



TACKBOARD

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President's Message

"People don't change when they see the light. They change when they feel the heat"

adage, quoted in The New York Times



A BELATED WELCOME back to all of you. The 2008/09 school year promises to be an interesting and eventful one. Bill 33 /Section 76 of the School Act consultations are ongoing and we know staff reps and teachers are doing this onerous but valuable work on top of

everything else at this time and we thank you once again. We sent out an issue alert this week detailing the importance of continuing our due diligence on this so I won't go through it again here. Suffice it to say that we believe this work is having an effect. The Board has now decided to make the 17 FTE they were adding from last year year's 2.1 million surplus continuing, not temporary positions and that is a victory. The provincial class size/class composition grievance from 2007-08 is coming to arbitration this month and the 2008-09 provincial grievance has already been launched. We want as many teachers as possible in Vancouver Secondary to sign on to this grievance. We have said all along that Vancouver secondary schools have the worst violations of any district in the province (1200 last year) and we need to keep saying it at all levels. The media have been relatively good over this past year about reporting our concerns around this issue and many (Courier, Vancouver Sun, The Province, Global TV) wanted talk to us about this year's surprising surplus and our response to it.

Because there are elections at both the municipal and provincial level this year, we intend to make this our number one issue when we are talking to prospective candidates (all of whom, not surprisingly, are very eager to talk to us now). With the municipal election coming up, we are anxious to get a progressive Board that listens to us with respect to teaching and learning issues, conditions of employment and advocacy. Our experience over the past couple of years has been that it is large

numbers of very vocal parents who get the ear of trustees as well as an often uncritical acceptance of senior management proposals (usually to increase the bureaucracy) rather than listening to teachers who want to improve conditions for them and their students at the classroom level. We will remind all candidates for election that class size/composition was the issue we walked the line for in 2005 and all the BCTF polling and focus group feedback from the public make it clear that it is still the issue embedded in the collective consciousness of parents in this province. The BCTF is assisting us in our campaigns by providing money and release time for local election contacts. **...see President's, page 2**

Election Direction

With municipal elections fast approaching on November 15th, it's time for the VSTA membership to decide the type and level of involvement we want to have in shaping the next Board of Trustees. Having a progressive school board that is ready to vigorously advocate for improvements to public education is an important consideration for teachers. Electing trustees who would be ready, willing, and able to listen to the collective voices of teachers, and who are prepared to act on our advice, would go a long way to improve the learning conditions in our classrooms and in our schools. Come out to discuss and debate this issue with colleagues, learn more about the candidates running for school board, and have a voice in determining the "election direction" of the VSTA at our next general meeting on September 30th, at 4 pm, at Tupper Secondary. Together, we have an opportunity to make a difference this election. Let's ensure the race for school board is not one that leaves us standing on the sidelines.

President's, cont'd from cover

On Tuesday September 30 we will be holding a general meeting at 4pm at Tupper and really want to ensure a good turnout. It is of some concern to me that decisions which affect policy, fees, leadership and other important matters are often decided by fewer than 100 members at the local level. Participatory democracy is hugely important in the way we do business and while I know teachers are very busy and overworked, we typically have a maximum of 3 general meetings per year and it is in every member's interest to have a voice there. The agenda items for this meeting were published in other venues but I reiterate that we will be looking for direction from the membership on our approach to the upcoming Municipal election, voting on a proposal from the Board that we shut the schools for two weeks during the 2010 Winter Olympics and the status of the Bill 33 grievances. Swell gifts and prizes will be offered and a pizza party (well, lunch) to the school with the greatest turnout. Look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there.

The chair of the District Review Team told us (and senior management) that the team were blown away and often moved to tears by the extraordinary dedication and hard work shown by teachers in Vancouver who face the most complex classes in terms of challenge and diversity in this province. (OK who made them bawl)?

Keep up the great work.

Anne

VBE/VTF Collective Agreement

Finally, a new collective agreement amalgamating provincial and local language is finished and is currently being printed. The new edition of the complete *K-12 VSB/VTF Collective Agreement* will be made available on a one per member basis as soon as printing is complete.

