



SAANICH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

# STA-in-TOUCH

January 2026

Newsletter of the Saanich Teachers' Association - BCTF Members of Local #63 (Saanich)



Welcome back and happy 2026! I hope that you found the time to engage in the activities or events that bring you joy, spend time with your favourite people and give yourself the time to recharge your batteries. It was a rare opportunity for me to have my three adult children together in the same house for a few days over the holidays, spend some time being creative and reflective, hike and explore around my happy place, Quadra Island. I wish you all a positive, healthy and happy start to 2026.

## President's Report

by Shannon Toronitz

### **BCTF Online Bargaining Town Hall**

Please check your personal email for information Monday regarding the online BCTF Bargaining Town Hall that will take place **Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 7pm**. I encourage all members to attend! It will be recorded and available for viewing after the livestream.

### **Opportunities for Members**

- We are currently seeking members interested in attending the BCTF AGM in March! If you are interested please have a look at the "Call for Interest". We will be electing 8 members at our Special General Meeting on February 4, 2026. If you are interested, please reach out to [lp63@bctf.ca](mailto:lp63@bctf.ca).

 2026 BCTF AGM Delegates.docx

### **STA Maternity/Paternity Workshop**

We will be holding an online maternity/parental leave workshop on **Thursday, January 22 from 4pm-5pm**. A link will be sent out to all members next week.

### **December Social Events**

Thank you to EC/RA members who attended our "light on business/heavy on social" rep assembly meeting. After the meeting we were joined by TTOCs/New Teachers for a fun evening at the Brentwood Bay Lodge. Huge shout out to Sean MacDonald, TTOC/New Teacher Rep for organizing and hosting the event. Don also hosted a family friendly Royals hockey event that many members attended. Thanks Don for coordinating this fun event for members!

## **January Deadlines**

### **B.5 RRSP Plan**

- **B.5.7** Members have the opportunity to enroll or re-enroll in the BCTF Plan as follows:
  - a. between September 1 and September 30 or December 15 and January 15 in any school year;
  - b. no later than sixty (60) days following the commencement of employment.
- **B.5.8** Members may withdraw from participation in the BCTF Plan where they have provided thirty (30) days' written notice to the employer.
- **B.5.10** Participating employees may vary the amount of their individual contributions to the BCTF Plan on either or both of October 31 and January 31 in any school year, provided that written notice of such change has been provided to the employer no later than September 30 for changes to be effective October 31, and December 31 for changes to be effective January 31.

### **ARTICLE B.28 CHANGE IN SALARY CATEGORY**

- **B.28.1** Any teacher who intends to apply for a change in salary category must notify the Secretary-Treasurer in writing by September 15th in which case the change in salary category becomes effective for payroll purposes on September 1st in that school year. Any teacher who intends to apply for a change in salary category must notify the Secretary-Treasurer in writing by January 15th in which case the change in salary category becomes effective for payroll purposes on January 1st in that school year.
- **B.28.2** Satisfactory evidence shall be provided by the teacher to the Secretary-Treasurer of the Board on or before the 30th day of November in that year in order to become effective as of September 1st in that school year, or before April 30th in that year in order to become effective as of January 1st in that school year. If no documentation or other satisfactory evidence is produced to the Board by the said November 30th or April 30th the teacher will be paid on the basis of his or her salary category held previously.

## **Wear RED for BCED on Mondays!**

Every **Monday** starting January 5, 2026 will be **WEAR RED for BCED** days. Show your support for our provincial bargaining committee as they continue to do the hard work that is needed to achieve a fair and equitable settlement.

## **Bargaining Updates**

- Please check in with your staff reps as well as the BCTF Bargaining page for bargaining updates.
- Have you changed your personal email address in the past year? Please ensure that your personal email address is updated on your BCTF profile. If you haven't been receiving anything from the BCTF in your personal inbox you may want to check your [BCTF profile](#)!

## **New Medical Leave Process in Saanich 2025-2026**

There is a new process for applying for medical leaves in the district.

1. If this will be your first medical leave request or it is for a short term leave please complete the Teachers Medical Certificate form on your dashboard. It can be found under HR Leave forms. If your medical leave request is an extension to an existing medical leave or a long term leave request please contact the District Wellness Manager, Mark Preston-Horin, to confirm whether you complete the dashboard certificate or an individualized medical certificate. They can be contacted at: [wellness@saanichschools.ca](mailto:wellness@saanichschools.ca)
2. Please ensure the following:
  - ONLY your medical practitioner completes the Medical Certificate(s).

