

April 2015

STA in TOUCH

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

Well Spring Break is now behind us and we're onto the sprint to June and the end of the school year. In Saanich we are in the middle of the 2015-16 budget process and staffing for next year will be starting very soon. Bill 11 has been introduced in the legislature and your STA is making preparations for the AGM in May. Needless to say it's a busy time for the STA.

If you are able, please consider attending the STA AGM on May 6 at Bayside Middle School. At this very important meeting we go over our budget, elect a new executive. If you attend only one meeting a year, this is the one to attend.

If you are interested in stepping up and becoming more involved with the STA, joining the executive is a way to do that. If you have any questions about the positions one can serve on, please contact Mark at lp63@bctf.ca

-Colin Plant and Angie Savage, Co-editors, STA-In-Touch editors

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President's Report

by Mark Skanks



Hi Everyone,

I hope you were able to find some way of relaxing or recharging over the March Break (and now Easter!). I enjoyed two things: a) the BCTF AGM, and b) camping in Parksville.

I realize that for many of you the BCTF AGM would be the last thing that would occur to you to do for fun! ☺ for me, though, it was a chance to hang out with some teacher friends (new ones and old ones), something I don't get to do every day in this job (sadly, and ironically, I suppose), and in many ways the AGM feels like a Pro-D convention or retreat in that we not only get to be social and conduct business, but we also get to have in-depth conversations about teaching and about what the role and priorities of the union should be. If you have never been a delegate before, I strongly encourage you to do so at least once before you retire.

Camping at Rathtreavor was a good reminder that it is possible to be busy and working hard (because the fire won't start itself, and the dishes won't do them themselves) and yet at the same time be peaceful, calm and slow.

I'm hoping that I can carry that feeling forward into this month, with many issues that could easily make one feel anything but peaceful, calm and slow – metaphorical fires that won't start themselves, like raising questions about the budgets, both provincial and district, spreading the word about Bill 11 with those outside our profession and reminding those within our profession about the lessons Bill 11 holds for Pro-D, talking about the Education Fund for next year with principals, and searching for volunteers to serve the STA for next year.

FACE

FACE stands for Families Against Cuts in Education which is a parent group that has organized events around the province this weekend to protest the “administrative savings” that the provincial government dumped in the laps of school boards this spring, ie what Christy Clark described as “low-hanging fruit”. We know of course that there is anything but low-hanging fruit to be picked for savings, if any fruit at all, but it is especially gratifying to see parent groups not only recognizing this, but taking up the charge. So, please, if you can come out to Beacon Hill Park playground this Sunday at 12 noon to support these parents who are supporting us. It is a picnic format, so bring your kids and bring a picnic. Bring some friends too. Hope to see you there.

Bill 11

Also this past month the government gave notice that it would be introducing Bill 11 in April. This is an omnibus-type bill that touches on teacher Pro-D and certification, Ministry access to student performance data, the cancelling of compulsory district Achievement Contracts, and – most ominously – a newly-expanded

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – CONTINUED

power of the Minister to override any and all School Board decisions if he deems them not to be in the public interest, and then remove and replace those Boards if they don't do as they're told.

Luckily, the government has been roundly mocked in the media for attempting to find solutions to problems that doesn't exist. (see Geoff Johnson's [article](#) in the TC, for example). Unluckily, this will not likely be enough to ward off the passing of this legislation. Please, if you have the time, or even if you don't, write to your MLA calling on him or her to fight against and vote against this anti-democratic bill, and encourage your friends to do the same.

May AGM / Exec Positions

In the course of our STA Budget process and subsequent Exec meeting we discussed a number of things that we could do to increase participation and attendance at the AGM, and what we could do also to encourage members to get involved with the STA at the Exec level.

