the Form 6A write the following: "The worker requests a copy of the employer's report be sent to the Workers' Compensation Board." This note is necessary because many school boards, including the VBE, do not forward accident reports unless the employee takes time off work as a result of the accident. You should also make a copy of the Form 6A and forward it to the VSTA office and keep a copy for yourself.



First time delegate, Spirit Lavallee and Christine Stewart, newly elected member to BCTF Executive.



Curbside demonstration, delegates at BCTF AGM 2009.