- the medical practitioner's signature and legibly printed name is on the certificate.
  - the office/clinic name, contact information is stamped or written on the form.
  - the medical practitioner's BC Medical license number is on the form.
3. You will be contacted by the District Wellness Manager to discuss your application for medical leave. You are encouraged to have a staff rep be part of any in person or phone meetings to take notes on your behalf so you have the necessary information to take to your medical practitioner. All members have the right to have union representation in meetings with the employer as per our collective agreement.
  4. You may be requested to have your medical practitioner complete a follow up individualized questionnaire prior to your medical leave being approved.
  5. If you have any questions regarding the new medical leave process please reach out to your STA rep or myself.

## Upcoming Meetings

### Tuesday, January 27@ 4pm, Saanichton Learning Center - conference room

Please join us for our 2nd annual SD63/Saanich Teachers' Association budget town hall meeting with District Staff and Trustees. This is an opportunity for all members to share their ideas, concerns and ask questions about budget issues that may specifically impact teachers in Saanich next year. Let's have a great turnout and show that Saanich teachers are motivated and engaged to be part of the budget planning discussion!

### Wednesday, February 4 @ 4:15pm - Special General Meeting

There will be many topics for discussion including a bargaining update from Robin Toscak, 1st vice president of BCTF. We will also be selecting members to attend the BCTF AGM in March. We hope that you will join us! More information to come.

## Professional Development

by Ruth Wadsworth & Elaine Ting

## Tapestry

Registration for the 2026 Tapestry Conference on Friday, February 13, is now open at:

<https://reg.eventmobi.com/tapestry>.

View the [workshops at-a-glance](#).

This online and in-person conference features over 75 workshops, including sessions on:

- Heather Willms - In-person at Belmont Secondary and online
  - Bridging the Reading Gap - Session A+B
  - Leveraging the Quiet Reading Block for Comprehension Growth - Session C
- Morgane Michael - In-person at Belmont Secondary and online
  - Blueprint for Belonging in the Classroom: Everyday Routines that Build Community - Session A



FEBRUARY 13 K-12 EDUCATORS ONLINE + IN-PERSON CONFERENCE



PROUDLY PRESENTED BY



REGISTER AT

**REG.EVENTMOBI.COM/TAPESTRY**

- Resilience Reboot: Wellness Practices You Can Use With Your Students - Session B
- Empowering Educators at Every Stage: Systems for New and Seasoned Teachers - Session C
- Ricky-Lee Watts - In-person at Belmont Secondary and online
  - Weaving Wellness and Resilience In Education - Session A
  - Living With ʔiisaak (Respect) And Hišukʔiš c̓awaak (Everything is One) - Session B
- Music Education at Esquimalt Secondary
- K-12 Math workshops presented by the BC Association of Mathematics Teachers (BCAMT)
- In-Person:
  - Exploring Mathematical Routines in the Early Years - Session A
  - From Area to Reasoning in Math - Session B
  - Extending Student Tasks in Math - Session C
- Online:
  - Instructional Routines in Secondary Math - Session A
  - Re-Imagining Fractions: Core Concepts to Support Conceptual Understanding of Operations on Fractions - Session A
  - Mathematizing in the Early Years: Seeing the World Through a Mathematical Lens - Session C

Most in-person workshops will be hosted at Belmont Secondary, plus there will be exhibitors. At Belmont, there will be a space to attend online workshops using your laptop and headphones. Food and drinks will be available at Belmont and Esquimalt.

The **Saanich Teachers' Association** will cover the **registration fees** for all teachers and teacher-candidates currently on practicum. For the local to cover your registration fees, you must select **Local 63** and the registrant type of BCTF Teacher or Student Teacher. After completing the registration process, you will receive a registration confirmation email. Please register by noon on January 30th.

Go to <https://reg.eventmobi.com/tapestry>.

The registration process requires completing three screens.

### **Screen 1: Complete the registration form.**

Remember to select **Local 63** and the registrant type of BCTF Teacher or Teacher-Candidate\*

### **Screen 2: Select your ticket type and workshop selection.**

#### **Ticket types**

- An in-person ticket will only display in-person workshops.
- An online ticket will only display online workshops.
- An in-person and/or online ticket will display all workshops.

#### **Workshop selection**

Be careful not to select time-conflicting workshops.

For example, if you register for Session A and Session B and also select Session A-B, the system will display a warning, but will allow you to check out with workshop conflicts. The registrar will delete workshops with time conflicts at their discretion.



### Screen 3: Review your workshop selections and click Confirm and Checkout.

Your total should be \$0 because your local is covering your registration fee. If you pay for your registration, you will not receive a refund.

After successfully registering, you will see a confirmation screen and receive a confirmation email.

#### \*Teacher-candidates

Teacher-candidates must be on practicum within the local on February 13th to qualify for the local to cover their registration fee. Please register using your post-secondary institution email address.

Register now at <https://reg.eventmobi.com/tapestry>.