With regard to encouraging attendance at the AGM, we talked about a number of things, including serving a meal and/or providing day care, and using the Zimbra meeting request function so that people would have a reminder. Some other locals not only give door prizes (as we do), but larger prizes as well. One local buys a lunch prize for the school that has the greatest attendance. Another keeps track of attendance at all general meetings for the year and gives a grand prize at the last meeting, with members getting one entry for every meeting attended. Some locals report that members have said that they attended only when they were personally invited by the staff rep or the president, and that they felt that otherwise they weren't needed.

First of all, let me say that I will do my best to come around and invite as many of you to come to the AGM personally as I can. ☺ Knowing that I won't be able to personally invite all of you, though, I would still love to hear your thoughts on what the barriers are to having greater attendance at our General Meetings. Please email me with your ideas.

For the coming AGM (Wednesday, May 6, 4pm, probably at Bayside, but yet to be confirmed) we will not only be doing all the crucial business that we always do in May (elections, passing the budget, etc.), we will serve a simple meal, and we will use the Zimbra meeting request function to try to get an idea of numbers in advance. Please come – we need you.

Also, we have some Exec members who have confirmed that they will run again for election, but to date we have vacant positions for 1st VP, 2nd VP, Secretary, Local Representatives (2), TTOC, Social Justice, and Communications. One idea that we have floated around (which would require a Constitutional change if we were to do it this year) is to have Member-at-Large positions on the Exec that have no specific duties other than to attend meetings and contribute to the debate there. We have speculated that it may be a barrier for some to become involved if they feel as though they have to pick up the responsibilities of a particular portfolio right away. I would also be interested to hear from you about this idea.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – CONTINUED

On-Call Office Manager

I sent an email earlier this week to let you know that we are currently hiring for an on-call Office Manager. This position would take effect May 1, and has the potential to lead to a part-time job share for next year. If you know anyone that you feel would be good for the STA office, please find that email (which contained a link to the job posting) and forward it to them. We will be shortlisting from all applications that we have in hand by April 22.

Pro-D

Holly Mair will be writing of this in more detail for the May STA in Touch (in fact she already has a draft written!), but I wanted to give you a brief advanced heads up about the issue of August days. There are things in motion right now apparently to encourage staff participation in two August days this summer (with two days in lieu in the 2015/16 year). Here is a summary of some of the concerns we feel you should consider before agreeing to any proposal:

- Pro-D is meant to be teacher-driven. If the events on offer are what you want to do and what you believe are a priority for your professional growth, then great – go for it and enjoy. (This applies both to the individual “you” and the collective staff “you”). If the events are not your choice or not your priority, don’t be afraid to say no.
- Pay close attention to the days taken in lieu, for two reasons. One, there are days that you cannot trade away (October and February) for contractual reasons, and two, there are days that – in the context of Bill 11 – we might be wise not to take in lieu for reasons of optics (ie the two November days).
- The more days that are taken in the summer by staffs, the fewer events will happen on the lieu days for the junior teachers who weren’t around in August. More August days means fewer school-based PD opportunities for junior and PT teachers.

Like I said, more to come in May. And to be clear, the choice is yours (individually and collectively), but talk to your staff and PD reps so that you can make an informed decision that protects our autonomy over PD.

SD63 Budget – remaining dates

While there is greater appetite from the new Board to be transparent and to give opportunities for not only feedback, but opportunities to see what is done with that feedback, this year’s Budget process hasn’t been without its own challenges. The challenges have come from without (the administrative savings mandated by the government) and within (scheduling issues, clarity and consistency of supporting information). We as STA members also haven’t been as engaged. Last year there were dozens of teachers at the public Board meetings; this year there were less than a handful (two at each, to be precise). Now, whether that is because we are all tired of the whole process, or because we feel we have elected a more sympathetic Board that we trust to do the right thing, I don’t know, but I hope that you will take a few minutes to go to the [SD63 website](#), click on the budget timelines and jot down the dates on your calendar. Then come to one of the remaining meetings, if for no other reason than to bear witness to the debate and to who says what.



Local Representatives Report

by Don Peterson & Colin Plant

This year's BCTF Annual General Meeting. This was after giving Jim Sinclair his honorary membership and we were all singing solidarity forever.

