

TEACHER

Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

Anticipating full-day Kindergarten

By Karen Bernath

There has been a lot of discussion and debate about the concept of full-day Kindergarten since the government first started discussing the concept. Change can be very stressful and changing the Kindergarten students' day to full time is a huge pedagogical shift from the way the Kindergarten program has been delivered over the course of my 21 years as a teacher in British Columbia. Many questions have been raised by teachers, parents and politicians alike—do four- and five-year-olds have the stamina for a full day at school? Will there be nap time? Will Kindergarten become a mini-Grade 1? Are we, as a society, placing too much emphasis on academic achievement? The government has made it clear that full-day Kindergarten IS happening—partial implementation for September 2010 and full implementation across the province for September 2011. There comes a time in the debate when we need to focus on moving forward as Reinhold Niebuhr said “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

The public debate and discussion around full-day Kindergarten has caused me, as a Kindergarten teacher, to examine my practice and

reflect upon what I truly believe about the Kindergarten program. Many early primary teachers in my local have moved away from teaching Kindergarten in the last five years because of the workload issues associated with teaching Kindergarten in today's world of high-stakes testing and accountability. I disagree with the screening of Kindergarten students before they have a chance to become familiar with the routines that will help guide them toward security in their learning environment. Being a Kindergarten teacher means doing double screeners in my district—one

It is my professional responsibility to ensure that the proposed changes bring about positive benefits for the profession and the learning environment of my students...

set for your morning class and one set for your afternoon class. Teaching K means double the report cards and double the parent teacher interviews—maybe one class of students for the full day wouldn't be such a bad thing? The government has stated that the Kindergarten curriculum will not be doubled with the additional instructional time. Perhaps there will be an opportunity to move back to a true “play-based” program where children are allowed to learn in an experiential way. I have dusted off my Primary Program binder and started reminding myself of the way that I learned to teach primary back in the “Year 2000” with themes and centres and field trips and cooking. I



have heard that the Provincial Primary Teachers' Association is working on workshops to revive the Primary Program. Suddenly as a Kindergarten teacher, I'm excited about the possibilities—thinking maybe this change will be okay for our Kindergarten students. It is my professional responsibility to ensure that the proposed changes bring about positive benefits for the profession and the learning environment of my students, always striving for a program that is play-based, experiential, and values the developmental needs of the students in my classroom. One of my favourite quotes by Mary

Englebreit comes to mind: “If you have knowledge, let others light their candles by it.”

As a Kindergarten teacher who has had the opportunity to teach full-day, every-day Kindergarten to a group of ESL, students with special needs, and First Nations students in the past, I will be helping my colleagues acquire the knowledge that they are seeking to ensure that this change is in the best interest of our Kindergarten students. Watch for workshops sponsored by the Primary Teachers' Association and the BCTF in your local. I have decided that rather than stress about the change, I'm

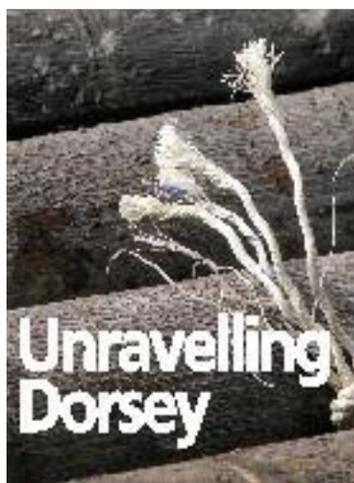
going to embrace it and use the additional time to make my Kindergarten program a good place for four- and five-year-old children to learn. In the words of Alan Cohen, “It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new. But there is no real security in what is no longer meaningful. There is more security in the adventurous and exciting, for in movement there is life, and in change there is power.”

Karen Bernath teaches at Bankhead Elementary School, Kelowna, and is a member of BCTF Professional Issues Advisory Committee.

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BC Teachers' Federation
100-550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2
E-mail: newsomag@bctf.ca



By Richard Hoover and George Popp

In August of 2009, after 57 days of hearings, Arbitrator Jim Dorsey found that 21 of 81 representative classes from 2006-07 and 2007-08 were in violation of Section 76.1 of *The School Act*. Now, in a second ruling, Dorsey has ruled on the remedies for the teachers of the 21 classes that were in violation.

Despite the employers' position that no remedies other than simple

declarations were appropriate, Dorsey has awarded substantial remedies.

During the hearing, the BCTF argued for remedies for the teaching and learning community in each school. We argued for the allocation of additional resources to the school and funds to the local union for the purpose of providing assistance to teachers. We argued for funds for professional development, reference resources, resources for students such as computer equipment and books, additional preparation time for teachers, and paid release time for teachers.

As the grievances took so long to resolve, Dorsey was not able to provide any relief to the teachers or students of the 2006-07 or 2007-08 classes that were found to be in violation of the law. So Dorsey chose to award paid release days to the affected teachers and, in cases where the teachers have retired or are no longer teaching in the district, an equivalent monetary amount.

In total, Dorsey awarded approximately 70 days of release

See DORSEY page 2

On the inside

It is only a matter of months before many schools and districts begin offering full-day Kindergarten. With this issue we begin a series of articles that explore the concept and assess the readiness and potential difficulties of this venture in the present context of BC politics and finances. Further complexities are unravelled in the recent arbitrator's decisions on providing some measure of redress to those teachers whose class size and composition were found to be in violation of legislation. Many more such grievances wait to be resolved, but this recent award may well

speed the process and foster greater vigilance in ensuring compliance.

The Federation continues to have a presence and influence internationally and articles describe the work being done in Peru and Honduras. At home, teacher enquiry groups are hard at work on a number of projects and other writers encourage us to reflect on our practice and engage schools and students in a variety of activities that enhance education.

Updates and reminders on items ranging from pensions to the Advantage program round out a very full pre-AGM edition.

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President's message



Irene Lanzinger

A recent ruling by arbitrator James Dorsey has given teachers another significant victory on the issue of class size and composition. In the fall, Dorsey heard evidence on 81 classes. Those classes

represented over 1,500 classes that the BCTF claims were in violation of the class-size and composition legislation in the 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years. Dorsey ruled in favour of the BCTF in 21 of the cases.

In this most recent ruling, Dorsey awarded compensation in the form of 70 days of release time to the 20 teachers of the classes found to be in violation of the legislation.

It has taken a great deal of time and legal arguments but we can finally advise teachers with difficult classes over the legislated limits that there is a process to deal with those classes. Teachers must attend consultation meetings and disagree with the organization of class. The BCTF will file grievances and, at least in some cases, teachers will be compensated. Bit-by-bit, step-by-

step, we are making progress on the issue of working and learning conditions.

The ruling places a number of obligations on principals and superintendents. Principals must consult thoroughly and genuinely. Principals and superintendents may find themselves testifying that classes are "appropriate for student learning," when clearly they are not. And, if they are not careful, their actions will result in boards having to pay compensation to teachers.

We can only hope that this will be enough of a disincentive to push administrators and boards into making every effort to meet the limits in the first place.

Dorsey's remedy ruling is a very important victory because it serves to remind us to be vigorous in our opposition to classes that do not

meet the limits and are not educationally sound.

The work is not over yet. We now must apply the ruling to the 1,500 outstanding cases from 2006-2008. And we will need to analyze the impact on the 2008-09, 2009-10 class-size grievances.

In spite of the victory of course, there are still major difficulties to face. One problem is that the original Dorsey ruling was not nearly as strong as we would have liked. This is particularly true with respect to the deference given to the principals' and superintendents' opinion on the "appropriateness of students' learning." The original ruling served as a disappointing reminder that the legislation was so very weak to begin with.

Weak legislation with no funding attached has created a situation

where thousands of classes exceed the limits and students do not get the support they need. As always, our major challenge is convincing the Liberal government to provide the funding for reasonable class-size limits, specialist teachers, and all of the other supports that children need. Instead, every day seems to bring more disturbing news about teacher layoffs and school closures.

This year trustees and parents have been speaking out about the erosion of our public education system due to underfunding. We need to build strong alliances with other groups and use every tool we have to continue to pressure the government to provide the funding we need, to ensure that every child's needs are met in our schools.

Readers write

Workers not at fault

In "Readers write" (*Teacher* Jan./Feb. 2010) you state that BCTF is negative and that "part of the cause of the meltdown in North America was caused by a predominant attitude that debt is a way of life." If BCTF omitted to question your kind of thinking they would be guilty of the most powerful form of a lie. Every messenger has an agenda and through questions we can see if it meets the test of impartiality, neutrality, and independence (morality), which is necessary for social justice. If questioning social justice is repugnant to you, then BCTF is negative. I personally applaud the BCTF for being negative when that leads to union protection of workers, better pay, maternity leave, unemployment insurance, health and safety rules, pensions, labour and building codes, environmental laws, protection of farmland, healthcare, and better education standards that serve the collective need of society.

As for your economic analysis, you need to look at what you read because those who caused the meltdown are in Victoria, Ottawa, New York, and Washington not working for BCTF, in the classroom, sawmill, or working for minimum wage pruning apple trees in Salmon Arm. It is government policies of deregulation and supply-side economics that have caused the meltdown, not a worker's desire to live on credit. The working class household debt, including those of our teachers, is horrendous. Why? When working people cannot maintain a standard of living and feed their families, they will borrow to just keep their head above the transfer payments that our government hoists on them, in order to give tax breaks to the 10% who own

most of the wealth in this province.

What is needed in this province is a monetary policy or easy money with changes in interest rates and money supply to expand aggregate demand, which will be a more effective immediate, and completely discretionary, method to stimulate the economy. Furthermore, the tax incidence should be lower for low-income people so they can purchase food, shelter, and clothing, which would stimulate small business, which employs one-third of our work force—mostly low-income earners. The government should also spend directly to help industries such as forestry in BC and the automobile industry in Ontario, which are most affected by external demand for these commodities.

Total national debt or provincial debt is not something that bankrupts nations or provinces, it is the amount of foreign debt they hold. Domestic debt is owed to the people in BC and stays in the province and servicing that debt also stays in BC to stimulate the BC economy. On the other hand, interest on the foreign debt leaves the province to stimulate someone else's economy. The only negative thing about a domestic debt is that its benefits are disproportionate due to the priorities of the present government.

The reason for this is the wealthy who have money make more from their investments than the poor because the poor have no investment portfolios. As BC's foreign debt reached higher and higher levels, servicing this debt forced the government to cut back on domestic spending, infrastructure, education, and health. Combine this with Campbell's tax cuts—which favour the wealthy, who spend the rebate in Mexico or Cuba like I will—the budget for domestic modernization and education and

social spending declines, and BC loses its competitive edge. Democracy means a government obligation to transparency, as well as political and economic equality in order to maintain a certain standard of living, this with a moral responsibility to healthcare, education, and housing for all.

Walter Trkla
Kamloops

DORSEY continued from page 1

time for 20 teachers whose classes were found to be in violation of *The School Act*. Dorsey also found that all teachers of a class including preparation-relief teachers, music, and regularly scheduled teacher-librarians were to receive pro-rated release time as remedy.

The remedies are based on four levels of infraction defined by the *Dorsey sum* assigned to the class. The Dorsey sum is calculated by adding the number of students with IEPs to the total number of students in the class. For example, a Science 9 class of 30 students, including 6 students with IEPs, would have a Dorsey sum of 36.

Here is the schedule of remedies that Dorsey determined for teachers of classes in violation of *The School Act*:

Dorsey Sum	Remedy	Maximum Remedy
Less than 34	2/3 day/mo.	6 days
34 - 36	1 day/mo.	9 days
37 - 39	1 1/3 day/mo.	12 days
More than 39	1 2/3 day/mo.	15 days

The remedies are to be applied for the school nine months following September 30. They will be based on the percentage of time the teacher taught the class, the

number of months the teacher taught the class, and the number of months the class was in violation.

Teachers who taught the class for a portion of the time, preparation-relief teachers, or job-share teachers for example, would receive an appropriate portion of the remedy stipulated.

The maximum remedy awarded to any one teacher in this particular grievance was nine days of release time for a Grade 4 class of 28 students, including six students with IEPs.

To attract a remedy, a class must be found to have been inappropriate for student learning. This entails determining that there was not a reasonably held opinion by the principal or superintendent that the class was appropriate for student learning and/or that the consultation process was lacking or inadequate.

Significantly, Arbitrator Dorsey ruled that failure of a principal to consult with a teacher is as serious a breach of the legislation as organizing classes not appropriate for student learning: "A class for which principal-teacher consultation is required and has not been held cannot be a class appropriate for student learning." Thus lack of consultation attracts the same remedy as if the principal's opinion was not reasonably held.

Dorsey also ruled that by law the consultation process cannot be "fixed" after September 30 by simply undertaking a late consultation: "There is no mechanism in this legislated public policy for a board of education to do after September 30 what it has not done properly before September 30th."

Another significant finding is that the excuse of lack of funds to organize a class appropriately is not a factor in assessing the appropriateness for student learning: "The formula for presumptive arbitrable deference to a principal's opinion... does not contemplate that a plea of underfunding by the provincial government will be a factor in assessing the appropriateness for student learning."

Further on this point, Dorsey says: "If boards of education are not funded to enable them to fulfill their legislated responsibility and duty, then the funding provincial government must be accountable or the Legislative Assembly must expressly enact relief from the class-size and composition standards and explain to parents and teachers why the standards are no longer desirable or achievable. It is not to be left to arbitrators to diminish remedies for individual teachers or increase deference to the opinions of principals and superintendents because underfunding places boards of education in positions where they must stretch their opinions of what is appropriate for student learning to meet class-size and composition standards with inadequate funding."

As well, Dorsey has ruled that a teacher's overall workload is not

relevant to a particular class: "The public policy focus of *The School Act* is on the class, not the teacher's overall workload..."

However, the award also contains some useful guiding principles for future enforcement of the limits. Remedies were reduced for classes where staff reps and teachers agreed to inadequate consultation, where teachers did not complain about lack of consultation or had agreed to teach classes exceeding the limits. Teachers who assisted in organizing classes that exceed the limits also placed themselves in jeopardy of diminishing, or negating, any remedy.

So, now we know what the remedies are for the teachers of the 21 classes that were found to be in violation of the *Act*, out of 81 classes examined by the arbitrator, what's next?

The BCTF has reached an agreement with BCPSEA on a process to deal with the remaining 1,500 classes that we claimed were in violation in 2006-08. In each district where there were alleged class-size/composition violations in 2006-07 and 2007-08, about 20 districts in all, the local parties will now meet to apply the Dorsey rulings to determine which classes were actually in violation and what the appropriate remedy is in each case. Where there is no agreement at the local level, the BCTF and BCPSEA will attempt to resolve the matter, and failing that, the matter will be referred to arbitration for a decision.

It is our hope that once the issues of 2006-08 have been fully resolved, we should be able to avoid further costly provincial arbitrations for the as yet unresolved 2008-09 and 2009-10 grievances by applying the Dorsey formulas and rules in each instance where teachers disagreed with the organization of their classes.

As Dorsey states in his award, "...the goal and hope... would enable the union and employer to fashion a time-driven, locally administered dispute resolution procedure... to expeditiously resolve differences..."

Clearly, and all in all, this has been a frustrating and time-consuming process that has not even now, three-and-a-half years after the violations occurred, resulted in any educationally meaningful redress for the thousands of students and hundreds of teachers who were in classes that were not appropriate for student learning.

Dorsey's interpretation of the legislation has finally resulted in remedies, but the outcome is still unsatisfactory for teachers who want educationally sound classes, not release time to make up for principals' and superintendents' bad judgment and misunderstanding of the law.

Richard Hoover is director, and George Popp is assistant director, BCTF Field Service Division.

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100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2
604-871-2283, toll free 1-800-663-9163, Fax 604-871-2289
E-mail: newsmag@bctf.ca Web: bctf.ca/newsmag

Editor

David Denyer

Assistant editor

Kathleen Smith

Design consultant

Betty Sommerville

Copy editor

Bev Humphries

Staff writers

David Denyer

Karen Langenmaier

Patti McLaughlin

Rob Taylor

2009-10

BCTF Executive

Michelle Davies

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The ministry unveils full-day Kindergarten

Full-day Kindergarten will play a significant part in providing BC students with a good start in their education and life. It provides an opportunity for children to experience a rich and interactive environ-

ment, while laying a positive foundation for healthy physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Education is the best economic development and health promotion program ever invented. Early childhood development is critical, and early years learning programs can determine the quality of our future learners and leaders.

Full-day Kindergarten provides our youngest students time to explore, learn, and grow in an engaging and supportive environment. Children are natural learners, full of wonder and curiosity about their world.

The Ministry of Education is phasing in universal access over two years. Full-day Kindergarten will be available for up to half of BC's eligible students in September 2010. By September 2011, full-day Kindergarten will be available across the province.

School districts are responsible for determining which schools will be offering the full-day Kindergarten program for the start of the 2010 school year. This allows them to address local priorities and meet the needs of families in their community.

When school districts submitted their proposals identifying potential schools for the first year of the phased-in approach, we requested they take into consideration

offering before- and after-school childcare so that parents working or studying have access to seamless learning and care services at school sites.

Benefits of full-day Kindergarten

Full-day learning is associated with improved literacy and numeracy, smoother transitions to Grade 1, and in the longer term, better secondary school graduation rates. A full day also enables teachers to give students more individual attention.

A longer instructional day will enable Kindergarten teachers to

The Ministry of Education is phasing in universal access over two years. Full-day Kindergarten will be available for up to half of BC's eligible students in September 2010. By September 2011, full-day Kindergarten will be available across the province.

provide more opportunities for learning and success. The expanded Kindergarten program will enhance a child's learning potential, provide a wide range of advantages from academic to social skills, model appropriate classroom behaviour, and help create a positive attitude toward school.

Additional benefits include:

- more opportunities to learn through play.
- extended interaction with other children to help develop strong social-emotional skills and positive self esteem.
- greater exposure to educational materials to help develop strong literacy skills.
- more time for teachers to meet the needs of children.
- fewer transitions during the day.
- more individual and small-group activities.

Supports for teachers

The ministry's current curriculum for Kindergarten will remain in place for full-day Kindergarten. (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/grkcurric_req.pdf)

The ideas contained in *The Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching* will support teachers in designing and delivering full-day Kindergarten programs. (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/primary_program/primary_prog.pdf) The Primary Program reflects an understanding that children learn through active engagement and play.

The ministry is working on a Full-Day Kindergarten Program Guide to assist teachers, administrators, and other school staff in creating rich, play-based early learning experiences for children. The guide will be available later this spring.

StrongStart BC Early Learning Program

Full-day Kindergarten is just one of several important early learning initiatives in our province. The StrongStart BC early learning program provides school-based early learning services for adults and their young children at no cost to families.

Both children and adults can benefit from StrongStart BC early learning programs—children have access to high-quality learning environments and benefit from social interactions while the adults who accompany them learn new ways to support learning, both at the StrongStart BC centre and at home.

Qualified early childhood educators lead learning activities, including stories, music, and art to help children get ready for success in Kindergarten.

Currently, there are more than 300 StrongStart BC programs in operation across the province that reported more than 278,000 visits in the last school year.

Full-day Kindergarten appears to have widespread support among British Columbians and research shows a play-based Kindergarten program combined with early learning opportunities has long-term benefits for our children's academic and social skills.

Vision for early learning in British Columbia

Nothing is more important, as we look to our future, than the education of our children. In British Columbia, early learning and early-childhood development have been placed at the forefront of efforts to improve education services.

The vision for early learning in British Columbia stems from knowing that children start learning from the moment they enter the world.

The *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* describes the vision, pedagogical principles, and key areas of learning for children from birth to five years (before school entry). (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/early_learning_framework.htm)

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Broadly speaking, the Early Learning Framework intends to:

- support dialogue and reflection on the critical importance of development and learning of young children.
- serve as a tool for reflecting on, and guiding, early learning programs and activities.
- support discussion with and between, families about their children's early learning.
- guide professional development activities and investments.
- serve as a basis for discussion among community partners with respect to the early years.
- create a shared image of the child that can guide efforts to promote early learning at the local and provincial levels.

Our best future is one where all our children are healthy, emotionally secure, socially competent, and confident learners.

In British Columbia, early learning and early-childhood development have been placed at the forefront of efforts to improve education services.

Full-day Kindergarten appears to have widespread support among British Columbians and research shows a play-based Kindergarten program combined with early learning opportunities has long-term benefits for our children's academic and social skills.

