



TACKBOARD

President's Message

"There is a crack, a crack to get in everything. It's how the light gets in."

Leonard Cohen



It really is hard to believe that we are already into December and as you all finish up your marks and prepare for Parents Evenings, we want to remind you that you have the right to inform parents about your class size/ composition issues which

make optimal conditions for all learners difficult to achieve (and that would be diplomatic understatement).

Currently the VSTA table officers (together with some members of Executive) are visiting schools talking about your school issues and additionally issues on our horizon like the potential 17-30 million deficit for this year's VSB budget. Cuts will have to be made and our message to Management and this Board is a consistent one. Cuts need to be kept as far away from the classroom as possible. We have also been consistent in our discussion with both HR and the Board about the Olympics transportation issue. Teachers need to make every effort to get to school on time but if they cannot, they need to let the school know. Teachers who have to cover for colleagues need to document that and we will invoke the rule that if teachers lose two preps, they are entitled to half a day in lieu. All teachers need to document this. The employer cannot claim that every day is an emergency over a two to three week period. Particularly as they had the opportunity to make a different decision last February when we presented the Board with a well-articulated and fully conceived plan to close Secondary schools for two weeks and to make up the time.

Another matter I want to raise here is the issue of "fireside chats". These are the "informal" meetings where AOs leave notes for teachers saying "see me" or in a casual conversation ask a teacher to meet with them as a result of a "concern". These can be as a result of parent complaints, student issues or a whole variety of other supervisory issues which could

result in some sort of stated expectations or a letter of expectation. We advise that you always take a staff rep with you to these chats and we have explained to staff reps that, at the outset, if it looks like this might lead to some kind of discipline, then the meeting should be shut down and referred by the Administrator to the Labour Relations Officer at the Board so that a proper investigation meeting with a VSTA table officer present will take place under the terms of the Collective Agreement. Stating expectations or a letter of expectation, however, is not considered discipline. This is a generic letter which could be written to any teacher and states in very general terms the expectations that the employer has around the issue under discussion. If we see the letter (as HR often sends them to us) we check them for precisely this generic and non-specific language. Teachers, too can always phone this office for advice if such a situation arises and sometimes the President or a Vice-President can attend if requested. But members are advised not to go into these meetings alone.

Finally, I want to wish you all a very happy and healthy Christmas break. Enjoy your well-deserved time off and thank you once again for all the excellent work this term.

Anne

Deadline for Educational Leave of One Year

Teachers with a continuing contract for at least five (5) consecutive school years immediately preceding the date of requested leave may apply for a paid (60% of annual salary and allowances) education leave of one (1) year. Teachers applying for an education leave of one school year must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent-Human Resources on or before December 15 for a leave commencing in September 2010.

Peer to Peer Consultants

Our primary focus is to support teachers, those new to the profession as well as experienced teachers new to an assignment or to a grade.



We can assist you in the following areas:

- Year Planning
- Report Card, Unit and Lesson Planning
- Classroom Management
- Teaching Strategies
- Accessing Resources
- Alternative Assessment Practice
- To increase students' learning and achievements

Other areas of support include:

- Workshops for new teachers and TOCs
- Access to a P2P website that provides a forum for teachers to share resources and ideas
- Providing an opportunity to observe Master teachers
- Opportunity to meet and share with new teachers (monthly TEACH workshops held at the board)
- An objective, confidential ear when needed

This is a **SUPPORTIVE** service, **NOT** an evaluation process. We do not report back to Administrators, HR or the Union. **ALL SUPPORT IS CONFIDENTIAL.**

Consultation times are initiated by the teacher and explicit support is determined by the teacher. Only teachers can ask for support. Administrators cannot ask us to call a teacher. Contact Phil Lee at 778-836-1290 or pklee@vsb.bc.ca.

BC Teachers' Pension Plan

Possible changes to your Pension

Within the next year, the Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees will be making decisions that should allow your pension plan to maintain some measure of indexing into the future. Please make sure to review the presentation (<http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedfiles/Public/SalaryBenefits/Pensions/consultation/2009Presentation.pdf>) and then complete the survey (<http://survey.bctf.ca/PENSION2009/pension2009.htm>) before December 4.

Booking Off for Doctor's Appointments et al

Teachers are reminded that if they are booking off for a morning or afternoon (even if they have a prep) they need to phone SEMS and use the appropriate code. This applies to both enrolling and non-enrolling staff. All teachers are treated equally with respect to this. The Board expects teachers to use their sick leave for these appointments.

The Future for Bargaining

The BCTF is planning to push for significant changes to the present bargaining structures in anticipation of the upcoming round of negotiations in 2011. The fall Representative Assembly passed two motions that call on the Federation to press for changes that would:

- result in a greater degree of local bargaining and provide funding for this to occur.
- address issues of class size, composition, and ratios for non-enrolling teachers.
- provide improvements in salary and benefits for teachers.



Sue Inglis, Point Grey Staff Rep and Council Chair, cycles to VSTA Office, October 2009

Teachers on Call - Our Colleagues

In the school visits VSTA table officers are conducting and occasionally in phone calls to the office, we get questions about preferential call out for TOCs. Preferential callout refers to the practice of teachers and/or AOs requesting certain TOCs rather than a random or rotational call out system. There are many reasons for this including teacher concerns around continuity, qualifications and appropriate levels of this for their subject area. While we understand and are sympathetic to shortages in specific subject areas, we need to remember that we are not the employer and by requesting certain people we are effectively evaluating our colleague, something as teachers we do not do with any other continuing contract colleague.

