

## Gulf Islands Teachers' Association

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### Dates

January 12 –  
Aboriginal Education  
Committee Meeting

January 15 –  
GITA Bargaining  
Committee Meeting

January 16 –  
Pro D Day

February 18 –  
Staff Rep Training

February 18 –  
GITA Representative  
Assembly Meeting

February 18 –  
**GITA General  
Meeting**

February 27 –  
Pro D Day

March 12 –  
Last Day of School

*“Democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”* Sir Winston Churchill

## Provincial FSA Vote

The FSA vote went relatively smoothly over all of the Gulf Islands with only two schools losing their entire ballot packages before the vote was even held and only one school being completely left out of the loop. After some frantic searching and phoning and emailing and FAXing, all ten of our schools were able to report their ballot counts by the deadline. In total, almost 100 GITA members cast their votes. “Thank you” to all the Staff Reps for overseeing the vote at each school.

The end result was that 85% of 22,397 teachers in British Columbia voted not to prepare for, administer or mark the FSA tests unless the FSA is changed to a random sampling model with neither schools nor students identified.

Teachers know first-hand that the Foundation Skills Assessment in its current form is damaging to students’ learning and to teachers’ teaching, and that the use of the results to rank schools is absolutely unconscionable.

As every statistician and pollster knows, to determine a trend in a population, one need survey only a random sample. This is also now the official position taken by the BCTF. GITA/BCTF

## Upgrade Downturn

The seismic upgrade going on at SIMS has uncovered a major fault. That part of the main building which is between the gym/stage and the parking lot cannot be upgraded because it is a “tack-on” to the original structure. It will be torn down. GITA

## Another Quick Look At Non-Instructional Days

I would like to clarify some misconceptions regarding non-instructional days in schools.

The School Act allows for six non-instructional days each year in the school calendar. One is an Implementation Planning Day that is provided by the Ministry of Education for the purpose of "facilitating activities that in the board's opinion are designed to enhance student achievement, with particular focus on literacy." (Ministerial Order 122/93).

The other five days are Professional Development Days. These are days which were added to the school calendar in 1972 at the request of teachers to allow for professional development.

This inclusion increased the number of days of work for teachers with no loss of instructional time for students.

Professional Development Days are those days in which teachers continue their pursuit of life-long learning. On these days teachers attend conferences and workshops and participate in collegial activities to enhance their teaching. Although most teachers have at least five years of university education, and many have masters degrees, it is essential that teachers continue to update their skills and become aware of new theories and innovations in order to improve the learning of their students.

Each Professional Development Day affords us the opportunity to do this. It is not a "day off" for teachers; it is a day when teachers learn and, when teachers learn, kids benefit.

Linda Naess, President  
Prince George District Teachers' Association

## Some Self-Directed Professional Development Activities

- Attend a local, regional, provincial, national or international conference or workshop.
- Attend a summer institute or course.
- Be a sponsor teacher for a student teacher.
- Become a BCTF Professional Development associate, and carry on the Teachers Teaching Teachers tradition.
- Become a BCTF Program Against Racism or Status of Women Program associate, and carry on the Teachers Teaching Teachers tradition.
- Become active in your Local Association.
- Become a facilitator and give a workshop locally, regionally or provincially.
- Begin or continue university studies.
- Develop innovative programs for use in your classroom.
- Develop an annual personal Professional Development plan and maintain a Professional Development portfolio.
- Explore the possibility of bringing the BCTF's Program for Quality Teaching to your Local.
- Form or join a teacher research group.
- Participate in group planning.
- Hop on the Internet through BCTF Online or another Professional Development site.
- Job-shadow in a related work situation.
- Join a professional organization or network
  - BCTF Provincial Specialist Association
  - Local Specialist Association or Local Chapter of a PSA
  - International network (ASCD, MSCD)
- Mentor a beginning teacher.
- Observe another teacher, and talk together about the lesson or program.
- Participate in curriculum development.
- Pilot curriculum or a program.
- Read professional literature.
- Reflect, discuss, and research for the purpose of planning individual or group ongoing professional development.
- Develop the discipline of reflective journal keeping.
- Serve as your school's Professional Development Representative.
- Share with colleagues what you found at a conference or workshop.
- Subscribe to and read professional journals.
- Watch professional videos.
- Work on a provincial committee (MoE or BCTF).
- Work on your Local's Professional Development Committee.
- Work with a colleague to discuss, observe, and critique a lesson or a program (peer coaching).
- Write professional articles for your local's newsletter, your PSA's publications, or *Teacher* newsmagazine. BCTF

## Professional Development News

From the Pro D Administrator, Elaine Jacobson:

There is some good news and some bad news. The good news is that there has been a lot of Professional Development activity this school year. The bad news is that we have spent most of the funds allocated to the Personal Professional Development and Teacher-on-Call categories. In fact, as far as our Teacher-on-Call budget is concerned, we are now using our contingency funds to cover Teacher-on-Call costs.

Our Curriculum Coordinators have been asked to look for other sources of funding if they are planning any more in-district workshops.

Another result of all this activity is that **teachers now must submit their applications ahead of time** for both Personal Professional Development funding and Teacher-on-Call requests. **Teachers should not simply assume the money will be there**, as we will definitely use it all up this year. The only question is when we will run out. GITA

## Gulf Islands Recipe for Teachers

Take 103 contracted teachers and trim them down to exactly 85.1939 FTE.

Blend in about 54 Teachers-on-Call.

Mix together with approximately 1565 students, virtually reduced to 1530.6875 FTE.

Scatter over 5 islands.

Put in 10 principals and 3 vice-principals who have been rendered to a total of 7.45 FTE.

Stir in only a few part-time coordinators.

Season with squeezed support staff.

Add international programs to taste.

Cover with 4 to 6 district administrators.

Apply just a pinch of funding.

Serve under a board. GITA

## Welcome back

Welcome back to school. To those of you who holidayed away, welcome back home. I hope you all had refreshing and rejuvenating vacations.

Our Bargaining Committee is still hoping to settle our Collective Agreement soon. BCPSEA has responded to our draft and we will be reviewing their concerns.

I hope to see you at the **GITA General Meeting on Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**. GITA