

JOINT STATEMENT ON SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

February 4, 2008, 2007

Drafted by the Vancouver Board of Education District and School Administrators, Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association, and the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association.

We agree with following points with respect to self directed professional development activities:

- 1) Self-Directed Pro D has a valuable role to play in the full complement of a teacher's professional development.

As professionals, teachers have a responsibility to engage in ongoing professional development.

Teachers engage in a number of different activities in this regard and many of these go well beyond the five days provided as non-instructional time.

Because teachers are at different levels of experience, have different interests and different professional learning needs, it is not always possible to plan for collective activities that are relevant to all.

Self directed activities can provide for the differences, enhance an individual's professional growth, and provide opportunities to work in collaborative teams on action research initiatives generated by the teachers.

- 2) Teachers have a professional responsibility to plan for their Self-Directed Pro D.

Professional development activities involve thinking carefully about practice, reflecting on professional needs, indentifying resources, and in some cases finding colleagues with similar interests or needs. This can not be done without planning ahead.

The BCTF principles of professional development and the VSB/VTF Professional Development Handbook reinforce this need for planning.

- 3) A written plan has to be submitted to the School Pro D Committee in advance of a Pro D day (suggested about two weeks prior). A time-line will be proposed by the School Pro D Committee and approved by Staff Committee.

The Professional Development Committee makes plans on behalf of the school and their efforts need to be respected. Letting them know at least two weeks ahead of time about your plans is important as a courtesy as well as for practical planning purposes.

Because each staff has a different planning cycle, it is important for there to be procedures set in the school and communicated broadly to all members of staff. In some schools an annual plan for self-directed Pro D is part of the process. In others, the plans are made along the way during the year. However the planning is undertaken at the school, the timelines and expectations need to be in place so all can meet them.

- 4) The Administrator is a member of the Pro D Committee and has access to those plans.

We all agree that a written plan must be submitted to the Pro D Committee and we acknowledge that the principal or vice-principal is a member of the Committee and therefore will have access to the plans.

It is important to understand that this is not an approval process. "Approval" indicates that a plan must be reviewed and accepted before the person can proceed to implement the plan. This is not the situation contemplated here.

It is assumed that as professionals, teachers will develop responsible professional development plans and that these will be submitted in a timely fashion. No approval, therefore, is required.

However, it must be clear at the same time that the principal supervises teachers. So, if a plan is not submitted, or if the plan is not professionally responsible, the principal, as the supervisor, may need to follow up with the individual.

We also agree there are principles which outline best practices for professional development - both self directed and staff organized. These are outlined in the VSB/VTF Pro D Handbook and in a variety of BCTF documents. There are also a variety of resources available to assist in planning in the VSB/VTF Pro D Handbook and documents created by VSTA and VESTA.