

TEACHER

Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

Set the table for bargaining

By Susan Lambert

Article A.1 Term, Continuation and Renegotiation

The parties agree that not less than four (4) months preceding the expiry of this Collective Agreement, they will commence collective bargaining in good faith with the object of renewal or revision of this Collective Agreement and the concluding of a Collective Agreement for the subsequent period.

— *Collective Agreement*

Notice before expiry of agreement

46 (1) Either party to a collective agreement...may at any time within 4 months immediately preceding the expiry of the agreement, by written notice require the other party to commence collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining

47 If notice to commence collective bargaining has been given

(a) the trade union and the employer, or

(b) the parties to the collective agreement must, within 10 days after the date of the notice, commence to bargain collectively in good faith, and make every reasonable effort to conclude a collective agreement or a renewal or revision of it.

— *Labour Relations Code of BC*



It's March, four months before the expiry of our collective agreements. We've given notice and the employer must come to the table and bargain with us in good faith, to make every reasonable effort to conclude a collective agreement. We are bargaining.

Teachers are governed by labour relations legislation. That legislation is the legacy of a social contract forged years ago, one in which workers gave up the right to job action within the term of a collective agreement in return for the right to periodically examine

and 29 in 2002, (and then again we believe by Bill 12, in 2005). The Liberal government, with this legislation, unilaterally stripped, from teacher collective agreements, class-size and composition provisions that teachers had negotiated (and sacrificed wage and benefit improvements for) over the course of the previous 20 years. This same Liberal government, with the stroke of the legislative pen, annihilated 10 local collective agreements and declared teaching an "essential service."

HEU appealed Bill 29 to the Supreme Court, and won. The legislation was a flagrant violation of the social contract, the charter, and a contravention of Canada's commitment to international conventions. We contend the action to curtail our bargaining rights was also illegal and we have challenged Bill 27 and 28 in the courts.

The tattered remnants of the social contract, which still form the legislative framework for bargaining in this province, require employers and unions to bargain in good faith to renegotiate a collective agreement before the old one expires. If that attempt fails, the legislation provides for impasse resolution mechanisms (strike/lockout) and details the process of setting these in place. The collective agreement must have expired, (ours expires on June 30, 2011) both parties must have fully canvassed all key issues to be re-negotiated, an LRB supervised strike vote must have been carried out and supported by a majority ballot, and the employer/employees must receive 72 hours notice before a strike or lockout can commence.

Our bargaining has started in a climate where successive waves of provincial education and funding policies have made teaching much harder and where the employer (the provincial government) has

established a mandate that places a straitjacket on its bargaining agent, BCPSEA.

Our expectations are high. We have waited patiently for this opportunity to negotiate improvements. We have watched as other provinces commit to recognizing the importance of the profession with compensation packages that far exceed ours, with preparation time provisions that far exceed ours, and with acknowledgements of professional autonomy and rights recognition that far exceed ours. If I taught in Edmonton, I would make \$12,000 a year more than I do here in BC, I'd receive \$6,000 more in

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Toronto and get 130 more minutes of preparation time. Can you imagine the improvements you could make to your teaching if you had such time to prepare, reflect, evaluate, and report on student learning?

The parties to this bargain are far apart. In the months before our collective agreement expires we will spend as long as it takes engaging the employer and explaining that our working conditions are learning conditions for students and that we must attract and retain the brightest and best into teaching.

And in the end if our best efforts at the table are not successful we may have to use the impasse resolution mechanisms in the legislation. We hope this will not be necessary but we are determined to negotiate a substantially improved contract for teachers.

It's time we created a year of teaching imbued with purpose and joy. A year of teaching with the time we need to teach. We need to create teaching conditions that honour

See BARGAINING page 3

It is very important to understand this trade off and the terms of this social contract. Workers agreed to "work now and grieve later" and traded the right to take wildcat strike action within the term of a collective agreement, for the legislative guarantee of the right to freely renegotiate the full terms and conditions of work at the expiry of each contract.

and renegotiate the terms and conditions of their employment—full bargaining rights. It is very important to understand this trade off and the terms of this social contract. Workers agreed to "work now and grieve later" and traded the right to take wildcat strike action within the term of a collective agreement, for the legislative guarantee of the right to freely renegotiate the full terms and conditions of work at the expiry of each contract.

In this province, that social contract was broken by Bills 27, 28,

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On the inside

Thoughtfulness characterizes this edition of *Teacher*. Learning in the 21st century is commented on by some members of the BCTF professional and social issues committee. Related to these articles is the need for teachers to be critical commentators on the changes taking place in education and how a resurgence in the philosophy of education could contribute to this endeavour. Articles from teachers demonstrate how deeply they are involved in examining their practice in literacy, special education, inquiry projects, and the development of early learning plans.

A further instalment in the BCTF work-life study looks at the hours teachers report they are working and the second part of a detailed study of the Teachers' Pension Plan is featured.

Developments in bargaining, both provincially and locally, are also highlighted and will doubtless be regular features over the next few months.

As is customary at this time of year, an AGM agenda and statements from candidates running for Executive Committee positions, round out a very full pre-AGM edition.

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President's message



Susan Lambert

We live in such volatile political times in this province. While I write this column, candidates are vying for the top spot in both the Liberal and NDP leadership races. By the time you read it, we will have a new premier and may be facing a provincial election. In the midst of the push and pull of the candidate debates, the spectre of merit pay

and the debacle of the BC College of Teachers, we found ourselves, once again, facing the FSAs. But this time we found an ally as the Principals and Vice-principals claiming that the testing regime is now too politically charged, called for FSAs to be scrapped. More and more districts are honouring parent withdrawal requests.

Teachers can only be heartened. Our campaign against the imposition of a census standardized assessment has always been grounded in our values: our caring for our students and our advocacy for a strong and stable public education system. We have had to be tenacious and maintain our struggle and commitment in the face of an increasing barrage of criticism. I hope the BC Principals' and Vice-principals' Association announcement will signal real change and open the door for a thoughtful and respectful discussion about assessment and accountability of the system as a whole and

recognition of the preferential authority of teacher assessments in individual student achievement.

It was something in the ensuing media that caught my attention. On one call-in show, several callers accused teachers of "coddling" kids, of using social promotion to pass undeserving students to successive grades, of not preparing children for the "real" world where, presumably, failure is a probability students should be toughened up for.

We have heard this before but this time it echoed two other news stories that occurred at the same time. One was about the four-year-old at the airport who, separated from her doll and told to submit to the full body scan tank on her own, melted down into a terrorized temper tantrum and the 82-year-old grandmother harassed and humiliated because she didn't declare the gel in her breast prosthesis. The other was a small but terrible story buried deep in the *Globe and Mail* on January 16, 2011: "A gun-fair

organizer was acquitted of manslaughter...in the 2008 death of an eight-year-old boy who accidentally shot himself in the head with an Uzi at a machine-gun expo." The defendant's lawyer blamed the boy's father, an emergency-room physician, for allowing him to shoot such a dangerous weapon.

A guest editorial in *The Vancouver Sun* suggested that we are terrorizing our own citizens through overzealous airport security measures when the odds of dying in a terrorist attack while flying are one in 25 million. What sort of fear drives a father to allow his sons to test a loaded Uzi at a gun fair? And how many steps are there between that fear and the fear that drives callers to accuse us of coddling children and not preparing them for a "real" world of dog-eat-dog competition and failure? What is the vision of the future that drives this fear? And why do these parents accept that the public education system should prepare students to survive in such

an apocalyptic world rather than relying on public education to create an alternative caring, just, and equitable future?

When considering these connections I know I may be accused of hyperbole and unwarranted exaggeration. I hope, in fact, that that is true. Meanwhile, though, I think we have an obligation to define our purpose in public education as one grounded in hope, promise, and equity. That is fundamentally why we oppose the standardization and mechanistic vision of accountability as measured by ever-increasing standardized test scores. When we have a province-wide discussion on what replaces the FSAs or on learning in the 21st century, we will again work hard to ensure that the discussions begin with a vision for public education grounded in community, in the values of civil society, and the common good.

Readers write

BCeSIS fails the test

Last October, Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid told CBC Radio's *Daybreak* program (Kelowna) that the problems with BCeSIS (British Columbia enterprise Student Information System) were fixed and is still cost effective.

But on the January 19, 2011, broadcast of *Daybreak*, MacDiarmid said a consultant will now assess if BCeSIS is worth keeping.

MacDiarmid is understating the problem. She didn't mention there have been significant difficulties with BCeSIS every year since it was introduced. BCeSIS has failed in nearly every key instance when teachers had to be logged on in crucial time periods, such as when preparing and writing student report cards each term/semester. Obviously, the more districts using BCeSIS, the more pressure on every aspect of the system.

When BCeSIS was being created, an alternative was put forward, based on having software and data at the school and district level, with a roll-up only of necessary information to the provincial level. But districts were told if they didn't join BCeSIS they would have to develop their own systems, which had to be compatible with BCeSIS. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of BC's 60 school districts have now opted in, paying "only" \$10 per student per year for access. (As of September 2010, only Delta, Vernon, Campbell River, and Okanagan-Shuswap have not opted in.)

However, the real costs are much higher when additional higher-end computers, staff training, technical support, troubleshooting, lost productivity, and wasted time are added.

If Apple or Microsoft had sold a product to the public with as many glitches as BCeSIS, it would have been recalled the same week.

David Buckna (retired)
Kelowna

Making way for new teachers

As a teacher approaching retiring age, I read with interest Glynis Cadwell's article recognizing the hard feelings that are being directed at retired teachers working as TTOCs. As another article in the same issue states, the average age of retirement in our Teachers' Pension Plan in 2009 was 58 years old.

I suggest it is time to acknowledge most retired teachers working as TTOCs for a few days a month are not taking jobs from younger teachers. Rather, by retiring on average seven years before their 65th birthday, they are providing new teachers an earlier opportunity for full-time work in the classrooms being vacated.

Gloria Dreyer
Langley

Meritless idea

I recently retired as a public school teacher with 30 years in the classroom. I have heard so much about merit pay over the past many

years. The reason why it has never come to fruition anywhere successfully is simply because it can't work. I taught elementary school and every year a new group of students would come with different learning styles, different home backgrounds, and so many other factors that affect their learning. One year I would have tremendous success with students and would under the merit-pay idea receive a large salary. The very next year, with different children, I would probably be fired under that concept. We teach children, not sell a product, and each child is different. Teachers will always do the best they can for the child but the results will vary.

The merit-pay concept also does not seem to consider the large number of teachers who are specialists in many areas. What about the large number of teachers who do not register a class—teacher-librarians, special educators who work with only one or two students at a time? How about home economics, music, or shop teachers—do we base their salary on how well the students bake a cake, perform in a concert, or build a birdhouse?

Too many, who are not knowledgeable about the education process, seem to think that all teachers register a classroom of students. They do not understand the concept that "It takes a village to raise a child."

Our international scores always show Canada near the top of the world on student scores and BC

always ranks near the top in Canada. My experience tells me that well over 90% of our teachers are dedicated, intelligent, and incredible wonderful people. I am so very proud that I was a teacher for so many years.

Allen Stanton (retired)
Coquitlam

Short-changed on prep

Due to a legal loophole that allows the averaging of prep time, hundreds of secondary school teachers go five months with no prep time. This is a travesty. Not surprisingly, the five months can be brutal. Many teachers get burned out or take a reduced assignment, which means a reduced salary, and a reduced pension.

Roughly half of BC's secondary schools are able to give their teachers weekly prep time, either through a fully linear timetable or through a mix of linear and semestered courses. Now should be a good time to harmonize contracts across the province to give weekly prep time to all teachers. It is a no-cost item.

Other government employees work a 37.5 hour week. A recent BCTF survey found teachers in BC work an average of 47.8 hours per week. Therefore, without prep time, there are a lot of teachers working over 50 hours per week.

Brian Lavery
Port Alberni

Not very dignifying

I am writing to comment on a statement made in the "Dignity in retirement" article in the Jan./Feb. 2011 issue.

The article states "The total pension payments you will receive within the first five years of retirement will be more than the contributions (plus interest) you will make to the plan..."

Although I understand that the statement is made in the context of a lifetime income for myself and my spouse, it does create the impression that I will have depleted my portion of the pension fund within that time and, thereafter, am beholding to the TPP for the remaining pension I receive. Not very dignifying.

Because of the matching contribution of the employer, the combined contributions plus interest creates a sizable investment which, with good management, should provide a sustainable pension well beyond age 85.

I believe that the employer portion of the contribution is something that I earned and do not distinguish between my contribution and the employer's.

Is my pension dependent upon the contributions of current and future contributors or are my contributions self-sustaining?

Ken Weatherill (retired)
Richmond

[Editor's note: The following explanation is provided by Rob Taylor, the Income Security Division assistant director responsible for pension information.]

Your teachers' pension is a defined benefit. That means that the amount of money you receive for your lifetime is predicated on three factors: Your years of pensionable service, your 50 best months of salary, and 2% for each year of pensionable service (up to age 65 as the 2% includes the bridge benefit).

Contribution rates are set by the Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees, based on the advice of their actuary, so that contributions along with expected investment returns will be able to pay pensions for the lifetime of every member of the plan, whether they are a first year teacher or a long retired member.

The bulk of the pension payments (80% or more) retirees receive over their lifetime from the TPP come from the earnings of the investments of the plan assets, not from member contributions. To illustrate: the contributions received by the Teachers' Pension Plan in 2009 from teachers totalled just over \$250 million; employer contributions totalled just over \$330 million; investment income was almost triple that amount at \$1.5 billion.

Pensions paid out in 2009 totalled \$806 million, about \$220 million more than was contributed. Without prudent investment, our pensions would be in jeopardy.

As teachers our pension plan is one of the prized benefits of our employment within BC's public school system and we should be proud of the history of its union, the BCTF, in its work in the area of pensions which ensure that its members can live in dignity in retirement.

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BARGAINING from page 1

professional autonomy and create learning conditions that maximize the opportunities of every child to succeed. We need to do that next year. We need to make sure this round of bargaining addresses our working conditions and the need for the profession to attract the brightest and best into teaching. We have set high goals for ourselves. To achieve them we will have to work together, your involvement is crucial.

We have adopted a bargaining plan designed to bring bargaining back to local tables. It is our belief that the best solutions can be found when local issues are addressed by those who know them best.

We will all have to attend to the process of bargaining and think together to determine our best course of action at every step along

the way. We have set ourselves a complex task. I predict there will be no quick fixes in this round of bargaining. Our attention will have to be sustained and focussed.

We cannot afford to pass on this opportunity. Teacher collective agreements in this province have always been positive factors in creating the quality of the public education system. This round can be no different.

We know we can rely on each other to keep informed, to engage in decision-making, to forge unity, and commitment to collective actions if necessary. We've done so over and over again. Together we are stronger and better and together we will reach agreements across the province that respect teachers and teaching and strengthen public education.

Susan Lambert is BCTF president.

Members set their sights on bargaining

A number of members were asked recently to briefly describe their hopes for the upcoming round of local and provincial bargaining.

Becky Blair
Creston

I would like to see successful local and provincial bargaining with significant reinstatement of local working and learning conditions. Generally the empowerment of locals to bargain contracts satisfactorily, which address the issues of post and fill, seniority, and working and learning concerns.

We are discussing strategies to encourage our board to embrace local bargaining and preparing to open.

Myriam Dumont
Vancouver

Maternity-leave provisions, improvements in TTOC pay and benefits, and class size/composition are the most important items for me.

Sue Heuman
Surrey

I hope that we become a truly inclusive union of professionals. We need to make sure all members are treated in an equitable and fair manner; distributed learning, adult educators, and TTOC issues need to be addressed. Improvements in these areas would include seniority, benefits, and paid leaves for union work.

Locally, our bargaining committee has identified local issues from the survey of our members in September. We have attended the bargaining training and conference to help us understand the issues and the process.

Christina McDermott
North Okanagan-Shuswap

My hope is for genuine collective bargaining done in good faith. Class-size and composition provisions and prep time and benefits are most important for me.

Locally we have been intensively combing through our collective agreement for areas to improve. Surveys have been used to see what our members want bargained.

Kyle McVicar
Fort Nelson

Quite simply, teachers deserve more prep time, more money, better benefits, and smaller classes.

Our local bargaining committee is prioritizing the survey results and will be taking those issues forward in bargaining.

Eli Silver
Vernon

As an addition to the list I would like to see improved, uniform occupational health and safety policies in BC schools.

Brenda Stewart
Nanaimo

My wish is for real bargaining with both sides having the ability to make decisions at the local level. We need full benefits for TTOCs and scale pay from day one, seniority for all teachers, for call-out, and post and fill. Our local has completed a membership survey and the bargaining committee is working on finalizing objectives. Meetings are being held with local politicians.

Treana Stewart
Cranbrook

My hope is seniority for TTOCs; seniority based call-out and post and fill. I will hopefully be the TTOC contact on our local bargaining team, conducting discussions in staffrooms, working with the TTOC Advisory Committee, and involved with local TTOC meetings.

Bruce Thomas
Victoria

I want to see successful local bargaining and wage and benefits improvements provincially.

In preparing for local bargaining there have been radio interviews with the local president, communication with the membership, and local action-focus groups to determine action strategies. Ongoing lobbying of politicians.

— David Denyer

Bargaining for our future

Still playing salary catch-up

Teacher salaries in BC continue to lag behind most other provinces. In Vancouver, the city with the highest cost of living in Canada, we are \$12,651 behind our colleagues in Toronto (5 max.). In fact, we have lost ground in the last four years. In 2007, we (secondary teachers) were a mere \$9,621 behind Toronto.

Closer to home, the situation is even worse. At 5 max., we are \$16,591 behind our colleagues in Calgary and \$16,860 behind teachers in Edmonton.

To add insult to injury, teachers in elementary schools in Toronto get

220 (increasing in 2012 to 240) minutes of prep time per week. Secondary teachers get 25% prep and non-instructional time.

The October 2010 Bargaining Conference set as a salary objective parity with teachers in Alberta and Ontario. As of September 2011, Toronto secondary teachers at 5 max. will earn \$89,614. We would need a 21% increase effective July 1, 2011 to catch up—and then fair increases each subsequent year. To catch up to Edmonton, with 5 max. at \$95,135 effective September, 2011, we would need a 28%

increase effective July 1, 2011.

Teachers need and deserve to be paid fairly and in keeping with their colleagues in the rest of Canada. We have been subjected to government wage freezes and legislated settlements for over a decade. We cannot allow the decline in our salaries to continue.

Below is a comparison of salaries across Canada. Keep in mind that an average house price in Vancouver is \$670,000. In Winnipeg, it's about a third of that, or \$226,000.

— John Wadge

Salary comparisons across Canada

Category	Vancouver	Edmonton	Winnipeg	Toronto Elementary	Toronto Secondary	Newfoundland
5 min.	\$45,909	\$58,819	\$50,259	\$49,261	\$50,231	\$49,198
5 max.	\$74,353	\$91,213	\$76,385	\$85,322	\$87,004	\$63,458
6 min.	\$50,488	\$62,422	\$56,329	\$52,750	\$53,790	\$74,619
6 max.	\$81,489	\$94,814	\$85,338	\$90,173	\$91,949	\$84,415

Source: BCTF Field Service Division

Looking back

70 years ago

Let there be no misunderstanding. The editor is antipathetic to prigs of all sorts. The linguistic prig is only one degree less objectionable than the moral prig. Priggery is the manifestation of virtue that is too self-conscious and too proudly fettered by taboos. Correct speech should be as unconscious as are the rise and fall of the diaphragm to the person who breathes correctly. The man who never permits himself a colloquialism or a telling bit of slang is probably a pedant or a coxcomb and almost always an insufferable bore. It is folk of his kidney that are largely responsible for the young teacher's fear of being thought a purist. But the commendable repugnance felt against pedantry need not manifest itself in the slobbering of consonants, the nasalization of vowels, the ignoring of distinctions proper as between synonyms, the flagrant neglect of punctuation and the deliberate blaspheming of syntax.

