

DECEMBER 2012

S.T.A. in Touch

**A newsletter of the Saanich Teachers' Association
BCTF members of Local #63 (Saanich)**

Welcome to the December newsletter! As you read this month, we would encourage you to hum some Christmas Carols to get the full effect of this issue. Hopefully you are all doing well as we approach that well-deserved (and needed!) Christmas break. I suspect many of you are busy preparing for concerts, finishing off report cards and are starting to plan for the holidays. This time of year provides us a chance to recharge our batteries and prepare for the dark and wet Winter months ahead. I hope you take the time to relax and do something special for yourself. Whatever you end up doing, the STA Executive would like to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

In response to the great feedback we've been receiving, we have added a hyperlinked Table of Contents that makes reading the newsletter even easier!

Devon Armstrong & Colin Plant

This issue again features a secret trivia question. Find the question and email the answer to cplant@sd63.bc.ca by Tuesday, December 18th at 6 pm for your chance to win a \$10 Starbucks giftcard!!

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President's Report

by Sean Hayes

Category 5+ and Category 6 (again)

Article B.28 of the Collective Agreement allows teachers two opportunities (one in September and one in January) to apply for a salary category change (to category 5+ or category 6) based on the completion of graduate degree work. So, if you have been working on courses this year and believe you now (or will soon) qualify for a change in salary category, **you have until January 15th to inform Secretary-Treasurer Monica Schulte (copy Paul Standring).** Any such increase will be effective January 1st, and you will have until April 30th to provide the evidence of the completed coursework. **Don't miss out on your New Year's raise!**



Pension Contribution Increase

As teachers, we are lucky to have access to a well-managed, defined benefit Pension Plan that will take care of us and our families after our careers are over. Of course, this plan isn't free, and both teachers and the employer make significant monthly contributions to the plan. The size of these contributions is set by the Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees.

The recent actuarial evaluation of our Basic Pension Fund suggests that several factors (fewer active members; longer living retirees; modest investment returns) are putting the Fund's ability to fulfill its "pension promise" at risk, and as a result the Trustees have approved a pension contribution increase. **Effective July 1, 2013, both member and employer contribution rates will increase by 1.3 per cent of salary.**

Less take-home pay is never good news, but teachers can take some comfort that this money isn't gone - it is being sent out to grow, so that we can fulfill the pension promise for all current and future retirees. The other bit of good news is that these contributions are tax-deductible - meaning the impact on our take-home pay will ultimately be somewhat less than 1.3 per cent (estimates are an actual impact of ~0.95%).

Finally, teachers who are thinking of buying back pensionable service (for time on leave, or periods of un- or underemployment) should do so *before* this increase kicks in, as the amount you will pay will be based on the current contribution level.

For more information, visit:

http://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/pencorcontent/tpppage/news/tpp_bc_valuation_2011.pdf

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - CONTINUED

Speaking of Retirement...



Every year, Teachers' Pension Plan puts on two sets of excellent retirement seminars all around the province. The first, *Your Pension, Your Future* is geared toward teachers who want to learn more about their pensions (after all, this will be the most valuable asset most of us will own). The second, *Thinking About Retiring*, is for teachers who are in their last few years of teaching. Both come highly recommended.

Here is the schedule for this year's Victoria seminars:

Your Pension, Your Future

January 16th 2013, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the Coast Victoria Harbourside Hotel

Thinking About Retiring

December 4th 2012, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the Coast Victoria Harbourside Hotel

January 16th 2013, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. (same location)

Pre-registration is required. Visit:

http://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/pen_corp_home/tpp_home_page/tpp_tools/tpp_tools_seminars/

SECRET TRIVIA QUESTION: When is the Tapestry Tri-District Pro-D Conference occurring?