Thank you to:

Mark Skanks, Sean Hayes, Don Peterson, Dave Burnham, Douglas Fraser, Mark Morrison, Katrina McGee, Rhann Archer, Les Lowe and Luanne Marchand, for giving up four days for you Spring Break to attend the BCTF AGM.

Also, a special thanks to all the teachers who stopped in at some point during the AGM.

Two of the main jobs of the AGM are to set the annual membership fee and to elect members onto the BCTF executive.

For contract teachers, the annual membership fee will remain the same at 1.79%; however, for teachers who are teaching on call only, will see their annual membership fee rise from 0.36% to 1%. Again the membership fee took over an hour to debate, where the TTOC fee was the most debated part of the fee. We debated figures from 1.79% to 0.36% for the TTOCs and we landed with the 1%.

Elected onto the BCTF executive for the 2015-2016 year:

Table Officers

Jim Iker - President
Glen Hansman - 1st VP
Teri Mooring - 2nd VP

Members at Large:

James Sanyshyn
Gail Chaddock-Costello
Mike Ball
Clint Johnston
Paul Steer

All three table officers were acclaimed. The balloting for the Members at Large took the maximum five ballots with a total of 10 candidates looking to be elected.

At the time of the writing of this report, the "BCTF AGM Key Decisions" report had not yet been posted; however, if you are interested in knowing the particular decisions made by the BCTF AGM, the document will be posted here:

<https://bctf.ca/myBCTF/agm.aspx>





Professional Development Report

by Holly Mair

APPLYING FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY FUNDS FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS

Each year, groups of teachers may apply for up to \$3000 to fund special professional development projects. This opportunity is only made available to members of the Saanich Teacher's Association as we are the only organization who contributes to this fund.

Basic Guidelines

- These funds are available to all groups of members of the Saanich Teachers' Association on an equal access basis.
- Teachers should expect to share these funds based on the priorities set by the Saanich Teachers' Association and its Professional Development Working Committee, which is responsible for allocating these funds each year.
- Groups should not expect to monopolize the available funds for any particular group. This means if your school is already funded or has been funded in the recent past, that your application is given a lower priority this year.
- A guideline would be that no group should expect to receive more than three thousand dollars in a given year.

Where do I get an application form?

- Visit www.saanichteachers.com for a copy of the application form.

Send completed applications to

- STA PD Chairperson at the STA Office.

Deadline:

- April 30, 2015

Criteria/Conditions

- a. It is desirable that these projects, directly or indirectly service as many teachers and students as possible.
- b. The size of the grants and the number of projects funded will be determined by the total amount of funds available for use in this area.
- c. Any school staff wishing to have funds for a staff function such as a retreat or activity off campus must indicate at least 25% of the funds needed to support teachers are coming from sources other than Professional Development funds allocated through the Collective Agreement.
- d. If a project is canceled, the funds are to be returned to the general professional development fund for reallocation either in the current year or in the subsequent year.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT – CONTINUED

e. All funds remaining at the end of the project year are to be returned to the general Professional Development fund for other use unless the Professional Development Working Committee has approved the groups' continued use of the funds

Examples from 2014-2015.

Still wondering what types of things might be funded. Here are all of the projects that were funded last year!