— March 1941, *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

There was a public demand for higher educational standards, particularly in the less favoured areas of the province. It was a period of material shortage, labour shortage, teacher shortage. It was the beginning of a period of greatly expanded enrolment. The government's solution was to leave the level of grants static for a period of seven years! However, there was money from another source that prevented bankruptcy from overtaking school districts. 1948 was the year of the advent of British Columbia's sales tax.

— March 1961, *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

It is not uncommon to enter a staffroom or a staff meeting and hear teachers talking about the kind of professional development they do not want any longer. Underneath the comments swells the dissatisfaction of teachers with the proposed solution to the complex array of problems they are expected to deal with on a minute-by-minute, day-to-day basis. Such themes as lack of control over the profession, lack of time, insufficient training,

inadequate funding for professional improvement, and poor communication are unraveled as a distressed and dispirited profession critically examines its situation and the support that is offered under the label of professional development.

— March 1981, *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

The red and yellow pennants stood out beautifully against a blue sky as about 200 teachers from throughout the province rallied at the offices of the BC Public School Employers' Association. They were there to urge the employer to live up to its earlier commitment and incorporate the primary class-size limits into the collective agreement. BCTF President David Chudnovsky told the rally he was deeply concerned that, because the class-size limits expire when the collective agreement runs out in June, it could mean the end of better learning conditions for thousands of children and the potential loss of about 900 teaching positions.

— March 2000, *Teacher newsmagazine*

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich



This conference will focus on emerging social and human rights issues in our schools and communities. Topics will include Aboriginal issues, peace, antipoverty, women's rights, environmental issues, antiracism, LGBTQ, international issues, and many more.

This conference is open to all teachers and members of community groups.

Workshops, networking, and strategy sessions.

For more information, go to bctf.ca.

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Organized by the BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice and the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee

Quality childcare is early learning



The right to public education

By Karen Bernath

In the Spring of 2010, the Government of British Columbia decided to move forward with the partial implementation of full-day Kindergarten in BC schools for September of 2010. Once full-day Kindergarten is fully implemented in the fall of 2011, the plan is to move forward with programs for three- and four-year-olds.

While universal, publicly funded services for young children seems to be a step in the right direction; the Coalition of Child Care Advocates and Early Childhood Educators recognize it is happening without a comprehensive strategy for success. The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC (the coalition) have released a plan for moving to a system of "Integrated Early Care and Learning in BC." You can find the briefing notes at www.cccabc.bc.ca or www.ecebc.ca.

The briefing notes state that: "Our plan builds on what is already well established. Families need access to quality care. Quality child care is early learning. Current policies and approaches do not meet the needs of BC's children and families. Public spending on the early years is a wise social and economic investment. Quality matters."

So, what does this mean for

teachers across BC and the BCTF? The starting principle of the plan is the right of all children to access universal, high-quality, publicly funded early care and learning. This is not unlike the governing principles of the BCTF, which believes that all children have those same rights to public education.

One of the key elements of the coalition proposal is the following: "Ministry of Education responsible for planning, developing, delivering, and governing integrated system of early care and learning from birth up."

For those of us who teach at the early primary level of our education system, this makes sense as we tend to intuitively see that early care and learning is inextricably linked to the work that we do in our classrooms.

The work of the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), has provided us with much research on

The coalition have put together a comprehensive strategy for changes that will help to ensure success if the government truly wants to move toward a program for three- and four-year-olds within the public school system.

how those early years affect the development and success of students once they reach Kindergarten. HELP also has a number of initiatives such as the 15-by-15 plan which seeks to improve family policy in the province to better support our children.

It seems we are all on the same page when it comes to the importance of implementing and recognizing the importance of sufficient resources to meet the needs of families who face social and economic challenges by increasing access to childcare and reducing poverty. Education is a key factor in breaking the cycle of generational poverty.

The coalition have put together a comprehensive strategy for changes that will help to ensure success if the government truly wants to move toward a program for three- and four-year-olds within the public school system.

The coalition recognizes that their emerging plan does not answer every question or provide every detail. They have approached the BCTF as a partner in helping to shape the future of early care and learning in BC.

As BCTF members, we can help by checking out their website, reading the full brief, and discussing the plan with colleagues.

Karen Bernath teaches at Bankhead Elementary School, Kelowna.

An early care and learning plan that works!

By Rita Chudnovsky

Last spring, the Coalition of Childcare Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC shared, in these pages, our excitement about a new project—"Moving to a System of Integrated Early Care and Learning in BC."

Our project was motivated, in part, by the implementation of full school day K for 5-year-olds and an undefined provincial government promise of programs for 3- and 4-year-olds to follow.

While the extension of universal, publicly funded, democratically controlled services to young children is long overdue, we were alarmed that BC was proceeding with no recognition or inclusion of our existing community childcare programs.

So, rather than wait for government to impose a plan, we took the initiative of developing Our Emerging Plan for an Integrated System of Early Care and Learning in BC.

Our emerging plan builds on what is already well known.

First—families need quality childcare and quality childcare *IS* early learning.

Unfortunately, BC's childcare crisis has gone from bad to worse. Fees are too high and now account for the 2nd highest family expense—right after housing. BC families spend more on childcare than on post-secondary education. Wait lists are too long. While over 75% of mothers are working or studying—we still only have licensed spaces for 20% of BC children. As a result, too many children are not getting quality early years experience—as is evident in the growing number of vulnerable children entering Kindergarten. And, the wages of college-trained early childhood educators' are too low, forcing many to leave the field because they cannot support their own families.

Secondly—full-school-day Kindergarten does not meet the

needs of most families who need full-day, full-year quality early care and learning for their children. We are also concerned that it has been implemented with no reduction in Kindergarten class sizes, making it very challenging for Kindergarten teachers to offer a play-based full-day program.

Finally, we know that young children thrive in play-based environments that support their holistic development. The potential for a downward extension of a narrow academic school-readiness focus is not in their interests.

Here's how our eight-point emerging plan offers a way to do a much better job.

1 Enact a new *Early Care and Learning Act* to enshrine the rights of young children and their families to access services that meet their needs

A new Early Care and Learning Act that enshrines young children's right to access quality early care and learning programs is the right thing to do and honours our commitments in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. A new act will guarantee families' access to, and meaningful involvement in, services for their children and the right of First Nation and Aboriginal communities to control their own early care and learning programs. And, a new act governing early care and learning brings childcare into an integrated system as a strong and equal partner.

2 Create a new home for all early care and learning programs—whether located in schools or the community—in the Ministry of Education

Education offers a universal, publicly funded, democratically governed system with relatively high levels of public support and a well respected and fairly paid workforce. Our plan builds on these strengths without moving young children into academic "readiness" programs or traditional school programs before they start Kindergarten.

3 Create early care and learning plans developed by local boards of education with stakeholders' involvement

In our plan, democratically elected boards of education would govern all early care and learning services in their communities—whether located in schools or not.

They would work with parents, early childhood educators, and local governments to develop Early Care and Learning Plans. These plans would guide the integration of existing group and family childcare and pre-schools into the new system and the development of new services.

4 Create new early years centres, a more appropriate alternative response to the needs of young children than part-time junior or pre-Kindergarten

Early years centres is a new name for the places where children from birth to age five participate in part- or full-day early care and learning programs while their families are at work, school, or home. Early years centres would be staffed by qualified early childhood educators. Over time, early years centres will become places that communities can and do feel proud of—just like libraries, parks, and schools.

5 Move forward with accountability

Our emerging plan builds on the strengths of the school system and existing childcare services.

Family childcare, group centers, and preschools could affiliate into early years centres. School boards would develop more early years centres to meet unmet needs. These centres would be funded to meet five accountability measures:

- cap parent fees at affordable levels
- raise early childhood educators' wages and education levels
- include all children
- meet identified community needs
- offer play-based programs that support children's holistic development.

6 Enhance Kindergarten and Grade 1

Children would still begin school at age five, but our plan creates a bridge between early years centres and schools by bringing qualified early childhood educators into Kindergarten and Grade 1 to work alongside teachers. The early childhood educators would be able to provide a full-day program for those families who want it—without having to bus young children from one location to another.

7 Support early childhood educators' to move toward parity with teachers through improved education

The research is clear—qualified early childhood educators are key to quality early care and learning programs. Our plan calls for a move, over time, to a bachelor's

While the extension of universal, publicly funded, democratically controlled services to young children is long overdue, we were alarmed that BC was proceeding with no recognition or inclusion of our existing community childcare programs.

degree in early childhood education as a new educational standard for the field.

8 New resources

We understand the pressures on our K-12 system. We know teachers face the same challenges the early childhood education sector knows all too well—too few resources in the face of growing needs. That is why our plan calls for an investment of new resources to build the early care and learning system we can all be proud of.

The momentum grows

Over the last six months, we have briefed over 25 BC communities about our emerging plan. In over 50 sessions, we shared our plan with hundreds of parents, early childhood educators, teachers, school trustees, municipal and provincial policymakers, labour unions, and concerned citizens.

You can view a webinar briefing at www.vimeo.com/17228473 and download the emerging plan at www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabdocs/integrated/files/emerging_plan_2010.pdf.

The interest, enthusiasm, and positive response have been overwhelming. While people have questions and there are details to work out, most are excited about the potential of the plan and want policymakers to give it serious consideration.

Based on this feedback, we are now finalizing our plan. We are moving quickly to ensure that the ideas in our plan are part of the public dialogue as a new premier and leader of the Opposition take office. Then, we begin the exciting work of building broader support and mobilizing communities to impel decision-makers to act.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with the BCTF and BC teachers to move forward with this concrete, innovative, and ambitious agenda.

Rita Chudnovsky, Coalition of Childcare Advocates of BC.

Should teachers think?

Autonomy, accountability, and philosophy of education

By Andrea English

If you are reading this article, then your answer to the question of whether teachers should think is, most likely, yes. Philosophy of education is a discipline that has supported teachers' ability to think about the practice of teaching and about how children learn. Theories of education that are discussed in philosophy courses with pre-service and in-service teachers aim to expose teachers to the underlying questions and problems of education and help them understand the difficulty of teaching. Yet, in several countries, including in Canada, teacher education programs are eliminating the philosophical component of their programs. The trend in decreasing theoretical inquiry for teachers corresponds to an increase in standardized testing as a measure, not just of learning, but also, of good teaching. Is this correspondence merely a coincidence, or do these trends have something in common? A closer look at the current discourse on educational reform may tell us that they have more in common than we might at first think.

The rhetoric of reform in the US, the UK, and Canada has been focused on teacher "accountability." But what exactly are teachers to be accountable for? In the Race to the Top education reform agenda proposed by the Obama administration, teachers are judged on the performance of their students on standardized tests. To make teachers responsible for student learning seems reasonable and necessary. Indeed, the job of the teacher is to support and enhance learning. However, does connecting teacher evaluation to student test performance really measure quality teaching as it aims to? According to the *The New York Times*, methods of linking teacher's effectiveness to student test scores, like the value-added method, are gaining ground in the US (Sam Dillon, *The New York Times*, Aug. 31, 2010). By determining the "value" added (or subtracted) by teachers, statistical predictions of student scores also

determine merit pay. The central problem is that these methods of teacher evaluation entirely leave out what goes on in classrooms on a day-to-day basis—they leave out how the teacher is actually teaching. Canada has not yet taken its response to the call for teacher accountability to the extreme of its Southern neighbour. But will the global cry for teacher accountability push provinces in that direction?

We have to make policymakers aware that teachers are willing and able to earn trust. Trust is earned in teaching, like in any profession, by making good judgments. So, the fundamental question that is not really being asked in the discourse on education reform is: What counts as good judgment in teaching?

Any experienced teacher will tell you that teaching is not a set of pre-designed steps that can be fully laid out in advance, independent of context and the students in the classroom. Despite this, common ideas of teaching and lesson planning make those on the outside of the classroom, including parents, continue to think that teaching situations can be fully predetermined to guarantee learning. However, much of what goes on in the classroom is based on decisions made by teachers "in the moment," when they see that something is not working and decide to make a change. (This decision-making process has been discussed in

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philosophy for over 2000 years. It is what Aristotle called phronesis, or "the art of making wise decisions in the moment.") Good teachers are able to decide when a student's learning process has gone awry and then determine what is needed to continue that student's learning process.

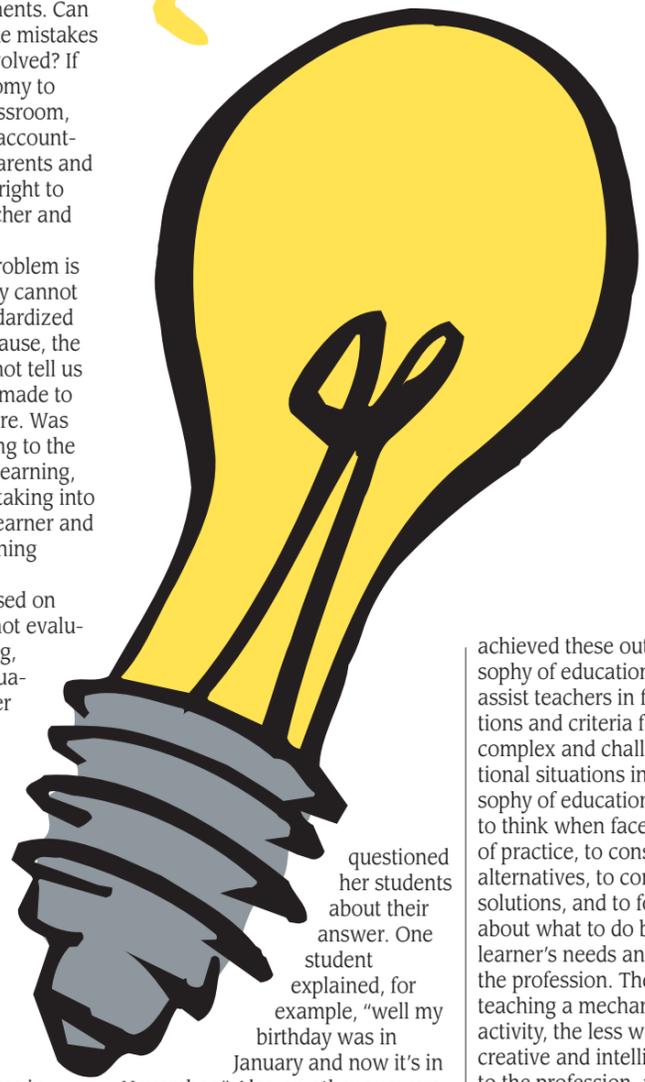
But this brings up the issue of freedom and autonomy for teachers to make judgments about learning, which leads us to another problem.

Good judgment in teaching, just as in other professions, is often learned by making mistakes, that is, by first making bad judgments. Can we allow teachers to make mistakes when our children are involved? If teachers are given autonomy to make decisions in the classroom, then they should be held accountable for their decisions. Parents and society-at-large have the right to ask for, and demand, teacher and school accountability.

However, the central problem is that teacher accountability cannot be fixed to students' standardized test scores. Why not? Because, the learner's test score does not tell us what decisions a teacher made to get the learner to that score. Was the teacher simply teaching to the test and demanding rote learning, or was the teacher really taking into account each individual learner and supporting his or her learning process?

Evaluating teachers based on student test scores does not evaluate the process of teaching, only its ends, so, the evaluation cannot tell us whether the teacher was in fact a good teacher. Would we say a doctor was good because his patient went from obesity and high-blood pressure to thin and trim? Presumably we first would want to ask, how were these results achieved? By surgery or by the promotion of healthy eating and exercise? While statisticians and economists calculating test scores in order to demonstrate school "progress" to other nations may not care about the answer to these questions, parents, teachers, and the students themselves should.

Beyond this, standardized test scores cannot really tell us whether a student is learning. They often do not illuminate the process of thinking of the child. A good example of this came from a pre-service teacher at Mount Saint Vincent University, who saw in her practicum, that the test assessing probability and likelihood in her Grade 5 classroom was less than adequate for measuring what students knew. On the test, the students were asked to remark on the likelihood of having a birthday this year, and many students marked "impossible." Surprised that so many students got the answer wrong according to the test, she



questioned her students about their answer. One student explained, for example, "well my birthday was in January and now it's in November." Also on other answers, this teacher-in-training soon found that her students were thinking and learning—and were in a certain sense right—even though their test scores showed wrong answers.

Finding out how students are thinking, not just whether or not they got an answer right or wrong, is important for teachers because it tells them where to go next in the lesson. When teachers learn what it is that is making a student confused or why the student is having difficulty understanding something, then they can figure out ways to help the student learn. These moments of difficulty or confusion in a student's thinking process should not be dismissed; they are vital for the teacher to be able to properly assess the learning process. Test scores erase these vital moments of learning, because they erase the necessary moments of confusion or difficulty that are part of every learning process, and thereby erase the individual learner from the educational equation.

As a society, we are at risk of creating unreflective teachers—those who do not think—if we continue the sort of policies that hold teachers accountable for the outcomes of students' learning, without, or independent of, any evaluation of teachers' decision-making processes that led to these outcomes. If we continue to create policies that do not address the underlying process of teaching, then we are essentially telling teachers not to think. That is, we are telling them that what they think and how they judge an educational situation is not valued. If we are not expecting teachers to think on their own, how can we legitimately hold teachers accountable for whether or not learning is occurring in their classrooms?

If we continue down the current path, then teaching will return to being construed as transmitting predetermined outcomes to students and standardized testing will remain as the primary means of verifying that students have

achieved these outcomes. Philosophy of education is needed to assist teachers in finding justifications and criteria for judgment of complex and challenging educational situations in schools. Philosophy of education teaches teachers to think when faced with a problem of practice, to consider all the alternatives, to come up with varied solutions, and to form judgments about what to do based on the learner's needs and the demands of the profession. The more we make teaching a mechanical, unreflective activity, the less we will attract creative and intelligent personalities to the profession, as influential philosopher and educator John

As a society, we are at risk of creating unreflective teachers—those that do not think—if we continue the sort of policies that hold teachers accountable for the outcomes of students' learning, without, or independent of, any evaluation of teachers' decision-making processes that led to these outcomes. If we continue to create policies that do not address the underlying process of teaching, then we are essentially telling teachers not to think.

Dewey pointed out in his 1925 essay "What is the matter with teaching?"

The need to think and judge in educational situations makes teaching a moral endeavour and not simply a set of skills and strategies for managing a classroom. If teachers know not only what they are doing in classrooms, but also understand why they are doing it, then they can contribute to the discussion on good teaching. If we want things to change in the current discourse on education, then we desperately need thoughtful teachers—those who care about learners and the future of the profession—to contribute to this discussion. Can we afford not to allow teachers to think and not to teach them to think like good teachers by making judgments for the learners' sake?

Andrea English is an assistant professor of Philosophy of Education, Faculty of Education, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax. andrea.english@msvu.ca

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Teaching and learning in the 21st century

By Jane Turner

When the ministry talks about 21st century learning and skills, it seems to be talking about the future, something to aspire to. Perhaps someone should tell the ministry that it is over a decade behind the times, not only chronologically, but also with respect to teachers' practice.

In its "futuristic" vision, the ministry is calling for teachers to incorporate the seven Cs into 21st century learning. Along with reading, writing, and numeracy teachers are to include:

- critical thinking and problem solving
- creativity and innovation
- collaboration, teamwork, and leadership
- cross-cultural understanding
- communication, computing and ICT literacy
- career and learning self-reliance
- caring for personal health and planet earth.

