



# BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 7, 2007

## OBITUARY

Percy Austin, former Abbotsford teacher, who retired from Abbotsford School District in 2005, passed away on August 15, 2007 in Victoria, B.C. During his career, Percy served as a B.C. College of Teachers' councilor and as President of the Abbotsford District Teachers' Association. A memorial gathering will be held on 16 September at the Interfaith Chapel at the University of Victoria at 3.00 pm. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society in his name.

## KNOW YOUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

## BILL 33

Hello Staff Reps

Please remind your staff of the consult/consent language of Bill 33.

Bill 33 brought in a requirement for principals to consult with teachers should they propose classes of more than 30 students in Grades 4 to 12 or more than 3 students with IEPs, as defined by the provincial regulations.

For Grades 4 to 7 a teacher has to consent to having a class of more than 30 students within 15 working days after school opening.

For Grades 8 to 12 the principal can assign more than 30 students if she or he claims "the organization of the class is appropriate for student learning" and they have meaningfully consulted with the teacher within 15 working days after school opening.

Further, more than 3 students with IEPs may be placed in a class of any grade after consulting the teacher involved.

It is important to note that teachers should have ADTA representation, staff representative, the President or Vice-President of the ADTA, at all consent or consult meetings and that all meetings are documented, with copies of the form used filed at the ADTA office.

## **SCHOOL PLANNING COUNCILS**

In 2002 changes to the School Act (Sections 8.1 – 8.3) mandated the establishment of School Planning Councils consisting of the principal, one teacher, and three parents. Assigned roles of the SPC include consultation with the board regarding the allocation of staff and resources, accountability contract matters, and educational services and programs in the school. In addition, the SPC must prepare a school plan in respect of improving student achievement that is in accord with the district accountability contract.

While teachers recognize the importance of planning and support relevant collaboration with parents, legislative restrictions severely limit the ability of SPC's to effectively meet the individual needs of students. SPC's have no control over funding and the school plans must accord with the district accountability contract that must be congruent with the ministry goals. District accountability contracts are driven by "data", instrumental measures taken from FSA's, district testing programs, and other decontextualized sets of numbers that fail to recognize individual differences among people. Of course, this explains the meaningless consistency of school plans throughout the province. Matters that teachers know are important in the intellectual and social growth of children, but are not easily quantifiable, are banished from consideration. Where, for example, is the importance of physical and mental health or critical thinking considered? And why is "literacy" interpreted only as "reading and writing" when "speaking and listening" are just as important? For these and other reasons, the BCTF, through decisions made at AGM's and Representative Assemblies, has withdrawn participation in SPC's.

The School Act requires the election, by secret ballot, of teacher representatives to SPC's but also authorizes boards to appoint a "person" to SPC positions if either parents or teachers fail to elect. In SD # 34, the board has adopted a policy (Policy 9.300) that authorizes the appointment of a teacher to an SPC. The questions, "How will the School Board implement this policy?", "Is it the School Board's intention to direct teachers to attend

School Planning Council meetings?", and "Do the trustees believe that forcing teachers to attend School Planning Council meetings, perhaps against their wishes, will produce meaningful discussions and outcomes?" have been posed to the board but remain unanswered. Shirley Bond has stated that SPC's must work. Perhaps she has answers to those questions.

What concerns me is the implicit belief that it is appropriate to coerce the participation of teachers. To me, this is tantamount to bullying, an apparent violation of the district's anti-bullying policies and procedures. It troubles me that this dichotomy is considered reasonable. Until teachers' expertise is valued and properly represented, until public education is again valued as a public good, and until SPC's, or their future incarnations, are allowed to address authentic educational concerns I request teachers to abide by the BCTF embargo and resist pressure to participate in School Planning Councils. If you need advice, please call.