



TACKBOARD

Volume 26 Number 2
October 27, 2011

President's Message



AS HAS BEEN THE CASE SINCE THE FALL OF 2006, the VSTA is once again experiencing a large number of class size/composition violations, none of which have been deemed inappropriate for students' learning as per the Superintendent's Report. And, while the overall number of violations is down from last year (as of September 27th), there are still 179 reported classes with over 30 students and 995 classes with more than three students with an IEP. In reviewing the report, we have noted some of the most egregious examples: a Socials 11 class with 33 students, 7 of whom have an IEP, English 8 classes with 31 and 8 and 32 and 5, Math 8 and 9 with 30 and 5, and a Mechanics class with 30 and 8 (think power tools!). Clearly, Section 76 of the School Act is not working, yet again this year. The BCTF continues to put pressure on the provincial government to reinstate the working and learning conditions language that was illegally stripped from our Collective Agreement in 2002 (an approximate cost savings to the government of \$275 million per year). Despite Justice Griffin's ruling and subsequent reaffirmation that Bills 27 and 28 legislation is unconstitutional and invalid, the government has steadfastly refused to recognize our rights as upheld by Griffin's decision, and has refused to negotiate on the issues of class size and composition. The minister's *Class Organization Fund* (COF) proposal to increase funding for special needs students by \$30 million next year (2012-13), \$65 million in 2013-14 and \$75 million in 2014-15 is woefully inadequate and does not begin to address the damage done to students and public education by the government's illegal legislation.

That public education is a low priority for the Liberal government is made clear by examining government expenditures. One measure of expenditure is the amount government spends on a service as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product, the total amount of goods and services in the provincial economy. The expenditure on K-12 public education in B.C. as a percentage of the GDP has fallen from 3.6% in 2002-03 to 3.3% in 2008-09. Of all provinces, B.C. ranked the fourth lowest (in 2008-09) in terms of the percent of GDP spent on elementary and secondary public schools. Likewise, K-12 funding as a percentage of the total provincial budget has dropped from 19.67% in 2001-02 to 15.34% in 2009-10. What about the government's repeated claim of "highest funding ever" for public education? While dollar amounts have gone up, they have not kept pace with the increases in inflation and the costs downloaded on to school districts.

Another indication of the current government's lack of respect for the teaching profession can be found at the provincial bargaining table. Despite having met more than forty times, BCPSEA has yet to address our need for improvements to salary and benefits. Currently, B.C. teacher salaries lag far behind teacher salaries in most of the country, even though B.C. has the highest cost of living in Canada. In 2010-11, a Vancouver teacher at maximum salary for category 5 earned \$10,969 less than an elementary teacher in Toronto, \$11,876 less than a secondary teacher in Ottawa, and \$16,860 less than a teacher in Edmonton. If B.C. teachers receive no salary increase for 2011-12, a teacher in Edmonton with equivalent years of experience and education will earn \$95,354 compared to \$74,353 for a teacher in Vancouver. All provinces in Canada are dealing with the effects of a global economic crisis, yet only the B.C. government is imposing a freeze on teacher salaries. For example, a recent mediator's report recommended salary increases for Saskatchewan teachers of up to 10.51% over three years depending on where teachers place on the salary scale.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support of our collective job action and respect for our virtual picket line. As was stated last month, it is essential that teachers put pressure on the employer so that we can reach a fair settlement and restore guaranteed working and learning conditions. Additionally, please continue to contact the VSTA office with your questions and comments as we move forward with our phase one "teach only" job action.

In solidarity,

Debbie



Glen Hansman (BCTF) & Debbie Pawluk at VSTA SURT

Did You Know? Bills 27 & 28

Over 3,000 teaching positions have been lost in BC since the imposition of Bills 27 and 28 by then Minister of Education Christy Clark.

Of those 3,000 roughly 1/2 (or 1,459) were specialist teacher positions including teacher librarians, counsellors, special education teachers, ESL teachers and Aboriginal Education teachers.

Roughly 1/2 of that again (or 737) were special education teachers (in other words, 1/4 of the total).



Proposed Pro D Robbery



In 1972, at the request of the teaching profession and after years of lobbying, 5 Professional Development (PD) non instructional days were added to the school calendar with no loss of instructional time for students and no increased compensation for teachers. PD days recognize that as professionals, teachers need dedicated time to hone their specific skills, improve their own unique practice and keep current with on-going research and development in their fields related to teaching and learning.

Most locals, including the VSTA, have provisions regarding PD including control over the allocation of PD funding as well as the ability to determine and plan our own Pro D through our school based Pro D Committees, and/or our Self Directed policy option.

