

Teacher

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2002–2012 Another decade of struggle for BC teachers

Looking back to the winter of 2002, former BCTF President David Chudnovsky remembers a powerful sense of inevitability. Then-premier Gordon Campbell was determined to slash public spending to pay for his 25% tax cut and there was absolutely nothing anyone could do to stop him.

The government targeted unions across the public sector. In education they went after teachers' hard-won collective agreement language on class size and services for students with special needs; important provisions to protect teaching and learning conditions, but costly ones. The Liberals clearly underestimated just how important those provisions were to teachers.

Chudnovsky recalled: "I got a phone call a couple of days before they introduced Bills 27 and 28 from a government official asking me if we would voluntarily accede to removing those provisions and agree that negotiating improvements in learning conditions for students be made illegal. In return, he would 'see' if he could get a tiny salary increase for teachers."

On January 26, 2002, then-Education Minister Christy Clark rose in the Legislature and tabled two bills that would have enormous consequences for teachers and students throughout the province. Bill 27, the *Education Services*

Collective Agreement Act, imposed a new contract and Bill 28, the *Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act*, stripped class size and composition from the old contract. Clark added insult to injury when she stated that she was "delighted" to speak in favour of Bill 28, which she claimed was "about putting students first on the agenda."

Over a single weekend, the Liberals wiped out decades of advocacy and sacrifice by thousands of teachers across BC and launched a decade of cutbacks, school closures, and untold damage to teaching and learning conditions. The BCTF and its members immediately responded with outrage and action.

"I remember how proud we all felt on January 28, 2002, when tens of thousands of BCTF members, parents, and students rallied across the province—almost 15,000 of us at the Coliseum in Vancouver—to oppose Bills 27 and 28 and to support improved education services for kids," Chudnovsky said.

"I would want to say to younger teachers who didn't experience that, it was a long way from perfect. But it had integrity, a responsibility, accountability, and a democracy to it that was tremendous for teachers. But most importantly, it was tremendous for kids."

"After 2002, it didn't stop. There was the mobilization of the political protest of 2005, the so-called illegal strike. What was that about? That was also about teachers attempting to advocate for children so that their learning conditions would improve.

"So how would I assess the significance of 2002? It was a moment—an unfortunate moment—in a very, very fortunate history of



Above: January 28, 2002, rally in Victoria to oppose Bills 27 and 28; Below: David Chudnovsky, BCTF president.

British Columbia teachers taking upon themselves the responsibility to advocate for kids to make sure their learning conditions improve. That hasn't stopped and it's not going to stop."

Bills 27 and 28 enabled the government to cut at least \$275 million per year from the education budget. But cost-cutting wasn't the only reason the Campbell government went after teachers' collective agreements, Chudnovsky says. One was simply the raw assertion of power by a government with an overwhelming majority, fuelled by the Liberals' disdain for the labour movement and their extreme discomfort with the unrepentant and outspoken advocacy of BC teachers.

"It has to do with the government's notion of how public policy is administered. Governments think they know best and that it's for them to decide what the conditions of learning will be in schools," he said.

"We as workers believe, rightly in my view, that the people who work in the system have a right and a responsibility to have some input. Not just if the government feels like

it, not just consultation, but actual input and the ability to contribute to the decisions that affect the system. And the BCTF to its great credit has for many years used whatever tools available to it, including collective bargaining, to assert that right and responsibility to have a say in how schools work. There is a kind of industrial democracy inherent in strong collective bargaining. Government—the Campbell government—was incredibly uncomfortable with that. I think that is a second reason why they did what they did."

Another very closely related reason lies in the BCTF's confidence and strength as an advocate for

progressive public policy in general, and public education in particular.

"BC teachers have always been prepared to stand up for what they believe, no matter what the government of the day thinks. We are going to advocate for teachers, for students and for public education, and we are not going to apologize for that. The government didn't like that attitude and still doesn't. So I think that was a piece of the story as well," Chudnovsky said.

What's the message for younger BCTF members who have never worked under those collective agreements?