Full-day Kindergarten is an opportunity to provide our children with a greater and more enriching educational experience and will be a sound educational investment in British Columbia's—and Canada's—future.

Full Day Kindergarten



Starting Kindergarten is an exciting time for children and their families.



Looking back

70 years ago

During recent years some of the more democratic and forward-looking American states have expunged from their statute books a certain type of legislation singling teachers out for discriminatory treatment, but British Columbia has at last fallen in step with those others that put their faith in loyalty oaths rather than in men and women. If indeed we have traitors in our midst it seems obvious that public enemies of that type will not be intimidated by formal phraseology borrowed from ancient feudal times. That the Minister meant the new regulations to protect loyal and conscientious teachers and to eliminate those unfit to be entrusted with the education of young citizens, no one will doubt. That the new regulations will serve these desirable ends, the Editor of the *The BC Teacher* does not believe.

— March 1940, *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

We must begin immediately to make the teaching profession more

attractive. To do this we must first make it a profession and not a stepping stone to marriage or a good second income for the married women. Salaries must continue to rise in most parts of the country and to keep pace where they have now become comparable to those offered by other jobs. But most of all governments themselves must investigate the means whereby they can make the teacher a genuine professional. This will include an assurance that standards will not be relaxed in the recruiting of teachers, and the promise of teachers being able, like the lawyers and doctors and engineers, to control these standards themselves.

— March 1960, *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

One important feature of teaching makes it substantially different from any other profession, a feature that has received insufficient attention. A teacher is always engaged in dealing with a group. A dentist, an accountant, a lawyer or a nurse, usually has only one person, or one problem to deal with at a time. A

teacher always has a group, and therefore, however thorough the preparation, however complete the lesson, learning takes place in a group, but is an individual activity.

— March/April 1980, *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

For thousands of our colleagues there have always been class-size limits, there have always been duty-free lunch hours, there has always been prep time. To young teachers it may seem as if teachers' rights and protections were a gift from a benevolent employer in a bygone and forgotten era. They can't know, because they weren't there, that these conditions, and many more, were won only a few years ago. And there is no reason for them to know that we old timers had to struggle and sacrifice and organize, and sometimes strike, to achieve the most basic improvements.

— March 2000, *Teacher newsmagazine*

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich



Full-day Kindergarten delayed is full-day Kindergarten denied

By Noel Herron

It will take four years from the time the BC Liberals first announced their intention in the Speech from the Throne in 2007 before all of BC'S eligible five-year-olds can gain entry into full-day Kindergarten in public schools.

In other words universal, full-day, Kindergarten will not be in place in BC schools until the fall of 2010.

The staggered two-year entry plan—40% entry this coming September followed by the remaining 60% entry in 2011—is hardly the “splash” Education Minister Margaret McDiarmid boasted about. It leaves local renamed boards of education (note the new moniker for school boards, which is really an empty political rebranding without tangible support) and local school principals to explain why some schools have full-day Kindergarten and others do not.

While our education minister was busy recently explaining to the media that the parents she spoke to whose children were planning to enter next September were

And how about the inequitable situation next September between parents of children unable to gain entry, while some of their children's friends are admitted to a full-day program?

delighted with the plan, she conveniently ignored the thousands of parents who will not be able to gain entry for their children until 2011 due to Victoria's ill-advised split entry plan. And then it will be too late for these children as the opportunity has passed them by.

This is an education minister who needs to be reminded that the parents unable to gain entry to their local school this coming September will view full-day Kindergarten delayed as full-day Kindergarten denied to their children. In Richmond, this number is estimated at 641, while in Surrey the number unable to gain entry is projected to be 1,200. Vancouver's estimate rises to 1,394.

And how about the inequitable situation next September between parents of children unable to gain entry, while some of their children's friends are admitted to a full-day program?

Even the number of classes approved by Victoria for local boards appears to vary considerably adding yet another inequitable dimension to the mix.

BC is the only province in Canada using a delayed, split entry, implementation plan that leads to unacceptable situations such as this.

Sadly, these are not the only problems associated with this long delayed and inept implementation in our province's early childhood scene. Lack of space, inadequate resources, and poor advance planning mean that the proper introduction of this much-needed change falls far short of the minimum standards required.

Both the provincial teachers' (BCTF) and trustees' organizations (BCSTA) have voiced strong reservations about the underfunding and

A botched Kindergarten plan

space requirements needed.

Based on their past bitter experience and fearing a return of the Rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul approach repeatedly used by Victoria, BCSTA's provincial council unanimously passed, at its October 2009 meeting, the following motion from the Prince George (SD 57) board:

“That BCSTA request that until the Government of British Columbia provides full, predictable and stable funding to support K-12 education, the Government of British Columbia defer the implementation of full-day Kindergarten and redirect the \$150 million (over three years) allocation of funds to current programming.”

The massive shortfalls in the current K-12 system, recently estimated at \$300 million, not covered by provincial funding, underscore the concerns of BCSTA members.

Announcing, in the 2007 speech from the throne, that one in four of preschoolers lack readiness for school entry and knowing that the introduction of a province-wide full-day Kindergarten program would require extra classroom space, Victoria gave no consideration to imposing a moratorium on the ongoing parade of school closures. Indeed boards may be compelled to close an estimated eight more schools.

With the late September cancellation of the annual facilities grants to school boards, the appropriate upgrading or modification of regular classrooms (suitable furniture, installation of sinks, purchase of early childhood materials, and supplies) to receive the first wave of full-day Kindergarten simply won't happen in most cash-strapped boards.

And what about the professional development workshops and in-service for teachers transitioning from half-day Kindergarten to full-day Kindergarten or teachers new to this program? This is not even included in the provincial plan.

Most disturbing of all, is the lack of provincial leadership in developing an age-appropriate, full-day Kindergarten curriculum. Instead of employing the curriculum expertise of provincial partners and college and university personnel to this end, there has been a total abdication of responsibility, despite claims to the contrary.

Providing school boards with contemporary curriculum guidelines backed up with innovative seed funding for early learning is simply

not on in this province.

The haphazard and badly botched implementation approach to the first extension of full-day Kindergarten programs is now on view for all to see. It is reflective of the low priority that the BC Liberals accord overall early learning in this province.

Providing school boards with contemporary curriculum guidelines backed up with innovative seed funding for early learning is simply not on in this province.

For example, there is not a single government sponsored pre-Kindergarten class for disadvantaged 4-year-olds in all of BC.

Vancouver has had three such classes for the past 20 years. And the question remains: Will it take another 20 years before targeted pre-school classes reach these needy kids across this province?

For two years Shirley Bond, the previous education minister, talked up a storm about early learning, even mentioning programs for three-year-olds. While this gave the minister great political traction, she ultimately failed to deliver.

How would one evaluate BC's overall approach to early learning?

In a few words: lightweight, insubstantial, and anchored closely to a public relations agenda.

BC's record on preschool to date is comprised of book hand-outs (Ready, Set, Learn) and the misnamed Strong Start (an insubstantial, part-time, drop-in, program scattered across the province). Our most vulnerable students—poor kids—get a raw deal in the BC preschool scene.

Clyde Hertzman, president of the Council for Early Childhood Development at UBC, sums it up “...the extension of Kindergarten should be seen as a first step; it needs to be followed by a commitment to provide full-day care through age six at neighbourhood centres. Without this comprehensive approach BC's children and families are no better off.”

Noel Herron is a former school principal and school trustee.

Watch for more articles featuring full-day Kindergarten in upcoming issues of *Teacher*.

The tax trap

By David Denyer

Severe restraint, austerity, and belt-tightening are the words coming from both levels of government. It's difficult not to come up with an image of politicians salivating at the opportunity the financial debacle has provided to further depress public services, people's expectations, and generally intimidate and coerce. As always, it's public services and the people who provide them that take the hit. The strategy is clearly working, as evidenced by the recent wariness of the public sector unions as they approach the next round of bargaining.

Taxes and what they pay for rarely comes up for discussion. Only in the context of *burdens, relief, and cuts* is there any mention of taxes. The need for taxes and increased fair levels of taxation is viewed by politicians and mainstream media as heresy. So ingrained has become the acceptance that taxes are an impediment to economic growth and prosperity that resource companies and business can argue for endless exemptions and hold local municipalities hostage by withholding their share on the basis that they pay too much.

This cutting off of the life blood that makes for a societies' well-being has to end. Unions, public-advocacy organizations, and coalitions have begun to raise the alarm over the perilous fantasy that reductions in taxes won't cost us anything.

This cutting off of the life blood that makes for a societies' well-being has to end. Unions, public-advocacy organizations, and coalitions have begun to raise the alarm over the perilous fantasy that reductions in taxes won't cost us anything.

In a speech given recently by Hugh Mackenzie, to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the foundation and ramifications of this fantasy were laid bare. “The disconnect between taxes and public services is not politically neutral. It is central to the political strategy of conservatives.” Constantly harping on about sustainability coupled with guilt-inducing haranguing on the terrifying prospect of government deficits (how could we possibly saddle our

grandchildren with our largesse?), reinforces, in the words of Hugh Mackenzie, “...an atmosphere in which political dishonesty becomes an essential tool for survival.” We see this strategy at work at both the federal and provincial levels.

Murray Dobbin, writing in the *Tyee* points to Jim Flaherty's 2007 budget as setting the stage for the upcoming federal budget and the misery to follow. Flaherty “launched a five-year, \$60 billion tax cut—largely for the wealthy and for corporations.” This has created, says Dobbin, a structural deficit that will continue into the future no matter what happens to the economy. In the absence of tax increases, this will bring cuts, layoffs, wage freezes, and massively reduced spending. 2008-09 saw the beginning of this deep tax cut, which will reduce revenue by \$220 billion over five years. Contemplate what that will do to provincial coffers given their increased dependency on transfer payments. Future leaders will continue to be hamstrung by this folly or face the politically risky manoeuvre of raising taxes.

So the stage is set for the crisis that requires stringent measures and *strong* leadership, which translated means forcing the general population to bear the consequences. In an analysis of what has happened to provincial revenues over the last decade the BC Federation of Labour has identified the following:

- The cumulative value of tax cuts introduced in annual budgets over the last ten years is over \$4.6 billion.
- Businesses, primarily large corporations, have received tax-savings over the last nine years that have cumulatively totalled more than \$1.5 billion annually.
- Once the Harmonized Sales Tax comes into effect on July 1, 2010, BC businesses will save an estimated \$2 billion-plus annually as consumers alone will bear the combined impact of BC's sales tax and the federal government's goods and services tax (GST).
- When the HST is fully implemented, the total savings for BC companies will be an astounding \$3.5 billion—each and every year! That's an annual reduction in businesses' tax bill of \$3.5 billion.

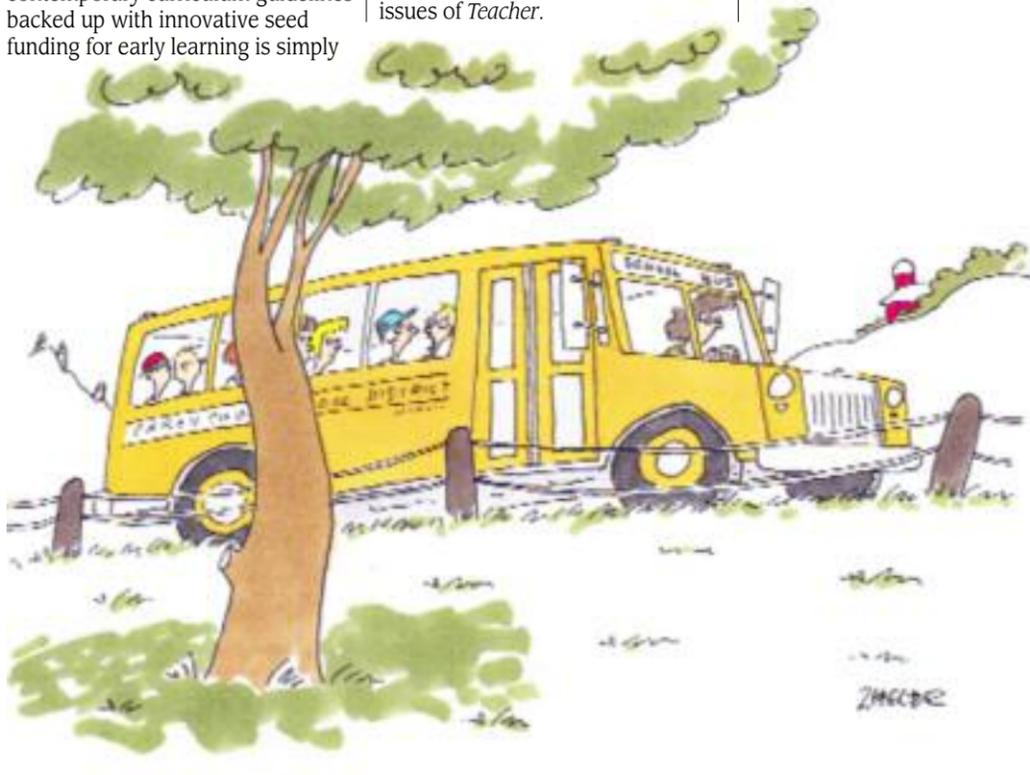
Other bewildering disconnects follow from this reality. Experts tell us that economic recovery has started, yet government is threatening to impose harsh measures for years. People are being encouraged constantly to spend and borrow (a vital part of stimulating the economy), yet how can they do so without disposable income. Job security and pensions are on the line but how can they save more without the income and job security that makes that possible. These classic “double binds” create all manner of disfunctionalities in society that only increases the demand for supports and services that are being diminished and cut. These are the benefits of runaway free-market capitalism.

Hugh Mackenzie finishes his talk with the following:

“...the aging of our population; growing income inequality; and the inexorably slow-moving crisis of climate change—all require more public investment, not less.

We need to have that adult conversation about the public services we need, and the taxes we'll have to pay to provide them, and we need to have it soon.”

David Denyer is editor of *Teacher* newsmagazine and assistant director, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division.



"I turned five. That's why I'm here. What are you in for?"

Teacher inquiry

By **Charlie Naylor and Nancy Hinds**

In April 2008, the BCTF Executive endorsed an approach to supporting teacher inquiry that co-ordinated existing inquiry approaches in the Program for Quality Teaching (PQT) and in the Research and Technology (R & T) Division. This approach was built on analyses of current professional development literature as well as the BCTF's experience in supporting a range of inquiry projects over time.

With a \$315,000 Ministry of Education grant received in April 2008, the BCTF initiated projects in seven school districts (Coquitlam, Vernon, Central Okanagan, Surrey, Creston, Richmond, Nanaimo) each a three-way partnership involving the BCTF, the local teacher association, and the school district. Three provincial specialist associations (SEA, LATA, and THESA) of the BCTF were also funded to conduct inquiry. Some existing BCTF inquiry projects in Kamloops, Kootenay-Columbia, Cranbrook, and Sooke were continued from previous projects.

To support inquiry, the existing cadre of PQT facilitators was expanded. Teacher facilitators supported the seven new projects in school districts, the three PSA projects, and four ongoing projects, a total of 14 teacher-inquiry groups in all. At each site a more experienced facilitator was paired with a less experienced facilitator to encourage mentoring and skill development. Three two-day

training and sharing workshops were provided to this group of facilitators in the 2008-09 school year. Two BCTF staff co-ordinated the project and offered mentoring and support to the teacher facilitators.

Approximately 210 teachers participated in the 14 projects. Each group of teachers reported their progress and learning at a celebration held at the project's conclusion. Some made presentations for superintendents/senior district staff, trustees, local teacher association presidents, or executives, administrators, and teachers. One facilitator produced a film documenting the group's approach to inquiry.

Some resources were purchased and provided to facilitators, while more have been developed by both BCTF staff and the facilitators. A range of technology was used to support communication, data analysis, and reporting.

Lessons learned are both logistical and conceptual. Much has been learned in terms of the logistics needed to support multiple inquiry projects at the central level (BCTF), and within local teacher associations. Partnerships with school districts have been positive and productive. While the BCTF's co-ordinated inquiry work is still a work-in-progress, there exists an improved understanding of the importance of facilitation, and how to build facilitation capacity. A better understanding of inquiry approaches has also developed, with a variety of methodological approaches encouraged, including



Drop everything and read...Teacher!

TANIA KEELER PHOTO

L-R: Veronica Shannon, Paula Weninger, and Barbara Nicholls, teachers at Tremblay Elementary School in Dawson Creek, take a few moments from their busy day to read the latest issue of Teacher.

action research, focused professional conversations and book-study. Reactions from participants, facilitators, school district staff, and teacher association presidents have been uniformly positive. In their view, teachers have been engaged in productive professional development, and the collaboration between union and districts has been welcomed.

The BCTF's inquiry work during the 2008-09 school year has stimulated discussion about inquiry approaches in districts where projects were not funded, when the BCTF responded to requests for presentations on inquiry from a number of districts and teacher

associations across the province. In the 2009-10 year, six new district-based projects have been funded, with some existing projects re-funded for a second year. Three new PSA projects will also receive funding in January. Facilitator training/sharing will continue. There will be an increased focus on documentation and reporting in order to share the lessons learned. At least one major conference presentation is planned and links to Ontario and Alberta teacher-union inquiry projects will be developed.

The grant from the Ministry of Education has been combined with BCTF resources to build a level of co-ordinated approach to inquiry

that has not been previously possible. It has provided the resources with which to build a foundation for inquiry. The second year will allow for some consolidation, yet there is a question of how sustainable this approach to teacher inquiry might be. There is a clear and somewhat stark choice—to build on the foundation currently developing or to revert to piecemeal and smaller-scale support for teacher inquiry as professional development.

Charlie Naylor, BCTF Research and Technology Division and Nancy Hinds, Professional and Social Issues Division.

Online reputation management

Protecting yourself...from yourself (and others)



By **Tony Wilson**

A good name can be worth millions, and we all know by now what happens when a good name gets into bad trouble. Tiger Woods is only one example of how important your reputation is, and how easy it is to be damaged. Perhaps irreparably.

The online world has created a new area of law in this age of Web 2.0. Its called Online Reputation Management Law, and it straddles the law of defamation, freedom of speech, privacy law, copyright law, and trademark law. It also involves the non-legal (but equally as important) fields of public relations and crisis management. Many of the legal issues in this area involve Facebook, which has over 350,000,000 users, (including about 90% of all the middle school and secondary school students you and your colleagues teach every day. You might be a Facebook user as well.)

If someone says or publishes something about another person that is untrue, not otherwise privileged, and this damages the other person's reputation, this may well amount to defamation and legal consequences may follow. "online" publication of defamatory statements on Facebook, Twitter, or on blogs is still publication.

But what if the damaged reputation is self-inflicted? Although there are things that older adults may share with others in more private ways, there has never been a generation so willing to share their

innermost feelings, their outrageous opinions and their inappropriate photographs than the under-25 age group who make up the mainstay of Facebook. I hear stories about the things 15- to 18-year-olds post on Facebook through my own kids and their circle. But I see the 22- to 25-year-olds because they're at an age where they want me to hire them in my law firm. Many of these people don't seem to understand how the comments and photos they post to Facebook can be publicly accessible, profoundly inappropriate, and career-limiting.

From the 15-year-old's perspec-

...there has never been a generation so willing to share their innermost feelings,, their outrageous opinions and their inappropriate photographs than the under-25 age group who make up the mainstay of Facebook.

ive, it might be a badge of honour to post photos of her or his wayward drunken exploits on Facebook, knowing that, as their parents aren't "friends," Mom and Dad won't see last week's vodka bender. And it might be cool to tell the world you belong to groups and fan clubs that are sexually explicit, or to swear on one's wall, knowing only one's "friends" will see it.

But it's disingenuous to think one's parents (or the people close to them) won't see the inappropriate photos and comments if the teen has 750 "friends" on Facebook, (how can anyone have 750 friends?). The reality is that, despite amendments to Facebook's privacy controls to comply with the

directives of Canada's Privacy Commissioner, it's still relatively easy to see and copy what a user has posted to Facebook.

I can only echo what most of the deans of Canada's law schools tell their new students each year: "Clean up your Facebook pages. Your prospective employers are all law firms. They will be looking for you."

I can tell you first-hand, we do. All employers do. We have to.

So here are a few legal and practical things that might interest you and your students about managing and protecting their online reputations.

