



SCHOOL UNION REP TRAINING



Introduction

Just as the president and the executive committee are the head of the union and the general membership is the heart, the school union representatives are the legs of the union. No policy, action plan, or communication vehicle will be brought to life in a school without the onsite skills, knowledge, and analytical capabilities of the school union rep. The BCTF Training Department, within the Professional and Social Issues Division, offers high-quality training programs to assist school union representatives in their ongoing work. The School Union Representative Training Program (SURT) co-ordinates the development, delivery, and evaluation of all SURT workshops for school staff and teacher-on-call reps, professional development reps, social justice reps, health and safety reps, staff committee chairs, and local executive committee members.

(Workshops for school staffs, other teacher groupings, and district professional days can be accessed through the BCTF workshops program which is different and separate from the SURT program.)

The School Union Rep Training Program (SURT) is largely financed by a BCTF grant, which releases school union reps for up to four days of intensive and practical training. The SURT Program is intended to develop the school union reps' hands-on, experiential knowledge, and understanding of Federation and local issues and the skills needed to ensure local and Federation policies and procedures are actualized within schools and amongst the teachers who work there.

The title School Union Representative Training Program reflects the fact that the training program covers the different union reps. You may wish to copy the workshop-selection pages for distribution to school union reps and/or executive members. The program is also available online at: <http://pdonline.bctf.ca/conferences/SURTBooklet/booklet.pdf>.

Planning school union rep training

Initial considerations

Careful planning is the key to a successful and enjoyable training day.



What are the desired outcomes for the day?

Through the local strategic planning process, the desired outcomes to meet both local and Federation needs are determined. For staff reps, training needs are often determined through a survey feedback from a previous training, or a meeting of a staff rep assembly. PD reps generally work through the local PD chair to determine their training needs. Other reps, such as social justice, health and safety, and school staff committee chairs, should work with their local association committees to determine their training needs.

Who needs to receive the training?

That is a local decision, addressing a specific need in the local. Examples include:

- a specific group (school PD or SJ reps, executive committee, etc.) wishing a planning session
- members new in their role as teacher rep (rookie staff reps, rookie PD or SJ reps, school staff committee chairs, etc.)
- those who wish training on an issue of local concern (professional ethics, health and safety, social justice, etc.)

Booking a workshop

All school union rep training *must be booked through the BCTF Training Department*. Make the initial call to Jane Turner, co-ordinator, School Union Rep Training Program (604-871-1871, toll free 1-800-663-9163), to establish the goals for the training, training topic(s), and dates. Give at least three-weeks' notice so that school union rep facilitators, who are teachers or local officers with busy schedules, have adequate time to prepare materials and arrange travel.

Locally developed training

Occasionally, a local may wish to design and develop a training not offered by the BCTF. It is possible for a local to use the School Union Rep Training Grant for that purpose, but it is essential that such training be planned with Jane Turner before the workshop is given if the local is to qualify for the BCTF grant.

Planning with the facilitator

After booking through the Training Department, you will receive a confirmation by e-mail or fax providing the name and contact information of the facilitator. The facilitator will call you to co-plan the training. Thoughtful planning, the key to a successful workshop, will include discussion of the following:

- facility
- involvement of the president or other local officers (to assist and provide local knowledge and information)
- local issues and culture
- participant composition and needs
- schedules.

Who can attend

Each local is entitled to a grant for up to four days of release time for each school staff, including the local TOC contact (see 10.J.10, *Members' Guide to the BCTF*). The release days are dedicated as follows:

1. Two days of training for the school staff and teachers-teaching-on-call reps.
2. One day of training for the school PD reps.
3. One day of school/local leadership training for school staff reps, school PD reps, staff committee chairpersons, school social justice reps, school health and safety reps, local executive committee members, or some combination of these. Grants for the fourth day of training may instead be used to release additional school staff and teacher-on-call reps for part 1 above.

Who pays for what

The SURT Program will pay for release time and travel for school union reps according to the grants procedure; for the school union rep trainer or staff's travel, accommodation, and release time expenses; and for materials for the workshop. The local covers facility expenses, meals, and other expenses related to school union reps' attendance at the session.

Note: *BCTF Procedure Statement 10.J.10 requires that the local jointly plan leadership training with the Federation to qualify for the grant.*

Follow up—Taking it back to the schools

School union reps should always be seen as members of a team of union activists who work together in each school on behalf of the members—to communicate with, advocate for, or organize and lead on union issues. Training is effective if school union reps plan to work together as a team and take it back to the school where they put the training to practical use—share information/knowledge and implement ideas with members. Discussing and planning how this is to be done is a component of every workshop. Locals can assist in the follow-up through progress reports at staff rep assemblies, newsletter information to members, etc.

School Union Rep Training Workshops 2009–10

The SURT workshops are for targeted audiences. To encourage and promote the team approach to school union leadership, some workshops bring school leadership teams together for training.