See STRUGGLE page 3

On the inside

January 28 marks the 10th anniversary of the enactment of Bills 27 and 28 by the liberal government in 2002, which stripped our collective agreements of class-size, composition, and service-levels language. David Chudnovsky, who was president of the BCTF at the time, looks back at that event and provides his assessment of its impact and what we need to remember as the current struggle unfolds.

The BC Education Plan continues to generate a wealth of critical commentary and its suspect linkage to what is happening at the bargaining table is not going unnoticed.

The pervasive effects of poverty in education and our society were highlighted with the release of the Poverty Report Card. At the press conference, featured in this issue, and

in accompanying articles, teachers are clearly aware of the need for a political solution to the problem and not one based on charity.

Working to put the spotlight on another issue, Michael Schratte has completed a monumental ride, raising awareness and funds, in support of mental health. His campaign is ongoing.

PSAs continue to profile their activities and services in this, their 40th year, and members are encouraged to join these important professional communities.

A roundup of rallies around our schools, held late last year, makes clear the commitment our members have to doing all they can to convince government to treat the importance of education and teachers with the respect and support that are deserved.



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President's message



Susan Lambert

What to make of the BC Education Plan? If we are truly talking about individualizing learning and ensuring that the content of the curriculum is informed by student interests and passions, teachers can wholly endorse the approach. Trimming the number of PLOs and focussing more importance on higher level thinking skills to allow for deeper learning and understanding are innovations that have been called for by

teachers for some time. Teaching students to use technology safely and wisely as a tool and not an end in and of itself is an admirable objective. Teaching the skills of critical appraisal, collaborative decision-making and action and teaching the confidence necessary to respectfully challenge authority are essential if we are to foster a generation of young people, able, like those in the Occupy movement, to act as both the conscience and the creators of a better world.

We have one of the very best public education systems in the world in BC and that excellence is largely due to the excellence of the teachers of British Columbia. So when teachers are characterized as the impediments to the plan we begin to wonder what motivates it and what are its intended outcomes.

There's a set pattern to the educational reform that has devastated public education in the US. We readily identify themes: "fix the teacher" (attacks on teacher

competence, merit pay, scripted lessons/standardization, mandatory re-certification, the theme of teachers stuck using 19th century methods in an agrarian/industrial model inappropriate in the 21st century), underfunding (cuts to service, increased class sizes, teachers described as overpaid and underworked), collective agreements and teacher unions as obstacles to progress, "flexibility and choice," standardization, testing and ranking, an over-reliance on technology as panacea, and privatization as hallmarks of these American reforms.

When we see these same themes surface in the vague ideas presented in BC's Education Plan, our wonder turns to worry. Why is teacher competence such a focus? How can this plan be implemented without funding? How can a government with the highest child poverty rates in the country propose to allow students to "bring their own devices" and receive credit for courses obtained through the

private sector?

And when government comes to our bargaining table to assert that rights in our collective agreement are obstacles to implementing this plan our concerns are realized. The right to seniority that assures increased security of employment with increased service, the right to due process that insures transparency and fairness in evaluation, discipline, and dismissal, and the rights to professional autonomy in our practice are fundamental to a respectful and dignified workplace. These rights foster collegiality and collaboration. And collegial collaborative relationships are critical to sound educational practice and to the continuous implementation of change that must characterize education in any century.

What kind of educational change requires us to give up our rights to bargain basic working conditions—class size, class composition, and learning specialist ratios and caseloads? What kind of education-

al change requires us to give up professional autonomy, due-process and fair-practice clause language that guarantee we will be treated respectfully in our work places? What kind of educational change is built on a managerial model of supervision, control, and surveillance, more reminiscent of the 19th century?

Educational change must be shaped by teachers and it must respect the profession. To impose change on a resistant profession is not only profoundly disrespectful it is to court disaster. Teachers are on strike because we are proverbially up to our necks in alligators. We no longer have the conditions necessary to do our work. It's government's responsibility to drain this swamp, fix this mess, and show some respect for the work teachers do. We must be able to bargain a collective agreement. Then, government must invite the profession as equal and willing partners to develop and implement continuous and exciting new visions for public education.