Discretionary Days

With the recent rollout of the Automated Dispatch System (ADS), teachers are having to brush up on the rules that govern our various leaves. One of the most complicated leaves – Discretionary Leave – has just gotten a bit more complicated. Here are a few things you should know:

- ❖ Article G.24 describes our paid Discretionary Leave. Teachers can take up to three of these days *at their discretion*. They will be paid, and have the average cost of a TOC (\$270 this year) deducted from their pay.
- ❖ The average cost of a TOC will be deducted for all G.24 Discretionary Leave days taken **whether a TOC was engaged or not** (to make access to this leave equitable for all teachers). If a TOC was not engaged, the STA and the Employer have agreed that the school will bank this TOC time and use it to engage a TOC at some other time (not necessarily to release the teacher who took the Discretionary Leave day). I suspect this is not happening in many schools, so teachers should remind principals of this requirement each and every time they take a Discretionary Leave day without engaging a TOC.
- ❖ The most recent round of provincial bargaining has complicated matters by introducing three days of **Unpaid Discretionary Leave** for all teachers. This means teachers now have access to six Discretionary Leave days – three paid (minus the cost of an average TOC) and three unpaid. It should be noted that for teachers who earn less than \$270 per day, it would actually be advantageous to take unpaid Discretionary Leave days first. Teachers will have to choose carefully when they are booking a Discretionary Leave day through the ADS.

Local Representatives Report

by Colin Plant & Mark Skanks

The Representative Assembly (RA) meets again on January 25/26 in Richmond. At this point the RA agenda has yet to be posted, but when it is, Saanich Local Representatives Colin Plant and Mark Skanks will be available to receive your feedback/input about the items on the agenda. You will find the agenda posted on our STA Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/224838570897905/> approximately 1-2 weeks before the meeting.

Key Decisions from the November 2nd RA

(Editor's Note: Any unfinished business from the BCTF AGM comes to the RA.)

BC Investment Management Corporation:

That the BCTF urge BCiMC to:

1. *Support eco-tourism and forestry recreational opportunities in their private lands and tree farm licenses, managed by Timber West.*

(Editor's Note: BCiMC invests our pension funds)



Conflict of Interest

That the following motion be referred to the Executive Committee for discussion with report back to the Winter RA:

That the following constitute BCTF procedure for BCTF active members, associate members, honorary members, and members on leave regarding conflict of interest:

“To avoid a conflict of interest between members’ personal interests including, but not limited to, being elected or appointed to a position, assignment, job, or other such activity generally regarded as conflicting with BCTF interests, members shall adhere to the following:

1. *If members’ personal interests, as outlined above, bring them into conflict of interest with their responsibilities as BCTF members (active, associate, honorary, or on leave), they shall agree in writing to not attend, unless specifically invited, any BCTF in-committee discussions and/or BCTF members-only meetings.*
2. *Should such members fail to agree to this request, their membership in the BCTF shall be suspended until such time as the conflict of interest is no longer an issue.*

(Editor's Note/Opinion: The above motion is largely a response to Kit Krieger becoming Executive Director of the BC Principal/Vice Principals Association. Kit is an Honorary Life Member of the BCTF.)

AGM referrals:



Air Canada

That the BCTF express its complete abhorrence of the actions of the Harper government in legislating workers at Air Canada back to work.

Member Expense Claim Policies

That the BCTF conduct a review, including member input, of member expense claim policies including: meal per-diem amounts, mileage, and allowable claims.

Local Bargaining Grant

That the following motion be referred to the Executive Committee with a report back to the Winter RA:

That the Federation provide a local bargaining grant for each round of local bargaining to locals to support local bargaining teams to prepare for and conduct local bargaining campaigns on the following basis:

1. *Locals will qualify for reimbursement of costs up to a maximum of \$15,000 for release time, and other costs (such as room rental and travel costs, printing, and other actions related to local bargaining).*
2. *Locals may claim for cost of food or refreshments or for any portion of the ongoing cost of regularly released local officers.*

New Buildings

That the Members' Guide Policy 39.01.5 (p. 144) be amended to read as follows: Members, especially the site-based health and safety committee, should be closely involved in the planning of new buildings and of alterations to existing buildings.