Staff rep workshops

Staff Rep Training Program Objectives—BCTF Procedure Statement 25.H.08—*That the Staff Rep Training Program:*

1. *Provide staff representatives with the skills and knowledge to fulfill their role as communicator, advocate, and union leader in the school.*
2. *Ensure that staff representatives have a current knowledge and awareness of the collective agreement including specifically those processes that require school level representation and/or advocacy.*
3. *Familiarize staff representatives with current local and BCTF priorities and communications vehicles relevant to union members in the school.*

1. What is my job? Role and function of the staff rep (3–5 hours)

The school staff rep is the legal representative of BCTF members at the workplace. This workshop helps staff reps, particularly those new to the role, understand their duties and responsibilities, their legal rights, and the resources available to support them.

2. The complete staff rep from A-Z:

Advocacy to zero tolerance (3–5 hours)

Staff reps will develop the skills and knowledge base needed to:

- advocate assertively for teacher rights in meetings with administrators and parents.
- participate and run a union meeting using BCTF Rules of Order.
- detect the “runaround” and learn how to practice zero tolerance for obfuscation.
- practice newly acquired skills through role play and local scenarios.

3. Contract awareness: Know your collective agreement (3–5 hours)

This introductory workshop, especially suitable for newer union reps, familiarizes participants with features and provisions of the local collective agreement and helps develop strategies to increase member awareness and effectively enforce those provisions. Advocacy for and enforcement of working and learning conditions now included in the *School Act* (Bills 28 and 33) is included. Participants must bring a copy of their collective agreement for reference.

4. Is it a grievance? Problem-solving at the school level (5 hours)

This workshop gives union reps an understanding of the grievance procedure for solving disputes. Participants learn their role in grievance handling and enhance their skill in helping colleagues resolve problems at the school level. Time is spent on how to resolve matters removed from the collective agreement by government legislation (e.g., class size, integration, staffing formula). Participants must bring a copy of their collective agreement in order to examine issues of local or school concern.

5. Advocating for public education (3–5 hours)

This workshop enhances participants' confidence in addressing class size and class composition, with FSA and electoral issues, by developing the school union leadership team members' abilities to advocate for their students and the public education system with the local media and parents through a combination of skill development and content support. This workshop has been adapted to address the BCTF Teaching and Learning plan for 2008–09.

6. Negotiating your enhancement agreement (2–3 hours)

Enhancement agreements are being developed in every district in the province. This workshop will explain what they are and who is involved in negotiating and implementing them. A successful implementation of enhancement agreements will be central to maintaining the positive relationship between public schools and Aboriginal communities.

7. Employment equity for Aboriginal teachers (2–3 hours)

This workshop helps participants understand the employment equity concept as it relates to all teachers. The workshop will address fears, myths, and realities of employment equity. It will explore the language to be used in the hiring process and help staff reps educate their members on the topic. Strategies for implementing employment for the local will be explored.

8. Hidden privatization: What is really controlling your working conditions? (2–3 hours)

Teachers' working conditions are affected by pressures from the agents of privatization and commercialization. While some elements of privatization are obvious (logos, sponsorships, and corporate curriculum), a "hidden privatization" threatens working conditions through the adoption of market methods such as deregulation and decentralization. Find out how schools are being restructured and how this restructuring is having an effect on the work of teachers. What are the ideologies, interests, and institutions that promote privatization?

Staff reps will be better prepared to identify and counter the hidden control of their working conditions.

9. Standing up for student learning: Dealing with

Section 76.1 of the *School Act* (3 hours)

Members will become familiar with the content and implications of class size/composition provisions of the *School Act* (formerly Bill 33). A follow-up evaluation and renegotiation process of all consent/consult meetings will be introduced. Use of the Teaching and Learning Conditions Report could provide evidence for both local/district discussions and future provincial grievances.

10. Role and function of the social justice school rep (3–5 hours)

(NEW Winter 2009)

School-based social justice reps working with the local Social Justice Committee can explore their roles and the functions they have within the school and local. Together with the local's Social Justice Committee, school reps will have an opportunity to set out long- and short-term plans and explore how to work in coalitions with others in their schools and community.

Health and safety rep workshops

1. Indoor air quality (IAQ) (3 hours)

This workshop reviews the symptoms of poor indoor air quality, the causes of it, and how to advocate on behalf of members and students whose health, teaching, or learning is affected. The workshop addresses tips and traps of IAQ problems and offers a list of resource people and material. The section on IAQ in the *BCTF Occupational Health and Safety Manual* forms the basis of the workshop. Exercises are based on real situations. Facilitated by a BCTF health and safety trainer.

2. Violence prevention (3 hours)

This workshop reviews the WCB regulations on violence protection and the section on violence in the BCTF Occupational Health and Safety Manual. Emphasis is on completing a risk assessment and on processing reports of violence, up to, and including, a WCB claim. In addition, the workshop discusses the law on the release of a student's history of violence in the context of a violence-protection program. Facilitated by a BCTF health and safety trainer.

3. Ergonomics (3–6 hours)

British Columbia is one of only a few jurisdictions in the world that has comprehensive workplace ergonomics regulations. This workshop

provides basic information about ergonomics and looks at the ergonomics requirements in the WCB Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Participants will learn how to identify ergonomics problems in their workplaces, some risk assessment techniques, and some effective control measures that can be implemented to reduce the risk to workers of musculoskeletal injuries.