Tapestry is proudly sponsored by the:

- Cowichan Valley Teachers' Union, Local 65
- Great Victoria Teachers' Association, Local 61
- Saanich Teachers' Association, Local 63
- Sooke Teachers' Association, Local 62

### French Educators Advisory Committee

by Cindy Lister

#### Supporting French Language Learning in Saanich

#### *Célébrons le mois de décembre en français!*

**Membres:** Méliissa Drolet (FI), Julie Lobb (FI), Lisa Gartrell-Yeo (FI), Cindy Lister (FI), Nadine McIntyre (FI), Genevieve Lisik(Core), Melissa Cannady (Core)

Au mois de décembre, nous avons vécu un moment magique à Bayside ! Les élèves de 6e année ont accueilli avec enthousiasme les amis de 2e et 3e années pour une activité de lecture toute spéciale. Après avoir choisi, étudié et pratiqué un album jeunesse, nos grands lecteurs ont partagé leurs histoires avec les plus jeunes, créant des sourires, des rires et de beaux échanges. Cette rencontre a non seulement célébré l'amour des livres, mais aussi renforcé les liens entre nos élèves. Bravo à tous pour cette belle expérience qui nous rappelle combien la lecture rapproche les cœurs !

J'espère que vous avez passé de merveilleuses fêtes, remplies de repos, de joie et de beaux moments avec vos proches. Nous sommes ravis de vous retrouver en pleine forme pour commencer cette nouvelle année ensemble. Que 2026 soit synonyme de succès, de projets inspirants et de nombreux sourires. C'est parti pour une année exceptionnelle !



**Upcoming Spring Staffing**

Let's get a jump start on spring staffing by starting with a review of definitions which is Appendix A to LOU#108 Staffing Process in our Collective Agreement.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Reference in the Collective Agreement</b>
<b>Contract</b>	Employment relationship between a teacher and the Board: either continuing or temporary	C.12
<b>Position</b>	A school or district placement and its teaching area(s) and full-time equivalency (FTE)	E.15
<b>Assignment</b>	Classes of students or specialty area(s) in any given school year assigned by administration	E.15
<b>Vacancy</b>	A newly created or existing position to which a teacher is not assigned and which the Board considers necessary to fill. (Note: The parties agree that potentially available positions created by issuing Notices of Intent to Layoff are not considered vacancies for the purpose of mobility.)	E.13
<b>NOIL</b>	Notice of Intent to Layoff	C.5.1.d
<b>Program Decline</b>	A reduction in enrollment in courses such that the employer would have been incapable of returning the departing teacher to their current assignment had they remained.	Paragraph #4 LOU #108108
<b>Mobility Posting</b>	A vacancy for a position at the start of the next school year resulting from retirements, resignations, full year leaves of absence or the creation of a new division or section due to increased enrolment. Normally posted during Round 1, however, vacancies for continuing positions greater than 0.75 FTE (greater than 0.5 FTE for non-enrolling) are considered mobility postings regardless of the time of year they are posted.	Paragraphs #5, #6, #7, #8, #11, #12, #13 LOU #108
<b>General Posting</b>	A posting that is not a mobility posting or part of the Round 2 NOIL process. Also called a Round 3 posting.	Paragraph #20 LOU #108

Next month, we'll look at the chronology of the staffing process. A shout out to our enthusiastic Ad Hoc Staffing Committee who are working hard to better understand and examine the current staffing agreement. Stay tuned for more information as they continue their work together. Thanks to the committee members for their engagement!

### ***Starling Minds***

This past summer I attended the BCTF Leadership Conference at UBC and one of the workshops I took was hosted by Starling Minds. I thought, with all the dreary weather and the long dark days, it would be something helpful to share with you.

Starling Minds is an **online mental health and wellness toolkit**, designed for teachers, that provides education and training to manage stress and prevent anxiety and depression.

Did you know you could download the app, 'Starling Minds' onto your device? And did you know that a family member can also access Starling Minds? To register for the FREE app and use all the tools, you will need your BCTF Member log in and the access code: BCTFMEMBER. If this is for a family member they can access using your BCTF member log in and the access code: BCTFFAMILY

You can also access Starling Minds away from the app, online: <https://member.starlingminds.com/landing/>

My favourite use of the app is this wheel, where I can see how I rate myself in different categories of my mental health: stress, resilience, depression, energy, and anxiety, and then can explore some of the small and quick exercises and recommendations. I can manage goals, journal, track my moods, use the thought balancer, track my sleep, read posts relevant to teaching and navigating mental health, and join communities if I so choose to.

Take a gander! It's just one of the helpful supports and tools that the BCTF kept after the Pandemic.

Take good care of yourselves out there. If you can't seem to access the Starling Minds app or online version, please let me know and I can help you through it.



