



President's Message



BY THE TIME you read this a Forum on On-Line Learning in the district will have taken place (November 30). In our round of school visits this fall, we learned from teachers in most schools that the issue of on-line learning and its implications for teaching

and learning as well as funding is a major concern. On November 30, 17 teachers including table officers from VSTA participated in a forum put on by the Board to discuss this pressing issue in this district. Some of the questions and issues came from a survey we did on this issue last year and arose from questions raised at the Board's Committee III last spring by our reps. Examples of questions/concerns raised include: percentage of course completions, ease with which students can opt out of a face to face course and into on-line courses mid-year, expectations of schools to support these learners for example in library usage, borrowing of textbooks, requests for help from classroom teachers, funding implications for the school and many other questions/ concerns identified by teachers. A full report of the Forum will be available both on our web-site and in the January *Tackboard*.

The other major issue facing all Secondary schools is the Ministry's announcement of the clawback of funding. In essence, the Ministry has decided to fund only courses taken by students which earn credits. The .5 students FTE base funding will no longer be provided. Both the timing and the implications of this announcement are hugely problematic for School Districts around the province. The BCTF and the VSTA have both sent

letters to the Premier and the Minister of Education urging them in the strongest possible terms not to recalculate and reduce the funding in school districts in the middle of the year. Our Board of Trustees has also sent a letter asking the Ministry and Premier to re-consider this ill - conceived claw-back.

The funding to meet the promises made when this government introduced class-size and composition legislation is already inadequate as we know all too well in Vancouver. Additionally, changing funding in midyear is unnecessarily disruptive to students, teachers, and Boards. The ministry claims it is just correcting an error; our response is the broken promise of class size/ class composition legislation is already causing greater and greater challenges for teaching and learning. Taking more away from Boards will simply compound that inequity. On Thursday, Nov 29, the BCTF will begin an ad and media campaign around this issue. The VSTA will also issue a press release challenging the provincial government to justify its spending priorities. The ads compare the casual acceptance of cost overruns at the new convention centre with the mean-spirited cuts to funding for public education when this government is sitting on a well-publicized financial surplus.

Finally, I have to say that our voice is being heard; it may not be heeded but with your help and the voices of 34,000 teachers in this province, I believe we can call this government to account for their failed promises. Have a good December and enjoy a well-earned break.

Anne

BCTF New Teachers' Conference 2008: A Call for Workshop Proposals

The BCTF will be hosting its eleventh annual New Teachers' Conference at The Executive Airport Plaza Hotel Richmond on Friday, February 29th and Saturday, March 1st 2008. The conference is a professional development opportunity designed specifically for new teachers, those in their first five years of teaching and for student teachers. As part of this initiative, the Federation is also looking for individuals to facilitate workshops for this event. If you require more information or have a proposal for a workshop in a content area of interest to new teachers, please contact Moh Chelali at the BCTF at 604-871-1844 or mchelali@bctf.ca or contact the VSTA Office for an application form. The deadline for workshop proposals is Friday, December 7th.

Bill 20: An Overview

In March of 2007, the provincial government tabled Bills 20, 21, and 22.

The focus of **Bill 20**, the School (Student Achievement Enabling) Amendment Act, is on **student achievement** and includes the following amendments to the *School Act*:

- Creates superintendents of achievement who may inspect school board records, enter schools, and interview employees and students.
- Provides the ability for parents who are "dissatisfied with a board ruling, such as the suspension of a student," to appeal to the superintendents of achievement.
- Establishes boards of education and mandating that boards prepare an achievement contract with respect to student performance, plans for improving student achievement, early learning programs, and literacy.
- Provides for the appointment of a special trustee if a board does not comply with an administrative directive to meet its obligations under an achievement contract.
- Defines special academies and allowing for students to be charged fees to attend the academy and also allowing for fees to be charged for some courses and materials.
- Broadens the minister's capacity to create provincial demonstration schools.
- Requires boards to establish district literacy plans.