Student healthcare needs

That the BCTF work with the Ministry of Children and Families and related ministries to ensure that children in BC public schools have their nutritional and healthcare and dental needs met.

Contest Winners!!

Congratulations to our November contest winners **Alison Cuthill** (Keating), **Philip Jungen** (Keating) and **Catherine Robillard** (North Saanich). Each was randomly drawn from those readers who found and answered the secret trivia question correctly answering that Mark Skanks and Colin Plant were the Saanich Local Representatives to the BCTF Representative Assembly. They each received a \$10 Starbucks Card.

Chris Bocking (Keating) also won a \$10 card for the best suggestion for a future newsletter idea for suggesting we include an article that covers the large number of positive changes that have come about in teachers' daily work lives as a result of collective bargaining.

(Editor's note: Chris has also generously volunteered to write this article for a future newsletter.)

December Newsletter Contest

This month we are again running a contest where THREE winners will win a \$10 Starbucks Card. Anyone who answers the secret question (including previous winners) can again enter. The draw will take place on Tuesday, December 18th at 6pm and the winners will receive their prize via district mail on Wednesday, December 19th.



Bargaining Committee

by Don Peterson

Even-though we just ratified our contract last June, that contract expires at the end of the school year. The Saanich Teachers Association will be preparing to bargain local language on your behalf. At the November Representative Assembly, Joe Winkler, Colin Plant, Mark Skanks and Devon Armstrong were appointed to the Local Bargaining Committee. I was appointed to be the chairperson of the committee. Sean Hayes, as president, is automatically a member of the committee.

Keep your eye open for a survey that will be out mid-January. It will be looking for your opinion on possible bargaining objectives to local items. At the February general meeting, we will present the membership with the results of the survey and then the membership (you) will decide on the local bargaining objectives. From there the bargaining committee will be able to prepare for bargaining based on the local bargaining objectives.

Don Peterson
1st Vice-President



Health and Safety Report

by Patsy McCarter



Winter holidays are in the offing, leading me to think of a few of the key health and safety concerns that pop up at this time of year.

The School Noise Action Group (SNAG) is a volunteer committee of researchers and professionals concerned with classroom acoustics in British Columbia. This comprehensive pamphlet has great suggestions for lowering noise related health risks.

<http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/HealthSafety/Advice/SNAG-pamphlet-online.pdf>

Indoor air quality sometimes gets a little questionable at this time of year. This terrific Indoor Air Quality Handbook considers steps you can take to keep the air fresh and safe in your classroom.

<http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/HealthSafety/Resources/IAQhandbook.pdf>

Teachers teaching on call might like to read the BCTF's health and safety tips for staying safe as you navigate the numerous schools and different environments you might be asked to teach in.

<http://www.bctf.ca/TeachersOnCall.aspx?id=17224>

Slips, Trips, and Falls

Now that the cold weather is here, school grounds may be icy, so slips are unfortunately common. Take a moment to inspect outdoor surfaces, be aware of your school procedures for appropriate ice clearing and don't underestimate the practicality of well-fitting, non-slip footwear.

When hanging all of those wonderful decorations and seasonal artwork, be careful to only use a proper ladder in good repair. Don't try to improvise by standing on a chair, desk, etc. Keep your weight centred between the side rails of the ladder and don't be tempted to use those top two steps.

Last but not least, with excited kids everywhere, watch that the hallways and walkways remain clear of backpacks, books, jackets and other clutter.



Stay healthy and safe, and have a restful holiday season!

Professional Development Report

by Sarah Windle & Holly Mair

Professional Development funds can be used to purchase academic journals and books. An academic journal or book is defined as:

A book or journal that has been written for a teaching audience and that explores educational issues.

For many teachers, it is difficult to travel to attend PD conferences: PD money is inadequate; children need to be cared for; and for many part-time teachers or TOCs, other work commitments conflict with PD dates.