As if teachers weren't doing this already. Teachers incorporate these Cs into their classrooms daily. However, there are some important words missing from the ministry's list. In addition to all of the above, our vision for teaching and learning in the 21st century includes, among others, the following Cs:

- co-operation among children
- collegiality between teachers
- consideration and care of others
- collective knowledge and honouring traditional wisdom
- complexity of issues and systems
- concern for a sustainable future
- civic responsibility.

Teachers throughout the province are preparing learning activities, lesson and unit plans, and learning experiences within and with their communities that incorporate the available technology, sophisticated learning outcomes, and skills needed in any century. The only thing standing in teachers' way is shortage—shortage of resources, time, and support.

Government and some pedagogical and political pundits are calling for "...radical change of teaching and learning approaches to fit within new economies and new technologies..." (Naylor, 2011, p. 11 bctf.ca) The focus is on how schools can best prepare students for their future worklife. While it is important that students leave school with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that

will help them in their economic endeavours, there are two very important things to keep in mind. The first is that we cannot know what precise skills and knowledge will be needed for the world of work five or ten years from now. We do know what foundational skills are going to be useful in any circumstance—reading, the ability to communicate, numeracy, flexibility, creative problem-solving, and care for our environment, are great skills for any age. But this debate shouldn't be simply about the skills needed for tomorrow's good jobs. It should be about "...what kind of world we want and then build approaches within education systems to create such a world." (Naylor, 2011, p. 5)

Pardon my cynicism, but a decade of experience with this government has taught me that when educational change is afoot, it usually has more to do with undermining an already tremendous school system, encouraging privatization of public services and cutting real dollars out of the budget so they can be spent elsewhere rather than making improvements to public education.

The ministry is suggesting that there may no longer be a need for teachers in a classroom with students; instead teachers will be facilitators, helping students engage in their passions, on-line, or out in the community. Let students delve into their interests, apprenticing

with those who are the experts, goes the mantra. In his paper, "21st century learning—Widening the frame of focus and debate," (2011) BCTF researcher Charlie Naylor addresses some of the shortcomings of the literature being cited by the government in its vision for "21st century learning." Among other things, Naylor writes:

"While the 'civil society' advocates see public schools as central to maintaining democratic societies, the 21st century schooling advocates lessen the primacy of school both as the place for the delivery of educational services and conceptually as central to the socialization of youth into civil and civic norms. The paper entitled "Schools" in the future, (www.21learn.org/site/wp-content/uploads/Schools-in-the-Future-April-2010.pdf) uses

Why are we looking to school systems that fall well below us in international evaluations, like the United States and the United Kingdom, for educational reform inspiration? Why aren't we looking to the school systems in countries that consistently outperform the rest?

quotation marks to make it clear that they do not necessarily see schools as central to learning." (p.6)

"Schools" in the future and other documents cited on the ministry website offer numerous scenarios and examples of how students will learn in the future. Those based on real-life examples are taken from small-scale institutions piloting programs in private or charter schools. Naylor points out the challenge to move these models from small, intensely motivated exemplars to large scale, system-wide public education for all.

Why are we looking to school systems that fall well below us in international evaluations, like the United States and the United Kingdom, for educational reform inspiration? Why aren't we looking to the school systems in countries that consistently outperform the rest? In the recent OECD Executive Summary of the 2009 results for the Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA), it states that the best performing school systems manage to provide high-quality education to all students. Canada is specifically cited as one of the countries that provides a flat structure of education, ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, economic status, and personal diversity, are welcomed into schools that afford them equitable opportunities.

It has been over 20 years since there was a systemic analysis of public education in BC. A lot has changed in that time and it might be time to re-evaluate our schools. Teachers would welcome a fair and comprehensive assessment of how we can best educate the children of our province. If education reform is on the table, then teachers need to be an integral part of the conversation. Teachers are best positioned to know how policy gets translated into practice. After all, we are the ones in the classrooms and schools across British Columbia. We are the ones teaching so students can learn in the 21st century.

Jane Turner is an assistant director, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division.

21st century learning for survival, not keyboarding skills

By Joanna Larson

When we think of the speed at which technology advances and changes our lives, we have a tendency to get panicky about preparing our children for the future. How do we educate today's youth so they can keep up, be competitive in the job market, and solve problems we have never even heard of? It is this anxiety that I believe has led to the 21st century learning movement that is becoming increasingly pervasive in BC's education circles today, but I also think may be wholly and completely the wrong approach to preparing today's students for tomorrow's future.

The 21st century learning movement has a tendency to confuse the ability to use technology, with actual knowledge. The difference being, the first is merely a mechanical skill, the second is the wisdom which is the true essence of what is necessary to preparing our children and ourselves for an uncertain future.

It is dangerous for us to confuse wisdom with skills because it misdirects us from realizing the importance of accumulated learning, reasoning, critical analysis, creativity, and the ability to analyze, unravel, and solve complicated problems. This is what is really needed, not just for success in the future, but possibly the very survival of humanity.

It seems the biggest proponents of initiatives such as 21st century learning work from the misassumption that our future depends on a yet undiscovered knowledge. This is a new knowledge that can only be derived from the cumulative beliefs and culture of the western world, which is increasingly heightening its focus on technology. These often self-described "futurists," fail to acknowledge the full complement of the more than 7,000 languages and cultures that comprise our world—each a unique variation on who we are as humans.

It is possible the answers to the questions that evoke our fear and anxiety about educating our children for tomorrow have already been answered, just not by the western world. This is the crux of the problem with this burgeoning preoccupation with digital technology. Rather than broaden our knowledge base, it is actually narrowing it.

In his Massey Lecture series "The Wayfinders, Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in a Modern World," anthropologist Wade Davis discusses what he refers to as humanity's greatest legacy, our ethnosphere. He describes the ethnosphere as the

sum total of all language, thoughts, intuitions, social and economic organizations, myths, beliefs, religion, decorative arts, stories, and ritual practices of all humanity. In other words, the cumulative knowledge of every culture spanning the world, since the modern human evolved to walk upright.

Since language is implicitly tied to the transmission of information, knowledge, myths, and beliefs, it is the foremost delineator of unique worldviews from around the globe. What does it mean to us then, that over 600 of the world's languages have fewer than 100 speakers, and at least 3,500 languages are not being passed down to children? What does it mean that we are allowing the disappearance of these enormous cultural vaults of information and expertise through the possible extinction of half of the world languages spoken today?

On average, every two weeks, the sole speaker of one of our world's languages dies, taking with her or him all the wealth of knowledge, intuitions, skills, and expertise of that particular language and culture. It seems to me, that at this rate, we are losing far more knowledge on any given day than we are acquiring through research and development at Microsoft, Apple, or Research In Motion.

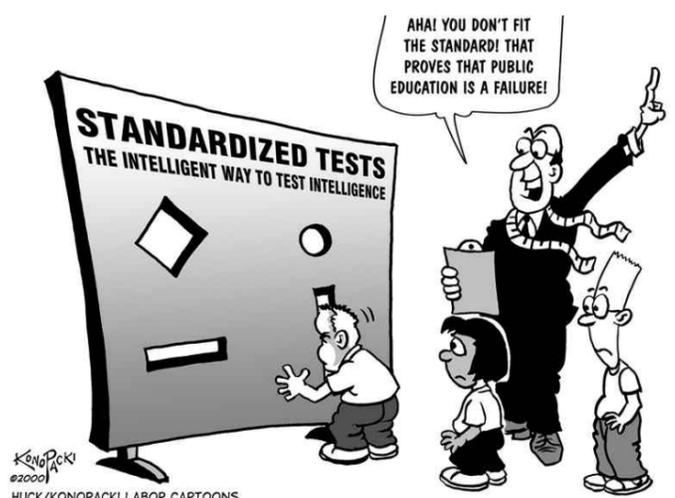
Perhaps, preparing our children for the future that awaits them is not about teaching them how to improve their keyboarding skills, or using the latest marketed software. Perhaps, preserving and understanding the importance of ethno-diversity is the key to their future success.

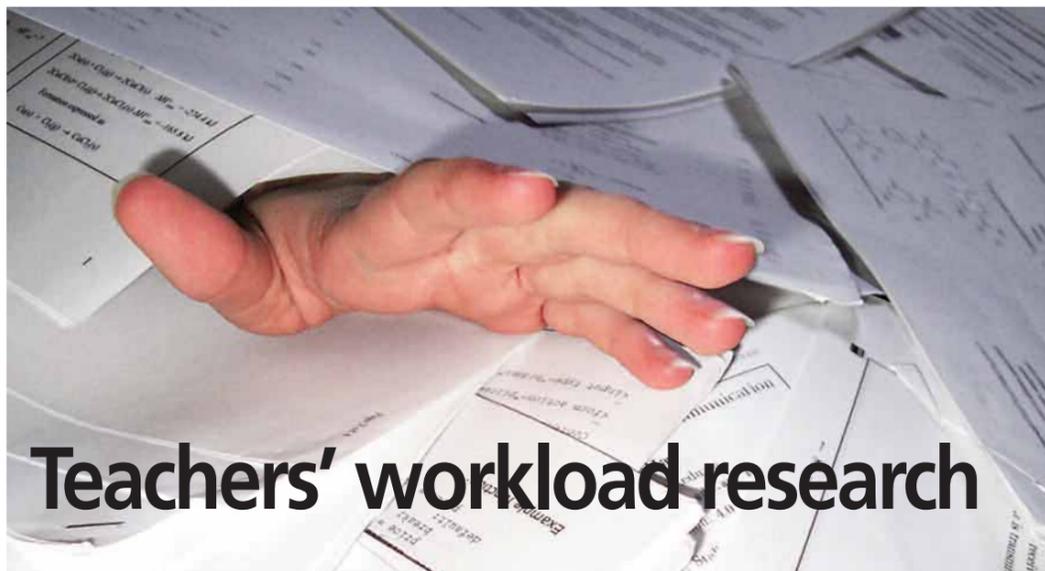
The 21st century learning movement has a tendency to confuse the ability to use technology, with actual knowledge. The difference being, the first is merely a mechanical skill, the second is the wisdom which is the true essence of what is necessary to preparing our children and ourselves for an uncertain future.

The ancient wisdom permeating a myriad of cultures around the world is simply not inferior to the new knowledge and skill set evolving in western society. It is merely an alternate paradigm to how we should exist in our world and move forward as a people. This is precisely why I believe preservation and study of that wisdom should be the heart of education in the 21st century. Addressing global warming, environmental degradation, depletion of energy resources, unbridled population growth, and economic instability requires this.

Joanna Larson is president of BCTF local 52, Prince Rupert, and is a member of the BCTF Professional and Social Issues Advisory Committee.

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Teachers' workload research

By Charlie Naylor and Margaret White

This continues the series of articles sharing information about the BCTF Research study, "The Worklife of British Columbia Teachers in 2009." All of the reports from this study can be found on the BCTF web site.

The findings on teacher workload challenge the perception that teaching is a "9:00 to 3:00" job. This study shows that full-time teachers are working hours well over the standard workweek, with a considerable amount of the work taking place evenings and weekends. During the hours that school is in session, teachers have very little time to attend to the growing administrative demands, to mark, or to prepare classroom materials. Much of this work spills over into

their personal time. Many teachers are also involved in extra-curricular activities outside of the regular school day.

Full-time teachers, who responded to the survey, work an average of 47.8 hours per week, with 1 in 10 teachers (including part-time teachers) working 60 or more hours per week. Teachers spend a significant amount of time outside of the regular workday on school-related tasks, most commonly on classroom preparation (88%), attending meetings (84%), marking (76%), work-related e-mail (74%), and working with students outside of class (70%). Doing preparation (6.6 hours) and marking (4.5 hours) take up the most amount of extra time each week. Administrative tasks also take up considerable time for many teachers, ranging from an average of 1.5 to 1.8 hours per week.

The findings on teacher workload challenge the perception that teaching is a "9:00 to 3:00" job. This study shows that full-time teachers are working hours well over the standard workweek, with a considerable amount of the work taking place evenings and weekends.

Teachers, especially in secondary programs, spend considerable time outside of the regular school day on extra-curricular activities, including coaching, fundraising, committees, planning concerts, and other school events. Almost one-half of teachers (44%) are involved in a professional

learning community or another form of collaboration. In terms of union involvement, 4% of respondents are involved in provincial specialist associations, and 14% are in other union roles.

New teachers in particular said they spend a lot of time preparing instructional materials, not knowing if they will teach the same grade or course the following year.

Being a new teacher, I spend much of my time with preparation and marking. It is overwhelming at times as I still haven't found a balance between work and play. I love what I do and wouldn't want to do anything else. However, I struggle with balance.

Several teachers commented that their preparation time had increased due to a loss of support-staff positions in the school to assist with photocopying and other assistance with teaching activities. Teachers' comments either directly stated or implied that current assigned prep time is not enough to cover all that classroom preparation involves.

I spend a lot of time with preparation and marking at school and at home. I find I have very little if any time to do this during the school day as I am always working with students. Very little ends up being accomplished during prep time as I'm usually setting up for the next hands-on activity. It takes a lot of time and planning to provide experiential learning opportunities.

Many teachers reported higher workload and stress when they were writing report cards.

Report-card time is extremely stressful for me. I'm usually trying to finish marking assignments or projects. All of the work for report

cards has to be done outside of the 30 hours of school time, yet I still have to prep for my lessons, etc. I'd estimate I work an extra eight hours on the weekend for this.

Work-life balance was clearly an issue for some teachers.

The hours are difficult to calculate. I arrive at school and power through most days until 5:00 p.m. with few recess or lunch breaks. Coaching eliminates prep time and we all give up time for recess (or out of school) playground duty. I am drained when I come home to my own two young kids. If I could afford to stay home I would; the job takes its toll on my emotional and physical health.

The data from this survey provide evidence of an intensifying workload for many teachers, with work-life balance likely affecting more women, some of whom are balancing meeting the needs of children and aging parents while also maintaining their career as teachers. Women with children and aging parents, have become known as the "sandwich generation" as they struggle to meet work and home needs. The instability of teaching for new teachers also appears significant, with uncertainty in terms of continuing work and constant shifts in assignment. This evidence suggests that the BCTF should address teacher workload issues in future bargaining and advocacy approaches.

This research was conducted by Charlie Naylor, senior researcher, and Margaret White, senior research analyst, of the BCTF Research Department.

Full report: Worklife of BC Teachers in 2009—bcf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=21498

The impact of the Grade 10 and 11 provincial exams

By Jenny Garrels and Jane Turner

The Grade 4 and 7 FSA exams have had their fair share of attention from the BCTF and the public over the last few years. However, the impact of the Grade 10 and 11 provincial exams on our teaching and students' learning, although much discussed when the exams were first proposed as part of the Grad Review, hasn't been debated, discussed, and scrutinized quite so thoroughly. Perhaps now is the time to do so.

Students must write provincial exams in English 10, Science 10, Mathematics 10, and Social Studies in Grade 11. In Math 10, there are separate exams for Apprenticeship and Workplace Math 10, and Foundations of Mathematics and Pre-calculus 10. In Social Studies 11, there are separate exams for Social Studies 11, First Nations Studies 12, and Civic Studies 11. In all cases, the exam counts for 20% of a student's overall mark.

It is ironic that as the ministry is calling for the teaching of 21st century skills, personalized learning, and moving toward the implementation of the seven Cs, one of the great impediments to such movement is the Grade 10 and 11 exams. Teachers are resorting to 20th century teaching methods like lectures, in order to "cover the content" that will be on the exams. Spending time doing in-depth project work has to be abandoned in favour of ensuring the facts to be tested are known by students. Instead of critical thinking assignments, students are faced with knowledge/recall work as teachers struggle to cover overloaded curriculums.

Both the English and social studies exams have open response sections that must be marked by the classroom teacher. The ministry amended the *School Act Regulations* to add that duty to the teacher's workload.

In a survey conducted by the science teachers in the province, respondents indicated that the:

Science 10 Provincial Final Exam has caused a significant decrease or entire deletion of lab activities in Science 10 classrooms, coupled with a preponderance of direct instruction through lectures. Additionally, Science 10 students now rarely have the opportunity to do group work, research projects and classroom presentations, take field trips to science facilities or explore local topics or current events due to the stringency of the approximately 100 Prescribed Learning Outcomes and hundreds of scientific terms that students have to memorize for this exam. — www.bcscta.ca

The context in which the new Grade 10 and 11 provincial exams were introduced exacerbates their effects for students. Grade 10 was added to the graduation requirements at the same time that Grade 10 and 11 exams were introduced. Low-achieving and at-risk students now face a formidable barrier, and teachers have less flexibility to deal with it.

In addition to the frustration caused to teachers' reduced instructional options, students also reported that they were increasingly stressed by the exams and dissatisfied with their experiences in Science 10 classrooms. Initially, many students chose not to enrol in

senior science electives for fear that their Grade 10 experiences would be repeated in Grades 11 and 12. However, that impact has been mitigated over the last few years thanks to the hard work of science teachers to ensure positive experiences for their students.

While provincial specialist associations (PSAs) in the other curricular areas subjected to the Grade 10/11 exams haven't done similar research, the anecdotal evidence is very similar. Teachers of Social Studies 11 classes also report that they are rushing to cover the details that are tested rather than providing students with quality, in-depth learning experiences that can spark skill development, life lessons and on-going interest in a new area. Curricular areas that do not have provincial exams are also affected by the pressure these exams put on students and school resources. Some schools look at providing extra instructional time for the subject areas that have provincial exams, taking time away from other areas, usually electives.

No wonder students complain about school being irrelevant. Teachers would like nothing more than to create student-centred, high-interest, differentiated lessons that taught skills for real life, knowledge for critical analysis, and promoted attitudes that encouraged learning.

The context in which the new Grade 10 and 11 provincial exams were introduced exacerbates their effects for students. Grade 10 was added to the graduation requirements at the same time that Grade 10 and 11 exams were introduced. Low-achieving and at-risk students now face a formidable barrier, and teachers have less flexibility to deal with it. For example, students who fail English 10 or Science 10 can no longer be put into Communications

11 or Science and Tech 11; they need credit for English 10 and Science 10 in order to graduate. English 10 is more difficult than Communications 11 and Science 10 is more difficult than Science and Tech 11. The "bar" has been set higher at Grade 10 than at Grade 12.

Both logic and research tell us that the new provincial exams at the Grade 10 and 11 levels will likely result in a decrease in the six-year graduation rate. This has happened in other jurisdictions that introduced compulsory exams before Grade 12. American states have experienced increased drop-out rates among black, Hispanic, poor, and recent-immigrant students. In other words, there has been an accumulation of disadvantage for the disadvantaged.

While students don't need to pass the Grade 10/11 exams to pass the course, the exams are worth only 20% of the overall grade, the students must write them in order to graduate. Students who are the most vulnerable are least likely to write the exam, knowing with a certainty only a 16-year-old has, that they will not pass anyway. As a result, the student failure rate is kept artificially high. Perhaps this is another route to Gordon Campbell's vision of a Grade 10 leaving certificate? While the outcry from both parents and teachers shut the door on that idea almost as soon as it was uttered, it seems this govern-

ment hasn't abandoned the idea completely, but simply tried to find another way to achieve the same ends.

If we are truly to engage in discussion about what schools should be like for teaching and learning in the 21st century, then the question of the Grade 10/11 exams needs to be put on the public table for debate. While FSAs have received most of the publicity, secondary teachers know only too well the damage being done to children when they are forced to sit for the provincial exams. These are high-stake tests, where opting out is not a possibility, and the results make up 20% of the final mark that appears on graduation transcripts. How can we possibly engage students in their passions, provide opportunities to think critically, be innovative and creative, and evaluate the ethical uses of technology if teachers are busily "covering the content" for the upcoming exam? These two educational paradigms come from different centuries, embrace conflicting ideologies, and play out in diametrically opposed practices. It is time to leave the 19th century behind and be able to fully engage in teaching and learning for the 21st century.

Jenny Garrels is president, Sunshine Coast Teachers' Association and Jane Turner is assistant director, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division.