Readers write

Praise for the BC Retired Teachers' Association

I read with great interest Joann Lauber's article, "BC retired teachers support their communities." Having read the full report prepared by the BCRTA's ad hoc Volunteerism Committee, I would like to congratulate members of the committee for an inspirational presentation. I also hope that the provincial and federal governments will consider what they might do to support the selfless work done by our BCRTA colleagues.

In addition to the many activities cited in the report, BCRTA members also offer workshops to their colleagues still working in the school community. For several years in my local, our professional development day offerings have included "There's more to it than money" sessions presented by BCRTA members who share their personal experiences with colleagues who are investigating retirement. Each year the sessions have been oversubscribed and extremely well received by attendees. Many teachers view retirement with mixed emotions and the workshops provide an excellent forum for realistic, informed discussion. The focus of these sessions is on life after retirement—the endless possibilities of redefinition lead to thoughtful conversations facilitated by BCRTA presenters.

It is evident that BCRTA members enrich our communities in many different ways. The supportive encouragement offered to the

teaching community at these workshops is easy to access. Ask your PD chairperson or local president to book a workshop—it will be time well spent.

Caroline Malm
Coquitlam

Angry at arbitrary change

I was surprised and concerned that the Liberal government through its section 91 of the *Teachers Act* has not only dissolved the College of Teachers, but is requiring all teachers (including retired and non-practising), to be practising members at a cost of \$120 per year. If we decide not to pay the fee, our certificates will be cancelled on January 6, 2012. Should we, retired or non-practising teachers decide in the future that we want to become practising teachers once again, we would be required to re-apply, submit transcripts and references, authorize a criminal records check, and have to do upgrade course work.

I doubt that very many retired or non-practising teachers were privy to this decision until we were contacted by the BCRTA and the BCCT within the last two weeks. At no time were we given the opportunity to express our concerns or displeasure or given the rationale for this turn of events.

I, for one, am angry at the way this was done. It shows no respect toward the thousands of teachers who have spent a great part of their lives in the service of bringing the love and excitement of learning to their students. Instead, it is

perceived as a money grab and a dismissal of our many years of service as meaningless. Why can we not have the status of "retired" or "emeritus" instead of having our career history erased by having to relinquish our certificate status?

I fear for the education process in this province when such mean-spirited, arbitrary decisions are made without consultation with those people involved.

Lynda M. Bird
President, Elk Valley Retired Teachers' Association

Action needed to end preferential call out

TTOCs are not united. Preferential call-out lists are used by many districts and teachers seem to assert this is their right, at least in my local. It also divides young and old, since the younger TTOCs see the older as having "an unfair advantage" if seniority were ever to be instituted.

Times have changed dramatically in the climate of opinion around unions. In the era from the 1930s to the 1960s, unions were beloved of workers.

Membership in unions passed the 50% mark in Canada and the USA. That is the era I grew up in. I learned that unions are my best friend as an employee.

But other younger teachers who have grown up since the 1970s, do not know this is a fact.

Union membership went into decline in the 1980s, and with the help of media and governments who are in the pockets of the

corporate order, the public now seems to think that unions have outlived their usefulness. A very common comment is, "There was a time when unions were very necessary and they did very good work to protect worker rights and improve working conditions. But times have changed. Now unions are more often a problem than a solution to the new challenges of the superfast global economy. We need to adjust to the demands of the 21st century. Unions do not help us grow our economy." Young people are more likely to say this than those over 45.

Preferential call out takes full advantage of that young/old split in our ranks, and pits TTOCs against one another, while teachers who use it act as if they are similar in authority to principals as judges of TTOC work. I am appalled by these attitudes. If BCTF does not make up its mind to do something more than pass resolutions against preferential call out—more than put it in a toothless policy—it will begin to unravel. As BCPSEA reveals in its bargaining positions, the deep agenda of government now is to attack rights of seniority and job security won by union action over decades of struggle.

