

GITA NEWS

December 2011

Bargaining Update

The obstacles placed in front of us during this round of bargaining have been many. There is a history of imposing contracts through government legislation. The government imposed contracts on us in 1998 (Bill 39, the Public Education Collective Agreement Act), in 2002 (Bill 27, Education Services Collective Agreement Act), and in 2005 (Bill 12, Teachers' Collective Agreement). It does beg the question as to how one can have a "collective agreement" when it is imposed. It was June 30, 2006, that a first provincially negotiated collective agreement was achieved. In this round of negotiation we are confronted by a government position of not wanting to bring any money to the table, a refusal by BCPSEA to allow for any meaningful local bargaining, and a desire to strip our Collective Agreement so that it will be aligned with the government's new education plan. We also are faced with the government coming to the Bill 27/28 discussions with the threat of "corrective" legislation being imposed, legislation that will reflect the government's goals of 2002 by: stripped class size, composition, staffing ratios, and other working conditions. The then Minister of Education, Christy Clark, eagerly supported the Flexibility and Choice Act. The result was the elimination of approximately 3 500 teaching positions from the British Columbia public education system.

Our goal remains to achieve a Collective Agreement through this round of negotiations. This agreement needs to bring our salaries in line with Alberta and Ontario. It needs to see improved benefits and working conditions and allow for meaningful bargaining at the local level so that local issues are resolved locally.

DATES

General Meeting- January
AGM- April or Early May
(Exact dates to be announced)



Congratulations **SIMS!**

A big thank you to Michael Berendt for the successful inquiry grant application on behalf of Salt Spring Middle School. This grant, amounting to \$3500 from both BCTF and SD64, enables SIMS staff to partake in a Personalized Learning Inquiry process.

Did You Know?

If your age + service = 88 and you have 100 sick days you should withdraw from the long-term portion of LTD payments. The Teacher website helps with all kinds of calculations related to retirement and buying pension time from certain leaves. The BCTF is also available to help.

GITA NEWS

Newsletter of the Gulf Island
Teacher's Association
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GITA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 2011-2012

Jack Braak	John Nicolson	
Carol Arnold	Paul Hutcheson	Jess Willows
Michelle Spencer	Bo Curtis	Janisse Browning
Elaine Jacobson	Rosemary Kilmer	Marianne Schaeffer

Gulf Islands School Trustee Election

Our School Board for the next year will be a mix of re-elected and new trustees. We look forward to working with the trustees to help build a properly funded and strong public education system, which focuses on the needs of all students and respects the profession of teaching.

Our Trustees are:

May McKenzie Pete Williams
Bonnie MacGillivray Susan Middleditch
Rob Pingle Kathy Paige

A warm Thank You

We wish Charles Hingston and Mike Krayenhoff well. Charles was a School Trustee for approximately 30 years. Mike was a School Trustee for nine years.

The Times They Are a-Changing

Change in education is constant as teachers look for new and better ways to connect with students and improve student learning. I believe that any change should ask, "does this work better for students and does this help teachers work with students". The government's education plan focuses on five "key elements":

- (1) Personalized learning for every student
- (2) Quality teaching and learning
- (3) Flexibility and choice
- (4) High Standards
- (5) Learning empowered by technology

A closer look at the BCPSEA bargaining discussions at the provincial table shows a focus on aligning the Collective Agreement with the new education plan. This creates cause for serious concern. We see the shifting of responsibility for teaching from professionals to community members and/or computers. We have heard the concept of anytime and anywhere learning. We can imagine what that might look like. The government again looks to do this on the cheap and therefore wants to tie our professional development funds to education change rather than provide time and money for inservice. There certainly is an attack on our professional autonomy, as the government wants to direct how our professional development is used and align it with evaluation very likely through growth plans. There is the concept of "best fit" which sees full management discretion over posting and filling and the ability to transfer teachers to wherever and whenever. Do "high standards" refer to more standardized testing? Finally, this leaves the big question of what role technology will play in education. We see so many education change conferences and meetings sponsored by major technology companies. What is in it for them? Are they involved because of genuine concern for the education of our students?

I believe being a professional means that we explore better ways to teach, that we reflect on our practice and have professional dialogue. My hope is that five and ten years from now we can look back and see an education system that continues to change for the better, an education system that looks at better ways to meet the learning needs of all students, respects teachers as professionals, and works constructively with teachers.