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Completed the mission:

A unique perspective of success in secondary school



By Angelika Sellick

What does success mean? For many people in Canada, success in secondary school is equated with getting good grades, graduating, and maybe even enrolling in college or university. But what if a student does not speak the language of instruction beyond a beginner level, is unable to read or write in their first language, or perhaps has never even been to school before? Is such a student destined to not succeed?

In a study conducted last year in a Vancouver secondary school, I asked students from a sheltered literacy class about their views on what it means to be successful (or a good student) in school. This particular class was made up of a diverse group of students coming from Vietnam, Thailand, Iraq, and Myanmar. Their ages ranged from 13 to 17 and the students had been living in Canada for as little as a few months to as long as four years. Most of the students spoke no English upon arrival in Canada and had little to no literacy ability—in terms of reading and writing—in their first language. Reasons for their low literacy included that some students came from indigenous cultures where the language is not a written one and some had lived for several years in refugee camps where their formal schooling had been interrupted.

During the interviews, students

spoke about how good students are those who do homework, study, finish projects, help and respect others, ask their teacher and classmates for help, read, write, and learn new words. It is noteworthy that none of the students spoke explicitly about getting good grades in school, although this may have been because their teacher in the sheltered literacy class did not use a grading system. Interestingly, when asked whether or not they felt they were good students, most were hesitant to say either way. The most common response was “I don’t know” or “Ask my teacher.” Several of the students stated they were not good students because they sometimes were absent or came late to class. Only a few students replied affirmatively, highlighting that they speak nicely to others, help their mother at home, and are a good friend at school. I wondered why the students responded in the way they did. Perhaps the students’ negative responses reflected their adoption of mainstream Canadian values around education, such as the teacher is the best judge of a student’s performance and the importance placed on good attendance. And perhaps, the students who answered positively were actually making links between being a good student and being a good person. The students’ responses were further layered by the fact that the interviews had been conducted in English. Yet despite language barriers, one student challenged my use of the binary terms “good” and “bad” student. His explanation was: “I am don’t like be the good student too because I like I am. I am who I am.”

...from the perspective of a teacher, what does success in school mean to you? What does success in school mean to your students? Does their understanding change across time and context? Such conversations with students, particularly those who have come to Canada recently as immigrants or refugees, may prove to be not only valuable and insightful, but also a great deal of fun.

Following up on these interviews, the teacher of the sheltered literacy class later asked her students to informally share what success meant to them. One student’s suggestion that success means “completed the mission” was popular amongst many of the students, particularly the boys. Their classroom teacher thought this reference might have been inspired by the video games which the boys often played. As to what they meant exactly by “completing the mission,” the students did not clarify. Moreover, it was unclear whether they

were referring to completing “the mission” that day, week, or year. Below are some other interesting responses given by the students, preceded by their teacher’s prompts.

Success: This word means...

- Completed the mission
- Not failed
- Do stuff that you have been told
- Be quiet

In my first country, for me, this would mean...

- To help my family
- I would look after cow after school
- I help family cut rice
- Play soccer everyday
- Is not poor
- Learn more English

In Canada, success for me would be...

- Going to school everyday
- Study and learning English
- Study hard and finish secondary school
- Play tennis
- Genius
- Have more money
- Work at McDonalds

This secondary school can help me be successful by...

- Helping me do homework
- Learn English
- Learn other stuff
- Sports
- Kind to me

To be successful in Canada, I need...

- My family
- Friends
- Girlfriend
- Have a job and learning English
- To graduate
- A good job and a house
- To help other people

Returning to the original question about the meaning of success, this particular group of secondary school students seemed to hold unique, diverse, and multilayered understandings of success that went beyond academic achievement. Much time could be spent unpacking the possible influences and implications lying behind their responses. The intent of this article, however, is not to deconstruct but rather to stimulate discussion. So from the perspective of a teacher, what does success in school mean to you? What does success in school mean to your students? Does their understanding change across time and context? Such conversations with students, particularly those who have come to Canada recently as immigrants or refugees, may prove to be not only valuable and insightful, but also a great deal of fun.

Angelika Sellick is ESL curriculum development facilitator, UBC Learning Exchange, ESL Program.

AGM 2011 Victoria—Agenda

March 19–22, 2011

FIRST SESSION

March 19, 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 2010 AGM Minutes
- Stewardship report on 2010 AGM
- Report of the nominating chairperson

President's report
Susan Lambert

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

Annual General Meeting
– Recommendation 5
– Recommendation 32
– Resolutions 103–105

Constitution and By-laws
– Resolution 101

Leadership Report
– Recommendation 1

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 20, Sunday morning

9:00 a.m.

Aboriginal Education

- Recommendations 2–4
- Resolution 102

Social Justice

- Recommendation 29
- Resolution 145

Bargaining

- Recommendations 6–7
- Resolutions 105–109

12:10 p.m.

College of Teachers' report
College Council chairperson

12:30 p.m.
Lunch

THIRD SESSION

March 20, Sunday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Teachers Teaching on Call
– Resolution 148

Professional Relations

- Resolution 138

Provincial Specialist Associations
Resolutions 139–140

Labour Affairs

- Recommendation 24

Privatization and Commercialization
– Resolutions 134–135

School Buildings, Grounds, and Facilities
– Resolution 144

Teacher Education
– Resolutions 146–147

Teacher Exchange
– Recommendation 30

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

5:30 p.m.
Adjourn

FOURTH SESSION

March 21, Monday morning

9:00 a.m.

Guest speaker

Sir Ken Robinson

10:15 a.m.

Education Policy

- Recommendation 9
- Recommendation 31
- Resolutions 112–116

Professional Development
– Resolutions 136–137

Professional Ethics, Rights, and Standards
– Recommendation 26

Political Action
– Resolutions 132–133

Technology
– Resolutions 149–150

Education Finance
– Recommendation 8
– Resolutions 110–111

12:30 p.m.

Lunch

FIFTH SESSION

March 21, Monday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Pensions
– Recommendation 25
– Resolutions 125–131

Unfinished business

5:25 p.m.
Final call for nominations
Announcements

5:30 p.m.
Dinner

SIXTH SESSION

March 21, Monday evening

7:30 p.m.

Unfinished business

9:30 p.m.
Adjourn

SEVENTH SESSION

March 22, 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 Colwood Room (Victoria Conference Centre). 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
– Recommendations 16–23
– Resolution 124

Public Affairs
– Recommendations 27–28
– Resolutions 141–143

Unfinished business

12:15 p.m.

Committee reports—Questions

12:30 p.m.

Lunch

EIGHTH SESSION

March 22, Tuesday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Finance

- Comments from the treasurer
- Recommendations 10–15
- Resolutions 117–123

4:00 p.m.

Awards

- GA Fergusson Memorial
- Honorary Life Membership
- Recognition of Retiring Activists

Unfinished Business

5:30 p.m.

Dinner

NINTH SESSION

March 22, 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



DARREN STONE IMAGES

Special resolutions to the 2011 AGM

Constitution and By-laws

Resolution 101

That the BCTF Constitution and Policies be amended to clarify that:

That By-law 6.7 (second paragraph) be amended by replacing the phrase "to hold and exercise the voting right of the voting card or cards that she/he has been assigned" with "who shall have the same duties and powers as those of a regular Local Representative."

Health, welfare, and safety of teachers

Recommendation 16

That procedure 13.C.02–3.2 (b) be amended by deleting "or psychiatrist."

Recommendation 17

That Procedure 13.C.02–14.1 in its entirety, be replaced with: For a claimant to remain eligible to receive benefits, any return to normal employment duties on a part-time basis must be recommended by a physician and approved by the plan administrator. The plan administrator's decision is subject to review by the Salary Indemnity Plan Committee.

Recommendation 18

That procedure 13.C.02–14.4 be deleted.

Recommendation 19

That procedure 13.C.02–15.1 in its entirety, be replaced with:
For a claimant to remain eligible

to receive benefits, any remunerative employment other than the claimant's normal employment duties must be recommended by a physician and approved by the plan administrator. The plan administrator's decision is subject to review by the Salary Indemnity Plan Committee.

Recommendation 20

That Procedure 13.C.02–17.1 (a) and (b) be amended by deleting "physical or mental."

Recommendation 21

That Procedure 13.C.02–17.4 be amended by replacing "an organic disease or a mental or nervous disorder" with "a physical or mental illness or injury."

Recommendation 22

That procedure 13.C.02–19.4 (e) in its entirety, be replaced with: the amount of the Accommodation Employment Offset ("Offset").

The Offset is intended to ensure that total income from accommodation employment and the Salary Indemnity Plan does not exceed the employment income before the disability occurred. "Net Employment Income" in a month, whether before or after the disability has occurred, is equal to the gross employment income in that month, minus the deductions under the *Income Tax Act*, the *Canada Pension Plan Act*, the *Employment Insurance Act* and the *Teachers' Pension Plan Act*.

If the total of New Employment Income from accommodation employment (as described in Regulation 23) and the gross benefit from the Salary Indemnity Plan is greater than the Net Employment Income before the disability occurred, the benefit from the Salary Indemnity Plan shall be reduced.

After the reduction, the New Employment Income from the accommodation employment plus the net benefit from the Salary Indemnity Plan will be equal to the Net Employment Income before the disability occurred. This reduction is referred to as the Offset.

Recommendation 23

That procedure 13.C.02–23.1 in its entirety, be replaced with: For a claimant to remain eligible to receive benefits, any remunerative employment must be recommended by a physician and approved by the plan administrator. The plan administrator's decision is subject to review by the Salary Indemnity Plan Committee.

Candidates for Executive Committee

President



Susan Lambert

Our bargaining and FSA campaigns have something in common. Both recognize that a standardized approach doesn't work. Our tenacious resistance to the census administration and misuse of standardized testing has finally resulted in a developing consensus that there must be a better way. We can take pride in our principled campaign in defence of the high quality of teaching and learning in the province.

Our bargaining campaign is also one which rejects a provincial standardized approach. While still

negotiating "big ticket" items like salary and benefits at the provincial table, we are determined to negotiate most other items locally. We want to establish Board/Union relationships that are mutually respectful, dignified, and productive. Teachers realize there are no standard approaches or solutions that work well for everyone and that negotiating local solutions together strengthens commitment both to the process and to the solutions reached.

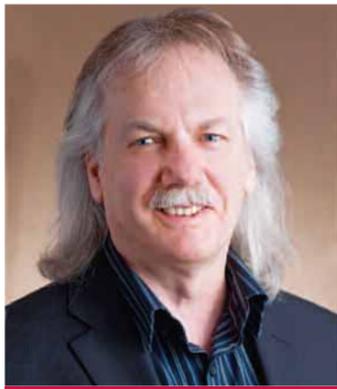
I am proud of all of our work advocating for public education,

from our opposition to the FSAs, to our determination to improve working and learning conditions, to our bargaining campaign. I am honoured to again ask for your support as we move forward together to strengthen teaching and learning in BC.

EXPERIENCE: *Provincial:* BCTF president (1 yr.) 1st Vice-president (3 yrs.), 2nd Vice-president (3 yrs.), 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

Our passion to defend public education is driven by our daily work in our classrooms, locals, and Federation.

Engaging and mobilizing members, new and experienced, and supporting all locals is critical for a strong, effective BCTF.

Together, we make a difference. It is critical we:

- achieve significant collective agreement improvements at the local and provincial level that meets the needs of all of our members and improves students learning conditions.
- advocate for increased and stable

funding to ensure support for every student, and stop privatization.

- engage in the electoral process to make public education a priority for all levels of governance.
- enhance professional development and support for members.
- ensure our voice on education policy at the local and provincial level.
- exercise and improve our professional autonomy.
- maintain a college of teachers with a limited mandate and an elected teacher majority.
- promote fair provincial assessment policies.

- support and strengthen social justice principles, practices and equity in our schools and communities.

I believe in leadership that is thoughtful and respectful, promotes 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 1st Vice-president (1 yr.), 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 Mobilization 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 (26). *Local:* President (15), Bargaining Chair (2), Chief Negotiator, Local Bargaining (3 rounds), Bargaining Cttee. WLC Chair (2), Staff rep, District H & S Rep (4), EAP District Cttee. (14), *Teaching:* 33 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

The political landscape has been volatile as we've prepared ourselves provincially and locally for bargaining. We must continue to advocate, with all political parties and in all of our communities, for smaller classes and more supports for students with special needs, for meaningful engagement with diversity and equity in schools, for increased access to meaningful professional development, for teacher-generated assessment and other professional issues important to members. All of these require restored and improved public

education funding and all would benefit from the restoration of full-scope bargaining at the local and provincial levels.

I am committed to defending members' rights and improving their working conditions, including TTOCs and newer members; it is also time to move forward on obtaining Aboriginal employment equity agreements in all school districts.

Our work as a union is complex and multifaceted, but our strength as a collective and our work with the labour movement continues to

make us effective. Still, improved member engagement is crucial for our future. The Federation must continue to work for all locals and with all locals on these issues and the many other areas of concern for members.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: 2nd Vice-President (current), Member-at-Large Executive Committee (1 yr.), *Teacher* Newsmagazine Advisory Committee, BC Federation of Labour delegate, Social Justice Review Steering Committee, AGM delegate.

Local: President (2.5 yrs.), Vice-President (2 yrs.), LR, Local Bargaining Committee and Collective Agreement preparation, Communications chair, Pride Committee co-chair, Strike Co-ordinating Committee (2005), Local Election Contact, Staff Rep. *Teaching:* elementary and secondary school teaching experience, and district-level role as anti-homophobia consultant. *Education:* MA (UBC), B.Ed. (McGill), BA (Carleton).

Member-at-Large



David Komljenovic

As teachers, we have influenced change in the public education system through our advocacy work, through our activism, and through the negotiations of our classroom conditions. We have recognized that we cannot separate our working conditions from the learning conditions of our students nor from the public education system we are integral to. I believe it is the role of the BCTF to speak out (through various mediums) in favour of a strong and egalitarian public education system and advocate for a system that respects teachers as

professionals and that provides optimal classroom conditions for our students. We achieve improvements for our students when we all work together toward common goals through a strong union.

I thank the membership for providing me the opportunity to serve them this past year on the Executive and ask you to grant me the privilege to serve you again. It would be an honour.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: BCTF Executive member-at-large (1 yr.), BC Fed delegate (1 yr.), WLC /Bargaining Advisory Committee (4 yrs.), Ad Hoc Committee on Bargaining Structures, BCTF SURT facilitator (3 yrs.), LR (2 yr.), AGM Delegate (9 yrs.), Summer Conference (7 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 co-ordinator, 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 Science/Math/Physics (4 yrs.), Adult Education (1 yr.), TTOC (2 yrs.) *Education:* B.Sc. (UBC), B.Ed. (UBC), Dipl. Ed. (Guidance) (UBC)

Member-at-Large



Joanna Larson

Over the past ten years public education in British Columbia has suffered from the relentless attacks of the liberal government. Teachers have been besieged and under assault, first from the stripping of our class-size and composition language to the Avison Report and merit pay. And yet, we have sustained our place on the international stage as leaders in one of the most enviable education systems in the world.

The latest attacks have come in the guise of 21st century learning. Some have implied that our union

and our bargaining structures are obstacles, which need to be eradicated.

A consumerist version of personalized learning and an overemphasis on skills and technology are intended to replace the relationship building, knowledge and liberal thought that form the basic structures and purpose of public education.

BCTF members recognize that public education serves our democracy by ensuring that students will have the ability to make sense of and participate

responsibly in the communities in which they live. This belief is the core value of what we do.

I offer my passion and commitment in the fight to preserve and enhance our amazing public schools. I would be honoured to serve you as member-at-large.

EXPERIENCE:

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

Local: President (2 yrs.); 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



Terri Mooring

Teachers believe passionately public education is critical to a just and equitable society. Our powerful united voice is influential in shaping education policy. Our unity around standardized testing has brought support from unexpected places; we continue our struggle to assert professional rights.

BC schools are highly regarded internationally. Too often success comes at the expense of teacher wellness. Our classes are overcrowded and have too many needs due to underfunding. It's imperative class-size and composition limits

return to Collective Agreements.

We face incredible challenges; especially bargaining. The needs of TTOCs and our underemployed cannot be ignored. Significant improvements to Local Agreements are overdue, and provincial PELRA items must show major gains. We must expand professional autonomy rights and support professional development as we face government initiatives. Teachers need improvements that positively impact our daily work lives, enabling us to focus on the amazing work we do without feeling over-

whelmed by unacceptable working and learning conditions.

As an experienced bargainer, I have negotiated many local improvements, including an Employment Equity Agreement. I am prepared to deal with bargaining challenges. As an experienced BCTF Executive Committee member, I have worked to build consensus, while offering an independent voice. I would be honoured to continue to serve as Member at Large.

EXPERIENCE:

National: Canadian Labour Congress Delegate (1); *Provincial:* BCTF Executive member-at-large (2); BC Federation of Labour Delegate (3); BCTF Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee Liaison (2); AGM Delegate (17). *Local:* President (4), 1st Vice-president (6), LR (4), Bargaining Chair (2), Gender Equity Chair (4), Professional Development Chair (2), Social Justice Chair (2), School Union Rep (10). *Teaching:* 22 years intermediate classroom; Resource Teacher (1). *Education:* Med (UNBC); Curriculum and Counseling; BA (SFU).

Member-at-Large



Paul Steer

We walk a difficult path, through challenging times. Our work in support of students' learning has never been more challenging than it is right now. Teachers throughout British Columbia endure multiple indignities: year after year budgets shrink while the number of students in our classrooms grow larger, the composition of our classrooms grow more challenging every year, and we face a government willing to condone these adverse circumstances while pretending all is well. But teachers know that all is far from well. Deservedly, teachers

expect the BCTF to achieve for them improved salary, benefits, and working conditions; protection from interference and redress for past injustices; and freedom to do their best and finest work: education of the young and preparation for citizenship in a more inclusive, civil, and compassionate society.

With all who desire a better union, I will work to achieve:

1. improved Salary, Benefits, and Working Conditions for teachers.
2. restoration of stripped contract rights and provisions.
3. enhanced Professional Autonomy

and improved Professional Development.

4. a renewal of government's commitment to Public Education.

We walk a difficult path through challenging times, but we need never walk alone. We shall walk this road together.

Paul Steer's website:
<http://paulsteer.ca/>

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: BCTF Judicial Council, (Current); CTF delegate (2 yrs.); *Teacher* newsmagazine Advisory Board (2, 3 yr. terms); Federation

Leadership Institute (3 yrs.); Summer Conference delegate (8 yrs.); AGM delegate (12 yrs.). *Local:* President (2 yrs.); Vice-president (4 yrs.); Local Rep (5+ yrs.); Social Justice Chair (2 yrs.); plus extensive local and ad-hoc committee membership and service. *Teaching:* Since 1981: Elementary, mainly Intermediate, but including some Primary; Special Ed; Junior & Senior Secondary; Alternate Education, 1995-2005; *Education:* B.F.A. (UBC '79); PDP (SFU, '81), M.Ed. (USM '94).

Member-at-Large



Christine Stewart

My traditional name is Galksi' Gibaykwhl Sook' - Wilps Ksim Xsaan and I am from the Nisga'a Nation.

What makes me proud about being a teacher is we remain united and strong even in times of adversity.

We have together made a great difference for social equity in our worksites and the lives for children in BC public schools. We continue to work within BC labour to advance improved living conditions for the children we teach and communities we live and work in. We will continue to face many

challenges as we attend to the daily attempts to erode our profession by government and certifying bodies. Whether these institutions focus on eroding our professional autonomy or working/learning conditions, we are at the forefront of the struggle to protect our rights and the public education system which we are integral to. As we enter local and provincial bargaining, we need to maintain a strong union by working with every member to ensure their voices are heard. There are few organizations in the world as democratic as ours and this needs to continue.