1. Notwithstanding new privacy settings announced in December, 2009, Facebook can retain cached archives of everything everyone puts on Facebook, even if it's deleted 60 seconds after being posted.
2. Any posting on Facebook can be saved to another's computer by a simple screen shot. And any photograph on Facebook can be dragged to another's desktop and circulated to others by e-mail, even though it may have been removed from the original poster's Facebook page. Digital pictures pulled from Facebook can be Photoshopped and otherwise manipulated in very bad ways.
3. Insurance company investigators regularly check Facebook pages of those they are investigating, sometimes posing as high school friends, or friends of friends so they can surreptitiously see the Facebook page and confirm or deny the claim. A woman in Quebec was recently denied insurance coverage when investigators saw recent pictures

of her "dancing up a storm" one night rather than convalescing at home after an apparent injury.

4. Canadian courts have ruled that one's Facebook page can be evidence and can be the subject of cross examination, even though a defendant had made his page as private as possible.
5. A court in New York City forced Google (as owner of a particular blogging website), to disclose the name of an anonymous blogger who arguably defamed a prominent model; the moral of the story being that no one is anonymous anymore. The defamed can always find the defamer.
6. Displaying your birthday and work history may be inviting scammers to apply for credit cards and otherwise steal your identity. Don't give out your birthday.

I can only echo what most of the deans of Canada's law schools tell their new students each year: "Clean up your Facebook pages. Your prospective employers are all law firms. They will be looking for you."

7. Tweets on Twitter will soon be searchable on Google, (so that tweets about how much a student hates his math teacher can be found by that math teacher).
8. Former NDP candidate Ram Lam had to abandon his candidacy during last year's BC election when the press discovered sexually provocative pictures of him on his Facebook page.
9. Users should limit the number of

friends on Facebook to real friends. If someone has 800 friends, one of them may be an insurance investigator, and another could be someone far, far worse.

10. Privacy Privacy Privacy. Facebook users should adjust their privacy settings so that only friends (and not "everyone") can see what they have posted. And never allow "friends of friends" access. Although Facebook changed its privacy settings in December 2009, the *Globe and Mail* reports that 70% of users still have their settings set to "everyone can see everything," possibly because they don't know how the privacy settings work. And of course, Google sees it all.
11. Although Facebook doesn't allow anyone under 13 to create Facebook pages, under 13's lie about their age.
12. Parents might want to monitor Facebook and other social networking activities of their teens, but teens (understandably) don't want to allow parent access as "friends." Perhaps a "designated driver" is a good idea as a friend; a young adult the teen and the parent both trust, and who won't contact parents about questionable postings or photos (but will call up the teen).
13. Finally, students shouldn't post pictures or comments they wouldn't want their mother, their grandmother, or their future employer to see, because one day soon, they will.

Tony Wilson is a Franchise and Intellectual Property Lawyer at Boughton Law Corporation in Vancouver and is an Adjunct Professor at Simon Fraser University. He has written for the Globe and Mail, Macleans Magazine and Lawyers Weekly, and is a regular columnist with Canadian Lawyer and Bartalk Magazine. His book on online Reputation Management will be published in the fall of 2010.

Canadian exceptionalism

Part 2

Preserving the difference through education

An educator's context

By Paul Shaker

If Canada is to follow the path of mature adaptation rather than the primitive responses of ego-gratification, its educators should recognize several factors.

Civility in mass media is a value worth preserving. Calling out incivility is a constructive act each listener and reader can practice. On these grounds, the reluctance of Canada to admit *Fox News* into its cable systems was justified. We are pliant beings, affected by our environment, and influenced by the narratives we hear and see. Public shaming may be preferable to censorship, and it is a response best delivered by independent citizens and their organizations, including the professional organizations of educators. Advertising content in mass media matters, too, as do other repetitive messages imprinted on the public by constant repetition. They should be critiqued, and such media awareness should be part of our curricula. There is value in non-commercial media alternatives, particularly on television, and these should be deliberately fostered.

Canada's sense of community contrasts with an unenlightened, self-destructive brand of individualism in the United States. For me it has been moving to observe the outflow of concern and material aid from the people of British Columbia in the face of human suffering here or elsewhere. The immediate deployment of Vancouver's Urban Search and Rescue Team to Louisiana in the face of Katrina was one of many expressions of compassion for the suffering of others that Canadians have demonstrated. Peacekeeping, propagating democracy, challenging HIV/AIDS, and environmentalism are other endeavours the nation undertakes. On a professional level, the support and confidence expressed by the citizens of BC during the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) job action of 2005 was a heartening expression of solidarity with their teachers.

There is magical thinking and there is critical thinking, and Canada tilts more toward the latter than does the United States. For example, slogans are not arguments, and *bon mots* make for laughs but not policy. Canada's political discourse had not thus far been reduced to catch phrases and put-downs such as *compassionate conservative*, *There you go again*, or *Drill, baby, drill*. Nor are Canadians as prone to accepting labels as substitutes for truly defining and evaluating programs. *Death tax*, *socialized medicine*, *ownership society*, *free market*, *the Clean Air Act*, *the Healthy Forests Initiative*, or indeed, *No Child Left Behind*, represent the apotheosis of the "words that work" communication philosophy of Frank Luntz. In Canada, such sloganeering and labeling is normally followed

by a pregnant pause, during which the audience awaits an explanation of the argument. In the United States, too often, the label is part of the Orwellian argument.

Our educational practices in Canada deserve some credit for this difference in people's quality of cognition. Discipline in thought and argument are the result of challenging interactions, particularly in school settings where the curriculum is designed to elicit such development. Other contributing factors include the quality of the teacher's critical thinking, his or her perseverance in pressing analyses forward, an interactive and individualized classroom environment, and the habit of carefully listening to accounting for the challenges of others. This last trait is one that Americans notice in Canada—audiences here listen attentively and in silence. They show a striking openness to the words of the other that embodies a commitment to learning, even at the expense of some egoistic discomfort. Short-term pain for the ego can introduce long-term gain for the self—the self being our higher order personality, called in spiritual terms, the soul.

America, while demonizing the term "liberal," has lost touch with the central message of liberalism—that human beings are perfectible through education and other salutary experiences. In place of a commitment to the elevation of all members of the society, average Americans have been led to believe that fulfillment comes to a lucky few—through the material acquisition or in the afterlife, through exclusionary creeds. Play the lottery or be born again. To serve their own narrow purposes, clever power-brokers have kept enough of the voting public mired in such views to make those attitudes self-fulfilling. If they are allowed to take permanent root, there will not be enough of the world's goods for all, nor will there be the national unity or sense of community required to protect the vulnerable.

Faith in a flawed world view, sold by methods that trigger emotional and unconscious responses, limits individual and societal maturation. One way to understand the difference between the two vast North American neighbors is to focus on the ways individual self-realization is defined and promoted in the two countries. In one, a flawed message is propagated for purposes of self-interest by the few. In the other a more communitarian vision still prevails and serves as a bond among average people and a vehicle for their political influence. By a slender thread, a non-commercial narrative holds sway in Canada and defines sets of values that protect the mass of citizens. Our teachers are vital to the telling of this story. If we are fortunate, the slender thread will hold and strengthen, and Canada's world-view will spread across North America.

Paul Shaker, Ph.D., is professor and former Dean of Education at Simon Fraser University.

Part 1 of "Canadian exceptionalism" was printed in the *Teacher*, Jan./Feb. 2010.



Conversations with the National Union of Teachers

By Ritchie Kendrick

In this second of two articles on conversations with the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in the UK, you will see that the BCTF is not alone when it comes to issues that are of particular importance to teachers. Issues such as Standardized Assessment Tests (SATs) and class size and composition are also hot-button topics with NUT members. Ritchie Kendrick discussed these with Andy Wooley, Regional Secretary of the NUT, Southwest Region.

Kendrick: Are there any controls over class size and composition?

Wooley: Well, the government introduced at Key Stage 1 (7-year-olds) a maximum class size of 30 with the opportunity for parents to

Industrial action in the UK has to be linked directly with the employer and can't be secondary or taken in sympathy. Unfortunately, in the UK, not all schools have the local authority as employer; many have their local school governors as the employer and any action has to be with them.

appeal under certain circumstances. Ironically, I just came from a school where that appeal has happened and the teachers are not very happy about it. Unfortunately, they have to accept it for this year and then have it rejigged. So that limit is there, but we were hoping to have that limit extended all the way up. The union has had a policy for years that the limit be 30 for a normal mainstream class and that where there are special needs and practical classes, that be reduced. What we are prepared to do is take industrial action [job action] to enforce that, but it has to be on a school-by-school basis. That is partly because of the way the law works, and the fact that the dispute has to be with that particular workplace or employer. Industrial action in the UK has to be linked directly with the employer and can't be secondary or taken in sympathy. Unfortunately, in the UK, not all schools have the local authority as employer; many have their local school governors as the employer and any action has to be with them.

Kendrick: Our teachers in BC have felt at times that we are the lone voice fighting for the integrity of our public education system. It is only in

We, at the NUT, say that it is possible to get rid of (SATs) and put assessment back in the hands of the teachers where it has always been...and in a way that is helpful for the kids and helpful for the teachers.

recent times that trustees and other educational partners have started to speak out against the chronic underfunding of public education. Is it the same for teachers here, do you feel you stand alone?

Wooley: Sometimes yes, but sometimes you get different alliances. For example, we have a disagreement with a rival teachers' union over the issue of SATs (Standard Assessment Tests). [SATs are the UK version of FSAs and they are used in the same manner to rate schools.] They feel that the alternative would be more work for teachers so they don't support our campaign to end the SATs. We, at the NUT, say that it is possible to get rid of them and put assessment back in the hands of the teachers where it has always been...and in a way that is helpful for the kids and helpful for the teacher. We have parents who will potentially boycott the tests and the possibility of industrial action is there. Because of the way the law is we have two focuses to it—one, it's bad for the kids... and two, it's bad for the teachers. We can only take action if it's an issue that creates an extra workload for teachers and it causes them to focus their work—their day-to-day work with kids—in a way they wouldn't normally choose to do.

Kendrick: In many BC schools we have situations where students are being given practice FSA tests and teachers are encouraged to specially prepare their students for these so-called snapshots of their achievement that are then used to rate schools.

Wooley: It is a problem here as well. It is quite clear people teach to the test because that is what they are forced to do. Finance comes with the results and there's the pressure for the school to do well...they are practiced well in advance, even all of the time in some circumstances. Publishing the figures is unhelpful because it doesn't take into account

where they come from, their demographic, their difficulties, etc. Although we'd like to get rid of all of these tests, our primary concern currently is with the SATs at Key Stage 2 (10/11-year-olds) where they are externally moderated and used in rating schools.

Kendrick: It is quite remarkable how similar our battles are. I hear that the NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers)—one of the UK's larger administrator associations—is partnering with you in your call for a boycott of the SATs. How is that going?

Wooley: It is working quite well... we're creating literature and much, much more. For example, there's a newspaper that will go out on the street Saturday mornings to get parental support, and so on, and we're working together to gain support from other trade unions. The fact that many head teachers are willing to support us in this campaign gives our members confidence in terms of the campaign. So we're very keen to have that working relationship.

Kendrick: It must be fairly critical to recruitment for the NUT to be able to deliver on some of the more controversial issues.

Wooley: Absolutely, from our point of view we have always seen ourselves as a union with progressive educational policies and of course the usual condition of service issues. A rival union leader once famously said, "We're not interested

It is quite clear people teach to the test because that is what they are forced to do. Finance comes with the results and there's the pressure for the school to do well...they are practiced well in advance, even all of the time in some circumstances.

in the education side of it because pupils don't pay union sub." But our members do care, I mean, obviously they care about bread-and-butter issues such as salary and conditions of service, but they care greatly about the quality of education, so we campaign on those issues in a general sense as well as school-by-school.

Ritchie Kendrick is an assistant director, BCTF Field Service Division.



BCTF Advantage

There are three exciting new partners in the Advantage Program Marketplace. New this spring are:

- **Fountain Tire**—with 40 locations throughout BC. Fountain Tire is offering several valuable ways for teachers to save on car-care costs.
- **SleepCountry Canada**—with many stores throughout BC, they have a valuable incentive for teachers.

- **Salin Acupuncture**—Salin Webb is a registered acupuncturist and doctor of traditional Chinese medicine. She offers a significant savings for teachers.

So far, we have nearly 20 Marketplace partners offering Advantage Program members substantial discounts on a wide variety of services and items. If you have a suggestion for a potential new partner, please contact the

program co-ordinator, Patti McLaughlin, pmclaughlin@bctf.ca

Great news for TTOCs

At its January meeting, the BCTF Executive Committee approved an extended health and dental plan for TTOCs. The program will launch March 6—the first day of the AGM—and TTOCs will be able to apply, online, for extended health and/or dental coverage through the BCTF Advantage Program website.

A nation-wide search was conducted for a suitable Canadian carrier for TTOC coverage. There were many considerations—cost, extent of coverage, medical questions, online applications, customer support to name a few. The best offering for TTOCs was

made by Manulife, and the program will be live, online by spring break.

More information will be disseminated at the AGM for delegates to bring back to their respective locals, and the Advantage Program Subcommittee will be working with the TTOC Advisory Committee to assist in getting information about this plan to all who are eligible for this offering.

There will be a representative from Manulife at the BCTF Advantage Program display area at the AGM, and all TTOCs are welcome at the Hyatt to gather information about extended health and dental coverage.

Please watch the BCTF Advantage Program website for



more information. Go to bctf.ca and click on the BCTF Advantage logo.

— Patti McLaughlin

Global responsibility Room to Read event

By Joan Mustard

Elsie Roy Elementary is an amazing school for community building and international mindedness. One of the many enjoyable yearly activities that take place at Elsie Roy is the Room to Read fundraiser.

Room to Read is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting education. Founded in 2000, the organization is based on the belief that "World Change Starts with Educated Children," and the idea that education is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty in the developing world.

We started with a belief:

- that education, especially for girls, is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty in the developing world.

How we moved forward:

- school-wide awareness about education around the world

- instruction complemented with RTR resources by teachers and librarian
- dressing up as our favourite book characters
- bring a book and buy a book (all books were sold for one dollar)
- students made bookmarks to hand out to students who made a donation or who bought books, which read "I have made a donation to Room to Read."

Room to Read (www.roomtoread.org) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting education. Founded in 2000, the organization is based on the belief that "World Change Starts with Educated Children," and the idea that education is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty in the developing world. By partnering with local communities in the developing world to establish libraries, create local language children's literature, construct schools, and provide scholarships to girls, Room to Read seeks to intervene early in the lives of children to empower them to improve socio-economic conditions for their families, communities, and countries through education. Since its founding, Room to Read has provided educational resources to

3.1 million children in Asia and Africa. By 2010, Room to Read hopes to improve literacy for five million children by establishing over 10,000 libraries and distributing nearly nine million children's books.

Students at Elsie Roy Elementary School donated books for this event and on our "Room to Read Dress as a Story Book Character Day," students purchased the donated books for \$1. The school is proud to

By 2010, Room to Read hopes to improve literacy for five million children by establishing over 10,000 libraries and distributing nearly nine million children's books.

announce \$518 was raised by the families of Elsie Roy Elementary in Yaletown, which will support a girl's

education for two years or buy 518 local language children's books (\$250 a year covers uniforms, transportation, usually a daily meal, and school supplies). RTR supports local writers and artists and publishes colourful local language children's books in countries where little exists for children.

Joan Mustard teaches Grade 1 at Elsie Roy Elementary School, Vancouver.





Election day in Honduras, November 29, 2009, was marked by tear gas and water cannons. The Honduran teacher unions and others asked for international human rights observers to be in the country at the time of the election. The BCTF sent President Irene Lanzinger and Larry Kuehn as observers.



International solidarity with Honduran teachers

By Larry Kuehn

Election day in Honduras, November 29, 2009, was marked by tear gas and water cannons in San Pedro Sula, the country's second-largest city. Irene Lanzinger, BCTF president, was there, and wrote this account of her experience:

"We arrived at the central square at about 12:45 p.m. The numbers increased during the march, and about 500 people gathered at the square. Along a side street to the square, I could see a huge water-cannon truck, a large military truck, and police jeeps. A crowd gathered in front of the military truck. A loudspeaker was advising people to move to the public square, to sit down, and not to provoke police. There was absolutely no provocation of the military or police. At one point, someone told me that the police were putting on their gas masks.

"Shortly after, the water cannon began firing on people, and the tear gas was fired into the crowd. Scott Marshall (from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation) and I started to run through the square. Scott told me we should stop and film what was happening, so we did for a few minutes.

"The police were running toward us. When the police raised their guns I told Scott we had to go, and we continued running through the square. At the back of the square a Honduran shouted at us to go right, not left, and we followed his advice. It was good advice, because the majority of the crowd, the police, and most of the tear gas, went left.

"The tear gas cleared a little and we stayed in the square and observed several people who were

injured because they were beaten by the police, or injured in the confusion of the escape from the tear gas. The Red Cross arrived to administer to them."

Why was the BCTF president in Honduras at this time?

The reason goes back 25 years, the length of time the BCTF International Solidarity Program (ISP) has been working with the teachers' unions in Honduras. Until now, ISP involvement has primarily provided funding for union training programs, including workshops on non-sexist pedagogy.

However, a military coup in the country in June, 2009, changed things for teachers and their unions. Most other countries throughout the Americas have condemned the military action in Honduras, recognizing that a "return to coups" threatens many of them—the age of military coups in Latin America replacing democratically elected governments supposedly ended in the 1980s.

Many groups in the country quickly came together to create a resistance movement to challenge the coup and restore the elected president. Teachers have played a central role: the teacher unions have been described by many as "the spine of the resistance."

The teacher unions and others in the resistance to the coup asked for international human rights observers to be in the country at the time of the election. They feared that the election would be used as an excuse by the military for repression against those opposed to the coup. In response to their appeal, the BCTF sent Irene Lanzinger and administrative-staff member, Larry Kuehn, as observers.

Canada's mainstream press has

barely mentioned events in Honduras, let alone provided any information about what is happening to teachers and education as fallout from the coup.

While in Honduras, the Canadian delegation from the BCTF and OSSTF met with Carlos Mauricio Lopez, a teacher active in the resistance.

Canada's mainstream press has barely mentioned events in Honduras, let alone provided any information about what is happening to teachers and education as fallout from the coup.

Lopez is a former president of COLPROSUMAH, the largest of the Honduran teacher unions, as well as former president of FOMCA, the federation of teacher unions in Central America.

Lopez told us that the government had closed schools a month early for the end-of-year break, with the intention of removing teachers as an active element in the resistance. The coup government hoped that teachers would just go on holidays, and thus be less of a factor in the resistance. Instead, he said, the early break gave teachers more time to do organizing.

The majority of Honduras' 60,000 teachers are part of the resistance to the coup, supporting restoration of democratic government and the creation of a new constitution that would provide more equity and social justice, he said.

However, the repression has been intimidating, even to those with strong convictions about the illegality of the current coup government

and the election it organized. Teachers will face a decision about whether to return to school in January, the time the government has decreed that schools will reopen, a month earlier than the law says classes resume.

Lopez told the delegation that the military has been making its presence felt in schools. Military personnel show up at schools to ensure that teachers know they are being watched.

Lopez, a school principal, has himself faced harassment. An officer showed up at his school, telling him that there were seven charges against the school for collaborating with the resistance, and wanting to ask him questions. He knew that he did not have to answer any questions without a lawyer present, and that the real intention of charges and questioning was intimidation to scare teachers off from participating in the movement against the coup and for a new constitution.

His own experience over many years in the struggles of teachers for better conditions for education gives Lopez the confidence that teachers will remain a part of the resistance movement. He quoted a protest song that reflects that experience: "They're afraid of us, because we are not afraid."

In addition to opposing the coup because it is a crime against democracy, teachers have supported many actions taken by deposed-president Zelaya, who during his term in office had raised the minimum wage, eliminated the school fees that kept many poor children out of school, and increased the pay of teachers. None of these reforms were supported by the small oligarchy that has

controlled business, the media and—before President Zelaya moved to more progressive positions—the government as well.

We found that in Honduras, Canada's reputation has taken a serious hit. One factor, is the role the Canadian mining industry has played in the country (and elsewhere in Latin America), creating both environmental and social problems.

Canada's Secretary of State for the Americas, Peter Kent, was quick to say after the elections "that they appear to have been run freely and fairly, and that there was no major violence." This statement was issued despite Irene Lanzinger's communication to the government and her meeting with the Canadian ambassador about what she had seen in San Pedro Sula.

