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STA President



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President's Newsletter

November, 2010

General Meeting Results

This year's first General Meeting (October 13th at Claremont Secondary) was a success thanks to the 60 or so teachers who took the time to attend. As promised, the meeting dealt with all-things-bargaining. Using our bargaining survey results as a starting point, the members in attendance amended, debated, and voted on a series of motions that established Saanich teachers' bargaining priorities for the upcoming round of provincial and local negotiations.

The meeting also elected the STA's first bargaining committee in many years. Joining **Mike Ewan** (bargaining chair) and myself on the team will be **Philip Jungen** (Deep Cove), **Don Peterson** (Sidney), **John Vucko** (Claremont) and **Amanda Wilson** (Parkland). This committee will work hard to represent the teachers of Saanich as we pursue our collective goals in this round of bargaining.

Are You Saving?

Three members of the Saanich Bargaining Committee (Philip, Mike and Sean) spent October 29th and 30th in Richmond at the BCTF Bargaining Conference. At this meeting, delegates from all around the province debated and passed a series of provincial bargaining objectives for our upcoming round of negotiations. While the details of these objectives are not newsletter fodder, it was apparent to all present that we have a challenging road ahead of us, and that this road will undoubtedly contain a few potholes. With this in mind (combined with the fact that CUPE is bargaining as you read this), it is important to remind ourselves that now is the time to start socking away a little extra "just in case" money. Hopefully this money will end up funding an unexpected vacation or a new big screen TV, but my advice is to hope for the best, but plan for the worst.

Coming Soon...

You might have noticed that our website (www.saanichteachers.com) needs a little work. While the **STA folder** on Zimbra is a nice resource for teachers, there is no doubt that a good website is the place where most folks go to find information and resources. Happily, our very own 2nd Vice President Amanda Wilson has taken on this challenge (in the absence of a Communications Chair), and hopes to have a slick, new website up and running by the New Year. Stay tuned.

New Teacher Induction

On Wednesday, October 27th, the Saanich Teachers' Association held its annual New Teacher Induction at the Brentwood Bay Lodge and Spa. After a few welcoming comments from yours truly and BCTF 1st Vice President Jim Iker, inductees, fellow teachers, administrators and trustees mingled over some nibblies and a glass of bubbly. Special thanks need to go to STA office manager Sally Glen who, in the continued absence of an STA Program Chair, organized this very pleasant evening.



Left to right:
Susan Bracher, Jeni-Lynne Blackie,
Jen Bromley, Derek Horton, Sarah
Tudway-Cains, Nicole Irwin,
Audrey Hayes, Sean Hayes, and
BCTF 1st VP Jim Iker

Class Size and Composition

Having now filed local grievances on all classes where teachers disagreed with the learning conditions in their classrooms (as well as any situations where consultations failed to occur), we will attempt to find solutions to some of the challenges being faced in our classrooms. If we fail to resolve these grievances, we will once again be forced to refer the matter to Arbitrator Dorsey.

Speaking of Mr. Dorsey, he continues to make a career from the fallout that has resulted from the odious legislation that was Bill 33. In a recent ruling, Dorsey has confirmed that, although it is not specifically called for in the legislation, oversized classes that commence in semester 2 must be treated according to the same rules described for September. In other words, principals must provide teachers with all relevant information, consultations must occur within the first 15 days, forms must be filled in, etc. **Please make sure you participate fully in these meetings when the time comes (take your Staff Rep and an STA form!).**

And for those of you who are wondering if we will ever find out what remedy, if any, teachers will get for oversized classes from years past, Mr. Dorsey may also hold the key here. After failing to agree with BCPSEA (the bargaining agent for School Boards) on remedy for these classes, the BCTF and BCPSEA have agreed to go back to Arbitrator Dorsey for further guidance of how to solve this dispute. Mr. Dorsey will hear evidence on another 45 classes between now and February. Hopefully, an additional ruling will allow us to solve these past (and hopefully present and future) class size and composition grievances.

F.S.A. 2011

Like it or hate it, the Foundations Skills Assessment is back for another year (January 17-February 25, 2011). The government maintains that these tests generate valuable data that can be used to judge the health of our education system. Most teachers, however, see these tests as a nuisance at best, and a vehicle for privatization at worst. In addition to costing significant amounts of scarce education dollars, standardized tests such as the FSA can force teachers to narrow the curriculum, and can cause unneeded stress for students. Much worse, however, is the way the results of these tests are being misused by organizations like the Fraser Institute to unfairly rank BC schools (with private schools inevitably on top).

To date, the government has refused the BCTF's requests to shield FSA results from the Fraser Institute, or better yet, to administer these tests on a random sample basis. As a result, teachers all around the province have instead focused on informing parents of their right to have their children excused from writing these potentially harmful tests. A similar education campaign will occur again this year, with information brochures and withdrawal forms available for distribution to parents soon.