PD rep workshops

1. Role of PD reps *(3 hours)*

This workshop develops the skills and knowledge of the PD rep as a union leader. Strategies for building member and public support for professional development, advocating for teacher-centred PD, and returning control of PD to teachers are explored.

2. Creating cultures of professionalism *(3–5 hours)*

(New Spring 2009)

This workshop explores the ways local and school teams can and do lead on professional issues, develop ideas and practices around professional cultures, and seek ways to enhance and support the autonomous professional practices of teachers.

3. Self-directed PD planning *(2–3 hours)*

Participants become familiar with professional self-directed planning options that build and support teachers' autonomy, professionalism, and collaboration. Participants will explore the differences between effective, teacher-directed PD and other types of in-service, as well as some of the stumbling blocks to effective PD.

4. Teacher inquiry: Empowering the person, the professional, and the union *(3–5 hours)*

(New: January 2009)

Many teachers are ready to move to a deeper professional practice where they are in control of their professional development. Inquiry approaches have been fostered in the BCTF by the Program for Quality Teaching (PQT) and by Inquiry projects supported by the Research and Technology (R & T) Department. This workshop will explore the ways in which teacher inquiry can be implemented in a local or school, the literature surrounding teacher inquiry, and how the BCTF, through its PQT and R & T projects, can help support teacher inquiry.

School and teacher leadership team workshops

The following workshops are most suitable for training days that are open to all school union reps because they emphasize the team approach to supporting members in the workplace and advocating for public education within the school environment.

- 1. Conversations about teaching, testing and autonomy** (3–5 hours)
(*New Fall 2009*)
This workshop provides an opportunity for school union reps to discuss the connected issues and concerns of the government accountability agenda and standardized testing and how they are affecting our teaching methods, assessment for and of learning and teachers' professional autonomy.
- 2. Capacity building: Developing the school leadership team** (3–5 hours)
Developing the knowledge, skills, and union-mindedness of the school-based team of teacher leaders (staff reps, PD reps, SJ reps, staff committee chairs, health and safety reps) is an important way to build capacity in the local. This workshop looks at practical ways to use the power of the team to support and advocate for members, create positive relationships in schools, and promote teacher education agendas. (Please note, this workshop should only be booked when bringing union reps from all the leadership areas together.)
- 3. Managing conflict** (3–5 hours)
When external conditions prompt changes in schools, routines are disturbed and relationships are affected. Teacher leaders in schools (staff reps, PD reps, SJ reps, and staff committee chairs) are often called on to help mend relationships or mediate conflict situations before they escalate further. This workshop provides hands-on strategies for union reps to use when dealing with emerging conflicts between coworkers at the school. (*Please note: this is not conflict resolution, but conflict management: developing skills to ensure conflicts don't escalate.*)
- 4. School staff committees** (3 hours)
Government has increased the voice of parents in schools, given greater power to administration, and limited teachers' roles in decision-making. To maintain teacher influence and control over their professional lives, teachers require their own independent and democratic structure and processes in the worksite. This workshop offers practical advice on how to establish and maintain a school staff committee.
- 5. School planning**
Goal setting for staffs (2 hours)
School union reps will learn about processes that can be used when leading a staff or groups of people through goal-setting activities. Processes examined will allow groups to develop a plan that meets their needs and evaluate the imposition of outside agendas.

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6. Professional relationships (3–5 hours)

There are two modules to this workshop on professional behaviour. They may be booked as separate modules or together as a full-day session.

Module A: The BCTF Code of Ethics

This workshop helps staff reps understand professional behaviour as it relates to the BCTF Code of Ethics. It explores the meaning of the various clauses, the rationale and processes for enforcement of the code, and the staff rep's role in promoting ethical conduct. Scenarios promote discussion on related work and the role of the BCTF Judicial Council.

Module B: Boundaries issues: Teacher/student relationships

Sometimes the standards of conduct between students and teachers are ambiguous. Teachers place themselves at risk when boundaries are crossed. This workshop helps staff reps identify potentially hazardous situations and provide support and resources for teachers.

Booking school union rep training days**—A checklist**

- The local co-plans and/or discusses training needs and ideas with Jane Turner, co-ordinator, School Union Rep Training Program.
- The Training Department selects and contacts the facilitator (school union rep trainer).
- The Training Department staff confirms the details of the workshop, by fax, e-mail, or mail, with the local and the facilitator.
- The facilitator talks with the local contact about the shape of the day, the location of the meeting room, A/V needs, photocopying, etc., and co-plans the delivery of the workshop.
- The local contact welcomes, introduces, and, at the end of the day, thanks the facilitator.
- The local sends its release-time grant application to Sheila Jones, attaching a copy of the SURT Workshop Confirmation form.

Online links:

The Role and Function of the school staff representative—see *Members' Guide to the BCTF*, 25.H.04

Online: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/About_Us/Members_Guide/guide.pdf
– pdf on screen pg. 113-114.

The Role and function of the PD rep—see *Members' Guide to the BCTF*

Online: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/About_Us/Members_Guide/guide.pdf
– pdf on screen pg. 114-115.