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President's Newsletter

January, 2012

Happy New Year!

Welcome back. I hope you all had a restful and reinvigorating holiday. As we continue with our job action, the coming months will no doubt present a series of new challenges, both in our schools (FSA, provincial exams, semester 1 end, semester 2 start-up) and provincially (the official introduction of the new Teachers' Council, potential Bill 27/28 legislation, potential collective agreement legislation). These challenges will put pressure on all of us, and will require determination, strength, and individual and collective resolve. Despite all of this uncertainty, I am confident that if we continue to stand together, 2012 will be a year in which we will secure a fair deal for teachers and public education.

February General Meeting

I usually spend this time of year worrying that we might not get sufficient attendance at our February General Meeting to achieve quorum. This year, with so much to talk about, I am hoping that running out of cookies will be a greater concern.

Please make an effort to come out to the Saanich Education Centre (formerly the DRC) on February 8th. Teachers have a lot of questions ("why are we here?" and "where are we going?" are the two most common) so we will have a member of the **BCTF Executive Committee there to give us an update on the complex provincial picture (the bargaining table, Bill 27/28 table, Teachers' Council, BC Education Plan), and potential next steps in our job action.**

We will also use this meeting to **elect our delegates for this year's BCTF Annual General Meeting** (BCTF By-Law No. 2 stipulates that AGM delegates must be elected at a local's general meeting). Please consider taking your turn this year to represent your colleagues at the AGM (to take place at the Hyatt Hotel in Vancouver over the first four days of Spring Break).

What: STA General Meeting

When: Wednesday, February 8th, 2012 @ 3:45 – 5:30

Where: Saanich Schools Education Centre (in behind Keating Elementary)

[Please contact Sally at the STA Office if you are interested in having your name stand as an AGM delegate.](#)

BCTF New Teacher Conference 2012

- When: March 2-3, 2012 (registration through the [BCTF website](#) starting mid-January)
- Where: Radisson Hotel, 8181 Cambie Road, Richmond
- Who: New teachers, Teachers-on-Call, and Student Teachers
- What: Workshops, resources, PSA information, networking...
- How: Excellent use of Pro D funds. **Don't forget that TOCs have access to \$250 worth of professional development funding** if they get 10 callouts this year. Contact Audrey Hayes (ahayes@sd63.bc.ca) for more information.

Semester 2 Bill 33 Consultations

Don't forget that for semester-based schools, there will be another round of class size and composition consultations occurring next month. These consultations are **completely unaffected** by our Phase 1 job action, meaning teachers are free to send and receive emails related to their consultation, attend meetings with administrators, etc.

We are all tired of Bill 33, but it is important that teachers and staff reps fight "consultation fatigue" and once again engage in this process. If you have a class that exceeds the legislated limits, please take the time to attend these meetings (**with a staff rep!**), and make sure you **fill out a copy of the STA form** (it is your choice whether or not to also sign the principal's form). We are continuing to file grievances for classes that are over the legislated limits (provided we get your form) and these grievances are a key part of the bigger battle to have our class size/composition concerns addressed.

Here are a few reminders about the process:

- 🍏 IEPs are IEPs for all classes, not just those listed or specifically mentioned
- 🍏 *all teachers* who have regular contact with a class must be consulted
- 🍏 the principal has the obligation to gather/provide required and relevant information, including class lists and IEPs, before any meetings
- 🍏 teachers must **expressly tell their principals if they disagree with the make-up of their class, and must clearly articulate how the composition/size will adversely affect the normal learning expectations for a class**
- 🍏 the principal must inform the teacher that the consultation process is complete, including any offered support

Please give a copy of your STA form to your principal and send the original to the STA Office (through your Staff Rep).

BCPSEA's LRB Appeal

Right before the break, BCPSEA attempted to appeal the Labour Relations Board decision to not allow Boards of Education the ability to fine the BCTF up to 15% of teachers' gross salary and benefits costs. BCPSEA was insisting that this fine was needed to balance the bargaining dynamic and prevent Phase 1 from "dragging on forever" and that the LRB had erred in its earlier ruling.

On December 20th, the LRB rejected BCPSEA's appeal for reconsideration and upheld their original ruling. Phase 1 can continue (hopefully not forever, but certainly for the foreseeable future), and there is no mechanism to force the BCTF to pay Boards for "work not done."

The Role of the Staff Rep

I recently read the VESTA (Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association) newsletter and ran across an excellent article entitled "What your Staff Rep does for you." As I have already mentioned Staff Reps a few times in this newsletter, I thought I would shamelessly steal this idea (and some of the content) from the good folks at VESTA.