Only the United States and four other countries have recognized the election as legitimate. Others fear this is just the first chapter in a potential series of military coups in Latin America to remove governments that are taking progressive action to reduce inequality and improve social rights, such as free education.

In Honduras, since the election, activists have continued to be assassinated and/or disappear. Teachers fear that more of their number will be added to the list of five teachers killed between the coup and the end of November.

Indications are that Honduran teachers will need sustained international solidarity as they continue to work with others in their country for changes to a society that is one of the poorest in the Americas.

Larry Kuehn is director of the BCTF's Research and Technology Division.

On to Ottawa trek

By Dan Blake

Familiar with the time-worn cliché about history repeating itself? The year 2010 marks the 75th anniversary of the "On To Ottawa Trek," and the parallels between then and now are striking. You may have seen the iconic image of the trek where hundreds of unemployed men jumped aboard the train boxcars at the foot of Main Street in Vancouver and headed east to confront the Conservative Government of "Iron Heel" Bennett. Starting with 1,500 in Vancouver on June 3 and joined along the route by more unemployed, 2,000 trekkers reached Regina two weeks later. A delegation, elected by the trekkers and led by Slim Evans, went on to Ottawa to present their demand for "work and wages" to the Prime Minister. Bennett had no intention of negotiating and the meeting degenerated into a heated exchange between Evans and Bennett. The delegation returned to Regina. Shortly afterward the trekkers were

brutally attacked by the Regina police and a riot ensued. One of the trekkers, Ronald Liversedge, has written a very moving account of the trek that can be found in the excellent teaching resource, *Youth, Unions, and You*. Every secondary school received a copy of the resource when it was produced several years ago. An online version is available on the BCTF website (bctf.ca/TeachingResources.aspx?id=18848).

The section on the trek in *Youth, Unions, and You*, is intended for Grade 11 Social Studies, but the topic and the material also offer opportunities for work in other curriculum areas. In addition to *Youth, Unions, and You*, there is an extensive collection of resources available for downloading on the website of the On To Ottawa Historical Society—www.ontoottawa.ca/index1.html.

Among the resources is a video, aptly titled, *On to Ottawa*, that was produced to recognize the 50th anniversary of the trek. In the video you will hear first-hand accounts by

trekkers Bobby Jackson and Ray Wainwright, who were still alive at the time. Jean Evans Sheils, daughter of Slim Evans, also provides fascinating anecdotes about her father. An earlier film produced by the BCTF, *For 20 Cents a Day* will also be available for downloading from that site. It is hoped that teachers will use this unique opportunity to make connections between the events of the "Dirty 30s" and the present economic situation. The On to Ottawa Historical Society welcomes samples of student work about the 1935 trek.

It is hoped that teachers will use this unique opportunity to make connections between the events of the "Dirty 30s" and the present economic situation.

The society is planning a number of activities in recognition of the 75th anniversary. There will be a rally in Crab Park from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 6. Crab Park is adjacent to the spot where

the trekkers began their historic train ride. It is also hoped to have a plaque mounted in an appropriate location in the park. Event details are still not finalized so it is recommended that you check the On to Ottawa website closer to June 6.

The Impact on Communities Coalition is taking its cue from the 1935 trek and organizing its own trek to Ottawa to draw attention to the plight of the homeless in

Vancouver. The group has organized a "rolling hunger strike" that began last December and is scheduled to end when the trek gets to Ottawa. The new trekkers will be getting a resounding send-off from those attending the 75th anniversary celebrations in Crab Park.

Dan Blake, a retired Surrey teacher, is a board member of the On To Ottawa Historical Society.



AGM 2010 Agenda

March 6–9, 2010

FIRST SESSION

March 6, Saturday evening

7:00 p.m.

Welcome

First Nations recognition

Preliminaries:

- Adoption of chairpersons, scrutineers, tellers, resolutions committee
- Chairpersons' orientation session
- Introduction of ombudspersons
- Adoption of agenda
- Adoption of 2009 AGM Minutes
- Stewardship report on 2009 AGM
- Report of the nominating chairperson

President's report
Irene Lanzinger

Greetings/Comments

BC Federation of Labour
Jim Sinclair, president

Canadian Union of Public Employees, BC Division
Barry O'Neill, president

BC School Trustees Association
Connie Denesiuk, president

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
Ann Whiteaker, president

Constitution and By-laws
– Recommendation 2

Organization of the BCTF
– Recommendation 18
– Resolutions 148–152

9:00 p.m.

Election statements from candidates for table-officer positions. Questions and answers for candidates running for table-officer positions.

Call for nominations

10:00 p.m.
Adjourn

SECOND SESSION

March 7, Sunday morning

9:00 a.m.

Leadership report

– Recommendation 1

Constitution and By-laws (*continued*)

– Recommendation 2

Organization of the BCTF (*continued*)

– Recommendation 18

– Resolutions 148–152

Aboriginal Education

– Recommendations 3–4

Social Justice

– Recommendations 21–22

– Resolution 176

Teachers Teaching on Call

– Recommendation 23

– Resolutions 179–180

Professional Ethics, Rights, and Standards

– Resolution 170

12:10 p.m.

College of Teachers' report
Richard Walker, college council chairperson

12:25 p.m.

Announcements

12:30 p.m.

Lunch

THIRD SESSION

March 7, Sunday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Bargaining

– Recommendation 5

– Resolutions 101–135

4:00 p.m.

Executive Director's report
Maira Mackenzie

4:30 p.m.

Election statements from candidates for member-at-large positions. Questions and answers for candidates running for member-at-large.

Call for nominations

5:25 p.m.

Announcements

5:30 p.m.

Adjourn

FOURTH SESSION

March 8, Monday morning

9:00 a.m.

Education Policy

– Recommendations 7–9

– Resolutions 137–139

Health and Welfare of Students

– Resolution 143

10:00 a.m.

Guest speaker

Mary Walsh

11:00 a.m.

Professional Development

– Resolutions 168–169

Supervision and Reporting on Members

– Resolutions 177–178

Membership

– Recommendations 16–17

12:25 p.m.

Announcements

12:30 p.m.

Lunch

FIFTH SESSION

March 8, Monday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Pensions report

Doug Pearce

2:30 p.m.

Pensions report on consultations

Pensions

– Recommendation 19

– Resolutions 153–167

Unfinished business

5:25 p.m.

Final call for nominations

Announcements

5:30 p.m.

Adjourn

SIXTH SESSION

March 8, Monday evening

7:30 p.m.

Unfinished business

9:25 p.m.

Announcements

9:30 p.m.

Adjourn

SEVENTH SESSION

March 9, Tuesday morning

8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

BALLOT DISTRIBUTION

For one hour, the election tellers will distribute ballots, one pad for each voting card, in the Prince of Wales Room (on the convention level). Each delegation is asked to assist by appointing one of its members to present all the delegation's cards, (including the LR cards) and to receive all its ballots individually.

Executive Committee members should each pick up their own ballots.

No ballots will be distributed after the session has begun.

AGM Standing Rule 12.2 specifies that ballots will be given out only at the place and times specified on the agenda.

9:00 a.m.

Elections

Health, Welfare, and Safety of Teachers

– Resolutions 144–147

Public Affairs

– Recommendation 20

– Resolutions 171–175

CLC/BC Federatin of Labour

– Resolution 136

Boards of School Trustees, School Districts, and BC School Trustees Association

– Recommendation 6

Unfinished business

12:15 p.m.

Committee reports—Questions

12:25 p.m.

Announcements

12:30 p.m.

Lunch

EIGHTH SESSION

March 9, Tuesday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Finance

Comments from the treasurer

– Recommendations 10–15

– Resolutions 140–142

4:00 p.m.

GA Fergusson

Honorary Life Membership

Recognition of Retiring Activists

Unfinished Business

5:25 p.m.

Announcements

5:30 p.m.

Dinner

NINTH SESSION

March 9, Tuesday evening

7:30 p.m.

Unfinished Business

Late Resolutions

New Resolutions

New Business

9:15 p.m.

Closing Courtesy Motion

9:30 p.m.

Adjourn

Special resolution to the 2010 AGM

Executive Committee recommendation

- That By-law 1.1(d) be amended by inserting the words “, subject to By-law 3.7,” so that By-Law 1.1(d) will read as follows (page 12):
1.1(d) Active members shall be the voting members of the Federation and, subject to By-law 3.7, shall be entitled to hold office and to vote on all matters as provided by these by-laws.

- That By-law 2.1 be amended by adding the words “and By-law 3.7” at the end, so that By-law 2.1 will read as follows (page 12):

2.1 At all general meetings of any local of the Federation, voting rights shall be governed by the provisions of By-law 1 and By-law 3.7.

- That By-law 3.6 be amended by adding the words “or, if appropriate, locals,” to the first sentence and by adding the words “or locals” after the word local in the second sentence, so that By-law 3.6 will read as follows (page 13):

3.6 All active members of the Federation employed in the British Columbia public school system shall be members of the local or, if appropriate, locals organized in the school district by which they are employed. Where more than one local exists in any school district, membership in the appropriate local or locals shall depend on the duties assigned by the employing school district.

- That By-law 3.7 be deleted and replaced with the following (page 13):

3.7 Active members working in more than one local shall choose the local in which they shall be permitted to vote and hold office.

Your teacher's pension after the consultation

The BCTF pension consultation meetings wrapped up when the online survey closed at midnight on Friday, December 4, 2009.

Pension committee members and BCTF staff led meetings with pension plan members in every local in the province to discuss the Inflation Adjustment Account (IAA) and the ability to index pensions into the future. Seventy-nine meetings were held with over 5,000 teachers, principals, district administrators, and retirees attending. The meetings provided presenters with a great deal of feedback.

The quantitative data (the numbers) showed strong support for maintaining full indexing, with 88% of the respondents expressing that desire. They also indicated strongly (75.6%) that they were willing to match employer contributions with contributions of their own in order to achieve full indexing.

The online survey had a total of 8,207 respondents with representation from all members of the plan

and all local associations. 55% of the respondents were active teachers and 45% were retirees. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the two-thirds of active teachers responding were over 45 years of age and one-third of active teachers were under 45. This is likely due to the teachers' distance from retirement age. As one respondent stated, “Your pension suddenly becomes much more important to you when you're about to retire!”

The survey results took two forms, quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data (the numbers) showed strong support for maintaining full indexing, with 88% of the respondents expressing that desire. They also indicated strongly (75.6%) that they were willing to match employer contributions with contributions of their own in order to achieve full indexing.

Given other indexing options, if full indexing was not achievable, teachers were in favour of sustainable but limited indexing. If there were to be changes to the way that pensions are currently indexed, those surveyed gave a higher degree of approval (60.7%) to sustainable indexing and somewhat less (50.2%) to indexing beginning at age 60.

There was very little desire to

limit indexing to avoid a contribution increase. Teachers were clear that they are willing to contribute more to provide stability in spending power.

The BCTF Executive Committee will be bringing forward recommendations to the BCTF Annual General Meeting in March.

Survey respondents showed strong support (67%) for maintaining the subsidy currently provided for the extended health benefit, if possible. But, also indicated support for a combination of sustainable indexing, no subsidy for benefits, and slight increase in contributions.

The qualitative data (written comments) represented a significant amount of information, with comments filling over 300 pages of text. As well, the BCTF received over 100 letters and more than 300 e-mails expressing concerns and opinions. The research department team coded the written comments and found that they expressed strong emotions, as well as some fear and apprehension about the situation.

Many respondents reflected on previous strikes and actions which took place to preserve or improve pensions for the benefit of all members. They expressed the hope that active teachers would not “abandon their retired colleagues,” but continue to work to maintain a financially sound pension plan. Others expressed fear of slipping into poverty or being unable to access healthcare.

The general tone from retirees was one of anxiety. The anxiety is caused by future uncertainty. Many respondents expressed their thanks for being included in the process.

The BCTF Executive Committee will be bringing forward recommendations to the BCTF Annual General Meeting in March. These recommendations are meant to give the Trustees of the Teachers' Pension Plan feedback with regard to inflation protection, so that the decisions they make are tempered by that information.

The Executive Committee recommendations will come out in a supplementary report to the Annual General Meeting immediately following their February meeting.

– Rob Taylor, BCTF Income Security Division

Candidates for Executive Committee

President



Susan Lambert

Teachers make a difference. We believe in what we do. We know what schools should be. We believe in the power of public education to build a just and equitable world. We know our autonomy to tailor our teaching to our students' needs is critical to both engaging students in learning and maintaining the quality of public education. We see clearly the link between the drive to standardization, the erosion of the quality of the system, and the encroachment of privatization. That is why we have opposed the imposition of standardized tests.

Our strong, clear and courageous voice is making a difference. More parents are withdrawing their children. There is growing condemnation of the rankings and a consensus that we must find a better way.

Soon we'll bargain a new collective agreement. We expect tough negotiations that will require unity, transparent processes, and engagement of all members at every step. Our principles, integrity and commitment to public education will empower our public voice. I am honoured to be running for

election to be president of this union and pledge to work hard to involve members in decision making, to build consensus, and to honour our collective voice.

EXPERIENCE: *Provincial:* BCTF 1st Vice-president (3 yrs.), BCTF 2nd Vice-president (3 yrs.), BCTF Executive member-at-large (1 yr.); AGM delegate (22), Task Force on the Code of Ethics, Trainer/ facilitator in Namibia (8 sessions) and South Africa (1 session), Staff Rep Trainer (5), WOW facilitator, Summer Conference participant and workshop presenter, BCTF OSD/PD Administrative Staff (4), Federation

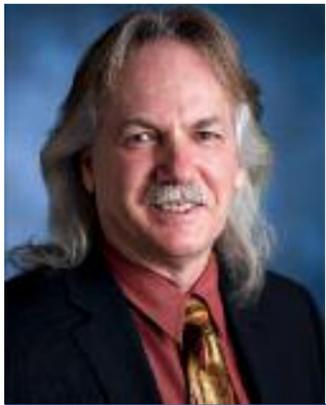
Appeals Board (2).

Local: (Prince Rupert): Staff Rep (4), S/W Cttee. (1), Program Against Racism Chair (2), Bargaining Cttee. (1); Communications Officer (2), Labour Liaison Officer (3). (Burnaby): Vice President (2), LR (4), Leave of Absence Cttee. (2), Grade 7 Girls' Conference (1), BTA Scholarship Cttee. (2), Job Action Cttee. (1).

Teaching: 23 years—intermediate, teacher-librarian, learning assistance, gifted education, special needs resource.

Education: Honors English BA (SFU), PDP (SFU), Teacher-Librarian Diploma (UBC).

First Vice-President



Jim Iker

The needs of every child drives our passion to defend public education.

Engaging members, new and experienced, and supporting all locals is critical for a strong, effective BCTF. Together, in unity and purpose, we make a difference.

It is critical that we:

- advocate for necessary funding to ensure success for every student, and stop privatization.
- press for full, free, collective bargaining to enable firm class size/composition limits including multiage/grade classes, support for students with special needs and non-enrolling teacher caseloads.

- bargain new structures to enable meaningful local bargaining to address local needs.

- actively involve members and bargain improved salaries, benefits, prep time, TTOC conditions.

- continue to exercise our freedom of expression rights and professional autonomy.

- resist the externally mandated testing agenda.

- strengthen professional development networks and support for members.

- build coalitions to preserve our democratic and public institutions.

- engage in education and public

policy.

- advocate for greater equity in our schools and communities.

I believe in leadership that ensures democratic processes, seeks and listens to member input and provides pro-active and co-ordinated strategies.

I bring you my experience and energy and value the opportunity to continue working on your behalf as 1st Vice-president.

EXPERIENCE: *Provincial:* BCTF 2nd Vice-president (3 yrs.), Member-at-Large (5), Prov. Bargaining Team 2006, Learning Roundtable (2005-09), Social Justice Review Cttee. (1), CTF AGM Delegate (4 yrs.), Bargaining Mobiliza-

tion Cttee. Chair (1), Prov. Bargaining Team, 1st 2 rounds of Prov. Bargaining, GR/LR (12), AGM delegate (19), Local Presidents' Advisory Cttee. (2), Chair (1), BCTF Interim Bargaining Structures Cttee., Legislative Adv. Cttee/team, Staff Rep Training, Summer Conference Participant (26). *Local:* President (15), Bargaining Chair (2), Chief Negotiator, Local Bargaining (all 3 rounds), Bargaining Cttee. WLC Chair (2), Staff rep, District Health And Safety Rep (4), EAP District Cttee. (14), *Teaching:* 32 yrs. (full and part time) K/2/3/4/ 6/7, Learning Assistance, Counselling, Special Ed. *Education:* Honours BA McMaster, B.Ed Dalhousie, Various Counselling.

Second Vice-President



Glen Hansman

As we head into bargaining at the local and provincial levels, it is important to continue to engage members and the other stakeholders in advocating for the restoration of public education funding and for meaningful changes provincially and in our communities. I am committed to defending and expanding members' rights, including TTOCs and newer members who are often the most marginalized segment of our membership. We have many tools available to us, and we use them well: political action and collective

action by our members, bargaining, legal, public relations, supporting professionalism and the autonomy of our members, supporting members' freedom of expression rights, involving ourselves in social justice and labour issues, and collaborating with other provincial bodies and allies. It is necessary that the Federation continue to employ all of these approaches to make improvements for the membership, for our students, and for public education. I will work carefully and respectfully with locals of all sizes to achieve our collective

goals, and I would be honoured to serve as your Second Vice President.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: Member-at-Large Executive Committee (1 yr.), *Teacher* Newsmagazine Advisory Committee (2 yrs.), Social Justice Review Steering Committee, AGM delegate (6 yrs.), CLC Winter School (twice), bargaining training (twice), LR (alternate) (3 yrs.).

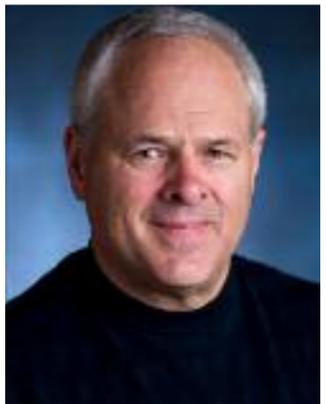
Local: President (2.5 yrs.), Vice-President (2 yrs.), Local Bargaining Committee and Collective

Agreement preparation, Communications chair, Pride Committee co-chair, Strike Co-ordinating Committee (2005), Local Election Contact (2005 & 2008-09), Staff Rep (2 yrs.).

Teaching: District-level (2 yrs.), Elementary (5 yrs.), Secondary (1 yr.)

Education: MA (UBC), B.Ed. (McGill), BA (Carleton).

Member-at-Large



Rick Guenther

It would be an understatement to describe the next year or two as challenging. While the obvious priority is negotiation of new Collective Agreements, a myriad of ongoing issues still need our attention. Teacher wellness is suffering. In my local I see an increasing number of teachers joining the BCTF rehab program. We must continue our campaigns to resist privatization and the encroachment of the audit culture. The FSAs still exist although our efforts to undermine their misuse are increasingly successful. And, while

the Dorsey awards regarding class size and composition may not be all that we wished, a useful precedent has been set. And we are winning allies, including recent partnerships with previously non-supportive groups.

Bargaining may be complex as we try to simultaneously address the diverse needs of locals and make improvements provincially. We must engage the process with unity of purpose, achieved through meaningful and respectful consultation and dialogue. In particular, CA provisions must include proper recognition of

TTOCs, who have been unfortunately neglected in the past, yet comprise a significant fraction of our membership. Our path may need the balancing skills of the Cirque du Soleil! I believe that my broad range of experience recommends me for the challenge and I ask for your support in continuing to represent the interests of all members.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: BCTF Executive Member-at-Large (1 yr.) Judicial Council (2005-09); Task Force on Privatization (2004-05); Various Ministry of Education curriculum committees.

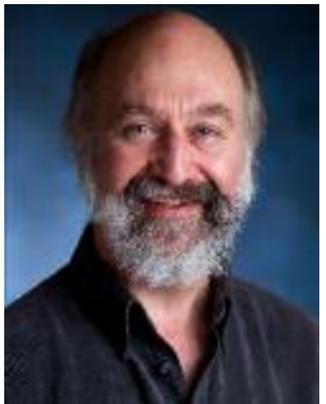
Local: Abbotsford District Teachers' Association (Local 34) President (2007-present), Vice-President, LR, Bargaining Chair, Strike Co-ordinator, District Health & Safety Committee.

