



GITA News

January 2010

Gulf Islands Teachers' Association

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Dates

January 15 –
Pro D Day

February 17 –
GITA Staff Rep
Training

February 17 –
GITA Representative
Assembly Meeting

February 17 –
**GITA General
Meeting, 5:30, GISS**

February 26 –
Pro D Day

March 4 –
Last day of school
before Spring Break

March 22 –
First day of school
after Spring Break

*“If you don't know where you're going, you'll wind up somewhere else.”
Yogi Berra*

Happy New Year

Welcome back to school. To those of you who holidayed away, welcome back home. I hope all of you had the vacations you wished for.

Our 2006-2011 Collective Agreement has been printed. By now, all contracted teachers should have received their personalized copies of the Collective Agreement at their schools. Teachers on Call and teachers on leave can pick up their copies at the School Board Office or make arrangements with the School Board Office to receive it at an Outer Island school.

Teachers should familiarize themselves with this document so as to understand the conditions of their employment and the protections that the Collective Agreement provides. Any question regarding the interpretation of an Article should be directed to the Staff Representative or, perhaps, the Local President. John Nicolson

Calling Out A TOC

Whenever a teacher is going to be absent, she/he should request a Teacher on Call for the complete absence, including preparation time. The absent teacher should assign duties for the Teacher on Call to do during this preparation time.

Teachers should request a Teacher on Call and a Leave of Absence only when they are certain that they will be absent. A change to the assignment of a Teacher on Call could be expensive for the School District, for the GITA or even for the absent teacher. For these reasons, every request for a Teacher on Call should go through Central Dispatch.

GITA

Our 12-Month Pay Plan Can Sometimes Hurt

Teachers on the GITA's 12-month pay plan are prepaid in the months of July and August for work that they have yet to do. That's the good news. The bad news is that, if a teacher does not complete the full school year appointment under which she/he has been paid, that teacher could owe the School District a substantial amount of money, perhaps thousands of dollars.

This situation could result from an unpaid leave of absence, a lay-off or a resignation occurring during the school year.

The provincial 12-month pay plan, which is not available to GITA members, is actually a savings plan whereby the district retains some of the teacher's salary, starting in September, and pays it back to the teacher during the following July and August. The teacher and the district share any interest earned. Under this plan, the School District always owes the teacher money.

The GITA is attempting to negotiate a Letter of Understanding to create a 12-month pay plan similar to the provincial plan. This is in keeping with the motion passed at the GITA 2008 Annual General Meeting to allow a contracted teacher to opt to take part in either the provincial 12-month pay plan or the local 12-month pay plan, in lieu of the 10-month plan. Our hope is that this new 12-month plan will be available to both continuing contracted teachers and temporary contracted teachers working until at least June 30 of that school year. Our current plan, which would still be in effect, is available only to continuing contracted teachers working in at least their second year with the district.

GITA

The FSA Ore Is In The Numbers

Teachers do not assess students' learning simply so that they have marks to put on report cards. The main purpose of classroom assessment is to support student learning, not simply to measure it. Teachers remain opposed to the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), not only because it does not support student learning, but also because it interferes with instruction, is costly and is ineffective in improving achievement.

Some Ministry of Education officials have referred to "mining" for data from the FSA results. To follow this analogy, the data must be the ore. However, in this case the ore (data) that is mined is not used by the Ministry for any purpose whatsoever except to provide the data (ore). There is no product.

Normally mining produces ore, which is in turn refined to produce utilitarian goods. The Ministry mining of FSA data produces nothing. The data does not result in any appreciable change in public education. Nothing is produced that will more enable our students to learn or their teachers to teach. The ore (data) is simply stored away safely, to be added to next year, and the year after that, and the year after that

Unfortunately, the Fraser Institute also refines the FSA ore (data) but only to produce statistics which are toxic to public education.

The mine should be closed. The BCTF is urging the Ministry of Education to adopt a two-year moratorium on all standardized tests, including the FSA, which incidentally is not standardized at all. GITA/BCTF

GITA Grievance Committee

In keeping with the BCTF philosophies of inclusion and of due process, the constitution of the GITA requires that a Grievance Committee be appointed annually.

The Chair of the Grievance Committee for this school year is Ian Mitchell.

Any teacher who believes that she/he is not being adequately represented by the Staff Representative and/or the President has recourse to appeal to this committee. For example, a teacher may appeal to the Chair of the Committee a decision by the teacher's Staff Representative and/or the President not to pursue a grievance by that teacher. The Chair will bring this concern to the attention of the committee who will then determine whether the GITA should pursue the grievance or not. GITA

Class Size/Composition Hearings

During the provincial arbitration hearings, the employer has offered many arguments as to why classes with many students and/or many special needs students are appropriate. The following are some examples from hearing notes:

- You don't need to attend to each student in your class every day.
- It's unrealistic to expect every student to succeed.
- If the student learned something, the class was appropriate. The good students did fine.
- Everyone passed. (Elementary school)
- Music classes don't necessarily need to use instruments. (In this case the curriculum was rhythm using drums.)
- Split classes are not necessarily more complicated or more work. Teachers often ask for them.
- The teacher is not necessarily the best person to tell us about the learning situation in a class. Other sets of eyes can often see more clearly. The teacher's is just one opinion.
- If you agree your class is appropriate, we accept your opinion. If you disagree that your class is appropriate, well . . . that's not the deciding factor.
- Grey area students are not part of the legislation. ESL students are not designated. They create no significant extra work.
- It was appropriate because your class attracts those types of students.
- The class is in a big room so there is room for more students.
- The teacher was good with those sorts of students so we are justified in putting more of them in that teacher's classes.
- Our teachers are very capable, so whatever situation we give them they make it appropriate for student learning. BCTF

Class Size/Composition In Court

In June 2010, the Supreme Court of Canada will be issuing its verdict regarding the BCTF challenge to Bills 27 and 28. These bills are the provincial legislation enacted in 2002 that effectively ripped out of our Collective Agreement all limits on class size and composition previously covered in Articles D.27, D.28, D.29 and D.30.3. GITA/BCTF