Here are a few of the things that your Staff Rep can do for you and your school:

- **Facilitate enforcement of the Collective Agreement**
As the union representative at a school, the Staff Rep is there to help everyone (including principals) understand and correctly implement the Collective Agreement (and other important documents like the Staffing Letter of Understanding). Staff Reps also often act as a primary source of information for teachers who have questions about pay, leaves, benefits, and other matters.
- **Provide representation for members**
Staff Reps are there to represent members when dealing with administration (and sometimes colleagues) when concerns arise. This right to representation is enshrined in our Collective Agreement. It is important to note that Staff Reps are not there to act as a judge, or even to defend their colleague. They are simply there to support their fellow teacher, take notes, and ensure that due process is followed at all times.
- **Facilitate collective support**
Even in the very best run schools, circumstances arise that cause stress. In times when grievances, job action, or other disputes arise, the Staff Rep can play a role in moving the stress from individuals to the collective (by helping members contact the STA office about potential grievances, helping members refer issues to Staff Committee, etc.). During job action, Staff Reps also typically take on the important role of Job Action Coordinator for their site.
- **Serve as a spokesperson**
Staff Reps often speak on behalf of individual teachers, groups of teachers, or entire staffs to administrators, to the monthly STA Representative Assembly, or directly to the STA Executive (usually by contacting the president).
- **Act as a link between the BCTF/STA and school staffs**
As mentioned in the last bullet, Staff Reps attend monthly STA Representative Assemblies. At these meetings, Staff Reps hear from other school reps, provide advice to the STA Executive, and get updates on issues of the day. Staff Reps generally then bring this information back to their staff to be shared during the STA portion of staff meetings.
- **Maintain an STA bulletin board**
Most staffrooms have an STA bulletin board where teachers can find important information, including BCTF/STA memos, newsletters, bulletins, notices of upcoming meetings, etc. This might also be an area to keep copies of the Collective Agreement, Staffing Letter of Understanding, BCTF Code of Ethics, and other important documents that teachers need to access from time to time.

Being a Staff Rep is not an easy job, but it is a crucial one. You can make your Staff Rep's job easier by staying informed (read STA/BCTF publications, attend general meetings, visit the BCTF website), and by attending any meetings your Staff Rep calls. You might even consider offering to help - many schools have two reps that share the job (and the responsibility).

Foundations Skills Assessment

As you know, our Phase 1 job action prohibits teachers from administering or supervising district or ministry tests, so this year's FSAs (which are just around the corner) will be handled by school and district administration. As per usual, **the BCTF is also asking teachers *not to participate in the marking of the FSAs.***

Although the BCTF is not formally involved in a full-blown FSA campaign this year (we are busy frying other fish) we still have withdrawal forms available for parents to fill out if they want their child excused from this year's test. See your Staff Rep if you want any copies of these forms, and feel free to refer parents who have questions about the FSA to the BCTF website (<http://www.bctf.ca/fsa.aspx>) where they can find informational brochures and a copy of the withdrawal form.

BCTF Great Big Video Challenge

In response to the challenges facing us, the BCTF communications department is giving you another one! They have launched a Great Big Video Challenge, and are encouraging teachers to let their creative juices flow. Teachers are being asked to capture their take on the current state of play in public education and send the video results (or a YouTube link) to the BCTF. Hopefully these videos will get us a little "earned media" and help us spread our message. A few examples are already posted on the BCTF YouTube page (<http://www.youtube.com/mybctf>) - I particularly like the Ministry of Education Answering Machine video. Challenge deadline is January 20th, so get filming!

For more information on this Challenge, please visit:

<http://www.bctf.ca/web2.aspx?id=24626>

Pacific Blue Cross ID

Just before the break, many of you will have received a message from Laurel Hill. However, there is a good chance that some of you might have missed it, so I thought I would send it along again. This is also a good reminder that the Pacific Blue Cross page (<https://caresnet.pac.bluecross.ca/CARESnet/>) is an excellent place to find Pacific Blue Cross information, including claims forms, benefits coverage details, claims status, and more.

Laurel's message:

For those of you who have Dental & Extended Health Care coverage through the District, Pacific Blue Cross has changed your identity number. Previously your identity number was your Social Insurance number. Your new number is 0000_ _ _ _ _ (plus your 5 digit employee number). If you do not know your employee number, it can be found on the right hand side of your pay statement. The group numbers remain the same. D829987 for Dental & E020063 for Extended Health.

In January, we will be sending out new benefit cards. In the meantime if you are submitting any Extended Health Claim forms remember to write the new ID# on the form, and be sure to provide your Dentist's office with your new number.