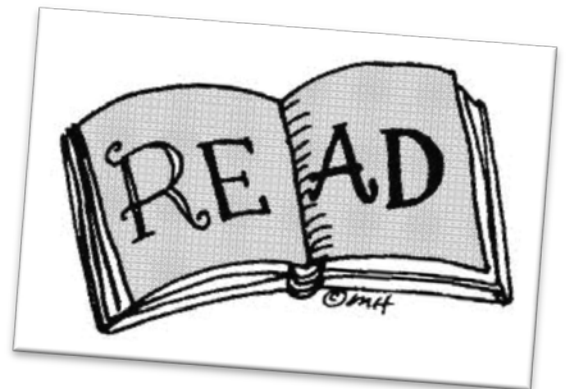
Think how lovely it would be to get journals delivered to your door step so that you can stay current in your teaching methods! Educational Leadership, and Reading Today are two fabulous journals that Holly has subscribed to in the past.

You can also get professional books: Teaching with Poverty in Mind: What Being Poor Does to Kids' Brains and What Schools Can do About it (by Eric Jensen) is a best-seller and it addresses an issue that may be affecting your classroom as you read this newsletter.

These are just a few of the many options available to you. If these don't appeal to you try searching on www.ascd.org; or www.chapters.ca. Many organizations also offer memberships so that you can join a circle of like-minded colleagues. Oftentimes, the journals come complementary with your membership.

Try the BCTF website and consider joining a PSA. Many offer journals as part of their membership perks. You can also try American associations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (www.ncte.org) and many more.

If you can't attend a workshop, let the workshop materials come to you! You may wish to check with your PD Rep to ensure your title qualifies as a professional resource prior to making your purchase. Remember, your choice must be written for a teaching audience (not a general audience) and must address educational issues.



Tapestry 2013 (Tri-District Conference)

February 15th at Esquimalt Secondary

Keynote: Dr. Martin Brokenleg

40+ workshops all levels and subjects

\$50 Teachers, \$25 TTOC's & Student Teachers

More Info: www.tapestryconference.weebly.com

Registration: https://www.onlineregistrations.ca/tapestry/



Social Justice Report

by Dianne Cacciato & Joe Winkler

The BCTF has asked us to focus on Diversity as a Social Justice issue for the month of December, so this month would be a good time to integrate anti-racism, anti-homophobia and multiculturalism themes into your lesson plans.

Resources for celebrating diversity this month:

Racism in Canada - This movie was produced by the BCTF in recognition of the 45th anniversary of the International Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination, March 22, 2011 (available on YouTube)

For Angela is an excellent video to springboard into conversations regarding racism against Aboriginal people. Based on a true story, this drama is about Rhonda Gordon and her determined stand for dignity and against ignorance and prejudice when she and her daughter Angela were harassed by three boys on a bus. This can also be found on YouTube.

Sticks and Stones (17 min) (Grades 3-7) 2001

This documentary looks at the lives of children aged 5 to 12, from various backgrounds, using their own words to show how homophobic language affects their lives. The two main topics in the video are family and name-calling. Children of gay and lesbian parents share their sense of isolation, their fear of discovery, and their struggle with making choices and facing intimidation. Animation sequences are added, to illustrate simple concepts and the history of homophobic slang words. Family photos of differing families are included. Information for teachers on the video liner provides background, discussion points and activities. Secondary students could use this as a discussion starter. It is available to borrow from the BCTF Information Services Department.

That's a Family! (35 min) (Elementary/Middle School) 2000

This video helps elementary children see and understand the many different shapes of today's families. With courage and humour, the children take viewers on a tour through their lives as they speak candidly about what it's like to grow up in a family with parents of different races or religions, divorced parents, a single parent, gay or lesbian parents, adoptive parents, or grandparents as guardians. It comes with an extensive discussion/teaching guide, with lesson plans, suggestions for facilitating classroom discussion at different grade levels, and additional resources for teachers, families, and children. It is also available to borrow from the BCTF Information Services Department.