### ***TTOC/NT Winter Social***

Thank you to everyone who attended this year's TTOC & New Teacher Winter Social. Your participation and engagement are vital to the work of this committee. We truly appreciate members who take time out of their busy schedules to connect with colleagues and engage with the Saanich Teachers' Association through our events. These opportunities strengthen our professional community and help ensure that TTOC and New Teacher voices are heard.

### ***Signing Up for a BCTF Online Account***

If you have not yet created a BCTF online account, we strongly encourage you to do so. The committee recently delivered a presentation outlining the process, and a slideshow tutorial will be sent to members shortly.

If you have questions or need assistance with setting up your account, please contact the committee at [ttocs@saanichteachers.com](mailto:ttocs@saanichteachers.com).

### ***Personal Email Accounts***

The TTOC & New Teacher Committee is currently collecting personal (non-district) email addresses to support confidential communication with members. These communications may include information related to bargaining, BCTF updates, and important STA news.

To be added to our private mailing list, please email your personal address to [ttocs@saanichteachers.com](mailto:ttocs@saanichteachers.com).

### **Employment Insurance (EI) Information**

Teachers Teaching on Call (TTOCs) may be eligible to receive Employment Insurance (EI) benefits during non-instructional breaks, including Winter Break, Spring Break, and Summer Break, provided eligibility requirements are met.

To qualify for EI regular benefits, you must be able to demonstrate that you:

- Were employed in insurable employment
- Lost your employment through no fault of your own
- Have been without work and without pay for at least seven consecutive days within the past 52 weeks
- Have accumulated the required number of insurable hours in the last 52 weeks or since the start of your last EI claim (whichever is shorter)
- Are ready, willing, and capable of working each day
- Are actively seeking work and maintaining a written record of employer contacts, including dates of contact

If you have not yet applied for EI, please note that applications must be submitted within four weeks of your last day worked. For the Winter Break period, this means the **deadline to apply is January 16**.

### **Mental Health Support Lines**

#### **BC Mental Health Support Line available 24 hours a day**

310-6789 (no area code)

Do not add 604, 778 or 250 before the number. It's free and available 24 hours a day.

#### **Suicide hotline: 1-800-SUICIDE**

If you are in distress or worried about someone else. It's free and available 24 hours a day  
1-800-784-2433

#### **KUU-US Indigenous Crisis Line**

1-800-588-8717 (toll free, 24/7 support available)

- Adults/Elders (250-723-4050)
- Child/Youth (250-723-2040)
- Toll free (1-800-588-8717)
- Métis Line (1-833-MétisBC)

#### **Indian Residential School Survivors and Family**

1-800-721-0066

#### **Kids Help Phone**

Text CONNECT to 686868



## Emailing the STA Office?

Need to email the STA office, but not sure who to email?

We have three email addresses:

- ★ Want to send an email to our (non-confidential) Outlook account: [sta\\_office@saanichschools.ca](mailto:sta_office@saanichschools.ca)
- ★ If it is **confidential** and you do not wish it to be sent through the district email account, email us at: [staoffice@saanichteachers.com](mailto:staoffice@saanichteachers.com)
- ★ If it is **highly confidential**, email STA President, Shannon Toronitz at: [Lp63@bctf.ca](mailto:Lp63@bctf.ca)

Also, be sure to update your personal information at:

- ★ [BCTF Member Portal](#)
- ★ School District 63
- ★ [Teachers' Pension Plan](#)
- ★ [Teacher Regulation Branch](#)



## Moving, Name Change?

- ★ Are you moving?
- ★ Has your name changed?



Don't forget to let us know. Please send the STA office an email with your new name and/or contact information. [sta\\_office@saanichschools.ca](mailto:sta_office@saanichschools.ca).

## Are you retiring this year?



Don't leave without saying good-bye! Let the STA office know when you are retiring and be sure to give us your forwarding email address so that we can send you details about the STA Retirement Banquet in June. Check out our website for more retirement information:

<https://saanichteachers.com/retirement/>

# IMPORTANT DATES FOR TEACHERS

## Non-Instructional Days

~~Monday, September 22, 2025~~ — **Ministry Priority Day**

~~Friday, October 24, 2025~~ — **Province Wide — PSA Day**

~~Friday, November 21, 2025~~ — **School Based**

Friday, February 13, 2026 -- **Quad-District**

Monday, April 20, 2026 -- **School Based**

Friday, May 15, 2026 -- **School Based**

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**Winter Break:** ~~December 22~~ — ~~January 2, 2026~~

**Spring Break:** March 16 - 20, 2026

**Spring Closure Week:** March 23 - 27, 2026

**Administrative Day:** June 26, 2026

**LAST DAY OF SCHOOL: THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026**

**(But who's counting?!)**