My experience working on the BCTF executive representing all issues facing teachers, and working together for our membership has been invaluable. It would be an honour to continue serving you.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: BCTF Executive Member at Large (2009 to 2011), BCTF, PSA Past President Aboriginal Education Association, WLCB Committee member, past VTF member working on our Letter of Understanding; Employment Equity for Aboriginal Teachers, SURT trainer and presenter, Summer Institute trainer and participant, BCTF AGM participant since 1998, CTF Aboriginal Standing

Committee (1 yr.), Summer Conference participant and Aboriginal Leadership since 1998. *Local:* VSTA (4 yrs.) VESTA (1.5 yrs.) VSTA Staff Rep (1 yr.) VSTA Co-chair School PD rep (1 yr.), VSTA Gender Equity Rep (3 yrs.), VSTA Member at Large since 2009. BCTF Staff PSID Aboriginal Education: 2004 to 2008 *Teaching:* I have taught in both Secondary and Elementary and as an instructor for both SFU and UBC Faculty of Education courses, and have worked as a research assistant. *Education:* BA SFU, Joint Major in Women's Studies and Psychology, PDP K to 12 Diversity Module, MA Education SFU, Diploma in Guidance Counsellor UBC in progress.

Member-at-Large



Wendy Turner

We are entering a time of opportunity, with elections looming municipally, provincially, and federally, to influence future public education policy. It is a time to assert our professional rights by demanding that those seeking election address our working conditions and our students' learning conditions.

It is a time of opportunity as we move into local bargaining with our elected school boards. We can look forward to opening local tables and bargaining language that reflects our current needs and practices.

It is a time to push forward our message that real choice for children in education comes from a fully funded, equitable public school system. Conversely, we need to remind our employers that a lack of government funding does not remove our members' collective rights.

We need to take this opportunity to stand together and go forward as united, confident professionals who advocate for the work they do with children on a daily basis. We need to share our stories of their successes and needs and how those

are best supported within the public education system.

I am honoured to work with my colleagues to accomplish our common goals as professionals. Together, we are the BCTF.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: Finance Committee, Ad Hoc Committee on TTOC Work in BC, BCTF SURT Facilitator, Local Representative, AGM Delegate *Local:* President, Vice President, Bargaining Team, Local Election Contact, School Staff Rep., TTOC Co-Chair

Teaching: Music/Band, Grade 5 & 6 Elementary, Grade 7-9 Middle School (science, math, social studies)

Education: Bachelor of Education (University of Victoria), Master of Arts in Administration, Curriculum and Instruction (Gonzaga University)

Member-at-Large



Jennifer Wadge

There is no doubt that next year will be an exciting and challenging year for BC teachers. By the time this statement is printed, we will have opened local bargaining tables with a view to expanding the scope of bargaining. For those who have taught for five years or less, this will be their first experience with bargaining. The BCTF and locals can use this as an opportunity to engage newer members. TTOCs and newer teachers often struggle the most with the challenges created by the underfunding of our public education system. Overcrowded classrooms,

cuts to specialist teachers, and an increasing workload all have a negative effect on teacher wellness, especially for those still gaining experience.

When we are constantly standing in defense of public education, it's easy to become mired in the negative. We must focus on our achievements in order to find the strength to carry on fighting for what we believe in.

We have made advancements in our FSA campaign, but 21st Century Learning and the BC College of Teachers are issues which we must

focus on in the coming year. I offer my enthusiasm and commitment and I would be honoured to serve as member-at-large.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: Resolutions Committee (1 yr.), LR (2 yrs.), AGM Delegate (3 yrs.), Summer Conference (3 yrs.), BC Federation of Labour Delegate (1 yr.) *Local:* Local 2nd Vice President (current), Local Executive (3 yrs.), Bargaining Committee (2 yrs.), Local Resolutions Committee (3 yrs.), Staff Rep (2 yrs.), Communication Audit

Committee (2 yrs.), School Pro-D Committee (3 yrs.)

Teaching: Elementary (4 yrs.)

Education: B.A. (SFU), B. Ed. (UBC), P.B.D. (Special Education) (SFU)



To market to market

Companies are forever trying to infiltrate the schools with their products placed prominently. Just look at the proliferation of pop machines with their attendant corporate contracts. Start them drinking Coke at age six and you'll have a Coke-drinker for life.

By Ozlem Sensoy

About the time that TVs were being mounted in the hallways and classrooms around the province, a great marketing strategy developed. If schools would show ads from corporate sponsors on their publicly mounted TVs, only for five minutes every hour, they would receive free news feed and cash. To funding-strapped schools, it sounded like a win-win. Kids would see the news (and a few ads) and schools would get more money.

Very few schools were suckered by this ploy. It was seen as a crass attempt to market to the unsuspecting student population of British Columbia. Rather than sell students' minds for a few pieces of silver, schools and boards said collectively, "no thanks."

Was this the end of trying to tap into the vast market that is the kiddie population of our province? Just as this wasn't the first attempt, it also wasn't the last.

Companies are forever trying to infiltrate the schools with their products placed prominently. Just look at the proliferation of pop machines with their attendant corporate contracts. Start them drinking Coke at age six and you'll have a Coke-drinker for life.

The more insidious marketers are those that try to dress their product placement as curriculum resource materials. When I was a Social Studies department head, I'd get all kinds of packages from places like marketing boards, inviting teachers to bring their classes for a tour of

their industry. Fancy booklets with bright coloured visuals would arrive regularly, extolling the virtues of something or other, pretending to be unbiased information on a specific topic.

Dr. Ozlem Sensoy and Dr. Beth Marshall, from Simon Fraser University have recently written an introduction and edited *Rethinking Popular Culture and Media*, (a publication from Rethinking Schools) that deals with corporatization of schools, as well as other issues related to pop culture, media, and education. The articles are written by teachers in language that is clear and teacher-friendly and explore the breadth and depth of creeping corporatism in our schools.

The book can be sourced at www.rethinkingschools.org/ProdDetails.asp?ID=9780942961485&d=praise

Sensoy is always on the lookout for the latest example of corporate cur, so please pass on to her the latest missives from the public and private marketers.

WANTED. Bad curriculum. Any and all things corporate. What junk do corporations want you to teach? Send any and all examples to Ozlem Sensoy at SFU, or contact her to schedule pick up. Ozlem Sensoy, Ph.D. Faculty of Education, SFU 8888 University Drive Burnaby V5A1S6 ozlem@sfu.ca, 778-782-6795

Fairness is not the same as equality

By Kip Wood

In 1996 and again in 2000, Steve Forbes entered the race to become the president of the United States. His platform was based on equality. Forbes believed in a 17% flat tax on personal and corporate income. Whether your income was a little or a lot, Forbes believed that you should be taxed at the same rate.

Forbes did not get the Republican nomination. However, the idea of a flat tax has been pervasive in the political arena for the past generation. Tax cuts are popular. The problem is most income tax cuts are flat, not progressive. People with higher incomes save much more than people with lower incomes when the tax cut is "across the board" or the same percentage.

Immediately after being elected in 2001, the Gordon Campbell Liberals reduced the provincial income tax rate by 25%. The move put about three billion dollars back in taxpayers' pockets in the next two years; however, most of that went into the pockets of the rich.

The problem with Forbes is that equality and fairness are seen as the same thing. Taking the argument further, there would be no wheelchair ramps, no childcare programs, no specialist teachers, and no seniors' discounts. These are "unequal" programs but equality, in these cases, would not be fair. That is because fairness is not the same as equality.

Voucher systems in education are about equality, not fairness. The government provides a voucher to the parent or guardian who then decides where to redeem the voucher. The provision of education then becomes the responsibility of the individual and not the state. If the student has special needs, the family incurs the cost.

The popularity of vouchers and flat tax rates is predictable when

you consider a single selling feature—everyone is treated equally. The effect of vouchers and flat tax rates on society is that individual needs become the responsibility of individuals. There is a departure from collective responsibility and a lack of fairness for individuals.

Canadian institutions were built on the principle of fairness. Equity (not to be mistaken for equality) is

Why is it that Canada is now identified as a plutonomy and why is it that our government is now identified as a plutocracy rather than a democracy? Governments of the rich, for the rich, and by the rich have a common trait: the abandonment of progressive taxation.

about fairness. In this way, equity is the right to be treated differently so that opportunities are more equally accessible.

After World War II, construction projects built the infrastructure we enjoy today; medicare was created and the education system went through its most significant expansion. Economic growth was unprecedented during this time. Baby boomers became adults and, as a society, we were able to pay for their post-secondary education, their training, and their apprenticeship programs. None of this would have happened with a system based on individual responsibility. Instead, there was a collective commitment to building a just and civil society. There was also a progressive taxation system.

In 2008, the Organization of Co-operation and Development released a study called "Growing

Unequal." The study of 30 member states reported whether there had been a significant widening in the gap between rich and poor over a 10-year period: 1998–2008. The most significant widening of the gap occurred in Canada.

The growing gap between rich and poor led Citigroup, in a now famous 2005 leaked memo, to the conclusion that Canada is one of three "plutonomies" in the world (the US and UK being the other two). A plutonomy is defined as an economy powered by the wealthy. The dictionary defines "plutocracy" as the rule or control of society by the wealthy or a class that exercises power by virtue of its wealth.

Why is it that Canada is now identified as a plutonomy and why is it that our government is now identified as a plutocracy rather than a democracy? Governments of the rich, for the rich, and by the rich have a common trait: the abandonment of progressive taxation.

Messages about equality and personal responsibility resonate with the population, and citizens believe that their upward mobility is only possible in a free-market system that eliminates barriers and rewards hard work. However, the departure from progressive taxation and the erosion of public services has left more people behind with much less opportunity to improve, or even maintain, their economic status. Public services create fair societies. The abandonment of publicly provided services, framed as equality, has led to greater inequality of incomes and decreased upward mobility.

For the past 30 years, the majority of Canadians have seen their wages stagnate, their purchasing power decrease, and their political influence diminish. Even as the number of people living in poverty in plutocratic societies increases, the free-market advocates continue

to assert their position because their interests, amassing wealth and power, are served.

The labour movement is about fairness: those who have the most, have a responsibility to those who have the least. In the words of J.S. Woodsworth, "What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all." This vision of collective responsibility is not realized with flat tax schemes and the shift toward a reliance on regressive taxes to fill government coffers.

The plutocratic power structure has imposed individualism on the electorate so that citizens concerned with the collective good have been transformed into self-interested consumers who reinforce the power structure by not being motivated to change, or even challenge, the *status quo*. Never before has the urgency to change course been combined with a lack

of collective will to change course. Citizenry has been replaced, even subsumed, by consumerism so that the ability to live critically and challenge the hierarchy has devolved into short-term economic thinking. The consequence of the widening gap between rich and poor is that more people are trapped in low-paid, low-skilled jobs and have a diminished ability to do anything about it.

Our governments don't have spending problems. Our governments have revenue problems. Moving back toward progressive taxation would go a long way to rebuilding a fair society. Simplistic platforms like flat taxation must be challenged so that equality is not mistaken for what it means to be fair.

Kip Wood is first vice-president, Nanaimo District Teachers' Association and a member-at-large, BCTF Executive Committee.



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Le miracle finlandais



Les enseignants sont très respectés dans la société et jouissent d'une liberté pédagogique totale et d'une grande marge d'autonomie et d'initiative.



Par Moh Chelali

Imaginez des étudiants qui déambulent une bonne partie de la journée dans des couloirs aux couleurs chaudes décorés de travaux des élèves de l'école. Adossés aux murs, quelques fauteuils pour que les élèves discutent en groupe ou simplement se reposent.

Imaginez de vastes classes très spacieuses équipées de tout le matériel le plus moderne y compris des derniers cris de la technologie. Les élèves y passent seulement 45 minutes de cours pour chaque séance. Aucun test, quiz ou examen n'est administré! Jusqu'à 9 ans les élèves ne sont pas notés et même quand ils le sont à partir de 9 ans il n'y a pas de chiffre ou de pourcentage associé à la note, juste quelques commentaires !!

Imaginez des élèves joyeux qui déposent sans crainte leur vêtement dans des vestiaires en libre accès dans le hall de l'école alors que leurs vélos utilisés pour venir sont laissés sans antivol dans des emplacements prévus à l'intérieur de l'école.

Imaginez des relations entre professeurs et élèves empreintes d'une grande familiarité jusqu'au point que certains élèves peuvent téléphoner si besoin est à leur professeur sur son portable pour obtenir des éclaircissements sur un point du programme et où il n'est pas rare non plus qu'un professeur se rende au domicile de ses élèves afin de se rendre compte de leurs conditions de vie.

Imaginez des enseignants avec

moins d'heures de cours à enseigner que dans n'importe quel autre système scolaire dans le monde. Des enseignants qui ont tout le temps nécessaire pour réfléchir à leur pédagogie et offrir des activités extracurriculaires aux élèves. Chaque enseignant a toute l'autonomie pour enseigner ce qu'il veut, comme il le veut et quand le veut dans le cadre des objectifs globaux du curriculum. Les effectifs des classes dépassent rarement les 20 élèves.

Imaginez une école totalement gratuite sans aucun frais. Les fournitures scolaires et les repas sont fournis gratuitement. Le directeur d'école est un enseignant la moitié du temps, et durant l'autre moitié il est responsable de l'encadrement et de la coordination pédagogique. Les tâches de la gestion des finances sont assurées par la municipalité dans laquelle l'école est située.

Imaginez des écoles privées intégrées ou jumelées à un système public plus que performant et où l'élève se rend avec plaisir à l'école la plus proche de chez lui.

Imaginez des enseignants avec une maîtrise comme formation académique pour commencer leur métier et qui reçoivent un soutien continu et une multitude de choix de développement professionnel. Souvent, ces enseignants sont rattachés au centre d'études ou de recherches de l'université la plus proche de leur école pour explorer les meilleures approches pédagogiques pour mieux aider leurs élèves.

Imaginez des écoles maternelles et pré-maternelles avec une atmosphère familiale presque comme à la maison. Des éducateurs en nombre suffisant pour communiquer en tout temps avec chaque enfant. Trois assistantes maternelles plus une aide ménagère par groupe de 12 enfants entre 1 et 3 ans sont en permanence présents; 2 professeurs qualifiés, une assistante maternelle et une aide ménagère sont présents pour tout groupe de 21 enfants entre 3 et 6 ans.

Imaginez que tout le mobilier de l'école est astucieusement choisi pour ses couleurs et son confort pour n'imposer aucun stress inutile aux enfants. Le rythme des activités est organisé de telle manière que les enfants restent calmes, détendus et disponibles.

Imaginez qu'on cherche avant tout à éveiller l'enfant, par des activités ludiques et des jeux et ce n'est qu'à partir de 7 ans que les enfants commencent normalement à apprendre à lire.

Après 7 ans, chaque jour est consacré à une discipline (musique, sport, activités manuelle ou artistiques, langue maternelle, maths) mais c'est seulement le matin que les enfants s'y initient, de façon toujours très attractive. L'après-midi est réservé au jeu.

Imaginez que les apprentissages initiaux se font sans violence, sans stress et sans contrainte excessive en ayant pour seul souci de stimuler, de motiver, d'être à l'écoute. Si un enfant montre des dispositions particulières ce qui

n'est pas rare dans un tel climat, on lui donnera l'opportunité d'apprendre à lire plus précocement (6 ans). En revanche, en accord avec les parents, les professeurs peuvent garder un enfant jusqu'à 8 ans au niveau de la maternelle s'il apparaît qu'il n'est pas prêt pour la classe supérieure. Après, le redoublement est en principe proscrit par la loi.

Une école de rêve dites-vous ? Existe-t-elle vraiment ? Et si elle existe combien coûtera-t-elle aux payeurs d'impôts ?

Vous l'aurez compris au titre de cet article, cette école existe bel et bien et elle s'appelle le modèle finlandais.

« Le modèle finlandais est le meilleur au monde ». Selon une étude internationale menée par l'OCDE (enquête Pisa) : à 15 ans le niveau des élèves finlandais surpasse de loin celui de leurs camarades européens et d'ailleurs dans le monde. La Finlande arrive en tête pour les performances en lecture de ses élèves parmi les 43 pays participants (les 30 pays de l'OCDE plus 13 pays associés). Elle arrive à la 4ème place en maths et à la 3ème place en sciences. Déjà au début des années 2000 elle figurait parmi les tout premiers pays au monde pour l'efficacité de son éducation. En 2003, elle améliora encore sa position, et obtint la première place, parmi les 41 pays participants, dans les 3 matières déjà évaluées en 2000 et la seconde pour la résolution de problèmes, introduite dans cette nouvelle session de 2003. La Finlande reste depuis en tête de liste des pays développés qui participent aux tests PISA (« Programme international pour le suivi des acquis des élèves » mené par les pays de l'OCDE)

Combien cela coûte ?

Imaginez une école totalement gratuite sans aucun frais. Les fournitures scolaires et les repas sont fournis gratuitement.

Tenez-vous bien, les dépenses annuelles par étudiant en Finlande sont aux alentours de 7500\$ par étudiants soit 5.8% du PIB. Ceci reste bien inférieur au coût de pratiquement toutes les provinces au Canada. À titre d'exemple le coût par étudiant est de 8500\$ en Colombie-Britannique, de 8,300\$ (2006) au Québec et de 10,730 \$ en Ontario !

Quel est alors le secret de ce miracle ?

La Finlande a fait un choix délibéré de parier sur l'élève qui est au centre de l'apprentissage. Les diverses approches sont basées sur une fine et profonde analyse des besoins réels de chaque élève et chaque élève est unique. Bien sûr le système finlandais respecte profondément les savoirs, mais il respecte encore plus les individus à qui il veut les faire acquérir.

Comme décrit ci-haut, l'environnement est chaleureux et accueillant sans aucune contrainte ni stress imposé sur les élèves ou les enseignants. Les rythmes d'apprentissages sont savamment adaptés et dosés aux rythmes des élèves.

Dès la maternelle, on a instauré une détection précoce des handicaps et des troubles de l'apprentissage et on a préparé des interventions adaptées avec un personnel spécialisé et hautement qualifié. Le taux d'encadrement est très élevé avec des enseignants qui ont tous une maîtrise en éducation et une formation sur le terrain très exigeante.

Les enseignants sont au cœur du succès finlandais. Tous les enseignants sont experts et associés à l'université pour des travaux de recherches et de pédagogie appliquée.

Les enseignants sont très respectés dans la société et jouissent d'une liberté pédagogique totale et d'une grande marge d'autonomie et d'initiative. C'est assurément là une composante essentielle de leur motivation.

Un pays comme la Finlande nous donne l'exemple d'un modèle performant à suivre. Les querelles stériles qui empoisonnent encore aujourd'hui le climat d'éducation chez nous, devrait être dépassées par un vrai dialogue constructif de tous les partenaires sociaux. Il y a quelques semaines, l'association des directeurs d'école de la C-B a rejeté les tests standardisés appelés en anglais (FSA) pour les mêmes raisons que les enseignants. Et que fait notre ministre? Elle s'entête à les faire passer alors qu'une grande proportion des parents les rejettent et que de ce point de vue, même s'ils avaient un intérêt pédagogique-ce qui n'est pas le cas-ils ne sont pas statistiquement significatifs. C'est tout simplement une perte de temps et d'argent. On pourra parler aussi de la fermeture d'écoles de proximité sous la couverture de l'efficacité économique, ce qui n'aide pas au travail de proximité en éducation. Mais énumérer la longue liste de ce dont il faut débattre et corriger fera partie d'un autre débat.