Check out the BCTF's web site (social justice resources) for more titles!

Here are some important social-justice-themed dates for December:

- Dec. 1 World AIDS Day
- Dec. 2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- Dec. 3 International Day of Disabled Persons International
- Dec. 5 Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
- Dec. 6 National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
- Dec. 11 Human Rights Day



Also, I still have several posters from the BCTF - anti-racism, anti-homophobia, and anti-pipeline - please contact me if you'd like me to send you some.

Joe Winkler

Who To Contact

Bargaining	Don Peterson – dpeterson@sd63.bc.ca
First Nations	Ginny Underwood – gunderwood@sd63.bc.ca
Local Election Contact	Don Peterson – dpeterson@sd63.bc.ca
Local Representatives	Mark Skanks – mshanks@sd63.bc.ca & Colin Plant – cplant@sd63.bc.ca
Health and Safety	Patsy McCarter – pmccarter@sd63.bc.ca
Professional Development	Holly Mair – hmair@sd63.bc.ca & Sarah Windle – swindle@sd63.bc.ca
Secretary	Devon Armstrong – darmstrong@sd63.bc.ca
Social Justice	Joe Winkler – jwinkler@sd63.bc.ca & Dianne Cacciato – dcacciato@sd63.bc.ca
Teachers-On-Call	Anne Stewart – astewart@sd63.bc.ca
Treasurer	Mark Skanks – mshanks@sd63.bc.ca

Let's Get Social!

The STA is getting more and more connected to the world of Social Media. Join us!

Our website is: www.saanichteachers.com

Follow us on Facebook at: [Saanich Teachers' Association](https://www.facebook.com/SaanichTeachersAssociation)

Follow us on Twitter at: [@BCTF63](https://twitter.com/BCTF63)

Phone us: 778-426-1426

Our mailing address is: 6843 Central Saanich Road Victoria BC V8Z 5V4



If you have any feedback on this newsletter,
or would like to submit an article, please contact:

Newsletter Editors: [Colin Plant](#)
and [Devon Armstrong](#)



IMPORTANT DATES FOR STA TEACHERS

1 HR TO FACILITATE PARENT/TEACHER INTERVIEWS RE. STUDENT PROGRESS

DATES

Brentwood Elementary	Nov 7	Nov 8	Mar 6	Mar 7
Cordova Bay Elementary	Nov 20	Nov 21	Nov 22	Mar 7
Deep Cove Elementary	Oct 3	Oct 4	Nov 14	Mar 6
Keating Elementary	Oct 24 (2hr closure)		Oct 25 (2hr closure)	
KELSET Elementary	Nov 1	Nov 28	Feb 28	Apr 10
Lochside Elementary	Nov 6	Nov 7	Nov 8	Feb 28
Prospect Lake Elementary	Oct 17	Oct 18	Feb 27	Feb 28
Sidney Elementary	Sept 26	Sept 27	Nov 22	Mar 7
Bayside Middle	Oct 3	Oct 4	Feb 14	May 23
North Saanich Middle	Oct 24	Nov 21	Feb 14	May 23
Royal Oak Middle	Oct 24	Oct 25	Feb 6	May 30
Claremont Secondary	Sept 20	Nov 22	Feb 7	Apr 25
Parkland Secondary	Sept 13	Nov 29	Feb 21	Apr 25
Stelly's Secondary	Sept 20	Nov 29	Feb 21	Apr 25

ALL SCHOOLS (TWO WEEK SPRING BREAK IMPLEMENTED)

Friday, October 19, 2012	Province Wide
Friday, November 9, 2012	School Based
Friday, February 15, 2013	Individual (tri-district)
Monday, April 15, 2013	School Planning Day
Monday, May 13, 2013	School Based

LAST DAY OF CLASSES: FRIDAY JUNE 28TH (not that we're counting!)