Peace River South Teachers' Association (Local 59) President (1982-84).

Teaching: Secondary science and mathematics, TTOC (2000-01)

Education: M.Ed. SFU; B.Sc. (Geophysics) UBC, Trade Apprenticeship

Member-at-Large



Jerry Horton

The BCTF has an amazing history that shows an ability to meet adversity, advocate for its members and for teachers throughout the world, champion a variety of social justice causes and work to make public education in British Columbia world renowned. We need to continue to work in all of these areas as governments, students, society, and our members move on into the future. We must remain in the forefront as we work on behalf of our membership to meet the changes and challenges that the future presents.

No matter what our personal beliefs and understandings may be, it is my belief that decisions of the BCTF Executive must reflect the desires and needs of its membership. This information must be garnered through ongoing dialog with individual members, local leaders and provincial leaders. The key is to listen carefully to the full range of input without passing judgment on what you have heard and then move to clear, concise decisions that reflect the information received.

It would be an honour to repre-

sent you as Member at Large. If elected I will represent and advocate for all members, with integrity, honesty, respectfulness and vigour. I will work tirelessly on your behalf.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: Governance Review Steering Committee (2 yrs.), Local Representative (12 yrs.), RA Ombudsperson (2 yrs.), AGM delegate (18 yrs.), Summer Conference (10 yrs.)

Local: President (3 yrs.), 1st Vice-president (2 yrs.), 2nd Vice-president (2 yrs.), Staff Representative (12 yrs.), Pro-D Core Committee (3 yrs.)

Teaching: primary, intermediate, middle school (37 yrs.)

Education: B.Ed (University of Alberta), M.Ed (University of Victoria)

Member-at-Large



David Komljenovic

Interwoven in our lives are the stories of teaching, children, and public education. Chronic underfunding has placed challenges on the working conditions of teachers and threatens programs and teacher rights. We need to continue to work with our partners to call for a restoration of funding.

We cannot separate our role in the system from the quality of programs—advocating for our rights benefits students. Members need an effective model of bargaining to address issues they face in the classroom. Underfunding has

placed strains on classroom organization and member morale. It has also pressured boards to look for savings through member collective rights. These cannot be compromised.

Further, many districts face unique local challenges and members need the ability to negotiate these unique working conditions directly with their boards. When members see activism resulting in positive changes in classroom conditions, involvement increases. With a younger and newer membership, it

is more urgent now, than ever before, to engage through methods that appeal to these members. We must pass on our stories to new members and invigorate all members to write the next chapter in our collective story, a chapter that improves public education for us all.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: WLC /Bargaining Advisory Committee (4 yrs.), Ad Hoc Committee on Bargaining Structures, BCTF SURT facilitator (3 yrs.), LR (2 yr.), AGM Delegate (8 yrs.), Summer Conference (6 yrs.), AGM

New Delegates Training (4 yrs.)
Local: President (3 yrs.), 1st Vice President (3 yrs.), Bargaining Chair (3 yrs.), Treasurer (2 yrs.), Chief Negotiator - Local Bargaining (3 yrs.), Staff Rep (1 yr.), Strike coordinator, Local elections contact (1 yr.) TTOC Committee (2 yrs.), District Labour Council Member at Large (2 yrs.), District Committee on Assessment (1 yr.)
Teaching: Secondary Physics/ Math (3 yrs.), Adult Education (1 yr.), TTOC (2 yrs.)
Education: B.Sc. (UBC), B.Ed. (UBC), Dipl. Ed. (Guidance) (UBC)

Member-at-Large



Joanna Larson

Access to free quality public education is as fundamentally Canadian as our belief in universal health care. Education is a right, not a privilege, so the strategic plan of Gordon Campbell's government over the past nine years is not only an attack on our profession, but on our way of life. Slowly starving one of the best education systems in the world with cuts to funding, lowering ideals through needless standardization and tests such as the FSA, and pitting neighbour against neighbour through painful school closure processes are mere

examples of the systematic erosion of public education in British Columbia.

As we fight to preserve the integrity and value of our profession, we must always focus on the big picture. The government will attempt to convince us that the system we have always known is unsustainable, especially in these economic times. We know this is not true.

Fighting to restore our full free collective bargaining rights, maintaining our professional autonomy, and seeking greater

equity and improvements to working conditions for all members will be critical in protecting public education.

I offer my passion and commitment and would be honoured to serve you as member-at-large.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: Professional Issues Advisory Committee (1 yr.); Social Justice Associate (3 yrs.); Workshop presenter (3 yrs.); AGM Delegate (2 yrs.); Summer Conference Participant (2 yrs.); LR (2 yrs.).

Local: President (1 yr.); Bargaining Committee (4 yrs.); Staff Rep. (3 yrs.); Grievance Committee (2 yrs.)
Teaching: Ontario (3 yrs.), Northwest Territories (2 yrs.), BC (12 yrs.) Kindergarten, primary, intermediate, some secondary courses, special education, English as a Second Language.

Education: M.Ed. (SFU), B.Ed. (McGill)

Member-at-Large



Katharin Midzain

I believe strongly that the BCTF, as a democratic body, needs the voices of all members. Having been immersed in the classroom until last year gives me a teaching perspective that can be applied to the decisions of the Executive Committee.

The BCTF, as the most organized group of advocates for children, must present a cohesive public voice that demonstrates the good things that are happening in our schools despite chronic underfunding. Teachers need to be valued for the challenging work they do

each day. Member involvement at the local level must be through positive interactions and meaningful, productive committee work. Drawing attention to social issues of our own communities and providing ProD to enable teachers to deal with social change is imperative. Strong locals will provide us with the strength to stand strong against constantly changing governmental initiatives and cuts.

The BCTF needs to look internally at its structures and capabilities in this changing economic reality. We

need to be creative in establishing operational practices that fit within a realistic budget. I believe we can accomplish our goals of advocacy within a balanced budget.

I am committed to teacher-directed and BCTF supported professional development, local social justice activism, fair, sustainable working and learning conditions for teachers and enhanced public understanding of the value of our profession. I look forward to contributing a fresh, articulate voice to the Executive Committee.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: AGM Delegate (6 yrs.), Summer Conferences (4 yrs.), LR (3 yrs.) FLI (2 yrs.), Zone meetings (4 yrs.)
Local: Local President (current), 1st/2nd Vice President (2 yrs.), Pro D Chair (2 yrs.), Member at Large (8 yrs.), Staff Rep (26 yrs.), Pro D, Bargaining, Social Justice committees
Teaching: 28 years elementary/learning resources (Abbotsford, Chilliwack)
Education: B.Ed UBC, Diplomas in Special Education/Reading

Member-at-Large



Denise Moffatt

There are challenges facing the BCTF in the years ahead; we are no strangers to adversity. Together, we can turn these challenges into opportunities to build alliances, strengthen the Federation, and rejuvenate our membership.

Members need the Federation to continue to advocate for increased funding for public education. We are not alone in feeling the effects of cutbacks, and the Federation can reach out to the other education stakeholders, such as parents and trustees, to develop lasting relationships.

The power of our profession lies in our ability to make informed choices in response to the needs of the students in front of us. We must hold tight to our professional rights in the face of standardization, prescription, and data mania. We have nothing to hide. On the contrary, we can extol the achievements of our members and support their autonomy through meaningful, teacher-led professional development.

Bargaining during an economic downturn will require strategic and careful positioning. However, by

empowering local bargaining tables, we can increase member involvement and engage the next generation of activists.

To every challenge I bring passion, creativity, and tenacity. I would be honoured to serve as member-at-large for the BC Teachers' Federation.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: Health & Safety Advisory Committee (3 yrs.), Health & Safety Trainer (2 yrs.), Ad Hoc Committee on Benefits, Provincial Returning Officer (2 yrs.), AGM Delegate (4 yrs.), Alternate LR (2 yrs.)

Local: President (2 yrs.), Grievance/Health & Safety Officer (2 yrs.), Member-at-Large (1 yr.), Bargaining Committee (4 yrs.) Chair (2 yrs.), Staff Rep (4 yrs.), Health & Safety Committee (2 yrs.), STA Convention Committee (4 yrs.), District Health & Safety Committee (2 yrs.), Economic Welfare Committee (2 yrs.)

Teaching: Secondary (5 yrs.) Art, English, Drama; Teacher-on-Call (1 yr.)
Education: Bachelor of Education (UBC), Bachelor of Fine Arts (UVIC)

Member-at-Large



Kip Wood

The democratic tradition of the BCTF has always been responsive to the needs of students and the welfare of teachers. Despite enormous challenges, teachers must continue this tradition. A variety of strategies and campaigns will have to be employed in order to advance the cause of public education.

Class size and composition, professional autonomy, and bargaining rights are top priorities for teachers. Making gains will require political action, clear messaging, respectful engagement, and advocating for members' rights.

Advocating for teachers also requires that we safeguard the rights of those less fortunate. Many of our own members are struggling with the increased demands at work, underemployment, and isolation. Promoting a more just society is an integral part of our professional practice. Our actions strengthen the communities we live in.

These issues will challenge us but we can call on our experience and solidarity of purpose. The Federation will continue to facilitate our activism and the Executive Committee will continue to play a

key role in refining strategies for the current context.

I am committed to working with you so that together, we can face these struggles. Serving as member-at-large would be an honour and privilege.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: PSA Task Force (2009), BC Association of Math Teachers - conference presenter (9 yrs.), BC Federation of Labour Delegate (4 yrs.), BCTF AGM (8 yrs.), Summer Leadership Conference (9 yrs.)
Local: President (3 yrs.), Election Contact (2005), Affiliation Contact (2003-2006), Secondary Rep (2 yrs.), Local Rep (2 yrs.), 2nd Vice President (2 yrs.), Staff Rep (17 yrs.)
Teaching: Secondary (17 years.)
Education: B. Sc. (UVIC), Teacher Training (UVIC), M.A. (UVIC)

Federation funnies

In the November/December edition of *Teacher*, members were invited to submit their funny unforgettable teaching stories. Four members submitted stories, so even though we said three would be chosen we decided to acknowledge each person who contributed and send them each a copy of the "Dancing in the Park" cartoon.

The deepest cut

An ESL student of mine had put extraordinary effort into completing a drawing assignment. I acknowledged this by asking him to let me know when he had completed it, and I would have it laminated. In time, he brought it to me and said, "OK. I'm finished now, and I'm ready to have it lacerated."

—Audrey Lear, Comox Valley

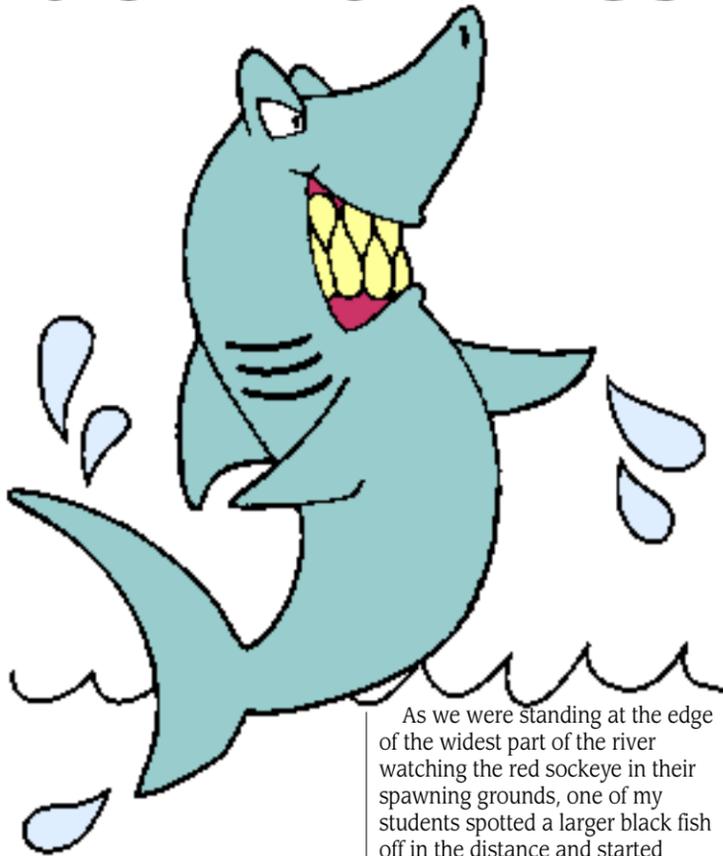
Little Sir Echo

One day a colleague of mine, came into my Grade 1 classroom, to let me know that two boy students of mine were making great noise in the washroom down the hall. Glancing around the room, I immediately knew that the culprits were Owen and Michael. I sent another student to bring them back. When they returned, I told them that the other teacher had heard them in the washroom. At first both boys denied that it was them. When I replied that there were no other students in the washroom at the time, Owen said, "Well, one of the voices was definitely Michael, but the other one, it must have been an echo."

—Audrey Lear, Comox Valley

Machiavellian map

I have a unique reputation at my school for my relationship with wayward wall maps. During social studies classes, I rely heavily on roll-down maps of Canada and the



A real fish story

Several years ago I took my Grade 4 class to the Adams River salmon run. It was the height of the run and there were several schools in attendance as well as hundreds of other visitors. Needless to say it was a very busy place. My class was divided up amongst the parent helpers so that everyone was responsible for only six children, which I thought would work well. The entire trip was carefully planned to minimize any mishap. But, unfortunately, some spontaneous eruptions just can't be planned for.

As we were standing at the edge of the widest part of the river watching the red sockeye in their spawning grounds, one of my students spotted a larger black fish off in the distance and started yelling at the top of his lungs, "Shark!" In seconds a crowd of students came running from every direction and he was still yelling "Shark!" The kids were closing in so fast that I realized I had lost control of the situation, the crowd had taken over.

After the chaos, the conservation officer nabbed the culprit and asked who his teacher was and the student pointed to me. I was asked to gather my class for a lesson on the difference between sharks and salmon, but I really needed a lesson on how to spot something fishy before it spawned legs and ran amok.

—Sylvia Olson, Kamloops

An over-the-top birthday event

The staff at my middle school really went out on a limb for my birthday this year. In the fall, we were trying to decide what to wear to school for Hallowe'en; I suggested that everyone dress as idioms. The idea was quickly shot down as everyone seemed to want to wear their own costumes. One card suggested that we wait and wear idioms on my birthday. Scorning the idea, I informed the staff that my birthday was January 12, too close to the return from Christmas break to make it feasible. Although every so often someone would jokingly remind us that we would be dressing up as idioms on Carrie's birthday, the idea was dropped.

January 12 dawned; I made my way to school as usual. Walking into the office I couldn't help but notice that my vice principal had

bells hanging from her wrists. I asked her if she was trying to imitate a cat. "No, Carrie," she explained. "I'm here with bells on." I started to laugh but the penny had yet to drop. The secretary was wearing red mittens. "I've been caught red-handed," she informed me. Laughing, I was still in the dark. Finally the counsellor, with a rope hanging out of her pocket, poked her head out of her door to wish me a happy birthday, and to explain that she was currently "at the end of her rope." Twenty-two of our twenty-five staff members had honoured the day by dressing up as idioms. Four people glued potato chips to their shoulders, the pregnant behaviour specialist "had a bun in her oven," someone had an umbrella to which she attached pictures of cats and dogs, a Grade 8 teacher hung a stuffed monkey from his back, and still another glued a heart to her sleeve. The best one was probably an EA's; she brought in a piece of a bush and a handheld egg beater and commenced running around the twig while twirling the egg beater.

Needless to say, I scrapped my planned lesson on "making inferences" to teach idioms to my Grade 6 class. After the quick lesson they scoured the school to find the



able to pass up a learning moment, real or imagined.

Several weeks later, not only did it jump its track, but it knocked the clock right off the wall. It took several minutes to bring my class back under control. With the smoothness of a seasoned educator, I replaced the clock, pulled down the map, and finished teaching. Rolling it back up at the lesson's end, the map took on a life of its own. It spun upward off its hooks, smacking my head, knocking the clock far enough afield to smash its face, and cartwheeling across the room to pummel the PA speaker.

My class broke into gales of laughter. I rubbed my head ruefully and performed a deep bow, announcing, "Class, you have just witnessed the strangest moment in my teaching career."

I spoke too soon. The following year, I was teaching an afternoon social studies lesson using the perky new wall map I persuaded my principal to buy me after my 1972 map took wing. At three o'clock, a short, slightly built Grade 5 student asked if he could roll up the map in order to clean the blackboards. I was signing homework planners at the time, so without thinking, I gave him the go-ahead. My next recollection was watching the map whiz up the wall with the poor little fellow hanging from the wooden pull bar. Our eyes locked as he rode his teacher's demon, his lips curled in a reluctant Indiana Jones smile that I shall never forget. "The End"

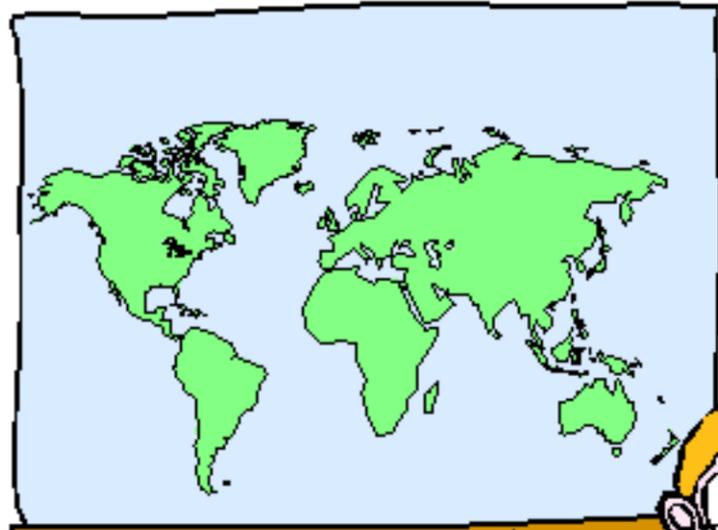
—Eileen Holland, Coquitlam

staff members wearing idioms, and created a long list of sayings. Returning to class, we tried to figure out what they meant. Interestingly, idioms have changed over the years. Very few children knew what "wearing my heart on my sleeve" meant, although "I'm toast" was easily recognizable. This lesson was particularly over the heads of the two Korean international students.

The "icing on the cake" was yet to come. Unbeknownst to me, one of the EAs suggested to my students that they wear idioms the following day. As a result one boy brought a toy car in the next morning and proceeded to "drive us up the wall;" a girl drew a raincloud on a piece of paper, put it over her head and informed us that she was "under the weather;" another kept "pulling his leg;" a fourth placed her stuffed horse on her desk and commenced applying her whip to it—she was "flogging a dead horse."

To "make no bones" about it, this was definitely an over-the-top birthday event. The only disappointment was that I could not participate. My "tickled-pink" costume, still hanging up in my closet, will have to wait until next January 12!

—Carrie Frampton, Qualicum Beach



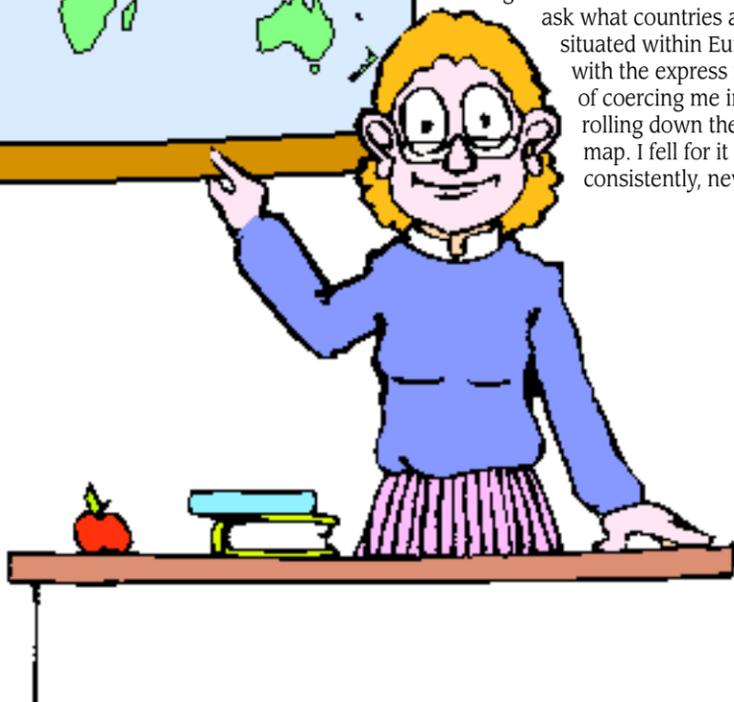
world. Up until 2003, I was the victim, both physically and scholastically, of a wall map manufactured in 1972. In its early decades, it was probably a fine upstanding young map, but upon entering the new millennium, it developed a crustiness about its personality that could only be

associated with old age. Spending time with it was done at a teacher's risk.