In the name of flexibility, technological change, cost savings, and specialized learning needs, the aim of government is to make teachers unorganized as a collective. We will compete with one another for jobs, and the employers will do as they see fit—more part-time work, less security, less benefits, elimination of contracts that will carry a teacher from their 20s though their 60s. This is the vision of 21st century education that the corporate state forecasts, and the public is being propagandized to believe. And the present condition among TTOCs is a fair picture of that future because BCTF will not do the right thing for TTOCs against the autonomy of local opinion, where preferential call out is demanded.

Leaders of the BCTF, take a good look at the TTOC issue. It is our Achilles heel. It predicts a dark era.

Charles Jeanes
Nelson

Children unprotected

"The officer described how the Shafia girls reported being hit in the face by their brother and father, and having their hair pulled because they were out late. The officer observed a mark around the eye of one of the girls. That officer wanted

to press charges, but called in youth protection services instead, who then interviewed all the girls in front of their father. The court was told the girls were crying and silent, but then recanted allegations of abuse, while still saying they wanted to live in a foster home."

– CBC News, Nov. 23, 2011
Here in BC, as a school counsellor I have observed similar interviews of children where before the interview proceeds the social worker telephones the alleged offender and asks for their permission to talk to the child, needless to say the children did not disclose the abuse they had previously described. Unbelievably this type of interview by Ministry for Children and Family Development is called "best practice."

The children in these cases remain unprotected, at risk and betrayed by the very ministry that is supposed to act in their best interest.

Susanna Kaljur
Courtenay

Teacher

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STRUGGLE from page 1

"I would want to say to those teachers that we old-timers know and understand that their commitment to kids and to the learning conditions of the kids they teach is no less than ours was. But we were fortunate in that we had a tool available to us in the course of that struggle to improve things—that tool was the collective agreement.

"Sometimes we idealize collective bargaining rights. And we convince ourselves that all we need is the right to bargain and everything will be okay. Wrong! It's an improvement in democracy, right? Collective bargaining is the right of people who work in an enterprise to have some say about that enterprise. But it's really just a tool, it's not a guarantee.

"I would want to say to younger teachers who didn't experience that, it was a long way from perfect. But it had integrity, a responsibility, accountability, and a democracy to it that was tremendous for teachers. But most importantly, it was tremendous for kids."

The BCTF mounted a challenge to Bills 27 and 28 and, in April 2011, Madam Justice Susan Griffin of the BC Supreme Court found the legislation to be unconstitutional and invalid because it violated teachers' Charter rights to full and free collective bargaining. The government was given one year to rectify the situation. Education Minister George Abbott has said that "corrective legislation" will be tabled in the spring session of the Legislature.

In light of the Supreme Court ruling, how should we think about this 10-year anniversary?

"I think this is another moment where we look back on the past but also look to the future. We look back on a past that we should be very proud of. We have never stepped back from our advocacy for children and their classroom conditions," Chudnovsky said.

"What tactics, what strategies, what tools will we have available to us in the coming months and years to continue to do that? Teachers have said through the Federation that we want, once again, to be able to use the tool of collective bargaining. That's certainly worth continuing to fight for. It's fundamental.

"At the end of the day I am completely confident because I know teachers teach in classrooms where the conditions that kids have to learn in have been undercut for 10 years now. And they see that. And they're teachers! They are there for a reason: because they care about kids. And so I am completely confident.

"What will this anniversary mean? Another step on the road to what we all care about and believe in and are committed to, which is to improve the conditions under which children learn."

— David Denyer and Nancy Knickerbocker
BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division

Notice of AGM 2012

As required by *The Society Act*, the following formal notice of the 2012 Annual General Meeting is made to all BCTF members pursuant to By-law 8.1 by publication in this edition of *Teacher*.

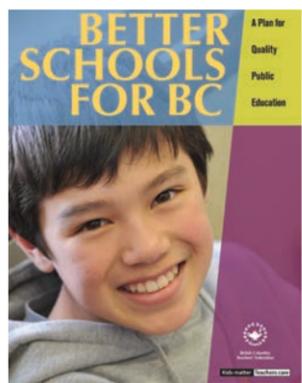
The 96th Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, BC, beginning on Saturday, March 17, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. and continuing to Tuesday, March 20, 2012.