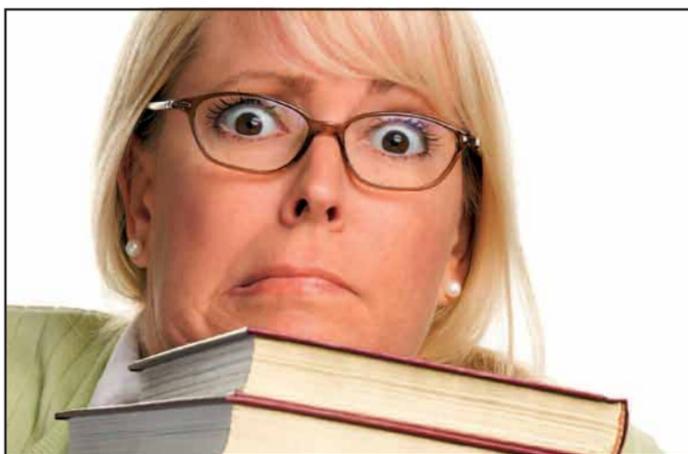
L'école est devenue un instrument politique qui obéit aux règles de l'offre et de la demande, jugée plus sur sa performance économique que sur sa valeur sociale. L'école devrait plutôt être considérée comme un idéal de rassemblement de tous afin d'édifier une société juste et prospère.

Moh Chelali, Responsable des programmes et services en français, Fédération des enseignants de la Colombie-Britannique.

References et vidéos à voir :

www.dailymotion.com/video/xc3psh_le-modele-deducation-finlandaise_tech
www.dailymotion.com/video/x8f8w1_education-le-modele-finlandais_news

Synopsis: This article describes the education system in Finland and explains how Finland's education system became the best in the world.



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The struggle for employment equity

By Robert Genaille

I heard an interview with John Ralston Saul recently on CBC Radio. He was talking about his book, *A Fair Country*, and he was talking about the Native leadership in Canada. The subject of Guu'jaw, hereditary chief of the Haida came up and Saul brought up what was, approximately, the following thought: "Can you imagine what he could have accomplished, what he could have contributed to our country, if he hadn't had to spend the last 20 or 30 years fighting that same country for his, and the Haida's right to be treated equitably?" If you ask Guu'jaw if he felt like he had missed out on something, I do not believe he would say yes. I think he would say

Employment equity and other issues related to increasing the presence of Aboriginal teachers in our schools is about fairness. It is about fairness to our teachers, who face inequitable employment options, expectations and the continued questioning of our right to be here.

he was doing what was right by his role in his culture and because his people deserve a better life.

My mom relates the story of an Aboriginal doctor who during his residency, was approached by security at the hospital he was doing his residency in because he was in a doctor's only section and they were there to escort him out, despite the fact that he was a doctor, and legally allowed to be there. They did not believe him and none of the other doctors present would stand and defend him.

When I was doing my masters, I was dealing with a poisonous work environment. I was ready to throw in the towel on the masters because I could not manage both, I happened to run into my uncle, our last old Elder on my rez. He said, "Bob, I'm proud of you. No one has ever tried to do what you are doing before...I sort of had no choice..."

The last few years have seen impressive gains in Aboriginal Education. These advances have been hard won and should be celebrated. They exist because of

hard work carried out by Aboriginal education activists who were not willing to put up with the *status quo* anymore. They exist because Aboriginal people value education, but it needs to be an education that is relevant to their history, culture, and way of life. It is not a rejection of western education, though it is a desire to decolonize that education by creating an education that respects and honours the first peoples of this land.

Having said that, it must be acknowledged that we still have a long way to go. It is a fact that there are few Aboriginal teachers. The differing value systems, as well as the ongoing legacies of colonization have resulted in a decreased sense of well-being and belonging within the education system for the Aboriginal teacher.

Employment equity and other issues related to increasing the presence of Aboriginal teachers in our schools is about fairness. It is about fairness to our teachers, who face inequitable employment options, expectations and the continued questioning of our right to be here. It is about fairness to our children, who face many challenges in this education system and need to see themselves reflected in their education. It is about fairness to their parents, who care about their children's opportunities. And finally it is about fairness for everyone else, who need to see real Aboriginal people and not stereotypes and myths.

Our students of Aboriginal ancestry are a brilliant, talented, extraordinary group whose strength, perseverance, and humour often leave me absolutely in awe. Many have faced challenges, legacies of colonization, and attempted assimilation; they live lives that they never deserved. I see them persevere in systems that are alien to the traditional ways of learning. The teaching and learning, in my experience, have never been one way. The work we do here is for them—to create opportunity for them to have a sense of where they are from, who they are, and who they can be. Because if we, and they, didn't have to fight to be treated equitably, to be treated fairly, can you imagine what they could accomplish?

Robert Genaille is a TTOC, Fraser-Cascade District and chair of the BCTF Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee.

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Making it better

Antihomophobia education in our classrooms

By Shannon Lanaway

In September 2010, columnist Dan Savage received a letter written by an individual identified as "Gay victim who survived." The writer described how a gay 15-year-old boy from Illinois had committed suicide due to homophobic bullying. The boy's Facebook memorial page had been defaced with homophobic slurs. The writer asked Dan, "What can we do about homophobic bullying in schools?"

Dan's initial response was to condemn religious organizations who have opposed antihomophobia educational programs offered in schools. Savage made a connection to the suicide of youth who experience homophobic bullying in rural and suburban areas that do not have access to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) organizations or services to support queer and questioning youth. He further identified parents who cannot accept that their child could be gay, who far too often kick their children out of the house, rendering them homeless. Savage included several responses to his blog regarding Billy Lucas' suicide. One individual wrote about how he wished he had had the opportunity to talk to Billy, "That however bad things were, however isolated and alone he was, it gets better."

What followed was the highly popular YouTube Channel called "It Gets Better." Where LGBTQ adults and allies of all backgrounds came forward and made videos letting queer youth and children from same gender families know that it does indeed, get better. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=5p-AT18d9IU&feature=player_embedded)

Over the past year, the media has reported on the suicides of nine LGBTQ youth in Canada and the USA. These highly publicized cases have renewed the call for anti-homophobia education at all grade levels in Canada and the USA.

The LGBTQ Action group for the BCTF Committee on Action for Social Justice (CASJ) created their own video in response to this action. Visit "It Gets Better Project-BC Teachers." (bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=21294)

Over the past year, the media has reported on the suicides of nine LGBTQ youth in Canada and the USA. These highly publicized cases have renewed the call for antihomophobia education at all grade levels in Canada and the USA.

This international grassroots initiative encouraged youth that life would get better after they graduated from school. While the intent behind it was positive, what we need to now be asking ourselves is: "What am I currently doing to make my classroom and school accepting of LGBTQ students and same gender families?"

Teachers are beginning to be supported by local boards for their work in the area of antihomophobia education. Twelve school districts in BC have LGBTQ policies in place now. Most of these are in rural communities. Six more districts are in varying stages of policy development under the leadership of teachers and their local unions.

The BCTF, Pride Education Network, and Out in Schools have created an extensive online database of resources, lesson plans, posters, DVDs, etc. that teachers can use in their classrooms.

Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Clubs now exist in 65 secondary schools in BC.

The BCTF has supported the formation of these clubs for the past decade. Pride Education Network provides bursaries to schools starting GSA clubs.

The Day of Pink is celebrated in many schools across the province in February. It is an ideal time to discuss the real harms of homophobia, transphobia, and gender-based teasing in our classrooms. With the upcoming Day of Silence (April 16) and International Day Against Homophobia (May 17) there will be more opportunities for you to act.

The BCTF has submitted a resolution to the 2011 Canadian Labor Congress Convention calling for a national "Making It Better" campaign to lobby provincial education ministries on making all

schools safe, inclusive, and more accepting for LGBTQ youth and same-gender families.

If you believe that every student deserves a safe place to learn, please become involved. Every student has a right to learn to their full academic, social, and emotional potential. As educators, we all have a moral and legal obligation to be changemakers where others too often fall silent. Our students should not have to be silent about their lives in order to survive. One child lost is one too many. We all have the power to make it better.

For LGBTQ classroom resources go to: (bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=17990)

Shannon Lanaway is a TTOC in the Kootenay Lake District and a member of the BCTF LGBTQ action group.

The Day of Pink is celebrated in many schools across the province in February. It is an ideal time to discuss the real harms of homophobia and gender-based teasing in our classrooms.

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Non-fiction for Grade 4s

By Rob Cowie

Students entering into a Grade 4 classroom, at the beginning of a new year, face many new challenges. Not only do they receive marks for the first time in their academic journey, they are also expected to become more independent in their learning. The amount of homework increases as well as the responsibility to use and share textbooks. From Grades 3 and up, the amount of non-fiction text the student's encounter surpasses that of fictional text (Stead, 2006). Teachers in the intermediate grades assume that students know how to read and understand what they read. Many intermediate teachers believe students are no longer learning to read, but now read to learn (Gear, 2006). The use of a textbook can be a daunting challenge for a new Grade 4 student because if they are not taught how to use one effectively, they can struggle with how and where to find information. This is exactly what I was finding with my Grade 4 students; they had no idea how to locate important information from textbooks. I discovered that the students' Grade 3 teachers rarely used a textbook when teaching a topic in Science or Social Studies.

The purpose of this 12-week implementation was to teach my Grade 4 students non-fiction reading strategies, since my

students were suddenly encountering textbooks where sentence structures had changed from simple to compound. Reading for content knowledge, I realized, required the use of different strategies than reading narrative text (Spor, 2005). Brownlie & Jeroski (2007) noted that teaching reading does not end when students leave the primary grades. With the increasing exposure to non-fiction text, students need to be taught reading strategies throughout their education.

I chose *The Comprehension Toolkit* by Harvey & Goudvis (2006) as my intervention. The toolkit provided the reading strategies that students' needed, when comprehending non-fiction text. The toolkit also provided practical and explicit instructions to teachers about how to teach each of the reading strategies. The toolkit used Harvey & Goudvis' "Gradual Release of Responsibility" (p.9) model for each reading strategy. Harvey & Goudvis (2006) explained that the gradual release of responsibility model included modeling, guided practice, collaborative practice, independent practice, and finally, the application of the strategy.

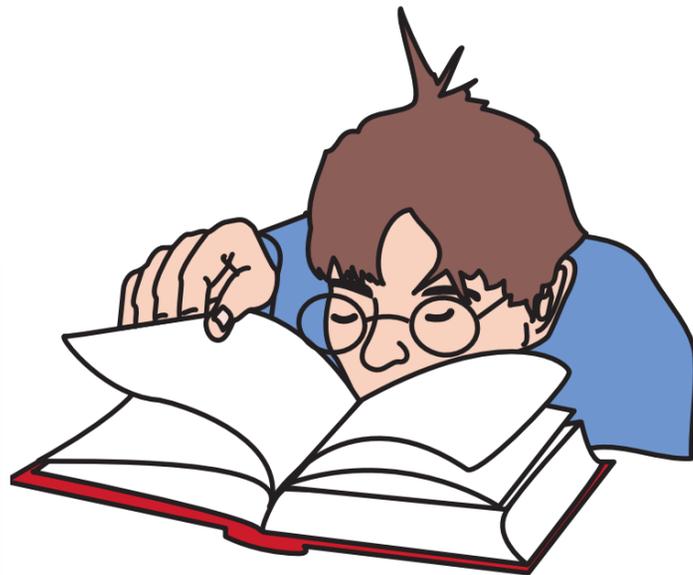
During the first month of intervention, several strategies to improve reading comprehension of non-fiction had been introduced to the students. In the first week, the students tracked their thinking while reading. In week two, the students learned how to use text features to connect to new information. During weeks three and four, students learned how to determine

important information, and to construct main ideas from supporting details.

The second month of intervention continued to introduce such reading strategies as asking questions and inferring meaning. The students learned how to read text and ask questions. As they read, the students looked for the answers to the questions in the text. Students learned how to infer meaning of new words and language discovered in the text using context clues and headings.

The purpose of this 12-week implementation was to teach my Grade 4 students non-fiction reading strategies, since my students were suddenly encountering textbooks where sentence structures had changed from simple to compound. Reading for content knowledge, I realized, required the use of different strategies than reading narrative text. (Spor, 2005)

The final month of intervention focused on the summarizing and synthesizing of information. The students learned how to summarize and paraphrase information that they read from non-fiction text. Finally, at the conclusion of the intervention an assessment was conducted to determine the



effectiveness of the intervention.

To obtain the results from the research, I compared pre- and post-results using computer-based assessment, as well as, the pre- and post-results of the Reading Assessment District (RAD) (#36) for determining importance. These qualitative measures determined that the intervention was successful. The students made measurable improvement in their ability to determine importance and overall reading comprehension. The results of these assessments saw the number of my students who were meeting to exceeding expectations in reading comprehension moved from 53% to 62%. The results of the RAD saw the number of my students who were meeting to exceeding expectations in determining importance jumped from 38% to 69%.

At the conclusion of the intervention, I observed the majority of my students took more time to read and reread the articles given to them. The students became more successful at locating all the important information. In addition, many students had begun to understand how to rewrite the information in their own words.

One of the surprises for me was that the students' attitudes regarding their textbooks improved over the intervention. There seemed to be less disappointment when using their textbooks and more interest with learning new concepts. Another outcome that the writer did not anticipate was that by introducing non-fiction reading strategies, the amount of non-fiction books being signed out of the library by my students increased.

Rob Cowie teaches at Glen Elementary School, Coquitlam. This article is based on his action-research paper titled "Grade Four Reading: Non-fiction."

References available on request.

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BCTF Advantage Program

Our newest partner

For the past year, travel offerings through the Advantage Program have been quite sparse, due to some industry-wide changes in the travel world. However, the program is delighted to introduce a new partner, who can be found on the "Travel" page of the Advantage Program website—**BenefacTours**.

BenefacTours is a Canadian company specializing in unique safari and volunteer adventure travel excursions to East Africa. Their mission is to create memorable experiences for all their clients while promoting volunteer opportunities that improve the lives of Africans and the environment.

BenefacTours can arrange private wildlife safaris, primate tracking, home stays, sporting activities, beach holidays, and volunteer placements in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda.

Experience Africa! Track gorillas or chimps, witness the Great Migration as two million animals move between the Serengeti and the Maasai Mara, climb Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, and experience watching the Big 5 in action.



BenefacTours will give teachers and their families an opportunity to rediscover themselves, to make a difference in the life of a child and to fulfil the dream of making a meaningful contribution.

BenefacTours African safari and volunteer adventures invites BCTF members and retired members to enjoy 10% discount on volunteer packages and a 5% discount on safaris.

Volunteer

Build schools or work in an orphanage, assist with teaching, nursing, counselling, or gardening in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda.

Some of your opportunities:

- Build schools in Jinja, Uganda.
- Feed babies, bathe newborns, or simply play with the toddlers in Mbale, Uganda.
- Assist with cooking, gardening, or teaching orphans in Nairobi, or

Nyeri, Kenya.

- Help teach, provide counselling, or share any skill with street kids in Moshi, Tanzania.
- Teach, nurse, or share skills in Ruhengeri, Rwanda.

Safaris

Come face-to-face with mountain gorillas or chimpanzees, watch the Big 5 in action, witness the Great Migration, meet Maasai warriors, climb Mount Kilimanjaro, kayak the Nile, or relax on the beach in beautiful Zanzibar. Choose from a pre-packaged safari or custom design your own African vacation.

For more information, check the travel page at bctf.ca/advantage.

— Patti McLaughlin

BCTF Advantage

Charitable giving in the 21st century

By Kathleen Ernst

While at a craft fair in early December, I stopped at a table of handmade jewelry. A banner announced that buying at this stall would support women in a developing country. As I looked at the goods I asked the person in charge of the stall what percentage of the price would actually go to the women? His answer—10%. He did not know how much of the remaining 90% would go toward overhead, and how much to materials.

I know there is a better way. The InnovativeCommunities.org Foundation (ICO) supports any initiative that reduces poverty, improves educational opportunities, or improves the health of the community. People in need receive 100% of donations. ICO even pays the bank transfer fees. The accounting practices are totally transparent, and all accounts are online 24/7 for anyone to see. Thus you can follow your donation to its destination and get a tax receipt.

How do they do this? ICO is operated entirely by volunteers. It currently supports several initiatives in Canada, Central America, and Africa. It runs its operations in a virtual, on-line environment. There are no paid staff. There is no central office.

The Mali initiative

Community initiatives are created and managed locally with ICO

support. Let me use the Africa Mali initiative as an example.

Youchaou Traore recognized the need for an alternative to state-operated schools in Bamako, Mali, and started one—a primary school was begun in 2001. Today the school has 282 students and two more buildings have been erected in outlying villages. A young entrepreneurs' group has been started, the computer classroom serves as an Internet café after school hours, teacher education programs are held, and there are plans to begin a vocational program. The Canadian team, of which I am part of, is raising funds to adequately equip the school, the teachers, and the students. The supplies have been sourced. Our current challenge is to send a 40-foot container of supplies and ensure its safe arrival on Youchaou's doorstep.

He and his board have identified operational needs. They will unload the supplies and make sure that they go where they are needed.

The Mali Initiative is a catalyst for change—igniting aspirations and enabling the dreams of local visionaries—to create a positive and sustainable world.

Charitable giving in the 21st century is best serviced by organizations like ICO that aim for:

- 100% transparency of donations
- 100% volunteer based
- 100% online administration.

Kathleen Ernst is a retired Victoria teacher.

Colombia

The most dangerous place to be a union activist

By Larry Kuehn

Representing a teacher union on a "Committee for Threatened Teachers" hardly seems like a desirable role. However, it was hotly contested in an election by five teachers in Cali, Colombia, recently.

The very name of the committee tells a story about the situation of teachers in Colombia—nearly 900 have been murdered in the past 25 years, thousands threatened, many forced into internal or overseas exile.

Already, in 2011, more teachers

have been murdered. For example, Humberto de Jesús Espinoza Díaz was killed in early February—after a government assessment that he was not in danger.

The fact that there was a contest for the position of working with threatened teachers also tells a story about the determination of these teachers to prevail, regardless of the consequences.

The national teachers' union, FECODE, is at the centre of many of the social struggles in Colombia. It is by far the largest union in the country, still having about 300,000 members. Nearly all other public services and publicly owned industries have been privatized and their unions smashed.

The remaining unions are involved in a desperate campaign to stop the government's plan to finish

What could possibly lead millions of people to leave their small subsistence farms to live in hovels, without jobs, and very little access to the good life lived in the middle of the cities? Fear and safety is clearly the answer.

Being caught in the middle of a war zone makes even the slums encircling cities seem relatively safe.

Much of the violence has been perpetrated by paramilitaries. These are men given guns and paid to terrorize and create enough fear to drive people from the land. Transnational corporations and the local elite that stand to gain from access to the land are accused of funding the paramilitaries.

School as "Zones of Peace"

Teachers are caught in the middle between paramilitaries and guerillas. They are targeted as union activists by a government that seeks to remove trade unionists as active opponents of the neo-liberal program of privatization. Threats come in a number of forms—funeral wreaths being delivered to their homes, calls claiming that the person has been killed, e-mailed threats to harm families.

Teachers want protection for themselves and their students. The union FECODE has initiated what they hope will be an international campaign to have schools identified as "Zones of Peace." The message is for everyone to stay out of the school with their arms—guerillas, paramilitary, gangs, army, and drug shippers.

The violence is very real to students. Some have seen their teacher gunned down in their classroom. Others have witnessed attacks on their families. Rival gangs trying to establish themselves use violence to stake their place.

The children of displaced people forced off the lands are in the same classes as the children of paramilitaries who forced them off their land, and have now been demobilized.

The proposal for schools as neutral territory (Zones of Peace)

Any and all of the competing groups may see teachers as enemies and threaten or eliminate them. They are targeted as union activists by a government that seeks to remove trade unionists as active opponents of the neo-liberal program of privatization.

calls not only for keeping the social violence outside the school, but also to introducing programs on non-violent ways of solving disputes—disputes among adults as well as children.