My Grade 4s and 5s became accustomed to holding their collective breath whenever I attempted to roll up the map. If it worked properly, I'd glance over my shoulder at the class with exaggerated pride. When the map refused to wend its merry way around the roller, we'd trade nervous laughter until repeated and excessively noisy roll-ups brought success.

One day, during a roll-up attempt, the map jumped its hooks and clattered to the floor, narrowly missing my head. After that, a heightened level of guilty anticipation among my students made the atmosphere crackle during social studies class. Students would question me about the location of the highest Canadian mountain or

ask what countries are situated within Europe, with the express intent of coercing me into rolling down the wall map. I fell for it consistently, never



Do kids need philosophy?

How to explore life's deepest questions at school



By Tiffany Poirier

Part 2: Excerpt from an article published in *The Tyee*, Sept. 8, 2009

Is school the place to tackle philosophical questions like, What is the meaning of life? What is truth? How do you know you are not dreaming right now? What would a perfect world be like?

When I tell people that I teach my elementary students the discipline of philosophy, the very notion seems to inspire instant debate—which is quite in the spirit of things!

I do, however, find that when people are uncomfortable with the idea of philosophy in a classroom, their concerns almost always stem from misunderstandings of what teaching children philosophy actually involves, at least in my own practice. The following is a collection of concerns that I have heard voiced in connection with doing philosophy at school, each followed by my response.

- *Teaching philosophy is pointless because children don't learn anything by regurgitating the opinions of dead scholars.*

Children need philosophy. But

that doesn't mean we should push them into dusty copies of ancient, difficult text. I don't mean we should pump kids full of aphorisms so they can recite them for our amusement at dinner parties.

Children should be educated in the discipline and process of philosophy. That is, children should learn to do philosophy—to ask important questions, to create, debate, and evaluate logical arguments, and to analyze how their own philosophical arguments are connected to their real life experiences.

Philosophy is a constructivist task that demands the highest order thinking skills—so if students are merely regurgitating others' doctrines, they are not actually doing philosophy.

- *Teaching philosophy at school opens the doors to brainwashing and indoctrination. Philosophy is the job of the parents.*

This fear stems from confusion about what is involved. A teacher's role is to instruct students: in understanding the difference between philosophical and scientific questions; in logic (valid and invalid arguments, fallacies of reasoning,

etc.); in constructing, clearly expressing, and fine-tuning their own arguments; in listening to, understanding, appreciating, respecting, and fairly considering arguments of others; and in generally acquiring the skills to dialogue in a community of inquiry.

In my class dialogues, I am a facilitator—not a guest speaker. My opinions are not the focus because the developing views of my students take centre stage. As an educational professional, I am bound by a code of ethics, and my student's needs are the priority.

- *There is no time in the crowded curriculum to squeeze in another subject.*

The idea that we have time for either the regular curriculum or philosophy is a false dilemma. Teachers can do both by fostering philosophical exploration through the teaching of other academic subjects.

Teachers can begin by helping students choose meatier, more philosophical books to read and by encouraging meaningful group discussion about the students' own deep questions.

Also, instead of having students write an essay titled "What I did on my summer vacation," teachers could tweak the topic to include a moral dimension, like "What I should have done on my summer vacation and why."

And for younger students building with Lego—or even older students rebuilding a car engine—a teacher could retell the story of the *Ship of Theseus*, inspiring minds to ponder the persistence of identity through time.

- *Kids should learn practical things at school, like job skills.*

As a teacher, my task is to equip students with the most important life skills so that they might be prepared to succeed and make the best choices on whichever life path they choose.

There are millions of different jobs that a child can grow up to do. And although not everyone grows up to be a professional mathematician, we still teach basic math operations since these are useful in the general course of life.

Philosophical training in a classroom that includes facilitated group dialogue can enhance students' cognitive as well as social-emotional development. Students gain skills for self-knowledge and self-expression. They learn to test generalizations, make connections and draw inferences, find analogies, formulate and test criteria, take multiple perspectives, co-operate, build on others' ideas, and so much more.

All of these skills are useful to those entering the job market. They are important to daily life. At the very least, they are useful when

negotiating your turn on the swing at the playground.

- *Talking about big issues, like death and poverty, might scare kids. Let them enjoy their innocence.*

Innocence is one thing, but ignorance is another. We can't ignore that children are, from a very young age, exposed to difficult concepts through their own experiences, omnipresent media, etc.

If we pretend things like death and poverty don't exist, we fail to prepare children for coping in our world. We need to be sensitive, but also help them acquire the cognitive and emotional tools to deal with tough issues they will face or are already facing.

Children should be educated in the discipline and process of philosophy. That is, children should learn to do philosophy—to ask important questions, to create, debate, and evaluate logical arguments, and to analyze how their own philosophical arguments are connected to their real life experiences.

Professional educators must use discretion when teaching any subject. They must consider the needs and emotional maturity of their students when planning their lessons.

- *What happens when kids have offensive views? When kids start talking, it could open a can of worms.*

Teachers need to create respectful classroom environments and support the guidelines set by the school as appropriate conduct.

I remember a wonderful class discussion about freedom of speech: the students themselves came to a conclusion that with freedom of speech comes responsibility.

And since some offensive views are based on flawed reasoning, philosophy training is all the more important because it helps children think critically about the views they hold. I believe our class discussions support democracy by preparing critical thinkers able to live among cultural, theological, political, and economic diversity.

- *Kids don't need formal instruction in philosophy. They will discover their views naturally.*

True, people develop and operate under personal philosophies of some sort, even when they don't know it. Still, isn't it better to have awareness and to be able to articulate one's views in the form of convincing, well-supported arguments?

Being able to reason well is a part of a balanced education. Children

who aren't given the tools to identify bad reasoning and to recognize, formulate, and defend their own beliefs are more likely to get taken advantage of by their peers, the media, and anyone else who can turn a phrase.

- *Philosophy is too rigid with its fixation on logic. Childhood is a time for possibilities and magic.*

The universe is governed by some basic logical truths, and children, as they are ready, deserve to be let in on the secret. In this universe, 2+2 will always equal 4, and "If all men are mortal, and Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal."

That is not to say that philosophy is the end of creativity; rather it can be the beginning of it. Children can find that playing with ideas in a community of inquiry is a magical process that opens minds to new ideas.

- *Kids don't want to do philosophy. It will bore them.*

How much fun children are having in a lesson often relates to how much fun and creativity a teacher brings to it. Generally, I find, children appreciate and enjoy opportunities to voice their views.

Once they start, I find I can't get them to stop being philosophical—it's as if something has been awakened inside of them. Over and over again, my students ask to do more philosophy and they report it to be one of their favourite activities.

Philosophy conversations can explore animal rights, friendship, goals, dreams, reality, time travel, and more. And when you add in fun philosophical games, stories, and art projects, there can be something to capture the imagination of every child.

- *Many kids are not cognitively ready to deal with abstract concepts.*

Good teachers are sensitive to their students' developmental levels, and they teach with instructional scaffolding to help students get to the next cognitive stage. While they may not be able to read Plato, even Kindergarten children have meaningful answers to questions like: What is fair? What is real?, and How should we treat others?

The bottom line is that for students to grow, teachers should open doors. With support, and when they are ready, students will walk through them.

To learn more about teaching children to philosophize, please visit www.qisforquestion.com

Tiffany Poirier is a Surrey elementary school teacher.

Poirier is the author/illustrator of *Q Is for Question: An ABC of Philosophy*, released in 2009. See www.qisforquestion.com for details.

A letter to the minister

Dear Dr. MacDiarmid:

My name is Jennifer Boulanger and I am a parent of two children attending middle school and secondary school in Coquitlam. I am also a public school teacher in Burnaby. From both perspectives, I am disheartened by some of the content in the January 14, 2010, letter you distributed to parents through the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) regarding the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) test for Grades 4 and 7.

Although many of your facts are unquestionable, there are also many unsubstantiated and/or misleading statements. Examples include:

We know that there is a very strong correlation between a child's FSA scores and their future success in completing school. In other words, the earlier that we discover there is a problem with a student's performance, the faster teachers and

principals can intervene to help them.

The assumption that FSA scores can be used for early detection of learning problems is ridiculous. Teachers can tell within a few weeks of working with students, which children need learning support. The FSA results in March/April of a school year do nothing to help identify student learning needs from September through June. This would be like a doctor waiting for all 56-year-old patients in BC to perform a stress test in January/February to help determine if one 56-year-old patient who comes to them in the previous September has a heart condition!

With individual student results, you can engage in meaningful conversations with your child's teacher about appropriate interventions to help your child succeed.

As a parent I would be very disappointed if my son's teacher waited until March/April to inform

me of his struggles in Math. I have always known on a regular basis from report cards and work sent home by his teachers, which concepts he excels at and which ones

The assumption that FSA scores can be used for early detection of learning problems is ridiculous. Teachers can tell within a few weeks of working with students, which children need learning support. The FSA results in March/April of a school year do nothing to help identify student learning needs from September through June.

he struggles with. Communicating with teachers by phone, notes, and conferences also keeps me

informed. Not once have I had to have a conversation about FSA results in order to help me understand my children's progress.

It is an important building block for your child's future success as a student... Please ensure your child writes this year's FSA. It might be one of the most important steps you take in preparing them for the future.

Last year's Grade 4 FSA for numeracy (done in February, 2009) contained a question regarding bar graphing. Since our class did not review or study bar graphs until March 2009, the resultant numeracy scores of my Grade 4 students were neither reliable nor valid. If FSA content is to reflect the entire year's learning outcomes then either FSAs are administered in May/June (once most major concepts have been taught) or the teachers working for the ministry need to change the assessment, using Grade 3 outcomes for the Grade 4 FSA, and Grade 6 outcomes for the Grade 7

FSA. (Another alternative might be to give students choice of which assessment sections to complete, based on what they have already studied that year.)

I want to take this opportunity to explain to parents why the provincial government (my emphasis) believes these tests are important for your children's future.

It is your right, as Minister of Education, to speak for government. Now I invite you to spend some time in District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) meetings or in classrooms dialoguing so that you may also speak for the other voices that are important for each child's future.

Please consider contacting me for further discussion. Dialogue is perhaps the only way we can all start to work together for the benefit of student learning.

Jennifer Boulanger
Coquitlam

Amazing success

By Karen Larsen

ACE IT (Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training) programs—intensive, post-secondary career pathways that lead to trades certification. Students enrolled in ACE IT are jumpstarting the classroom-based technical training portion of their apprenticeship. The other apprenticeship component, workplace-based training, happens on jobsites with an employer-sponsor.

Some ACE IT programs are delivered completely at a post-secondary institution, where a cohort of ACE IT students spend a full semester at college—like Auto Refinishing Prep Technician or Baking and Pastry Arts at Vancouver Community College. Other ACE ITs are a hybrid, like Langley's Piping and Plumbing program, where the students learn their trade mostly at Langley Secondary and partly at BCIT's Burnaby Piping and Plumbing facility. A third model, like Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School's Cook Training program, sees the secondary school designated as an Industry Training Authority (ITA) accredited trainer and all of the classroom-based learning takes place in that school.

When the secondary school students earn post-secondary credits they concurrently receive 16 to 32 secondary school credits for the same learning. Since they are still in secondary school, the students' college tuition fees are paid by their school district.

Tyler Dumont, Tyler Waldron, and Sonja Knudsen are students in Langley's ACE IT Piping and Plumbing program. The lack of educational relevance in the mainstream curriculum emerges as a theme when asked why they enrolled in the program.

"I never did good in school. I was failing and I didn't see that I'd get anything out of high school graduation," says Dumont.

Waldron, a self-proclaimed 50%er, found sitting in a desk was not his preferred learning style. When a teacher gave an assignment he often didn't understand the work. "Because of the plumbing program I'm actually working toward something. I went from Fs and skipping classes to being on the Honour Roll."

Like Waldron, Sonja Knudsen "...couldn't sit in class and listen." She was barely passing and her attendance was terrible. "I probably wouldn't have graduated if it wasn't for this program," Knudsen admits.

Alex Crema (Kitsilano) and Jennifer Kelly (Killarney) switched schools so they could reap the benefits of Vancouver Technical Secondary's ACE IT Hairdressing program. According to Alex, the program is "awesome."

Alex has always wanted to be a hairdresser. Her mother's hairdresser friends encouraged Alex to pursue her passion. When asked about the program, Alex notes that "Even if you decide you don't want to continue as a hairdresser forever, this is still a great option. You have something right after high school."

Elynne Zhu, also from Killarney, thought she'd enrol in Blanche MacDonald's \$15,000 hairdressing program after secondary school graduation. When a friend mentioned Zhu should consider the tuition-free program at Van Tech, she and her mom visited the teacher and applied on the spot. Zhu likes the fact that "You don't have to worry about your Grade 12 courses, because they come with the program."

When asked to offer advice to students who are considering an ACE IT program, Jennifer Kelly says, "No one should second guess it, if they're considering it—do it. But you have to be willing to put in the effort."

Tyler Waldron would agree with Kelly. He feels ACE IT, "...is an opportunity...I don't know how you could turn it down. It starts you off on a career. It changes everything."

Sonja Knudsen is very pragmatic when she compares herself to apprentices in the "regular" BCIT piping and plumbing program. She smiles wryly "there are 35-year-old guys in the program who are at the same point in their career that I am. I am 17 years old. Who is further ahead?"

"Some of us have a hard time in school and teachers always told us we should work with our hands," Tyler Dumont shares. He sums up his career decision proudly, "I realized if I wanted to make good money and go somewhere in life I'd need a trade."

When he developed the program, Langley's piping and plumbing

instructor Jeff Dickson imagined the opportunity to access post-secondary training would be the biggest "plus" but three years later he feels student maturity is the most valuable component. "Given the opportunity...support...and environment to be successful, those kids who were disengaging from regular secondary school become active learners who take ownership of their lives. My role tends to move from leader/teacher to facilitator/advisor."

The students think the world of their teachers. Janna McCullough (hairdressing) and Jeff Dickson (piping and plumbing) define life-long learning through their actions. Both hold Red Seal certificates in their respective trades, Bachelor's degrees, teaching certificates, and Master's degrees.

Dickson sees the opportunity to work in an adult-oriented setting with post-secondary expectations as the key to success for his young charges. "Too many of the students I saw in regular secondary school sunk to the expectations that the system put upon them. They played all the games. By holding them to a higher standard...and the students seeing the opportunity to advance their career aspirations...I've seen amazing success."

And isn't *amazing success* what we are all striving to achieve with our students?

Karen Larsen is on a one-year leave as a career education teacher at RE Mountain Secondary School in Langley. She is on a part-time term contract with Vancouver Board of Education promoting trades and apprenticeship for youth.

ACE IT stats

- 26 separate ACE IT program titles in BC that range from Aircraft Maintenance Technician to Construction Electrician to Welder Level C
- 187 actual ACE IT programs scattered across BC
- 1,066 students enrolled in ACE IT for September 2009 intake
- 2,200 students enrolled in ACE IT programs 2008–09 school year
- 95 students in Langley School District are enrolled in ACE IT programs
- 80 students in Vancouver School District are enrolled in ACE IT programs.



A student writes

A copy of a letter was received from a student who describes the struggle that many young people face in an attempt to continue their education in the face of ever increasing costs and diminishing support. The plight of students who are not from affluent households (which is most) can be documented in many ways and this is just one heartfelt example.

Proposal to Translink Problem

Many young people face incredible hardship. In British Columbia, the child poverty rate is the highest in the country. To that end, the hardship experienced by many young people is real. I am one of those young people. I struggle on my own trying to live independently. I get \$92 a month as a living allowance. My shelter and food costs are paid by the ministry. I am unemployed but I do go to school. My travel costs to school must come out of my living allowance. It costs me \$3.50 per day to go to school (\$70 per month). I felt

embarrassed to continually ask my social worker for a bus pass (\$42 per month). I know that people will mock my experience but it is a harsh reality for me because I am left with very little. There are people in similar circumstances who have to travel two or more zones and that leaves them with very few options. What hurts me the most is that I fear being denied service by the drivers who don't seem to understand my circumstances and who apply the typical stereotype that all young people are cheaters and users of the system.

There are real costs as a result of the problem:

1. cheating fares
2. police/Transit security
3. escalating costs—more and more youth can't afford fare
4. stress and conflict with bus drivers.

More support for young people

A lot of kids are in very tough living and financial positions and the bus system is a huge part of thousands of people's everyday commute, but it's hard when people

are actually trying to do good things and provide for themselves and their responsibilities. I understand that bus drivers think that people try to cheat the system, but if we ask you nicely and not just cheat our way on the bus, they should at least give us that understanding. No one ever wants to ask for a free ride but we are forced to in order to try to make our lives better.

Less confrontation

Some of the experiences I've had with bus drivers: asking if I could get a ride and a bus driver has had a bad day and starts shouting at me that this isn't my parents driving me around and that I will be ticketed next time. It makes me very mad when bus drivers act disrespectfully and rude to me. They do not know me or what I have to deal with daily. I've had to sit in the rain countless times on 222nd and Fraser Highway waiting for the 502 coming from Aldergrove to bring me to school. One out of five times it has been on time but there needs to be more busses going to and from Aldergrove. Every 15 minutes would be good. The 502 goes by three schools on its route and it only runs every half hour, so students who miss the bus if the driver is early or late have

to waste more time waiting for a bus that might not come.

More opportunity

Easy access to a reliable, low-cost transportation system will enable many young people to search for work more easily. It will also mean that young people will be able to take more shift work. I had an opportunity to do the late shift at Burger King but had to turn that down because I could not afford the cost of transportation and the poor access.

Travel benefits for students in London, England

A 16+ Oyster photo card allows you to buy 7-day, monthly, or longer travel cards and bus & tram passes at the child rate and pay as you go at half the adult rate on bus, tube, tram, DLR, and London Over ground services.

You can also apply for free travel on London's buses and trams if you: Live in a London borough, are in full-time education, were aged 18 on August 31, 2009.

Solution

I think the solution for the transit system in Langley would be to model the Oyster card system from

London, England. If you have a student photo id, you should get to ride on the bus for free on school days. The 502 Aldergrove should run every 15 minutes to ensure that kids are making it to school on time, and if this goes through I think every bus driver should hear this, it might make them a little more susceptible to identifying what kids actually need support.

This system has worked very well in London and if adopted in BC would be a tremendous support for young people. It would also encourage more bus riders and help build a greener transportation in the future.

Thank you for considering my request.

Brittney Deering is a student at Langley Secondary School, Langley.



Teaching four-on-four is nuts

By George Richard and Robert Whiteley

One of the most important factors in the BC education system is the independence of boards of education and the diversity in policy and programs allowed. Differences in district policy such as school schedules and timetable structure are examples of this diversity.

This article reports on a study investigating if and how semester timetables affect teacher volunteerism. It was completed as partial requirement for an MA in Teaching and Learning at UBC Okanagan. Fifty percent of the 160 part- and full-time secondary teachers in the North Okanagan Shuswap school district responded to the survey. The central questions in the study were designed to determine whether or not teachers approved of the current allocations of preparation time in the school's timetable and, if there was an evenly distributed allocation of preparation time during the year, would that encourage more teachers to get involved in school volunteerism.

There are numerous secondary timetable structures in BC with both authors having taught in various configurations including semester, year-long, and hybrid settings. Preparation time is used for teaching duties such as marking, lesson planning, administration, and colleague collaboration. Both authors have worked in schools that had preparation time allocated in one semester or "balanced," i.e., evenly distributed throughout the year. All four secondary schools in the North Okanagan-Shuswap follow a semester timetable that provides 25% or one block of preparation time in one semester only—*four-by-four* teaching. On the other hand SD 60 (Peace River North), offers a hybrid timetable structure that enabled secondary teachers to have

a 12.5% preparation time or one prep block every other day during the school year.