Bargaining update

Bargaining at the provincial table continued in the month of January, and dates are scheduled into February. By the time this issue of the *Teacher* newsmagazine reaches you, the Federation will have made a significant move at the provincial table to accelerate talks toward a negotiated deal at the bargaining table. Communications support to locals, and advertising in the media, will be occurring to support the efforts at the bargaining table. The Federation continues to encourage individual members to write letters to the editor (contact information can be found here: bcf.ca/AdvocacyAndAction.aspx), and to talk to parents, friends, and other members of the public about this round of bargaining and about other important issues such as class size and class composition.

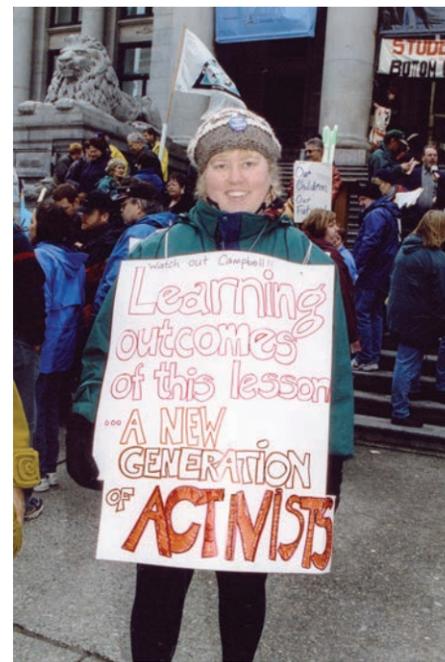
To assist members with this, the *Public Education Needs a Better Deal* brochure (outlining key bargaining concerns around salary and prep time, and the BCTF's ongoing dispute with the province over class size and composition) and the *Better Schools for BC* document remain available for members to distribute; both can be found in electronic form on the front page of bcf.ca, and both can be easily shared on Facebook and Twitter. Hard copies are still available too.



Read Susan Lambert's president's message for more context to where we are now in this round of bargaining. Members are also strongly encouraged to attend membership meetings in their locals over the weeks and months to come—to come together to discuss, listen, reflect, and make the best possible decisions together.

For timely bargaining updates, sign up and visit MyBCTF.ca.

— Glen Hansman
BCTF 2nd vice-president



January 28, 2002, tens of thousands of teachers, parents, and students rallied around the province to oppose Bill 27 (Education Services Collective Agreement Act) and Bill 28, (Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act).



BCTF ARCHIVE PHOTOS

Looking back

70 years ago

Why have compulsory membership? A vigorous provincial Association does a great many things which benefit not only its members but all the teachers within the province. For the non-member as well as the member, the Association fights in defence of salaries, negotiates pension schemes, improves conditions of employment and tenure, and obtains redress of all sorts of grievances. All this may amount in twenty years to a marked transformation of the teacher's lot, or (as in the past twelve years) it may prevent the utter collapse of the teacher's livelihood under the stress of economic depression.

— January 1942, *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

In this age of tremendous scientific advancement there are those who question the inclusion of Latin in the modern curriculum. Some say it is the language of a dead race and does not deserve consideration; others hint that this tongue no longer has anything to

offer in the variegated world of hydrogen bombs, rockets, and sports cars. The classicist maintains that Latin is not the language of a dead race merely; it is a civilization rich and complete, the treasure-house of some of the world's finest literature; the repository of the mental thrift and tradition of the greatest minds in Universal Biography.

— January 1962, *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

Have you had a frank discussion lately with your class about cheating? If you had, you might be shocked at the amount of moral ignorance that abounds in our society. You might have found, for instance, that many, if not most, students do not know what the Golden Rule is. And if they do know the Golden Rule, it is almost certain they do not grasp its relevance and its scope. Morality is the last great undeveloped human discipline. I'm convinced that moral education can and will help to eliminate this confusion of goals, and that it should be at the top of the list of the teaching profession's priorities, not

one of those things we mean to do someday when we get around to it.