All of this is in jeopardy now as BCPSEA's current proposal "Professional Growth & Engagement" sets out mandatory Professional Growth Plans for teachers. Such plans would include PD requirements be determined by school, district and/or provincial goals. Their Program of Professional Growth would include "clear and measurable" expectations of employees, with an annual evaluative performance review process.

BCPSEA's perspective is most problematic. Of concern is that it focuses on management direction and control of teachers' professional learning. It significantly increases the power of school administrators to introduce a standardized teacher growth plan and represents teachers as employees, not professionals, in need of employer direction. Their priority is a model of centralized organizational control, as opposed to professional learning. Outrageously, their tabled language states that if there is no agreement to their model, it will still become the new language, likely to be imposed by legislation.

Teachers need to respond to this proposal with vigour. We must seize this opportunity to demonstrate our engagement in our OWN professional development by our individual professional growth choices. We must also continue to involve ourselves in the teacher developed plans of our school and district based Pro D committees. We must speak out in support of knowing our own unique school and classroom environments and our knowledge of how to respond to our own unique Pro D learning needs in those areas.

Mary Filleul, VSTA Pro D Chair

FUND Public Education NOW



In a brief on Education Funding presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services this September, the BCTF made the case for increased funding for public education. Here are a few of the highlights along with some statistics from our own district.

Although Canadian jurisdictions, with the exception of Alberta, have experienced declining enrolment in the last decade, most have taken the opportunity to lower their student/educator ratios. Not so in BC where by 2009 we had the second-highest student/teacher ratio in the country.

In Vancouver specifically, teachers who support the students with greatest need have been hardest hit. Conversations around class composition, and the complexity of learning needs this reflects in our classrooms, take on new significance when informed by the stark reality of reduced supports. There are over 100 fewer special education specialists working in Vancouver schools than in 2001, a decrease of over 23%. There are close to 200 fewer English as a Second Language teachers available to support students and their teachers, a drop of close to 65% from 2001 levels. There have also been decreases in teacher librarians and counsellors, positions that serve to support all learners and teachers in our schools. Contrast this with the fact that enrolment in elementary and secondary schools in Vancouver have declined about 8% from 2001 levels.

The current proposal by Minister Abbott of a Class Organization Fund to address outstanding concerns will do nothing to restore these numbers. Teachers need to see a re-investment in public education in BC before we fall further behind the rest of Canada. Since 2000, corporate income taxes in BC have decreased from 16.5% to 10% leaving the provincial treasury strapped for revenue.

The disparity between BC teachers and our counterparts in the rest of Canada is growing. BC Teachers are once again facing a net zero mandate while elsewhere in Canada teachers will be receiving the following improvements to their salaries:

Ontario	3% in September 2011
Alberta	4.4% in 2011/12
Saskatchewan	up 10.5% over 3 years

The provincial government needs to re-examine its priorities to ensure public services are fully supported and the students of BC and their teachers are not asked to shoulder the burden.

Ed May Social Justice Grants

Individuals or groups of teachers may apply for Ed May grants of up to \$2000 for school-based social justice projects.

Application forms **MUST** be signed by your social justice contact and local president. Please make sure you include the evaluation page that incorporates an analysis of your project using the social justice lens.

Application forms are available online at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/public/AboutUs/ServicesHandbook/4EdMay.pdf.

The criteria for applying is at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/GrantsFunds/SJGrantInfo.pdf.

Here is the abbreviated version:

- may be classroom or school-based, or may involve the community and school
- can be a current or new initiative
- funds may be used for release time, materials, publicity, communication, coalition building
- funds may not be used for travel, overseas projects, purchase of food or school hardware (computers, furniture, etc.)
- a budget must be included with the proposal.

Priority will be given to projects that

- are new rather than repeat proposals
- are innovative
- actively involve students
- have major impact on learners
- are collaborative (with funding from other sources)
- represent a geographical and topical balance.

The BCTF receives many applications each year; therefore, attaching additional information about the scope of the project to the online form/application is very helpful.

APPLICATION DEADLINE is November 25th at 4pm. Applications are **NOT** accepted via e-mail.



Looking for a School Board Trustee who will...

On Saturday, November 19, 2011, we

will have the opportunity to cast ballots to elect Mayors, Councillors, Parks Board and School Board Trustees across the province. Here in Vancouver, we recognize the advantage of working with a supportive majority at our School Board.