Changes to the VSTA SIF

At a general meeting last June, the membership voted on and approved changes in the coverage provided by the VSTA's Salary Indemnity Fund. The yearly fees for continuing and associate members were increased to \$40 and \$45 respectively. Members who do not pay their fee by December 31 of each year will be charged a \$5 reminder fee, and if they are in arrears after one full year, be de-activated from SIF membership. The salary top up provided by the plan is now available for a maximum of twenty (20) days, reduced from the previous thirty-five (35) days. The membership approved this change because the number of members drawing on this fund has been steadily increasing, threatening the solvency of the fund. The purpose of the change was to restore the long term viability of the plan so that the fund remains healthy and the plan remains available for members in the future. Teachers are reminded that the yearly enrolment fee needs to be submitted by members directly to the VSTA and is *not* deducted by payroll.

New 12 Month Pay Plan

There is a new Optional 12 Month Pay Plan for K-12 teachers being implemented in the district effective Sept. 1, 2008. This plan now replaces the defunct Summer Savings Plan. All applicants must apply through the payroll department as soon as possible. Temporary teachers who start no later than Sept. 30 and are contracted to June 30th may also enroll. Members planning to retire this year are advised *not* to enroll in the plan since the summer payments will delay when retirees can begin to draw a pension. A signed application form giving authorization must be given to payroll. All participants will have 10% of their gross semi-monthly salary deducted, and deductions will continue year over year unless the member provides written authorization to terminate the contributions. The payout of funds will be in 4 equalized payments (July 15, July 31, August 15, and August 31). Interest at the bank's savings rate, from Sept. 15 to March 31, will be applied to the summer installments. The Board will retain interest accumulated from April to August to cover costs associated with administering the program. The deduction code on the pay stub will be noted as "12PP". Further details about the plan and forms are available on the VSTA website (www.vstaweb.ca), as well as from payroll. Contact payroll at payrollandbenefits@vsb.bc.ca.

Class Size and Class Composition under the School Act

Class size and composition language was stripped from our Collective Agreement in 2002. In 2005, the provincial government passed legislation, Bill 33, which established *some* class size and composition limits. These are now included in the School Act, Section 76.1 and were amended in June of 2008. Though most of the regulations are the same, there are some new changes to the consent/consult language.

“Consult” means

(a) Provision by the principal of a school to the teacher of a class with

- (i) information relevant to the proposal of the size and organization of the class, and
- (ii) [a minimum of] 2 school days before a decision is made respecting the size and organization of the class for the teacher to consider the proposal and provide the principal with the teacher’s views in that regard, and

(b) Consideration by the principal of the teacher’s views, if any have been provided,

And “consulted” has a similar meaning.

Teachers are advised to **always** have a staff rep present during consultations with the principal/ vice-principal, and to be sure to record the details of each class consultation on the VSTA “*Record of Class Size/ Composition Consultation*” form (available from staff reps). The class size and composition limits should not be exceeded before the consultation process is complete. When considering a proposal to exceed thirty students in a class (or more than 3 students with an IEP), teachers must take into account what is best for the *whole* class rather than focusing on the needs of a single student.

Teachers should request the provision of additional learning resources and supports as required to ensure that the learning conditions are appropriate for student learning. Asking for more resource teacher time, more SSSW time, or release days to give you time to plan are some examples. Counsellors are asked not to participate in organizing classes that exceed the *School Act* limits without direction in writing from an administrator.

If teachers believe this process has been violated, including a lack of *meaningful* consultation, or if class size limits were exceeded before the consultation, talk to your staff rep about signing on to the provincial grievance using the “*Class Size and Composition Provincial Grievance Reporting Form*”, available from staff reps. The grievance process enables the VSTA/BCTF to seek a remedy to oversized classes through the process of arbitration. The grievance/arbitration process is currently the best mechanism we have available to try to mitigate the damage caused by the “consult” clause in Section 76 of the School Act, and every teacher who has experienced a violation of Section 76 is encouraged to join the provincial grievance.