While preferential callout had been the practice in this district for many years, there has been a gradual shift in culture and perspective on this issue and the BCTF AGM, the sovereign body of the Federation has taken a position against preferential callout and for seniority based instead. In Vancouver we have a rotational system based on qualifications and not seniority. This ensures that with the approximately 1100 TOCs in this district, (approximately 300 are used and needed on a daily basis) there is work on a rotational basis for most of them. (Many also TOC in other districts.) Currently, for a variety of reasons our HR department is not allowing preferential callout to continue- in part because of the "permanent TOCs" (that is continuing contract teachers who currently are not in a continuing position, and instead are on the TOC list temporarily) and because of the Union position, taken at a VTF general meeting in 2005, that we move away from preferential callout and to a purely rotational system based on qualifications.

VSTA works closely with Human Resources at the Board to monitor the number of TOCs and encourage them at all times to deal proactively with shortage areas like French Immersion, Physics, Tech Studies, Home Economics and others which may occur from year to year.

TOCs for the most part are our younger and newer colleagues in this profession. Currently across the country there is an attrition rate from teaching of approximately 40%. The literature tells us that if we can keep young teachers in the profession for 5 years, they are likely to stay. These first early years are critical for our young colleagues. VSTA is cooperating with the Board on newer teacher induction and receptions for these teachers. We also put on a newer teacher reception every year at our office and we send invitations to all newer teachers' with 5 years or less experience. Additionally we work together with HR on a mentorship model and there are currently three mentors at the Board doing this work with any teacher who requests it.

In schools we all need to support and encourage our TOC colleagues and not put ourselves in the position of evaluating them and their teaching. The same rules around the Code of Ethics apply to our interactions with TOCs as with our continuing contract colleagues (See Article #5 BCTF Code of Ethics) Let's work together to making schools welcoming to all TOCs who come in - make sure they know the name and location of a VSTA staff rep, make sure they are included in break and lunch time conversations and that their rights under the Collective Agreement are protected. These are the teachers and activists of the future and we want them to stay in this important and enriching profession.

AGW

VSTA Ad-Hoc Technology Committee

As a member of the *Information and Communication Technology Advisory Committee (ICT)* for my third year it has become apparent that Vancouver secondary teachers woefully need a network to talk tech and tech related issues. With the onslaught of BCeSIS and computers in every classroom, technology is becoming more a part of our daily practice. It is crucial that VSTA have a way to communicate tech related issues to its members and for members to provide feedback to VSTA for discussion at the district level.

Several members of the VSTA executive struck an Ad-Hoc Technology Committee to develop a network among all secondary schools / sites. What is now required is each school /site deciding upon 2 members to be representatives on this committee and providing a non-VSB e-mail. It is suggested that this process occur through your school Staff Committee. The initial emphasis is on building a list of tech contacts from each school /site so we can pass information to you for your consumption or to initiate a discussion where feedback is required. There needs to be a voice for the educational component of technology integration and who better to speak on educational issues than educators.

Raza Mirani, Member-at-Large

TTOC Corner

December 2009 Pay

Payroll will not receive all TOC days worked until Wednesday, December 16th, so it will be impossible for their entire pay to be calculated and transmitted to their banks on December 16th for deposit by December 18th. So that Teachers on Call receive all their pay entitlement as soon as possible, Payroll proposes the following alternative pay schedule:

All days worked Dec 1-8 (6 days) to be paid on Friday, December 18th

All days worked Dec 9-15 (5 days) to be paid by Tuesday, December 22nd

All days worked Dec 16-18 (3 days) are paid on January 15th, 2010 (regular schedule)

This alternate pay schedule will be noted at the bottom of the TOC's December 15th pay advices, and an email to all TOCs will be provided.

Rate of Pay (Article B.2.6.b.)

"On the fourth consecutive and subsequent consecutive days worked in an assignment or assignments, a teacher on call shall be paid 1/189 of his/her category classification and experience or at Category 4 Step 0, which ever is the greater amount, *for each full day worked*. Such payment on scale shall be retroactive to the first day worked."

Important change: To qualify for the rate of pay for the fourth consecutive day in an assignment or assignments, a TTOC may work either full and/or half days.

Please contact the VSTA office if you have any questions and/or concerns.

Memorial of the Montreal Massacre



The Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter invites you to participate in a day of action to end violence against women. All events are free and will take place on Saturday, December 5th, from 10am-6pm at the Vancouver Public Library. For more information, phone 604-872-8212 or visit www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca.

Bargaining History: Did You Know?

In March of 1994, the B.C. provincial government introduced the "Public Education Labour Relations Act" which imposed provincial bargaining on teachers. All matters that had a cost to them (salary, benefits, leaves, and hours of work) were to be negotiated. All non-cost matters could be negotiated locally. The BCTF became the bargaining agent for all public school teachers in B.C. and a new structure, the B.C. Public Schools' Employers' Association (BCPSEA), was created to bargain for the school boards.



Wishing you Happy Holidays!

Anne, Debbie, Shaun, Kim & Mo