It is important that school board trustees recognize the following central principles:

- Although teachers work hard to provide real equity of opportunity for all, historical factors and systemic barriers mean inequity remains for our students. Our education system must challenge and work to change this reality.
- Smaller classes for all students and better support for students with special needs is a benefit to both the teaching and learning conditions for all our students.
- All students should have access to the expertise of teacher-librarians, ESL teachers, counsellors, learning assistance teachers and special education teachers to support their learning.
- Increased investment in public education is critical to reverse the downward trend in support over the past 20 years.
- The most effective assessment of student progress is the assessment that teachers do every day in the classroom.
- Collective bargaining has been an important tool in building an excellent public education system and must be restored.

As we step back and consider quality education in a broader context as a fundamental piece of democracy, supportive trustees are a key part of this picture. Supportive trustees make our goals for the best possible BC public school system achievable. Take time during early polling, November 9th-18th, or on November 19th to cast your ballot for trustees who will support quality public education.

Treena Goolieff & Sylvia Metzner
Local Election Contacts

VSTA Executive Committee 2011-2012



Front: Amy Hurn (MAL), Sylvia Metzner (1st VP), Moira Ekdahl (Treas), Debbie Pawluk (Pres), Shaun van der Hoop (2nd VP), Treena Goolieff (MAL). Back: Young Cheng (MAL), Govan Keng (Technology Chair), Mary Filleul (Pro-D Chair), Ros Kellett (SEJC Chair), John Silver (TOC Chair), Brin MacIntyre (MAL), Lisa Pacheco (Local Rep), Trish Mugford (MAL), Raza Mirani (Local Rep). Camera shy: Susan McIntosh (MAL), Christine Stewart (MAL).

Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP)

All teachers eligible to retire at the end of December may do so and receive the ERIP which is normally available only at the end of June. To receive the ERIP, all the normal rules will apply (see below) except that notice of retirement must be in by 2011 November 30 to begin retirement, with pension, on 2012 January 01. Contact the VSTA if you have further questions.

Rules of Eligibility:

- be on a continuing appointment
- be retiring with a pension
- have a minimum of ten (10) FTE years' service with the Vancouver Board of Education.
- be at the maximum of their scale
- have been in active service for the previous four (4) years, during which there may be a maximum of one year leave not including leaves under Article G.21.30., and/or leaves granted due to disability (within the meaning of *The British Columbia Human Rights Code*)
- be a minimum age of 55, and a maximum age of 64 as of 2011 December 31st in the year of retirement
- submit his/her request to retire, in writing, **on or before 2011 November 30** for a retirement date of 2011 December 31.

Based on the salary upon retirement, excluding allowances, the minimum salary to be PB(5), step 10, the maximum to be 6M, step 10, minus PB(5), step 3, and to be adjusted by the applicable earnings as at age upon retirement date:

Age	4PC	5PB	5PA	6M	Payout %
55	\$19,038	\$19,038	\$25,102	\$26,173	100%
56	\$17,134	\$17,134	\$22,592	\$23,556	90%
57	\$15,230	\$15,230	\$20,082	\$20,938	80%
58	\$13,327	\$13,327	\$17,571	\$18,321	70%
59	\$11,423	\$11,423	\$15,061	\$15,704	60%
60	\$9,519	\$9,519	\$12,551	\$13,087	50%
61	\$7,615	\$7,615	\$10,041	\$10,469	40%
62	\$5,711	\$5,711	\$7,531	\$7,852	30%
63	\$3,808	\$3,808	\$5,020	\$5,235	20%
64	\$3,808	\$3,808	\$5,020	\$5,235	20%

Note: For more information on applying for the ERIP, please call the VSTA office or Human Resources.



Salary Indemnity Fund Important Reminder

Continuing members of the VSTA SIF are reminded to submit their fee for the 2011-2012 school year **no later than October 31st**.



New applicants for membership to the VSTA SIF must be made within *two months* of continuing appointment with the VBE in order for membership during the current year. In addition, new VSTA members *age 30 or older* may join the SIF during the *first year* of VSTA membership. Otherwise, the Age Clause Limit will bar them from future membership. If a SIF member "drops out" of the SIF after his/her 30th birthday, he/she *cannot rejoin* the fund.

Educational Leave: Opportunities and Deadlines

Continuing contract teachers with the VBE are eligible for a variety of educational leaves (G.9.):

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 2012.

- Teachers with a continuing contract of not less than one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the requested leave may apply for a paid (60% of annual salary and allowances) education leave of less than one (1) school year, but longer than ten (10) school days. Teachers must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent-Human Resources at least three (3) months prior to the commencement of the leave.

- Teachers with a continuing contract of not less than one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the requested leave may apply for a paid (100% of annual salary and allowances) education leave for ten (10) school days or less. Teachers must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent-Human Resources at least four (4) weeks prior to the date of the commencement of the leave.

Application forms are available from the VBE.