— Jan./Feb. 1982, *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

Whatever happens, there's no doubt that 2002 is going to be an historic year in the history of public education in British Columbia. As the new school term begins and Phase II of job action gets under way, thousands of teachers continue working to help achieve a negotiated collective agreement. However, after months of talks, the BC Public School Employers' Association persists in its demands for concessions that would seriously erode the quality of education, and has not budged an inch on salary or any other important issues. Premier Gordon Campbell, Education Minister Christy Clark, and Finance Minister Gary Collins have all mused aloud in the media about imposing a legislated contract.

— Jan./Feb. 2002, *Teacher* newsmagazine

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

My life, my union

The BCTF, along with other public sector unions, is publishing a series of member profiles in *The Asian Post*, *The South Asian Post*, and *The Philippines Post* in an outreach effort to raise the profile of the Federation and raise awareness in immigrant communities about workers' rights and the role of unions in Canadian society. The articles are published in English, Chinese, Punjabi and Tagalog.

Speak up girls, your opinions matter



Magee Secondary School English teacher, **Helen Kuk**, talks animatedly about admiring her Grade 6/7 teacher, Ms. McIntyre, who said: "Assert yourself, girls. Your opinions matter, so speak up." Kuk took these words to heart while pursuing a Life Sciences degree from Queens University and a Masters in Fine Arts at UBC. Born in Hong Kong, she arrived in Ontario as a two-year-old with parents who immigrated so their children could have good educational opportunities. In Canada, they started from scratch, and saw their lifestyle decline, but the value of education remained clear.

Although Scarborough is a diverse community, growing up there she felt "not actually Canadian," and that she didn't fit in. Kuk recalls "wanting to be Canadian and being really conflicted as a kid." In her extended family, everyone functioned in Cantonese. She was encouraged to "focus on her family" and retain Chinese values. Her parents wanted her to become a doctor, but she "successfully planted the idea of teaching" in their minds.

The role of education in Chinese culture established Kuk's appreci-

ation for "the comfortable life and career choices" an education provides. She realized it also offers "rich life experiences" that she explores in the Grade 8/9 Leaders Program at Magee. Its wide focus includes studying social justice, going hiking, and visiting the opera.

Kuk's studiousness and active imagination created a childhood "life lived in books." Now, her relationship with students has evolved from teaching English because she loves literature, to loving "working with the kids...who make me see things in a new way." Especially important is seeing them live up to their potential and embrace ideas. She lets students know that school is "not always fun. You have to work hard."

Kuk is currently a staff representative at Magee. Her first union experiences in Toronto taught her the union's value in mediating staff relations and "in making things better." For three of her ten years in Vancouver, she has been involved in job action. She appreciates the BCTF's role in fighting for basic needs. Her involvement has taught her much about the system, including union history.

She advises newer teachers to learn about what the union promotes. Initially, she admits, "seniority was a problem for me." Now she says, "You cannot make up for experience."

Kuk expresses concern that the present government promotes a corporate model that seems to denigrate everything teachers try to do. At first, she says, she took it personally. Now, she realizes, "To be a teacher, you have to be a union activist."

Sit on the sidelines, or get involved



Gurpreet (Gurp) Mahil was born in Abbotsford to hard-working parents who own a farm where they grow blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries. He grew up in the early 1980s, an era when, as a turban-wearing student in the system, he experienced racism directly. "It was," he remembers, "easier to laugh than to ask a question." A member of the Committee for Action on Social Justice, Mahil does see more visible minorities now, but still sees racism, too. "I don't want to see it at the end of my career, so I hope I can help to change a few people's minds." As a BCTF activist and local representative, changing minds requires "thinking beyond the food, festivals, and clothing." Mahil says, "We need discussions and panels, and to encourage teachers to speak up." He encourages his own students to ask him the questions about his cultural heritage he would have liked to have answered when he was in school. "Questions are good because that is what starts the conversation." When his Langley special education class visited the

local gurdwara (Sikh temple) with him and tried the food in the langar, (communal dining hall, open to everyone) for most it was their first time eating an Indian meal. His experience tells him that being a teacher from a visible minority is beneficial to his relationships with kids. They have the opportunity to interact with and respect a teacher who emphasizes that they should be "open to all cultures and learn what their beliefs are." In June 2011, Gurp took four of his graduating students from special education on the traditional grad boat cruise with the Grade 12 students. It was a great way for all the "kids to interact with, learn from, and empathize with one another." Interaction, learning, and empathy are certainly key words to inspire students and teachers alike.