“88 and Out”—

Save up to \$800. Per Year

BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan regulations provide for a member who has reached age 64, or a total of age plus contributory service of 88, to withdraw from the long term portion of the plan. You may wish to continue the plan, however, if your accumulated sick leave and BCTF Short Term SIP (120 days) will not protect your salary until you reach the age of 65 or factor 90. Members who withdraw from the Long Term portion of the plan will still receive the 2% SIP allowance. Call the Income Security Division at the BCTF at 604-871-2283 or VSTA for an application form or more information.

School Walkabouts

Teachers are reminded that attendance at Walkabouts during the first few weeks of school is *voluntary*. Walkabouts are not meetings or informal reports regarding students’ school progress, nor are they meetings or conferences called by the principal as defined by *School Act Regulations*. However, walkabouts do provide an opportunity for teachers to meet and talk to parents about their classes, including information about class size and composition. As a matter of common courtesy, teachers unable to attend a Walkabout evening should notify their principal.

GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, September 30th
4:00 pm at Tupper

There is a very important General Meeting for our membership as we head into the election season. It is critical that every school is well represented.

- Update on the new Bill 33 consultation process;
- Decide on the VSTA direction and strategies for the upcoming municipal election for School Trustee;
- Vote on whether to support or reject a proposed two week spring break vacation in February 2010 (to coincide with the 2010 Olympics).

The school with the largest turn out (on a percentage basis) will receive a complimentary pizza lunch!

Mark your calendars and come with your questions and suggestions.

Newer Teachers Reception

All *newer* teachers (up to 5 years experience) are invited to attend an informative reception at the VSTA office on Wednesday, November 19th, from 4:30-6:30. Drop by, meet your colleagues, and learn about a variety of valuable services and resources offered by the BCTF, VBE and VSTA. Speakers will include a variety of teacher-consultants from the VBE and the VSTA Executive. Refreshments will be served. We look forward to meeting you all!!

Purchasing Pensionable Service Lost Due to Taking a Leave of Absence

Purchase of service means paying for periods of employment that have not been counted as service with the Teachers Pension Plan. During a leave of absence without pay or with partial pay, your contributions and pensionable service are reduced in proportion to your salary. By purchasing service, you may be able to increase your future pension benefit. Members who have taken leaves of absence are encouraged to explore options to buy back their pensionable service. Such purchases must be made within five years of taking the leave, and are always cheapest if applied for prior to the end of the leave, (normally June) prior to any salary increase. Members cannot purchase a leave after resigning from a school board, even if they are immediately hired by another school district; members *must* purchase leaves before resigning. Members should discuss purchasing leaves when the leave is granted, when returning from leave, or before terminating employment. For more information, go to the Teachers' Pension Plan website at www.tpp.pensionsbc.ca.

Bus Pass Reminder

The Vancouver Board of Education participates in the Employer Pass Program (EPP) offered by TransLink. Translink's Employer's Bus Pass is now available to teachers.

Under the EPP, teachers can purchase an annual personalized transit pass that is paid for through payroll deductions. Deductions begin one month in advance of receiving the pass and are spread over both pay periods each month.

Employees must commit to an initial 12-month period and must pay a one-time administration fee of \$15 payable to TransLink. In return, they receive a discount of approximately 15%. For information on actual costs and savings, follow the link to "Frequently Asked Questions" on the TransLink website (www.translink.bc.ca/Transportation_Services/Fares_Passes/employers_pass/).

Horizon Training Workshop for TOCs

A workshop for TOCs wanting to train to work in school libraries is being offered by the Board. The registration deadline is Monday, October 20th. For more information or to register, see the "Current Professional Development Opportunities" webpage (www.vsb.bc.ca/vsbprograms/Prod) or contact Moira Ekdahl, Teacher-Librarian Consultant at mekdahl@vsb.bc.ca.



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