In advance of this campaign, I wanted to remind teachers of the BCTF advice that teachers **not participate in creating or marking the FSA tests**. It is also important to remember that **no additional classroom time should be dedicated to preparing students for the FSA**. More information/materials will be available from your Staff Rep in the coming months.

Joint Pro D Committee

My October newsletter article on Non Instructional Days generated a lot of great conversations - and more than a few additional questions - about these important days. I thought it would be a good idea to remind you all that we have an outstanding network of people who might be able to answer some of these questions. In addition to the **Pro D Rep** in your school (who received a full day of training on October 8th), the members of the **Joint Professional Development Committee** can be an excellent resource for you if you have any questions. This committee meets several times a year to examine professional development funding/budgets, discuss and review applications for Priority Funds, and in recent years has helped to organize district-wide Pro D events. This year's representatives are:

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|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Chair: | Holly Mair |
| Elementary Rep: | Jean Prevost |
| Middle School Rep: | Rae Thomson |
| Secondary Rep: | Joanna Linger |
| TOC Rep: | Audrey Hayes |
| Board Office Rep: | Diana Wiseman |
| Employer Rep: | Nancy Macdonald |

By the way, Audrey and Anne Stewart (STA TOC Chair) have organized a **Pro D opportunity of sorts for TOCs** for this month's (Nov. 12) NID. Teachers-on-call are invited to spend the morning here at the STA Office learning about their rights and responsibilities under the collective agreement. I will be giving each participant a copy of the hot-off-the-presses (finally) 2006-2011 Collective Agreement, and answering any questions participants may have. Contact Anne (astewart@sd63.bc.ba) or Audrey (ahayes@sd63.bc.ca) for more details.

Know Your Collective Agreement

As you just read, we have finally completed the “contract melding” process and have signed off on the final version of our 2006-2011 Collective Agreement (alas, just in time for it to expire). The Employer should be sending a pdf version to all teachers in the near future, and we have placed a copy in the STA folder on Zimbra. Staff Reps have also been given a hard copy to use in each school. I thought this might be a good opportunity to take a look at a few interesting corners of this document and let you all know what they really mean.

Seniority vs. Experience (they are not the same!)

Articles

C.2.7 (excerpt) Effective September 1, 1993, for the purpose of calculating seniority, any part of a day of service as a teacher on-call shall equate to a full day, and any contract period as a part-time teacher shall equate to full time.

B.27.1 The increment date shall be the 1st of September or the 1st of January following the month in which applicable experience accumulated is achieved.

B.27.2 Eight months of full time employment in any one year, or its equivalent as described below, shall constitute a year’s experience for increment purposes.

B.27.3 Teachers appointed in the B.C. Public Schools as part-time teachers shall accumulate experience credit proportional to the percentage of time they are employed. When the accumulative experience over a number of years is equal to eight months full time employment, the increment date provisions shall apply.

Professional Autonomy

Article

F.13.1 A teacher shall, within the bounds of the prescribed curriculum, and consistent with effective educational practice have individual professional autonomy in determining the methods of instruction, and the planning and presentation of course materials in the classes of pupils to which he/she is assigned.

F.13.2 The Board and the Association agree that consistent with the purpose of the evaluation process, an evaluator may recommend teaching practices different from those being used by the teacher.

F.13.3 The professional responsibility and ability of the classroom teacher to provide student evaluation is recognized. Evaluation of students shall primarily be the responsibility of the teacher in consultation with the principal.

F.13.4 If for any reason student evaluation is revised by an authority other than the teacher, the teacher will be informed. If the teacher disagrees with a revision of marks or comments, that authority shall take written responsibility for the new mark assignment or comment on the student’s records.

Translation

...for seniority, part-time teachers get full-time seniority, and TOCs get full day credit even if they only work part of a day. A teacher who works every second Wednesday all year (0.1 FTE) and a full-time teacher (1.0 FTE) would both accumulate one year’s seniority in any given year.

... for movement up the salary grid, a teacher must accumulate the equivalent of 8 months of full-time employment to move up one step, and the FTE *actually worked* is counted here. These increments are only awarded twice a year (September and January). As a result, a half-time teacher might have 10 years accumulated seniority, but only be on the 5th step of the grid.

The take home message is, you cannot use your seniority to predict where you should be on the salary grid... the calculation rules for each are totally different.

Translation

...this is important language. It means teachers have the ultimate authority over how they teach their classes (assuming they attend to legislation like the School Act and cover all PLOs).

... if a teacher is being evaluated under Article E.19, it is OK for the administrator doing the evaluation to suggest to the teacher that they “try something different.”

... similar to F.13.1, but this time dealing with a teacher’s rights to autonomous student evaluation. Notice that this right is not as absolute as autonomous instruction... principals can have a say when it comes to evaluation.

... at times, administrators (sometimes through counselors) want teachers to change a student’s marks (or comments, etc.). If teachers disagree with this change, they should clearly indicate this, and direct the administrator to take *written responsibility* for this change.