An overview of Bill 21 will appear in the January edition of *Tackboard*.



VSTA Website

The VSTA website has been completely redesigned to further meet the needs of our members. Teachers can access the "melded" VTF Collective Agreement, as well as find information about salary, benefits, and important upcoming events. In addition, the new website provides links to a wide variety of teacher supports and contacts and has a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page. Check out this invaluable resource at www.vstaweb.ca.

Self-Directed Pro-D:

Teacher Professional Responsibilities vs. Administrative Rights

New Self-Directed Pro-D Guidelines were recently passed by the VSTA Council. These guiding principles not only define self-directed Pro-D, but also provide suggestions and benefits of self-directed Pro-D, as well as useful strategies for self-directed planning and procedures. These guiding principles remind teachers of our professional responsibility to engage in activities that further our teaching expertise, to use our Pro-D time wisely and appropriately, and that we have professional autonomy over our Pro-D. That is, no one else, i.e. administrators, can tell us what we should be doing for professional development (other than the 1 Admin. day per year they have). These new guidelines have been sent to all secondary schools for distribution to teaching staff and are posted under Professional Development on the VSTA website.

Recently, some Administrators, encouraged by the District's labour relations officer, have been asking teachers to provide specific details about their self-directed Pro-D plans and have even gone so far as to attempt to approve or disapprove of their Pro-D plans.

The VSTA position is that teachers are not required to provide that information to administrators. Teachers are only obligated to advise administrators of our whereabouts on the Pro-D day. Teachers are encouraged to inform the school Pro-D committee of their self-directed Pro-D plans, as this assists the committee with school Pro-D planning and enables the committee to organize opportunities for teachers who share common Pro-D goals to work together.

We are reminded that Pro-D days were added to the school calendar at the request of the teachers to provide time during the year to refine, improve, and enhance our teaching expertise. They are *our* days.

VTF General Meeting

**Thursday, December 6
4pm at Tupper Auditorium**

There will be an important VTF General Meeting at 4.00pm on Thursday, December 6th, at Tupper Secondary School. This meeting is necessary to allow the VTF to continue mid-contract modifications/ bargaining matters to proceed. Please make every effort to attend.

PUB NIGHT



Join your colleagues at the
Montmartre Cafe

4362 Main Street @ E. 28th

**Friday, November 30th
2:30-6:00**

to socialize and celebrate the end of term one! Arrive early to enjoy complimentary finger food and entertainment.



White Ribbon Campaign

What is the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC)?

The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) is the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women (VAW). In over fifty-five countries, campaigns are led by both men and women, even though the focus is on educating men and boys. In some countries it is a general public education effort focused on ending violence against women.

How did the WRC get started?

In 1991, a handful of men in Canada decided they had a responsibility to urge men to speak out about violence against women. Wearing a white ribbon would be a symbol of men's opposition to violence against women. With only six weeks of preparation, 100,000 men across Canada wore a white ribbon, while many others were drawn into discussion and debate.

What does it mean to wear a white ribbon?

Wearing a white ribbon is a personal *pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls*. Wearing a white ribbon is a way of saying, "Our future has no violence against women."

Memorial of the Montreal Massacre

Remember...

- 62 wives killed last year in Canada
- 64 prostituted women gone from Vancouver
- 500 Aboriginal women missing from Canada
- 14 massacred in Montreal, killed as feminists

The Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter invites you to participate in a day of action to end violence against women from 10:00am-6:00pm at the Vancouver Public Library on Saturday, December 1st. For more information, phone 604-872-8212 or visit www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca.

A package with white ribbons, posters and information will be distributed to a male Staff Rep this week. Please mark White Ribbon Week, November 30 to December 6, in your calendars. For more information, check out www.whiteribbon.ca.



Educational Leave Deadline

Teachers planning to take an educational leave commencing September 2008, are reminded that applications must be made in writing to the Associate Superintendent of Human Resources on or before December 15, 2007 (Article 10.J.8.(a)).



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