Literature review

When compared to a linear or full-year timetable system, the research shows that there are definite benefits to a semester system. These benefits include improved school culture, more positive relationships between teachers and students, fewer discipline issues and higher graduation rates. However, there is no conclusive evidence from the literature that show students learn or achieve more in a semester system compared to a linear system. Conversely, there's no evidence to suggest timetabling structure negatively impacts learning or achievement among students on either system. Some of the literature strongly suggests that teachers face more workload challenges when they don't have preparation time in one semester compared to a semester when they do have preparation time.

Teachers, administrators, and academics report challenges in meeting societal, government, and

Ill-conceived, top-down accountability measures and significant structural, policy, and curricular reform challenge a teacher's capacity to do her or his job effectively.

student learning needs as classrooms have become more diverse racially, socially, behaviourally, and in the learning needs of the students. Ill-conceived, top-down accountability measures and significant structural, policy, and curricular reform challenge a teacher's capacity to do her or his job effectively. As noted, almost a decade ago, the frustration level of

BC teachers has increased as administrative duties and standardized tests multiply (Naylor & Field, 2001). We have evidence that suggests teacher frustration level continues to rise.

Events in Ontario under the neo-conservative Harris government offer an example of frustrated teachers responding to workload increases—Ontario teachers refused to participate in school-based extra-curricular activities. Change occurred in the Ontario education system as teachers were offered 25% preparation time if they sponsored an extra-curricular activity. Many view this as payment for sponsoring extra-curricular activities, a position the BCTF strongly opposes.

Most research suggests such extra-curricular activities offer positive outcomes for students. Many studies point to the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and self-identity benefits for young people. Virtually, every school board in BC supports extra-curricular activities from ensuring extra-curricular programs receive first priority for facility usage to funding that supports teachers, equipment, and students in extra-curricular activities.

Results

The survey results confirm that most teachers value school-based extra-curricular activities and that a majority of teachers working in North Okanagan-Shuswap school district participate in extra-curricular activities either as a sponsor, supervisor, or coach. However, many teachers abstain from volunteering for extra-curricular activities when there is no preparation time in a given semester.

The data also tells us that most full- and part-time teachers face incredibly challenging workloads when they have no preparation block in a semester. This is

particularly true of teachers with less than five years' experience and all teachers who teach core humanities and science and math courses.

Some part-time teachers who buy a prep in one semester would work full time if they could work in a balanced preparation schedule, i.e., if they had preparation time during both semesters. Indeed, teachers overwhelmingly reported that they would like to change the semester timetable to provide preparation

Events in Ontario under the neo-conservative Harris government offer an example of frustrated teachers responding to workload increases—Ontario teachers refused to participate in school-based extra-curricular activities.

time during both semesters in the school year. Most telling is that not one of the teachers who responded to the survey wanted the one block in one semester preparation time allocation system to remain in place.

Teachers are clearly professional—this is demonstrated by the strong majority of teachers who indicated that they would not be willing to teach outside their subject specialty even if it meant a balanced preparation over both semesters.

Teachers in North Okanagan-Shuswap are very frustrated with Liberal government legislation, regulation, and policy, reporting that government initiatives are increasing teacher workload and requiring more of a personal commitment to teaching.

Finally, there was a strong perception on behalf of a majority of teachers that school-based administration and senior school district personnel were not supportive of teachers who volunteered to sponsor extra-curricular activities.

Comments

In 2007, the BCTF AGM passed

the following motion, "That the BCTF request school boards to work with union locals to find solutions to the problems of schools on the semester system where teachers have no scheduled regular preparation time for an entire semester." The results from the timetabling study clearly provide data that supports this motion.

Extra-curricular activities provide schools with an identity, offer students purpose, and provide opportunities for teachers to share their many and varied talents. It is in everyone's best interest to work collaboratively to ensure extra-curricular activities are not just maintained but thrive in BC's public schools. However, schools cannot be expected to provide for all the intellectual, socio-emotional, and physical needs of young people. The community also has a responsibility to ensure young people's needs are being met.

Teachers have always worked collaboratively with others in the best interests of student learning. We recommend that local associations embrace the spirit of the 2007 AGM motion and work with boards of education, senior board personnel, and principals and vice-principals to develop balanced preparation schedules in semester timetabled schools.

George Richard teaches in Salmon Arm and Robert Whiteley is a professor, UBC/Okanagan.



Curmudgeon's corner

By Sean Douglas

The suggestion has been made that the only constant is change. This much is a given, but when do we take responsibility for the changes that occur, and to what extent do we allow change to transpire before being accountable for its results?

As society evolves, so do the ways in which we as individuals perceive the world. With our changing perception, however, has come this uncanny notion that what once was earned is now something that is entitled. Entitlement is the belief that one deserves to receive something regardless of the quality of effort, and academic entitlement exemplifies this notion.

Over the past decade, the computer age has offered an incomprehensible quantity of information that is available to us at any given moment and which continues to increase at an exponential rate; what we retain and our ability to use this information, however, has lessened dramatically. We live in an era where our expectations far exceed the reality of what may necessarily be anticipated. This idea is evident to those who live in urban settings; studies have shown that those living in urban regions become agitated after approximately three minutes of waiting. This is obvious to anyone who has had to stand in line at the grocery store, or anyone who has hit every red light on route to a destination, or to those of us who have been forced to sit in traffic on a sweltering day. While it is no surprise that as we continually

find methods of making our lives convenient and our expectations for convenience grow, we must ask the question, what is the sacrifice to all this convenience?

The answers are many, however, one sacrifice of this convenience is that over the past number of years, students have gradually begun to feel that they are able to achieve more by doing less; this myth, however, is beginning to take its toll in post-secondary school and, consequently, in the workplace. In defence of students, however, being brought up in a culture that caters to their every need at the push of a button hardly builds the necessary skills needed to instil the values of respectful habits, strong work ethics, and an ability to appreciate what it means to truly earn something. According to a recent article and survey conducted by CTV between February and March of 2009 titled "Profs say students lack maturity, feel entitled," the general consensus of professors is that there is a "definite decline in student preparedness." The article outlines a growing concern that students entering university today "are less prepared and have poorer research skills than students from three years ago," according to faculty and librarians from 22 Canadian universities. They go on to suggest that there is "a belief that good grades are an entitlement."

So who is to blame for this feeling of entitlement that has become an epidemic problem? Is it fair to hold the conveniences of society at fault? Or perhaps we have been pushed into this false sense of security by the same culture that offers credit to

those with no money, excuses for those who are unsure how to be accountable, and greater conveniences to those who are too indolent to appreciate the value of a process. Then again, looking for a scapegoat for every issue is in itself part of the greater problem, as entitlement is merely a symptom resulting from a lack of effort. According to a 2008 article published in the *National Post* titled "Student Entitlement or the Usual Whining?," students maintain the attitude that minimal effort and attendance is enough to earn high grades. The article suggests that "the mentality of students enrolling in post-secondary education is akin to shopping in a store where the

...over the past number of years, students have gradually begun to feel that they are able to achieve more by doing less; this myth, however, is beginning to take its toll in post-secondary school and, consequently, in the workplace.

customer is always right;" there is no longer a sense of accountability, but rather an expectation that they are entitled to receive without putting in the required effort.

A recent study by researchers at the University of California, Irvine, found that a third of students surveyed said that they expected Bs just for attending lectures, while 40% said they deserved a B just for completing the required reading. One secondary school English teacher was asked his opinion on the trends of students and stated

that "many students are in for a shock when they realize that while secondary schools often fall into substantiating the feeling of entitlement that students feel, university professors will not tolerate it... The false impression that students have of receiving credit with no merit is often the greatest lesson that post-secondary students are obligated to learn."

There was a time when education was the most significant issue in a student's life; now, however, there is this growing trend that school is to be designed around everything else. There is a feeling of being overwhelmed by the pressures of what students face on a day-to-day basis. Professor Greenberger, the lead author of the study called "Self-Entitled College Students: Contributions of Personality, Parenting, and Motivational Factors," suggests that the sense of entitlement could be related to increased parental pressure, competition among peers and family members, and a heightened sense of achievement anxiety.

This said, the question must be asked, that with all of the conveniences of the present day, how is it that the baby-boomers—those born in the middle part of the 20th century—were not only able to sustain themselves with fewer conveniences, but in fact thrive? While there have been many thoughts on the subject, one suggestion made by Jean M. Twenge, author of *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable than Ever Before*—is that the era of entitlement is a direct result of an overly narcissistic generation of students, which is the result of a socialization process that begins from birth.

In other words, our culture has overcompensated the importance of self-value to such a degree that many individuals have created a false complex of the self that has become unrealistically self-centred. According to Twenge, our culture has become so inundated with the idea of "generation me" that "we are all winners," when the reality is that there is a great deal of difference between the effort that a winner makes and that of someone who falls short.

It is no surprise that with trends being a constantly evolving characteristic of our society, many students have a preconceived notion of what they are expected to be, what they think they are, and how they want to be seen. Unfortunately, however, this plays on the concept of narcissism as addressed by Twenge. If these ideas are indeed true, then it is no wonder so many students feel entitled to that which they have not effectively earned.

Whether or not the feeling of entitlement is growing, or whether we are simply more aware of the issue, the research does allow us to suggest that academic entitlement is a serious issue. What remains to be seen is how educators and society at large will deal with the task at hand, for as we know, the only constant is change, but with change still comes the responsibility of being accountable for our past and tomorrow. If nothing else, we must ask ourselves, do we want the doctors and lawyers and pilots of tomorrow merely working hard, or do we want to know that they truly know what they are doing?

Sean Douglas teaches at Keswick High School, Keswick, Ontario.

Teachers' Pension Plan

Where have we come from?

Did you know that if you had put in a full career in teaching up until 1921, your pension was completely at the whim of the BC Legislature? A teacher could be rewarded for long and faithful service by a special act of the Legislature, but there was no such thing as a pension plan.

In 1919, at a Special General Meeting, the BCTF passed a motion requesting that the government establish a superannuation fund for teachers. In 1921, the *Civil Servant's Pension Act* was amended to allow employees to receive a pension provided the school board chose to do so, after receiving approval from the local municipal council. Strange as it may seem, no pensions were granted under this provision.

It was on April 1, 1929, that the first Teachers' Pension Act came into force. Member contributions were set at 4% of salary with government contributing \$25,000 per year. The pension was a grand \$25 per year for each year of service, to a maximum of \$750 per annum.

It was on April 1, 1929, that the first *Teachers' Pension Act* came into force. Member contributions were set at 4% of salary with government contributing \$25,000 per year. The pension was a grand \$25 per year for each year of service, to a maximum of \$750 per annum. In addition, teachers received an annuity based on double their credit in the fund. In 1940, pensions in pay were reduced because the plan was underfunded.

In 1941, a new *Teachers' Pension Act* came into force. Teachers now contributed 3% of salary on the first \$100 per month and 4% on the excess. In addition, they contributed another 1% of salary to stabilize the fund. The pension granted was \$18 per year of service to a maximum of 20 years and then \$12 per year after that. In addition, teachers received an annuity purchased from their contributions.

Between 1948 and 1961, new pensions were adjusted to reflect the increases in salary.

The biggest change came in 1961 when a defined-benefit plan was instituted, with pensions based on a formula of pensionable service combined with average earnings, similar to what is in place today, but with a much lower benefit. Teachers were not eligible for a pension unless they had 10 years of service, and the maximum service allowed was 40 years.

More improvements came as maximum salaries changed over time. The next big adjustment came in 1966 with the implementation of the *Canada Pension Plan*. At that time, the pension contributions and benefits were integrated with CPP.

The present formula, with 2% per year x years of service x the highest average salary came into effect in 1971, along with the 90 formula we use today, with a few relatively minor changes. That year was also the year of the first province-wide strike in BCTF history. March 19, 1971, teachers and retirees joined in a campaign to improve the pensions of those already retired, and of those who would retire in the near future.

The overall effect was to increase pensions in pay as of December 31, 1972, by 12%; those that came into effect later received 4% increases. A second increase of 12.4% came in

June of 1974, and a further 5.5% on April 1, 1975. For the next several years pensions were indexed on a quarterly basis, based on changes in the *Canadian Consumer Price Index*.

During the 1980s, there were changes to contribution rates but the basic benefit remained the same. Indexing became annual in 1981 and for the first time contributory service was used to determine eligibility for a pension, with the value of the pension being calculated on pensionable service.

It was in the 1980s that the BCTF began to have input into the investment of the pension fund.

Changes through the 1990s included: allowing for a pension to survivors and the disabled after 5 years, rather than 10; stopping member contributions after 35 years of pensionable service; allowing retirement at age 55, with reductions; changing the reductions for early retirement to 3% per annum below the 90 factor and above age 55 to a maximum of 15%; pension eligibility changed to two years of contributory service, and up to five years of child-rearing time could be recognized for contributory service.

In 1995, the cost of the extended health benefit, dental plan and medical services premium were paid by the plan using employer contributions to the Inflation Adjustment Account.

A very big change to the administration and governance of the pension plan came in 1994, with the establishment of the Teachers' Pension Board. This board represented all plan members and had the responsibility for making recommendations regarding the rules of the plan, the investment of plan funds, and setting contribution rates.

April of 2001, saw another huge change to governance, when the BCTF as plan-member partner entered into joint trust with the government of British Columbia as employer-member partner. This gave responsibility for managing all aspects of the plan to the Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees. This board consists of five plan-member partner appointees and five plan-employer partner trustees.

The early years of the 21st century saw some reductions in plan coverage. As the number of retirees grew, it was determined that the medical services premium and dental plan premium were not sustainable and covering those costs was discontinued and in time the subsidy to the spouse's extended health benefit was also dropped.

In the fall of 2009, the BCTF held a wide-ranging consultation with members to determine the future of indexing within the Teachers' Pension Plan. The results of the consultation will be released at the 2010 Annual General Meeting.

Everything you always wanted to know about your pension, but didn't know who to ask

At retirement you will be given a number of pension options, single-life or joint-life last survivor, guarantee periods, and perhaps a temporary annuity. The option you choose should reflect your present and future needs. The decision you make regarding the form of pension may be one of the most important you make, as it is irrevocable.

With regard to the various options, they fit into two categories. The single-life option is quoted for pension plan members who don't

have a spouse. The joint-life/last-survivor option is a benefit for members who are married or are living in a marriage-like relationship. The *Family Relations Act* requires that the surviving spouse have some income guarantee in the event of the retiree's death unless they legally waive that right. Retirees under the age of 65 may also choose a temporary annuity option, provided their lifetime pension is large enough to support it.

A single-life pension with no guarantee is just that. Your pension is paid to you until the end of the month in which you die. The guarantee periods, 5, 10, and 15 years, mean that you will receive a lifetime pension, but should you die before the end of a guarantee period, your beneficiary or estate will receive the balance of the value of the pension that has been guaranteed. In simple terms, if you retire on June 30 this year and select a five-year guarantee and pass away three years later, then your beneficiary will receive the equivalent of the remaining two years of the guarantee period. This guarantee comes at a cost because you are buying protection for someone other than yourself. The longer the guarantee period you choose, the bigger the reduction in your pension. Think of it as buying better car insurance. The more coverage you want, the more it costs.

The joint-life/last-survivor options are available for pension plan members with spouses. The *Family Relations Act* specifies that the surviving spouse of a pension plan member is entitled to at least 60% of the original pension until they too pass away. This rate is variable. Again, the amount of protection you choose changes your lifetime pension, as all pensions have equal actuarial value. If you choose the 100% joint-life/last-survivor option, then you and your spouse will not see a reduction in the lifetime pension should one of you die. The 100% joint-life/last-survivor option does not come with a guarantee period. If you choose less than 100% protection, then you can also choose a 5-, 10-, or 15-year guarantee.

The option you choose should reflect your present and future needs. The decision you make regarding the form of pension may be one of the most important you make, as it is irrevocable.

The final pension option is the temporary annuity. Available, as stated above, to retirees under the age of 65, this option allows the retiree to increase their pension by approximately \$510 per month until age 65. Choosing to front-end-load your pension decreases the lifetime portion of your pension permanently, but may provide you with extra income early in retirement when you may have added expenses, such as travel, seeing children through university, or paying off your mortgage. Choosing the temporary annuity means that at age 65 you lose not only the bridge benefit, but also the annuity, so there will be a significant loss of income.

The pension option you choose will affect you for the rest of your life. Therefore it must meet your family's financial needs now and into the future. Seeking the advice of a trusted financial planner before you make this important decision would be a very good idea.

— Rob Taylor,
BCTF Income Security Division

Article removed at author's request.

Book reviews

A boy after the sea: An untold story

Kevin Snook. Snook Publishing, Vancouver, BC/England, 2009. 232 pps, \$55

Kevin Snook's son Dan, loved the sea and it was his dream to become a fisherman. At age 16, leaving his parents and two brothers in British Columbia, he headed down to Oregon, to work a season on a commercial fishing boat.

But when Dan came back home, he was a changed person and began taking drugs. Finally after rehabilitation, Dan's parents learned their son had been sexually abused by his employer. Out of fear, Dan refused to lay charges. (His employer is still at large.) But Dan's ordeal wasn't over. He continued to use drugs and died of an overdose at age 19.

Dan's death devastated his family and now his father, a professional chef, has called on his culinary colleagues around the world to help compile a book of seafood recipes, dedicated to Dan's memory. *A boy after the sea* is a beautiful coffee-table-sized book, with photographs accompanying 14 internationally known chefs' commentary and favourite recipe. Additionally, Snook's book considers environmental concerns while honouring the bounty of the sea. Snook offers information about a foundation he has set up in his son's name, to help troubled youth, ages 15 to 25, who have been subject to sexual or substance abuse.

In the book's forward, Snook writes: "Despite being a very close family our world was torn apart when our 19-year-old son Dan died of a drug overdose. His all too brief existence in this world had been

scarred by sexual abuse, inflicted whilst he worked 18-hour shifts on a commercial fishing boat. Isolated at sea, with no land in sight, this became too much for a young man to deal with. In my heart I believe that my son took his own life, seeking a better place to be."

Snook also writes: "If this foundation achieves nothing more than to save the lives of one or two young people, and to restore their faith in other people, then I will have achieved my goal."

Copies of the book are available at Barbara Jo's Books to Cooks store in Vancouver and online at the foundation site. All financial proceeds go toward the foundation.

Statistics show one in six males are sexually abused, and one in three females. Providing counselling assistance to children and youth is essential.

For more information, contact:

www.1in6.org, www.dansnooktrustfoundation.com.

Janet Nicol, Killarney Secondary School, Vancouver.

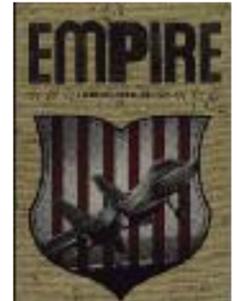
Groundwork guides

Groundwork Guides is a social issues series published by Groundwork Books, a children's book imprint of House of Anansi Press. The mandate of this series is to "offer both a lively introduction and a strong point of view" on "pressing and sometimes controversial topics," including imperialism, Islam, oil, pornography, slavery, and urban development. These books are suitable for senior secondary students, and I recently provided them as a research essay resource in my English 12 classes. So far the response from them has been positive. Students report having learned a lot, and have commented that key points are readily accessible. These books are readable, and loaded with interesting facts that will be new to most readers. In general I would give the series a thumbs up, with a few misgivings. Strangely, the US

massacre of millions of Vietnamese civilians has been omitted from the guide titled *Genocide*, and Empire fails to acknowledge the Mongolian empire. Regardless, the *Groundwork* series is a welcome resource for social issues discussions in the classroom. (More information can be found at tinyurl.com/6lxa3n.)

This review first appeared in *The Global Educator*, journal of the Peace and Global Education (PAGE) PSA (www.pagebc.ca).

Patrik Parkes, Moscrop Secondary School, Burnaby.



If "we teach who we are" then who is teaching social justice?

By Rhonda Philpott

We do not really see through our eyes, or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs

— Delpit, 1988

In the past nine years, teachers in BC schools have been using the Ministry of Education BC Performance Standards—Social Responsibility (Government of British Columbia, 2000) as a framework to guide instruction and assess student achievement in social responsibility. However, as of 2007, a new secondary school elective course, Social Justice 12 has been introduced (Government of British Columbia, 2007). Where the social responsibility standards focus mainly on caring for each other and the environment, the Social Justice 12 curriculum asks teachers and senior secondary students to engage with perspectives and issues of injustice (such as racism, heterosexism, homophobia, stereotyping, imperialism, oppression, etc.). As of September 2008, this new elective on social justice is being implemented in seven BC secondary schools and, starting September 2009, it was available for implementation in all "interested" schools. However, for one particular school district, concerns about the course content may keep this curriculum forever shelved. For this very conservative school district, discussions about issues such as homophobia and heterosexism have no place in schools.