1. Professional Growth Council (\$3000). This contribution offset the overall cost of the professional growth council. As a partner in the event, the STA PD Chairperson was involved in conducting a needs survey, helping plan the overall direction for the sessions, selecting the speaker etc. The committee also has School District 63 representation. Approximately 75% of this initiative will be paid for by the school district and 25% by the Saanich Teachers.
2. Tapestry Tri-District Conference (\$3000). For many years the Saanich Teachers' Association has participated in the planning and execution of the Tapestry Conference. This conference is organized by the PD Chairs from the Saanich Teachers' Association, Sooke Teachers' Association, and the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association. Each local contributes a minimum of \$3000 to keep the registration fees low for teachers.
3. Keating Staff Retreat (\$2500). The Saanich Teachers' Association agreed to support a staff retreat for Keating teachers.
4. Bayside Staff Brain-Based Learning (\$910). The Bayside staff applied for funds to bring in a speaker on brain-based learning for one of their school-based PD days.
5. Inquiry Across the District (\$3000). The Teacher-Librarians applied for funds to assist them in working with classroom teachers on inquiry projects that will span all grade levels in the district.
6. LSA Grants (4 @ \$500 each). Each year the Saanich Teachers' Association offers 4 grants for Local Specialist Associations. Each grant is worth \$500 and requires the group to submit an application as well as a constitution, list of executive members, list of members and proposed plans for the year. This year we have funded the Saanich Teacher-Librarians, The Special Education Association of Saanich, and the Saanich Music Teachers Association.

These are just a few ideas of what you can do as a staff, or a team of teachers from various schools in the district.

We look forward to receiving your applications on **April 30th**.

***Please note that Book Club Applications are accepted in the October of each school year and are separate.*



STA Program Report

by Luanne Marchand

YOU'RE INVITED!

STA / SAA RETIREMENT BANQUET

Thursday, JUNE 18, 2015

We are pleased to invite you to the Annual Retirement Banquet for teachers and administrators in the Saanich School District

The Beachhouse Restaurant
5109 Cordova Bay Road
Victoria, BC

5:00 p.m. No Host Bar
5:30 Opening Remarks
Dinner 6:30 p.m.

Please make cheques payable to:
Saanich Teachers' Association

and mail /drop off to:

6843 Central Saanich Rd
Victoria, BC
V8Z 5V4

Deadline: June 12, 2015

RSVP to Audrey Hayes

staoffice@saanichteachers.com

or

STA office 778-426-1426

Tickets are \$25.00 each

Contest

Congratulations to Colleen McNamee of Parkland for winning March's newsletter trivia contest.

This month's prize is a **\$50 gift card to a Co-Op gas bar.**

Question: *Saanich has three middle schools. Of the three, which is the oldest?*

If you know the answer to this question, please email Colin Plant cplant@sd63.bc.ca by **Thursday, April 30th at 6pm.**

Good Luck!

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](#)

Follow us on Twitter at:

[@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](#) & [Angie Savage](#)



IMPORTANT DATES FOR STA TEACHERS

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

DATES

Brentwood Elementary	Oct 16	Nov 5	Nov 6	Feb 24
Cordova Bay Elementary	Oct 28	Oct 29	Oct 30	Feb 11
Deep Cove Elementary	Oct 22	Oct 23	Nov 20	Feb 26
Keating Elementary	Nov 4	Nov 5	Nov 6	Mar 3
KELSET Elementary	Oct 7	Oct 9	Nov 19	Apr 1
Lochside Elementary	Nov 4	Nov 5	Nov 6	Feb 26
Prospect Lake Elementary	Oct 8	Oct 9	Feb 18	Feb 19
Sidney Elementary	Oct 8	Oct 9	Nov 20	Mar 5
Bayside Middle	Oct 15	Oct 16	Feb 12	May 21
North Saanich Middle	Oct 8	Oct 9	Feb 4	Mar 6
Royal Oak Middle	Oct 28	Oct 29	Feb 4	May 28
Claremont Secondary	Oct 2	Nov 27	Feb 5	Apr 30
Parkland Secondary	Oct 2	Dec 4	Feb 26	May 7
Stelly's Secondary	Oct 2	Nov 27	Feb 25	Apr 29

ALL SCHOOLS (TWO WEEK SPRING BREAK IMPLEMENTED)

Friday, October 24, 2014	Province Wide
Friday, November 7, 2014	School Based
Monday November 10, 2014	School Based
Friday, February 20, 2015	Individual (Province Wide)
Friday, April 24, 2015	School Planning Day
Monday, May 4, 2015	School Based

LAST DAY OF CLASSES: FRIDAY JUNE 26TH (Not that we are counting)