What can Canadians do?

Keep our eyes on Colombia was a common message from union and human-rights activists. International attention saves lives and puts pressure on the government to take action. Responding to appeals for support of individuals provides some protection for them, particularly against state-sanctioned violence.

Larry Kuehn is director of the BCTF's Research and Technology Division and responsible for the BCTF International Solidarity Program.

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Being caught in the middle of a war zone makes even the slums encircling cities seem relatively safe.

privatizing healthcare. Education is being privatized as well. Small schools are being closed, moving the students to large centralized schools, which are then contracted to churches and private companies to run.

Around the modern, busy cities like Bogota are "rings of misery," as they were described by a leader of the campesino movement. Between three and four million people are internal refugees living in scrap-wood and iron-sheet shacks with rutted dirt roads that turn to muck in the rain.

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The murders of Colombian teachers continues

On January 10, 2011, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) reported the murder of Manuel Esteban Tejada, a teacher at the "Palma Soriana" education centre, affiliated to the teachers' association of Córdoba, (ADEMACOR).

The ITUC strongly condemned the murder. ITUC represents 176 million workers in 301 affiliated national organizations from 151 countries and territories (www.ituc-csi.org).

According to ITUC, 25 out of the 46 trade unionists assassinated in 2010 in Colombia were teachers. The ITUC has joined with CUT, the Colombian trade union centre and ADEMACOR demanding the launch of an immediate and exhaustive investigation into this crime, to identify those responsible at every level.

"It is inadmissible that the majority of the crimes and offences in Colombia go unpunished," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow, "Impunity is a scourge that we all have a duty to fight."

In a letter (www.ituc-csi.org/continuan-los-asesinatos-de.html?lang=es) to President Santos, the ITUC called on the Colombian authorities to ensure that the investigation is conclusive and that those responsible are punished with the full force of the law, thus breaking the circle of impunity in Colombia.

Colombia has the most atrocious record of targeted assassinations of trade unionists in the world. About half of the unionists killed were teachers—over 400 in a six-year period.

Education International (EI), the

Colombia has the most atrocious record of targeted assassinations of trade unionists in the world. About half of the unionists killed were teachers—over 400 in a six-year period.

global union federation representing 30 million educators around the world, has long been concerned about the shocking extent of political violence confronting its Colombian members. Dr. Mario Novelli of the University of Amsterdam, in an in-depth report prepared for EI states:

"In this sense political violence against educators cannot, and should not, be separated from an understanding of the broader social struggles of Colombian trade unions and social movements against inequality, authoritarian rule, and endemic political violence that continues to sustain a highly unequal development model favouring a small minority of wealthy elites at the expense of the vast majority of the population." www.ei-ie.org/en/news/show.php?id=1099&theme=rights&country=colombia

See the very graphic video underlining the political violence facing trade unionists around the world. www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI

— David Halme

Wisdom of the children

A unique art gallery in Peru

By Janet Nicol

After working alongside colleagues on a project sponsored by the BC Teachers' Federation in Peru last summer, I travelled to the world heritage site of Machu Picchu. Along the way, I found the Wisdom of the Children, known as *Irq'i Yachay* in the Quechuan language.

This is the name given to a unique children's art gallery in downtown Cusco, starting point for tourists heading to the famous mountain ruins. The gallery showcases art created by indigenous children living in isolated mountain communities. These primary-age students are taught by Laura Russell and a staff of about a dozen Peruvian teachers. A film documenting the methodology used and showing the children painting, is also part of the exhibit.

"The children manifest cultural messages," Russell, a professional art teacher and founder of the workshops, says in a telephone

interview from her part-time residence in California. "They have their own way of seeing." She says students' paintings reflect the wide open spaces of the Andes, the symbolic condor, and their ancient mountain deity.

"We discovered the cognitive abilities in children were unrecognized by educators," Russell says. "For instance, these children have a strong sense of design, learned by observation."

The temporary exhibit I visited proves Russell's point. Textile art designs filled the walls, painted in vibrant colors. Watching elders weave designs passed down through generations, children are able to express their observations with a paintbrush.

Russell says her workshop team does not "teach" art. For example, lessons in perspective are not offered. Instead students learn how to use a paintbrush and to thicken or thin out the paint—and then, without further instruction, they start creating.

The team of educators travel throughout the rugged Andes, recruiting volunteers to assist them

in selected communities. While the culture of the Quechua people living around Cusco is still remarkably intact, Russell says the children are underserved by the nation's education system.

"We found there was a vacuum in the education system," Russell says. "The school curriculum does not pertain to the children's daily lives."

Russell was making a tourist pilgrimage along the Inca trail more than 20 years ago when she became interested in exploring the artistic potential of the local children. Her ideas turned into a project in 1991, and after building a team of trained teachers, the group set out to teach in 31 communities. The Cusco art gallery was started eight years later, with funding coming from Inter American Foundation. (Gallery website: www.aylluyupaychay.org)

By using art, Russell says all forms of knowledge can be transmitted to children.

"We tell students to create a circle on paper and to divide it into eight parts. Then color what you want," she says, describing a basic math lesson on fractions.

Children can choose a letter of



Children's art gallery in Cusco showcases art created by indigenous children living in isolated mountain communities.

the alphabet and draw a gigantic version of the letter, along with a frame. "Draw pictures of things that start with this letter around the frame," Russell says, depicting a language lesson.

"The point is to give the students an opportunity for self-expression. This leads to self-esteem and self-respect." Everyone benefits, Russell believes. "This includes community volunteers, who are typically men,"

she adds, "as women have less time to offer."

"It's a participatory form of education. The students don't just copy."

These innovative teachers are now working on integrating their methods into a regional curriculum. "It's all about working from the ground up," Russell says.

Janet Nicol teaches at Killarney Secondary School, Vancouver.

Helping change the world one drop at a time

WaterCan's experience in British Columbia



Below: Students at RC MacDonald Elementary, Coquitlam, participated in a 2 km walk carrying one or two water jugs to raise funds in support of clean water projects in Ethiopia.



By Tessa Roselli

Turning the tide of global poverty and environmental degradation is going to take visionary leadership, fresh ideas, commitment, and resolve. Students have, over WaterCan's 23-year history, made a significant contribution to our charity's vision: "Clean water for all!" This impact has been especially felt over the past two years with the introduction of WaterCan's school-by-school fundraising challenge, which matches school donations to specific clean water projects in Africa.

In 2008, WaterCan initiated the challenge, which encourages Canadian students to participate in local fundraising and awareness activities in support of clean water for their counterparts in Africa. Over the past two years, Canadian students have raised over \$65,453 that has gone directly to supplying clean drinking water, basic sanitation and handwashing facilities to African primary schools and communities.

Over the past two years, Canadian students have raised over \$65,453 that has gone directly to supplying clean drinking water, basic sanitation and handwashing facilities to African primary schools and communities.

British Columbia's students and teachers have embraced the challenge. For example, as part of a school-wide initiative for social responsibility, RC MacDonald Elementary School in Coquitlam, emphasizes the importance of "Respect for others" to their students and community. The school has an on-going school-wide theme called "We can make a difference," aimed at empowering students and facilitating their enormous ability to take action in making the world a better place. Kelly Owens, a teacher involved in the initiative, expresses the importance of global citizenship and proactive contributions to alleviating poverty, and not just talking or studying about it.

Concerned about environmental



sustainability and global awareness, the WaterCan initiative to pursue a WaterWalk, was suggested by Dawn Twerdoff, a teacher at the school. In May 2010, students and teachers at RC MacDonald organized and participated in a WaterWalk, whereby donations were pledged by their friends, family, and the community. These students learned that a donation of \$25 provides clean water, sanitation, and better health for one person in eastern Africa. Students raised \$3,409 in support of the Clean Water for Bachoo District Project in Ethiopia this past academic year!

As part of our fundraising campaign for WaterCan, students collected pledges with a commitment to walk 2 km carrying one or more jugs of water around our all-weather field. The children eagerly accepted the challenge...!" She continues, "We used plastic milk jugs for the event that families donated from their recycling. When we were done, we took the jugs to the recycling depot and donated that cash to WaterCan as well."

In reflecting on the impact of the initiative on her students, Owens notes that the reality of many girls and women in Africa who walk several kilometers to fetch water really struck a chord with the students.

Worldwide, nearly 1 billion people do not have access to clean drinking water. A further 2.5 billion have no basic sanitation like toilets and latrines. This constitutes one of the most lethal, yet solvable, public health emergencies affecting the developing world today. The lack of safe water and adequate sanitation is the world's largest cause of sickness. Diarrhea, alone, kills 1.5 million children under the age of 5 each year—more than AIDS, measles, and malaria combined.

The donation made by RC MacDonald was matched 3:1 by the Canadian International Development Agency, and when combined with the contributions of several other participating schools, allowed WaterCan to dig four borehole wells in rural Bachoo District, Ethiopia.

The selfless actions, dedication and hard work of the students at RC MacDonald have dramatically improved the lives of 1,680 children, women, and men. Students were very proud of their contribution.

To learn more about WaterCan's school outreach program, including our H2oh! Learning Series and current School by School Fundraising Challenge, please visit: www.watercan.com.

Tessa Roselli is a WaterCan public engagement volunteer.

Teachers' Pension Plan

Dignity in retirement: A social justice issue for BCTF members

Pensions present: Every member has a right to a pension after two years of service. The amount of the pension is calculated on a defined benefit formula of 2% for each year of service up to 35 years based on the five best years of salary. The Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) is jointly trustee and invested by an agency independent of the government.

Pensions past: In 1921, the *Civil Servants' Pension Act* allowed employees to receive a pension provided the school board chose to do so and had approval from the local municipal council. From 1921–29, no pensions were granted under this provision.

How far we have come. Teachers once had to depend on the special act of the legislature to “be rewarded for long and faithful service.” Now, teachers have a right to a pension to which every active member and the employer contributes. How did we get here and where can we go from here? With this question in mind and using the social justice lens dealing with agency: the ability to effect change, the BCTF Pensions Committee has zoomed in on significant changes to our pensions as a result of activism, building knowledge and capacity among BCTF members and how members have been, and continue to be, the voices of change even after leaving the classroom.

40th anniversary of the 1971 one-day strike over pensions

After many decades of haphazard increases to pensions, a version of the pension calculation formula we have now, came into effect. This improvement, however, didn't address existing pensions and the calculation of pensions for those teachers with short service. At that time, there was an increase to existing pensions granted and changes that affected short service members but they were deemed unsatisfactory to both active and retired members. The result was the first province-wide strike in BCTF history on March 19, 1971.

Retired members achieved quarterly increases to their pensions based on the quarterly changes in the Canadian Consumer Price Index in 1975. This was the beginning of cost-of-living adjustments to pension payments. Activism paid off—literally.

10th anniversary of the 2001 joint-trust agreement

In the early 1980s, the government agreed to create an investment committee, with BCTF representation, to hear reports from the Ministry of Finance and to give input to the investment of the pension fund. At this time, teachers had no real influence as the investments were managed by the Ministry of Finance and were known to be directed towards

provincial projects. Members lobbied for greater involvement. A province-wide consultation and vote took place and the result was the *Joint Trust Agreement*.

In 2001, the BCTF as plan member partner and the Minister of Finance as the plan employer partner signed an agreement to implement joint trusteeship of the Teachers' Pension Plan. The resulting Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees (five appointees from each partner) is responsible for managing the pension plan and the pension fund. The trustees delegate responsibilities to bcIMC, the British Columbia Investment Management Company, created in 1999, for the investment of the funds; and the BC Pensions Corporation for the day-to-day administration of the pension plan.

How does the BCTF ensure that members are informed about their pensions?

An important part of agency is that individuals know their rights and have accurate information. With respect to pensions, the BCTF provides training to all local officers with 50% or more release time, during the Federation Leadership Institute (FLI) in the fall. In addition, prior to the school year starting, there are pension sessions during summer conference. The BCTF also conducts pension workshops upon request of the local. In addition, a full-time assistant director at the BCTF building, whose primary responsibility is pension serves as a resource to members and local leaders with questions about pensions, planning for retirement, what happens to a pension in terms of death of a member as well as in matters of grievance resolutions involving pensions, and in matters of pension appeals.

If I have a concern about my pension that is specific to me, where can I get help?

As mentioned above, the BCTF has a full-time assistant director who is responsible for helping members with pensions' concerns. Individual members can also call the TPP directly with their questions.

If I have a concern about the pension fund in general, how can my voice be heard?

A report from a BCTF-appointed member on the Teachers Pension Board of Trustees is a standing agenda item on the BCTF Representative Assembly agenda and the BCTF Annual General Meeting agenda. Any member is welcome to attend either meeting with voice (and vote if they are a designated delegate from their local). Any member can also bring resolutions on pensions issues to the BCTF RA or AGM after first passage of same at a general meeting in their own local.

What about changes to my pension and benefits? How am I informed?

If there are changes to the contribution rates arising after an actuarial valuation of the TPP fund or a change to the Joint Trust Agreement, all members are informed via a communiqué from the TPP. In cases where there will be changes that affect every member, there will likely be a province-wide campaign to inform all members and seek feedback. As in 2010, when there was a consultation with members about the TPP Inflation Adjustment Account, the BCTF will ensure all members have an opportunity to provide input and have their concerns heard.

How is the BCTF actively involved in the betterment of pensions for teachers and workers in general?

The BCTF has contributed to pensions discussions in general through submissions of briefs and resolutions to organizations. In 2008, the BCTF submitted a brief to the Alberta/British Columbia Joint Expert Panel on Pensions. More recently, in 2010, a brief was submitted to the federal government regarding the Canada Pension Plan and the proposed changes.

In addition to active members having a voice in pensions' matters, the British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association (BCRTA) also plays an active role in advocating for improvements to pensions and benefits. The BCRTA has been involved with pension matters at the BCTF since 1945 when a BCRTA member was appointed as a voting member of the BCTF Pensions Committee. Voting delegates from the BCRTA also attend the BCTF AGM when pension matters are on the floor of the meeting. The BCRTA has tirelessly advocated for sustainable pensions, comprehensive benefits, and the ability to retire in dignity after service in the public education system.

How have voices of BCTF members effected change?

The collective voices of BCTF members over the years have helped establish the pension formula we have now. The Pensions Committee, established by the BCTF in the mid-1930s has been a vocal force in improvement to pension for teachers.

More recently, the collective voices of members have been heard in the area of responsible investing. Over the latter half of the past decade, resolutions regarding responsible investing have come up at the BCTF RAs and AGMs. Individual trustees in attendance heard and brought back the concerns of teachers to the Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees. The result was the US Social Index Fund established as a pool for funds from the four public-sector pension

plans, including the TPP, by the plans' investment agent, British Columbia Investment Management Company (bcIMC), to begin to address these concerns. While responsible investing is still in its infancy, BCTF members can be reassured that their pension funds, through bcIMC, have taken the lead in responsible investing in Canada. Change is a slow process in the pensions' arena—bound by the weight of legislation and the responsibility of financial jurisprudence.

What about the other parties who have a right to a pension through the TPP?

Members of the BC Principals and Vice Principals' Association (BCPVPA) and the BC School Superintendents' Association (BCSSA) also belong to the Teachers' Pension Plan. In 1992, the Teachers' Pension Plan Advisory Committee was formed with representatives from the BCPVPA, BCSSA, BCTF, and BCRTA to address the concerns of all four organizations. Nominations for the position of trustee to the Teachers' Pension Board are made from the members of this committee.

How do BCTF Pensions Committee members and the TPP Board of Trustees stay informed?

The Teachers' Pension Plan Advisory Committee, which includes the BCTF Pensions Committee, have regular training days built into the meeting schedule for the year. A variety of current and relevant topics are covered, depending on the needs of the membership of the committee at the time. Outside training opportunities are also available each year, depending on the budget and decisions of the BCTF Executive Committee.

The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees has a policy on trustee education. Each trustee is provided with both resource materials on pensions in Canada, orientation sessions related to the work of the board's agents, bcIMC and the BC Pensions Corporation, and an annual education spending account. Attendance at certificate programs approved by the board is encouraged. As well, each trustee is encouraged to join professional associations and attend conferences and invitational seminars related to the diverse and complex issues facing the trustees as the administrator of a large pension plan such as ours. The board's Trustee Education Policy helps toward ensuring that each trustee is equipped with the information needed to carry out her or his fiduciary responsibilities.

This is the second of a four-part series of articles by the BCTF Pensions Committee that will appear this year in Teacher news-magazine.

The Canada Pension Plan is changing

Starting this month, a series of changes go into effect in the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), which affect present retirees who are under the age of 60 and all future retirees.

The changes are gradual and if you are already in receipt of a CPP retirement pension then you will not be affected.

The normal age for receiving a CPP retirement pension is 65. However, you may start your pension as early as age 60, or delay it until age 70. There is a 0.5% per month penalty for receiving it before age 65 and a 0.5% per month bonus if you start after age 65. Therefore if you take a CPP retirement pension at age 60, your pension is reduced by 30% permanently. Under the present rules, there must be a work interruption for a period of two months before you can begin your CPP retirement pension, and if you continue to work then you cease making CPP contributions.

Under the new regulations, beginning on January 1, 2012, the 30% reduction will gradually increase from 0.5% per month to 0.6% per month. By 2016, the full reduction will be 36%.

On the flip side, if you continue to work after age 65 and don't collect your CPP retirement pension, the rate will gradually increase to 0.7% per month for a total of 42% by age 70.

At the same time, there is no requirement to substantially reduce your work in order to be eligible to start your CPP pension. You may continue to work, and as long as you are working you will be making CPP contributions and your CPP benefit will continue to record those accruals. This is significant, because unlike our Teachers' Pension Plan, which uses a 5-year highest average salary to calculate your pension, CPP uses a lifetime eligibility average. Your CPP retirement pension is based on the number of years from age 18 to work secession that you were eligible to contribute divided into the number of years you actually did contribute. So, if you elected to collect CPP at age 60, your earning years would be divided by 42 (the difference between age 60 and age 18. From that, the lowest 15% of your earning years would be dropped, or approximately 6.3 years. Under the new rules that provision will rise to 17% by 2014, or 7.14 years. As well, there is a childrearing dropout for years of low or no earnings while caring for dependent children under the age of seven.

These changes are to ensure the continued financial stability of the Canada Pension Plan and to recognize that some Canadians would prefer to work past their normal retirement dates.

—Rob Taylor

Factor 88? Don't wait

A member who has attained age 64, has reached factor '88' (age plus contributory service), or is in receipt of a retirement pension under a registered pension plan, may voluntarily withdraw from the long-term portion of the Salary Indemnity Plan. Withdrawal may be made during any school year in which one of the foregoing conditions has been met and upon the completion of the appropriate withdrawal form. Withdrawal will be effective, upon approval, in September for applications received in that month. Applications submitted later will be

effective the month following approval of the application.

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.

Principals and vice-principals should contact their HR department to inquire if they are members of the BCTF SIP or the disability plan

offered through the BCPVPA. The BCPVPA plan will have its own withdrawal guidelines.

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

Seminars: Your pension, your future and/or Thinking about retiring

Preregistration is required for these two seminars co-presented by BCTF staff and Pension Corporation staff. The time and the location will be confirmed by mail or e-mail. Check out the poster in your school

staffroom or go to the Teachers' Pension Plan website (tpp.pensionsbc.ca) or contact the plan by phone 1-877-558-5574 or e-mail TPPseminar@pensionsbc.ca.

There is more to it than money

The BCRTA has developed a workshop designed to complement the pension plan seminars, but with limited enrolment to facilitate sharing and learning.

Attend a seminar. We know that entering retirement is more than choosing a pension option, and who better to share information, ideas, and experiences with you than

retired teachers?