The course is just too problematic, explains [the] school district superintendent. "Some of the content is clearly controversial," he said yesterday, speaking to homosexual references that appear in the course outline. (Hutchinson, 2008)

Although I question the motivation behind this particular school district's reasons for rejecting the Social Justice 12 curriculum, I think some interesting points have emerged through student protests (after "accidental" approval of the course by one school was withdrawn) and media probing. One thing that became evident is that students want opportunities to engage in discussions about difficult and controversial issues that ultimately affect them and the world in general. The other point that surfaced, and is of particular relevance, is the question of who will be teaching the curriculum. In a letter sent to the Ministry of Education, the superintendent of

this particular school district expressed this concern,

What's more, teachers might be saddled with too much "personal bias" to teach the course effectively. Without proper training and background knowledge, teachers might mishandle the course material. The result could be counterproductive: a classroom of children "more biased and less tolerant of opposing beliefs because of misinformation." (Hutchinson, 2008)

Added to this, is the voice of the conservative BC Parents and Teachers for Life,

"Although the course...will deal with many topics worthy of students' consideration, it is—due to bias and lack of specified direction—a course which allows for the possibility of gross abuse on the part of the teacher who might choose to use it to propagandize for his own particular viewpoint" said President Ted Hewlett. (Steffenhagen, 2008)

...the dissonance generated by introducing this curriculum suggests that it is in fact exactly what we need to spark a dialogue about how our beliefs and perspectives inform/influence our pedagogy.

What struck me about these two newspaper excerpts, is not the undertone of community and interest groups' obvious biases toward the curriculum content itself, but the concerns about through whose perspectives and biases these issues of social justice will be taught. Moreover, I might argue that underlying the above discourses, are concerns that Social Justice 12 will not be taught from the preferred biases and perspectives of the particular interest groups the school district or Hewlett represent. There is no denying that this curriculum, more so than other curriculum, is about examining beliefs, perspectives, values, and worldviews. So how it is taught, or from what perspective it is taught, could potentially have a profound effect (whether negative, or positive) on students' understandings of each other and the world. So I agree, this is an issue of concern. We all hold biases, beliefs, and worldviews specific to our own experiences, interactions, and ascribed social identities/locations. However, if as Delpit (1998) argues,

"we teach through our beliefs" (p. 280), then as teachers it is imperative that we are aware of those beliefs and biases and that we understand how these inform/influence our practice. So, although I applaud the efforts of the Ministry of Education to move curriculum to a place where it could compel students to initiate social change, I am concerned that once again as teachers we might be jumping in before engaging in dialogue about the complexities this new curriculum might present. This is not to suggest we abandon this challenging and significant curriculum. On the contrary, the dissonance generated by introducing this curriculum suggests that it is in fact exactly what we need to spark a dialogue about how our beliefs and perspectives inform/influence our pedagogy. However, my fear is that all the attention will focus on this one school district's conservative views and motivations, and as a result opportunities for all teachers, parents, students, and districts to engage in this critical dialogue might be lost.

Is not the real concern here about whether or not the teachers who are implementing, or planning to implement this curriculum have indeed engaged in dialogue and self-reflection about their own personal beliefs, biases, perspectives, and worldviews? Or whether or not these teachers have engaged in dialogue and/or professional development where they have been asked to examine how their beliefs, biases, and worldviews influence how they teach a particular curriculum? Or whether or not these teachers have explored the complexities of teaching in a way that makes space for a variety of voices, perspectives, and beliefs to emerge?

The concerns unearthed by this particular district's refusal to implement the Social Justice 12 curriculum confirms why it is timely and imperative to engage practicing and prospective teachers in discussions and professional development on how they have come to understand social justice (through the experiences and discourses of family, friends, education, travel, and work). Moreover, if "we teach who we are" (Palmer, 1998) it is essential all teachers pause to reflect on how those understandings inform/influence their practice of social justice education.

Rhonda Philpott is a faculty associate in the teacher education program at Simon Fraser University.

Feel like your calendar is chasing you to June?



Is there a difficult conversation that you keep putting off? Has a professional relationship disintegrated without a repair in sight? Are you involved in a dispute from which there appears no way out?

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The BCTF Internal Mediation Service assists members and others in resolving disputes in a timely manner. This confidential service is conducted by trained, neutral, teacher-mediators who understand the stresses of today's classrooms and schools.

For more information, contact Patti Turner, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division, 604-871-1803, toll free 1-800-663-9163, ext. 1803, e-mail: pturner@bcf.ca.

"Beat the Meetles" solution

by Brian Porter

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
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In making application for withdrawal, you should ensure that

in the event of serious illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave which, when combined with 120 days of benefit from SIP: short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach factor '90' or the end of the month you attain age 65, whichever comes first.

Applications are available online at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SalaryBenefits/SIP/LT-WithdrawalForm.pdf or by calling the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.

Health and safety

Refusal of unsafe work

This office receives many calls and e-mails asking under what conditions workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. The specific language relative to the refusal of unsafe work may be found in the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation Part 3.12*:

A person must not carry out or cause to be carried out any work process or operate or cause to be operated any tool, appliance or equipment if that person has reasonable cause to believe that to do so would create an undue hazard to the health and safety of any person.

The operant words are *reasonable cause* and *undue hazard*. This



means that every worker will have a different level of tolerance to work practices and as such every worker has the right to refuse unsafe work when they have a reasonable cause to believe there is an undue hazard to themselves or anyone else in their work area. The process is very clear and allows for different stages of investigations to ensure that the work area is safe before workers return.

3.12 Procedure for refusal

A worker who refuses to carry out a work process or operate a

tool, appliance or equipment pursuant to subsection (1) must immediately report the circumstances of the unsafe condition to his or her supervisor or employer.

A flow chart of the refusal of unsafe work process is available on the BCTF website in the health and safety tab.

3.13 No discriminatory action

A worker must not be subject to discriminatory action as defined in section 150 of Part 3 of the *Workers Compensation Act* because the worker has acted in compliance with section 3.12 or with an order made by an officer.

Workers can be reassigned temporarily *at no loss of pay* until the matter is resolved.

Keep in mind that the refusal of unsafe work is not to be used as a threat and should be taken seriously. The work situation either creates an immediate undue hazard or not. Once the process has been initiated, it is important to see it through to the end so that there is a record of investigations and remedies to prevent further unsafe situations.

— Karen Langenmaier
BCTF Health & Safety officer

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CHRISTINA LAKE. Cabin for rent, 3 bdrm., 1 and 1/2 bath, road access, 100 ft. of private beach with dock. July 18-25 - \$1500; Aug. 22-29 - \$1250; Sept 12-Oct 10 - \$2000. Phone 250-368-3599, adeluca@sd20.bc.ca

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VANCOUVER Killarney area: 1 bdrm, ground level, spacious, bright basement suite, laminate, tile flooring, large kitchen, living and dining rooms, alarm, price includes cable, heat, electricity, 1 day/week laundry. N/P, N/S. Clean, responsible female tenant only. \$900/mo. References required. Available Feb. 1. 604-464-1046 call afternoon or 604-591-8908.

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PD Calendar

MARCH 2010

22 Pemberton. The Sea to Sky Teachers' Professional Development Committee is hosting "Connectedness: within, with each other, and with the world." Keynote address, Dr. Gordon Neufeld: Relationship Matters: Harnessing the Power of Attachment. Neufeld will expand on his keynote in workshops. Speakers include Terry Small (Brain Boosting Secrets), Rachel Mason (Aboriginal Ed), Judy Fainstein (Youth and Environmental Sustainability), and more! Visit the SSTA website <http://bctf.ca/ssta> for workshop descriptions.

26-27 Kelowna. BC Science Teachers' Association—Catalyst 2010—A Science Odyssey. A conference for all Science Educators K-12+ at the Delta Grand Okanagan Resort and Conference Centre. Join us for: exciting keynotes, featured speakers, teacher-led professional development, hands-on workshops, technology workshops, science literacy and reading strategies, IRP implementation ideas, current issues in science education, Presentations by leading scientists, science teacher collaboration, K-7 science workshops, exhibitor hall. Visit the BCScTA website www.bsccta.ca for more details.

26-27 Richmond. BCTF New Teachers' and Student Teachers' Conference 2010. The 2010 conference will take place at the Radisson Hotel in Richmond. For further information, contact Cécilia Huard de la Marre at chuarddelamarre@bctf.ca or 604-871-1869.

27 Vancouver. Foundations for Adult Learning, 13th Annual Conference of the Adult Educators' Provincial Specialist Association. BCTF Building. Keynote address by Mark Selman followed by five small group sessions, panel presentation, and afternoon plenary. Contact Lynda Toews at psac74@bctf.ca and <http://aduldedpsa.wordpress.com> for registration info.

31 Burnaby. BCTF Day on Campus will take place in SFU at the Burnaby Campus. For further information, contact Cécilia Huard de la Marre at chuarddelamarre@bctf.ca or 604-871-1869.

31-April 1 Vancouver. The Special Education Association (SEA) presents the 35th Annual Cross-currents Conference at the Westin Bayshore Hotel. Keynote plus a variety of quality sessions and exhibitors for regular and special education. For information contact or visit the website: www.bctf.ca/sea. Exhibitors contact Karen Bell at karbell@shaw.ca

APRIL 2010

9-11 Delta. William Glasser Choice Theory and Lead Management training Basic Level. Counselling credits if applicable. Further info call 604-948-1967.

10 Burnaby, Kelowna, Surrey. PITA Build UP Series. Burnaby: Social Studies (Holly Lloyd), Language Arts (Diana Cruchley); Kelowna: Science (Ray Myrtle), Math (Ray Appel); Surrey: PE (Glenn Young), Writing (Bryan Gidinski). For more info about the workshops, visit pita-earlycareer.wikispaces.com or contact Ray Myrtle, president@pita.ca

16-17 Harrison Hot Springs. The Adult Basic Education of BC conference "Inspiring Skills for Success" is open to all educators—instructors of adults from school districts, colleges, prisons, and Aboriginal centres, people working with ESL, English, Math, and High School Completion programming. Check the website at www.abeabc.ca/conferences.htm or contact Leonne Beebe, leonne.beebe@ucfv.ca, 604-792-0025, L 2414, or Yvonne Chard, yvonne@deltsad.bc.ca

20-24 Victoria. BC Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy Spring 2010. The Legislative Assembly of BC offers a professional development program for BC teachers in elementary, middle and high school. Come to your Parliament Buildings in Victoria and learn about parliamentary democracy and the political process. Eighteen teachers will be selected to participate and experience BC's

parliamentary system first-hand, returning to their schools and communities with an enhanced understanding of democracy. Deadline for applications is January 31, 2010. Further information and to apply on-line visit www.leg.bc.ca/bcti

23-24 Vancouver. First Nations Schools Association 14th Annual Conference and AGM. "Valuing and Caring for All." Featuring workshops that support school and student success, with a focus on BC First Nations schools. Registration materials available February 2010. www.fnsa.ca/currentevents.htm Toll-free: 1-877-422-3672

25-26 Delta. William Glasser Choice Theory and Lead Management training Basic Level. Counselling credits if applicable. Further info call 604-948-1967.

28 Vancouver. Underwater Robots in the Classroom. Vancouver Maritime Museum, 7:30 pm. (No admission charge—just a donation offering for the VMM), The Underwater Archaeology Society of BC (UASBC) will feature maritime author Vickie Jensen and student-built underwater robotics at its February Speakers Series. The evening will also feature BC's award-winning student teams, their robots, and a preview of the 800-page Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) textbook *Underwater Robotics: Science, Design & Fabrication* which Jensen has co-authored and edited. Vancouver Maritime Museum, 1905 Ogden Avenue, Vancouver, 604-257-8300.

30 Whistler. PITA's 5th Annual mini conference "Supporting Struggling Students in Literacy and Math." Learn practical ways to survive the diversity in your classroom. Encourage reluctant readers using Elaine Jaltema's literature circle approach; Guys Write!—nine sure-fire ways to excite your boys (and girls) about writing with Diana Churcheley; Strengthening students struggling in math with Liz Barrett; Understand and learn how to support those frustrating disorganized children in your class with Mary Moody; Learn to engage learners through differentiating instruction and start on adapting your units together with Amber! with Amber Flanagan. Details contact Ray Myrtle president@pita.ca

MAY 2010

15 Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices 2010 13th annual conference. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings and questions. Deadline for proposals March 19, 2010. Registration fee \$25 (\$15 for students). Lunch and refreshments included. Scarfe Education Building 2125 Main Mall UBC. For more information, contact Judy Paley 604-822-2733 judy.paley@ubc.ca or visit epltd.educ.ubc.ca/programs/institutes/iop.php

15-16 Vancouver. UBC offers at the Point Grey campus a French and Spanish immersion weekend. Single accommodation is available at the Pacific Spirit Hostel for \$33 (+ taxes) per night. Teachers can use their Tuition Fee Certificate toward the \$250 tuition fee. Call toll-free 1-866-528-7485 or see www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/weekend.html

19-23 Vancouver. Environmental Educators' PSA (EEPSA) hosts the EECOM 2010 national conference in partnership with Simon Fraser University and Metro Vancouver. Diversity, Sustainability, Environment: Cultural and Practical Diversity in Environmental Education. Contact Patrick Robertson, 604-818-6521, pabrobo@shaw.ca or visit our website www.bctf.ca/eeepsa

Future October PSA days
2010-11: October 22, 2010
2011-12: October 21, 2011
2012-13: October 19, 2012
2013-14: October 25, 2013
2014-15: October 24, 2014
2015-16: October 23, 2015

PSA PD Day—October 22, 2010
PD Calendar website: bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx
Additions/changes: sdrummond@bctf.ca

BCTF Peru brigade

August 2008 and 2009

Over the last two summers, seven BC teachers have traveled to Peru, and in co-operation with SUTEP, Peru's national teachers' union, have given English-language methodology workshops to Peruvian teachers. Here are reflections on that experience from three of the teachers.

Julia MacRae, Surrey
English teacher and team leader

What does it mean for regular BC teachers to give workshops in Peru to regular Peruvian teachers? It means solidarity in action. When we use a few of our union dollars to pay for quality professional development for teachers facing some of the most concerted attacks on their professionalism in the Americas, it means those teachers receive a vital lifeline of moral and pedagogical support. It also is a strong experience of modeling what we consider to be effective and appropriate professional development: teacher-to-teacher sharing. All too often, the Peruvian teachers receive professional development from experts, such as representatives of textbook companies or universities, rather than from other teachers. SUTEP, Peru's national teachers' union, is also all too often struggling to respond to more basic concerns of teachers, such as pitifully low salaries and difficult working conditions to be able to offer quality professional development. For the Canadian participants, we benefit from the opportunity to have a fascinating travel experience, far different from the typical tourist experience, as well as very valuable personal professional development. It is challenging to develop, tweak, and deliver a workshop in a different culture and surroundings. We also gain perspective on teachers' conditions throughout the world, and are able to see first-hand the value of such solidarity action.

Suzanne Aubin, Penticton
Languages teacher, 2008 Pilot project

They hang on my every word. They ask me to repeat, to clarify; they excuse themselves before leaving the room, shake my hand when they arrive. They wear shirts and ties, skirts and heels. All of them intent, keen, oblivious of the fact that they are on vacation. I make those teachers—my students for a week—smile, even laugh. I must be dreaming.

They love the hands-on workshops, a novelty to a theory-dominated educational system, and eagerly jot down the structures of what has become standards of language classes in our country: brain-storming, think-pair-share, inside/outside circles, games, cultural activities.

I am in a classroom in Lima, Peru, in a convent school of blue painted tiles overlooking the ocean, eight-foot waves crashing against the shore far below. My students are teachers of English, sharing the universal reality of teaching teenagers, struggling with classes of 45 or more, one hour of instruction per week, the absence of TTOCs and hellish transportation to work.

They love the hands-on workshops, a novelty to a theory-dominated educational system, and eagerly jot down the structures of what has become standards of language classes in our country: brain-storming, think-pair-share, inside/outside circles, games, cultural activities. They are uplifted, made aware of some light at the end of this tunnel, some reprieve from the monotony of their classes, the apathy of their students, their

own sense of isolation.

We stress the point that they have each other, that they need to build a network once we have left, that they can exchange and reduce the vacuum they see themselves in. They are even talking about participating in an effort to bring us back.

In a country where the government openly criticizes teachers and undermines the public school system in order to privatize, the self-esteem of teachers is fragile and responds avidly to any encouragement.

After one week of exchange and instruction, they do not want us to leave. We exchange e-mails and they promise to let us know when they try their new tools in their classes and share the results with us. At the closing ceremony, we smile and cry all at once, aware of how tenuous the hope, how formidable the odds.

Five days later, on our way to the airport, a last e-mail check reveals an invitation to register in the newly formed "Network of English Teachers in Peru," with many of the participants already signed in. We could not have had a better closing to this new venture.

Laura Barker, Surrey
Adult educator, 2009 team

Now that I'm home in the rain and the cold winter weather of Vancouver, what do I remember most about teaching in Peru this summer?

I remember the reports we heard in the news before we left about the violence and protests that had been intensifying in Peru. For months, indigenous groups in Peru had staged demonstrations against a series of legislative decrees that threatened their ancestral lands. Concerned about oil and logging development in the Amazon—as well as other neo-liberal policies—people across the country held

marches, went on strike, and caused traffic chaos to register their discontent with the government's policies. Thousands protested and dozens were killed in clashes between police and citizens. I was interested to learn that, along with other trade unions in the country, Peru's teacher union, SUTEP, was in the forefront of the protests in Peru. Through an inspiring show of solidarity, protesters forced the government to repeal some of its

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pro-corporate decrees, just a week before we were to arrive.

I remember the warmth and enthusiasm from the Peruvian teachers, who often work two jobs to support their families on their meagre teacher's salary. Despite these challenges, they made long journeys on public transportation to attend our English pedagogy workshops, happy for the rare opportunity to participate in professional development and to make personal connections with Canadian teachers. I remember the first of many participants who thanked me and kissed both cheeks at the end of each session. Many of the teachers wanted multiple photos taken with us at the end of the course. Though we were only there for a week, they secretly organized a lovely closing ceremony in which they sang, danced, performed skits, and offered us traditional gifts and snacks.

I also remember arriving at our second location, Piura, in the north. Lorenzo, our SUTEP host there, was on his cell phone constantly, setting up media interviews for us, and juggling his work and union duties. As he walked with us down the main road downtown, giving us a brief tour, he handed out leaflets advertising our workshops to teachers he met in the street. A few

days later, in the middle of an excursion he took us to the artisan community of Catacaos. A man rode up to us on his bicycle—he was a reporter, who promptly unstrapped a tape recorder from across his chest and there in the middle of the street interviewed Lorenzo and our team leader Julia.

And finally, I remember preparing for my workshop on assessment strategies in language learning classrooms. There's nothing like having to distill down the essence of your practice into a workshop of a few short hours to make you really articulate the nuggets of what you believe. Once we got to Lima and better understood the needs and the level of the workshop participants, I tweaked the content just a bit. But when we got to the second location in Piura, a more drastic overhaul was necessary to meet the needs of the teachers there. After our first day, we frantically chopped and adjusted our workshops as we had been met with many blank stares in the first session. Turns out my "nuggets" could be distilled even further!

Preparing and facilitating a workshop is the best professional development I can think of. And presenting in front of one's peers is an excellent way to keep honest about what works and make you reflect on your practice. I have many more memories of teaching in Peru this summer—along with thousands of photos—but I am most grateful for the opportunity to work with Canadian and Peruvian colleagues and to be reminded of the importance of union development and solidarity in a developing country.

Summer 2010 applications

The Peru Project will take place again in the summer of 2010, late-July to mid-August. To find out more, go to "The Peru Project" at bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=19096; an application is also available here. The application deadline is March 19, 2010.



Clockwise from top left: Leadership team (Julia MacRae); Laura Barker on the last day; Meet the press in Piura; and Peruvian teachers using BCTF materials.