Retirement brings with it life-altering situations and a wide variety of choices, some financial, some legal. Some physical, some social, and all are connected with lifestyle. Achieving a workable balance of activities and fulfilling dreams doesn't just happen. Once you have determined that it's time to retire, it's also time to concentrate on all the other aspects of your new venture.

If a pension seminar is coming to your area, ask your BCTF local president to contact the BCRTA to book this highly acclaimed follow-up workshop.

Classified

TRAVEL/VACATION

FRANCE. Ultimate vacations, privately owned, beautiful furn. 1 bdrm. central Paris. Wkly/mthly. 604-738-1876, 604-879-4936, irene.roland@gmail.com, www.ultimateparis.com

MAUI Privately owned, beautiful fully furn. 2 bdrm, 2 bath condo, across from Kamaole Beaches. Great complex, Great location. 250-598-6955.

HORNBY ISLAND vacation accommodations, discoverhornby.ca

TOFINO. Owned by a Salt Spring teacher's family, this cozy condo is on the harbor in Tofino, at Elk Landing, across from The Shelter Restaurant, walking distance to town. To view, go to www.tofino beach homes, go to select your property, go to Eagles Nest. Call 250-725-2570.

WHISTLER Condo. Sleeps 4, views, close to village, 604-943-9423, preddyplace@telus.net.

BLACKCOMB Luxury 2 bdrm/loft, 3 bath, sleeps 8, ski-in/ski-out, 604-940-0156.

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SOUTH OF FRANCE villa in lively, lovely market town of Limoux. 4 bdrms. Sleeps 8. 2 bathrooms. All mod cons. Near lake and river swimming and historic Carcassonne. Great rates. Deep discounts for long-term, off-season. www.southoffrancereental.com

PUERTO VALLARTA Bright, clean, quiet, 1 bdrm, 2 blks from beach, downtown, \$350/wk., monthly rates. 604-608-4268, dbemc@hotmail.com

WHISTLER 1 bdrm. condo (Whistler Creekside) sleeps 4, hot tub, swimming pool, sauna, kitchen fully equipped, underground parking, close to lifts & stores. Call Jan or John 604-530-0958 or e-mail jpmeagh@shaw.ca

FRANCE BURGUNDY Weekly vacation rentals. Centre of medieval town. Fully equipped studio, 1 and 2 bdrm. apartments. Owned by former BC couple. www.la-charite-sur-loire.com

VANCOUVER ISLAND oceanfront condo. New luxury 2 bdrm. Panoramic view, steps to the ocean, jacuzzi, pool, 604-274-2396, www.yellowpointretreat.com

SAN PANCHE, MEXICO. Just 40 miles north of Puerto Vallarta, luxury oceanview 2 or 3 bdrm. house, in quaint Mexican village. 40' heated pool, across the street from 1 mile sandy beach. Weblink: www.casadesuenosmagicos.com

QUADRA ISLAND private cabin for 2. Panoramic ocean, mountain view, soaker tub, www.lunavista.ca

WATERFRONT CONDO Birch Bay, WA. 2 bdrm., 2 bath., available for day, week, or weekend rentals. Complex has indoor pool, hot tub, games room. \$100/night. Further info contact Teresa, tvfiero@telus.net or 604-831-4080.

WATERFRONT P.E.I. Beautiful 3 bdrm. cottage for rent May through Oct., \$1700/wk. July and Aug. or \$850/wk. spring/fall. Contact: brucehaven@hotmail.com

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WHISTLER CABIN-PINECREST 5 bdrm/loft, totally renovated with 4 baths, sauna, woodstove, large decks, fully equipped kitchen. By tennis courts and private lake. Seasonal rates from \$275/nt. 604-936-3346, e-mail: glush@shaw.ca

OCEANFRONT SUITE VICTORIA BC Weekly vacation rentals. Details at <http://judyak.shawwebpage.ca>. Contact judyak@shaw.ca or call 250-380-6682.

HAWAII. Private Maui Schooner Resort in Kihei, Spring Break 2011-Sat. Mar. 19 to Sat. Apr 2. Two bdrm./2 bath (sleeps 6) \$1,350/wk. or 1 bdrm. condo/1 bath (sleeps 4) \$1,150/wk. Contact 604-535-9315.

GABRIOLA ISLAND, BC. 2 bdrm. Cottage, 250-247-9883, www.gabriolacottage.netfirms.com, boysen@shaw.ca

TEACHING EXCHANGE. Consider an exchange to another country and receive your regular salary and benefits! Hundreds of BC teachers have done it, why not you? Contact BC Exchange Teachers' Assoc. teather_t@sd36.bc.ca or go to www.ceef.ca for more information.

FRANCE FRANCE 2011 holiday rental. Well renovated converted barn & stoned houses in ancient, traditional vineyard village, SW France. Great walking, cycling, food, wine, Cathar castles. C\$765/C\$1051/wk. per family. U18. E-mail mjcapper@hotmail.com, visit www.ourhouseinfrance.com.au

DEEP BAY waterfront 2 bdrm. cottage, Vancouver Island, overlooking Denman, Hornby Islands. Relaxing, private. Sleeps 4-6 people, N/S, N/P. Available June to September. 604-939-0121 or joyce.buckham@shaw.ca

FRANCE HOLIDAY RENTALS Languedoc near Montpellier, Mediterranean. Medieval house & studio apt. Self catering. From \$650/wk. for 2 people, www.ruemontbel.com, sjevent@shaw.ca

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PALM DESERT fully furnished, 2 bdrm/den condo. palmvalleycondo1@gmail.com

OKANAGAN LAKE vacation home in Penticton located on the strip. Deluxe 3 bdrm suite, sleeps 6, full kitchen, patio, backyard and only seconds to the beach. 250-809-2474

TEACHERS ALASKA CRUISE July 31. awayugo.ca - 604-287-2922 for details and booking.

SPRING BREAK GALIANO ISLAND. Lovely, newly renovated character cottage for two. March 19 to 26. \$775. Also available monthly. www.pinkgeraniumcottage.com

OKANAGAN LAKE uninterrupted view. Beautiful 4 bdrm., 3 bath Peachland home. Located between Kelowna and Penticton, Peachland is in the heart of wine country. Home is completely updated with new deck and hot tub. Owned by Okanagan teacher. Weekly rentals available March, July and August 2011. Call Sarah 250-575-7272.

OKANAGAN COTTAGE for rent July 9-16, Aug. 27-Sept. 3. Sleeps six. 40 min. from Westbank on Okanagan Lake. To view: www.carsareus.com \$1400/wk., johncarr@telus.net

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VANCOUVER Clean, bright, quiet, centrally located condos at Robson & Bute. 1 bdrm. \$95. Daily/wkly/mthly rates. 604-608-4268, dbemc@hotmail.com

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VANCOUVER 1 bdrm. apt available for sublet July 20 - Aug 31. Approx. 700 sq.ft. furnished, laundry, 2 patios, beautiful space. Rent \$900 for entire time, or negotiable. Contact helenfrench1@yahoo.com

MISCELLANEOUS

SCHOOL TATTOOS. 1,000 tattoos with your school's logo \$149, Visit www.schooltattoos.ca, E-mail info@schooltattoos.ca or call 613-567-2636.

OUTBACK KIDS FIELD TRIP "Survivor" team building, lunch, kids rafting... all in one great day! "The highlight of the year!" Glenayre Elementary. "The best field trip ever!" Scott Creek Middle School. www.CanadianOutback.com/outbackkids, info@canadianoutback.com, 1-800-565-8735.

DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN! Book a field trip to Burns Bog. Discover the wonders of this globally unique ecosystem. Ask about our teacher's guides. 604-572-0373 or www.burnsbog.org.

THINKING OF RETIRING? Join the BC Retired Teachers' Association. Add your voice. The BCRTA is affiliated with the Council of Senior Citizens Organization and the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers to make seniors' issues a government priority. For more information, go to www.bcrt.ca or call 604-871-2260, 1-877-683-2243.

APTS FOR SALE. 1 or 2 bdrms. Kerrisdale co-op near library & village. Golden oak floors. Easy access to UBC. Adults only. 1-888-880-8785.

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PENSION QUESTIONS? Ask Arnie - now retired and available for expert, personal, one-to-one consultation including pension estimates, options, bridge, CPP/OAS, and pension splitting. Call Arnie Lambert at 604-354-5624 or arnie.lambert@shaw.ca

Health and Safety All I need is the air I breathe...

By Karen Langenmaier

Contrary to popular thought, you may not be suffering from stress. You may be reacting to variations in, or lack of, adequate fresh air or toxins in your work environment. With indoor air quality (IAQ) problems you don't break out in red welts, you don't cough blood, and you don't pass out. But, given a chronic lack of fresh air and breathing toxins all day, you could suffer from any or all of these symptoms. Remember, it's not the first cigarette that kills you.

People spend up to 90% of their time indoors, particularly in the winter. Contaminants that come from moulds, photocopiers, printers, scented felt markers, glues, paints, rubber mats, cleaning products, viruses, bacteria, solvents used in technology shops, chemicals in the science lab, perfumes and cologne, and countless other sources all add to a toxic soup that we breathe on a daily basis.

Sections 4.70 to 4.80 in the *Workers Compensation Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* cover the requirements for indoor air quality for workplaces in BC. Section 4.79(1) states in part, that the employer must ensure that the indoor air quality is investigated when complaints are reported.

The most common IAQ complaint is mould. Moulds require moisture and a source of nutrient in the form

of organic matter and will continue to grow as long as these conditions exist. Many porous building materials such as drywall, insulation, ceiling tile, and wood contain organic material. Without the nutrients, mould will die or become dormant and can become active again years later if the conditions support the active growth. The primary method of mould spread is through the release of spores into the air. It can also be directly transmitted by being rubbed from one surface to another.

Many school districts respond to requests of testing for mould by contracting environmental companies that typically will conduct a spore count test in which they compare the number of spores outdoor to the number of spores indoors. If the indoor number exceeds the outdoor count significantly, they conclude that there is active mould growth and remediation methods are recommended.

If however, the spores are equal to or less than the outside, the conclusion often is that there is not active mould growth. Keep in mind that spores are the means in which mould is transferred from surface to surface. If the mould is actively growing behind the drywall, or ceiling tile, there may not be a transmission of mould to another surface but there continues to be active mould growth. Active mould growth gives off volatile organic

compounds (VOCs) which are what you smell and contribute to the health symptoms (think low VOC paint). Dr. Karen Bartlett from the School of Environmental Health at UBC, who is one of western Canada's leading experts on mould says that "if you can smell mould, there is active mould growth."

The only reliable way in which to determine if there is active growth is to take samples of the wall structure, or to do a physical inspection taking the wall cladding off to look behind. Walls around sinks, windows, and doors typically are susceptible to mould growth as are frames of portable classrooms that do not have adequate eaves-troughing.

In summary, workers at any workplace should know that they have the right to report indoor air quality concerns and that the employer is obligated to investigate these concerns. Workers also have the right to take part in how the testing is done and to know the results and the implications.

The WorkSafeBC website: www.worksafebc.com has valuable information on indoor air quality through a publication called *Indoor Air Quality: a guide for building owners, managers, and occupants*. It is a very user-friendly publication that outlines the regulatory language and processes to follow when an indoor air quality problem is reported.

The BCTF website also has a copy of the *BCTF Occupational Health and Safety manual*, which covers the same information.

The Health Canada website, www.hc-sc.gc.ca has a document called Indoor Air Quality—Tools for schools action kit for Canadian schools.

For further information, please contact the BCTF health and safety officer, Karen Langenmaier at 604-871-1891 or klangenmaier@bctf.ca.

Karen Langenmaier, Health & Safety Officer, BCTF Income Security Division.

Study of plantar fasciopathy

Plantar fasciopathy (commonly called plantar fasciitis or "the bottoms of my feet hurt") is a common condition for people whose jobs require standing for long periods of time. A researcher from the University of Wisconsin has been awarded an innovation work grant from WorkSafeBC and is requesting volunteers to be case studies to be part of their research. Many teachers stand for prolonged periods of time and suffer from plantar fasciopathy.

If you are interested in being part of this research project, please contact Michael Ryan at ryan@ortho.wisc.edu.

PD Calendar

MARCH 2011

17-18 Vancouver. SEA (Special Education Association) is proud to present the 36th annual Crosscurrents conference at the Westin Bayshore Hotel. Keynote speaker is Dr. Paula Kluth plus a variety of quality sessions and exhibitors for regular and special education. For information visit the website at www.bctf.ca/sea or contact Leann Buteau lbuteau@gmail.com

MAY 2011

7 Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices 2011 14th annual conference. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings and questions. Deadline for proposals March 11, 2011. 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 eplt.educ.ubc.ca/programs/institutes/iop.php

Future October PSA days
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 21, 2011

PD Calendar website: bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx
Additions/changes: bgoto@bctf.ca

What can we learn alongside Byrne?

By Sarah Evans

"You are a terrible basketball player. You should try other things before you embarrass yourself more." Those would be the messages that most people would float through their heads on auto-repeat if they failed at a team try out. Michael Jordan didn't make the cut for the school basketball team in his Grade 10 year. However, the message he chose to hear was that it just meant he needed to practice harder—so he did. What makes the difference between someone who can't see past the pain of the moment and gives up playing, and someone who leverages the discomfort to create a long-term goal of being more successful? Emotional intelligence—the complex system of behaviours and beliefs that enable someone to create and achieve a vision—is a crucial and yet often overlooked part of education.

The biggest factor in success is often the extent to which a student can be supported in maintaining a clear vision of themselves as a

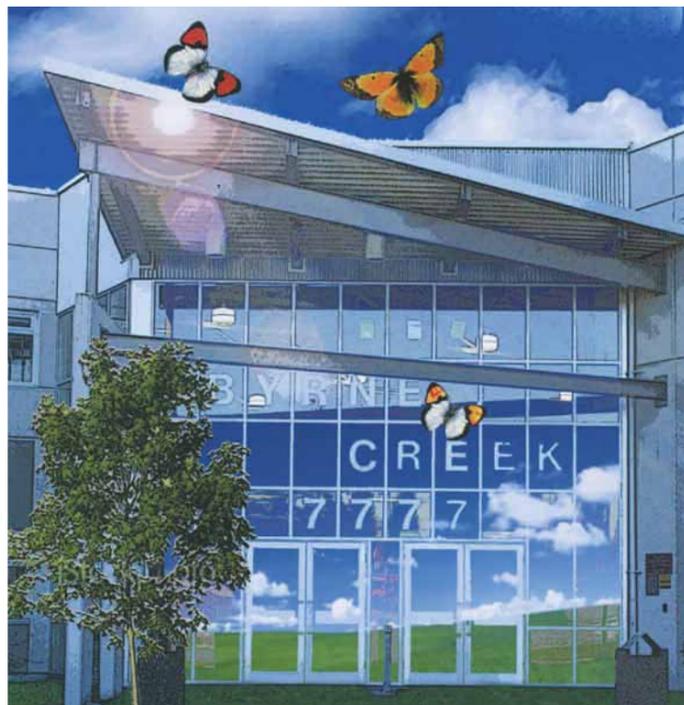


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thriving learner. This is certainly one of the biggest challenges for many staff and students at Byrne Creek Secondary School in Burnaby. The school population is made up of students from over 60 different countries, many of whom come with unique learning challenges. While many ESL students often arrive at Byrne with a high level of oral English, the average reading and writing ability is usually around a Grade 2 level. It often takes between five to seven years to fully acquire the academic language needed to succeed in regular classes. This leads to a frustrating gap between academic ability and personal and parental expectations. Academically, it feels for many like failing to make the team many times and for many years. While often difficult for school and student alike, such immense challenges offer opportunities for new models and modes of learning—so long as that vision of success can be maintained.

During the time that a solid foundation of academic language is being built, our ESL learners will face many emotional challenges. A large portion of students find themselves at Byrne Creek having left behind their country, culture, language, and often many family members. Many of our ESL students have come as refugees of war, persecution, and other tragedies and have experienced prolonged and multiple traumatic experiences. They also often have interrupted or even non-existent first-language education. All have to contend with the difficulties of adaptation—the loss of cultural identity and the strange role reversal that often happens within families. Many become the link between parent and society taking on a wide range of adult responsibilities. With respect to human resilience and



Grade 9 student, Marina Smirnova, created this image of her school in 2009.

perseverance there is nothing that we can teach these students. In all sincerity, it is they who have much to teach us about how to face challenges. They bring with them their vast survival skills and life perspectives and open up learning as a real two-way communication of knowledge.

In dealing with these issues, our school has heart beyond the neatly packaged acronym that serves as our motto (Honesty, Empathy, Achievement, Respect, and Teamwork). The rich diversity of our school population is an invaluable resource for everyone within the building—it necessitates a need to work together to foster understanding. It is this that has led Byrne Creek (and other schools in the province dealing with similarly deep emotional issues) to be at the

forefront of specialized program creation. It is a new culture of learning that is attempting to put human needs first before organizational.

It makes such sense to attempt to tailor programming toward what students actually need and it is such an integral part of Byrne Creek that it is easy to forget such flexibility requires great foresight and commitment from all: district staff, administrators, and teachers alike. We feel lucky and are quite rightly proud of the many different programs that have been honed to fit the needs of our learners from a specialized work-study ESL program to unique reading programs like the one-on-one "Later to Literacy" program. All of these special initiatives are just part of the wider scheme of amazing

programs that support a balanced approach and a drive for excellence in academic, athletic, and artistic progress.

It is a school that works very hard to create real partnerships and a sense of belonging. Collaboration is literally built into the school day, with a special timetable for one day of the week that allows 45 minutes of staff collaboration time while students are peer-mentored. There are many clubs running before and after school with long-running programs such as "Youth in Transitions" that works closely with students alongside their parents. Byrne Creek Secondary School is pursuing the possibility of becoming a community school in order to further build on these successes. Every year there are countless examples of dynamic student teamwork such as the Leo Club and catering students combining to cook a Thanksgiving meal for several hundred students, parents, and staff. In addition, many ex-students maintain their links to the school community. Byrne Creek is also the site for a new pilot project called "Village of Attachment," being run by Bev Ogilvie and Steve Cairns. The intention is to deepen the significance of the crucial attachments that provide students with support and security within school and outside school.

I would argue that teachers on the other hand perhaps need help in detaching—letting go and not holding too much responsibility for another person's ability to change. There seems to be little help with that and it is worth asking why. It is also worth asking why there seems to be little recognition of the burn-out rate that occurs in ESL, LSS, and counseling positions and why professional development does not better address the emotional needs of teachers. How can educators be

expected to help students develop a higher level of emotional intelligence if they are not supported to develop their own? Also, despite the monumental shift toward greater flexibility, there are still some frustrating systemic barriers to success such as the large class sizes in LSS or the district-wide decision to cut leadership positions. While the latter is perhaps more manageable within small ESL departments, it does not fit at all for a school like Byrne with a huge department of six full-time and several part-time ESL teachers. The uncharacteristic inflexibility of the decision has left our ESL department as a large ship with many busy crewmates and no captain.

The biggest factor in success is often the extent to which a student can be supported in maintaining a clear vision of themselves as a thriving learner. This is certainly one of the biggest challenges for many staff and students at Byrne Creek Secondary School in Burnaby.

There is a need for radical flexibility as we move into a shifting cultural and career landscape. How well equipped our students are emotionally to deal with change and challenge, will be of supreme importance. If we can create the right kind of positive community, we can help them work through and change the negative messages that will inevitably come up—those messages of "it's too late for me" or "I'm too far behind." A wise colleague of mine, who is deep into her master's research, put it beautifully. She has come to see that her role as an English teacher is to model the kind of "robust vulnerability" that is needed to help each student find their own voice—their own version and vision of authentic success. There is a lot that can be learned from Byrne Creek—"robust vulnerability" and a broad definition of success seems to be just the start of it.

Sarah Evans is an ESL teacher at Byrne Creek Secondary School, Burnaby.