Mahil's parents, acutely aware of the vagaries and hardships of farming, made education a priority for their children and, after graduating from Rick Hansen Secondary School, Mahil attended the UFV. He started out as a business major, but soon lost interest. Gravitating to education was partly due to curiosity motivated by the girl he was dating, now his wife, and the advice of a college counsellor. He recalls that his passion for sports—almost all sports—had earlier inspired him to want to be a PE teacher. When Mahil was a boy, his dad got him involved in soccer and, not surprisingly, he "fell in with its team aspect that still means you can excel as an individual." It is, he reminds us, "a universal game" that is not expensive. Anyone can do it. At university he continued to pursue his lifelong sports activities, especially soccer, but he found a new passion, too. Student politics.

At the UFV he decided to join the student union where he "got really involved," spent a couple of years as vice-president and then became president. He liked to organize events and participate in decision making. And so, as he now notes, he was "well-prepared to see what the BCTF was all about" when he became a Langley teacher. In particular, he was eager to bring to the Federation a visible minority perspective, one that still needs to be enhanced.

In the Langley Teachers' Association, Mahil was involved in the program against racism, which he chaired for two years and is now a local representative (LR). He teaches low-incidence children in special education full time, coaches soccer at school, and runs an Abbotsford soccer club (Athletic India) in his free time. He loves working with kids, "seeing them grasp a concept and share it with others." He knows that it is important to bring a new teacher's perspective to the union, remarking that, "At a Representative Assembly, you see faces that have been there for over 20 years. Other new teachers can say, hey, why is Mahil involved and recognize the need to step into those shoes, too."

Thoughtful about the often-daunting challenges newer teachers face—many classes to prepare for, shifting schedules, shrinking funds—Mahil believes they should know their rights. His advice to them is to be involved in the local union because, "that's where the decisions are made. You can sit on the sidelines or you can get involved to protect your rights."

Teaching for social justice in a French immersion Kindergarten class

By *Jessica Campbell*

Is Kindergarten too early to start talking about social justice issues with students? Of course not! While some five-year-olds may struggle with zipping up their coat or making it to the bathroom on time, they definitely have a strong sense of justice and how an imbalance of justice in their world of the classroom is not okay.

I've been teaching Kindergarten for eight years at the same school, located in a mostly wealthy and privileged neighbourhood of Vancouver. Many (not all) of my students spend their holidays in Mexico, Hawaii, or elsewhere, and have everything they need and much more. My challenge is to help them understand the imbalance of wealth in the world and how they can make a difference.

Here are three of the key messages I hope my students come to understand every year:

Myth #1: Africa is a poor country.

With picture books, photos, and music from different parts of Africa, I try to teach my students that Africa is a huge continent full of different cultures, languages, foods, and music. Also, while many people in different African countries do not have enough food, medicine, or

money for school, some people do. Many people are working hard to make life better for themselves, including young children.

Myth #2: People without food and shelter live far away in another part of the world.

My students are not always aware that there are kids their age who live just a 15- or 20-minute drive away who do not have enough food to eat before coming to school, or even a home to live in.

Myth #3: There is not enough food in the world to feed everyone.

I teach my students that in fact there is enough food for everyone—the problem is the people with a lot of food forget, or don't want to share what extra they have with others.

Our school is very active in fundraising to help others in our city (the annual Christmas hamper program, clothing drives, collecting turkey dollars, and much more). While all these activities raise awareness around poverty in our city and make a difference to others, these short-term projects do not end the systemic poverty so prevalent across our province. We have the worst child poverty rates in the country.

Throughout the year, I put a lot of emphasis and recognition on those I see sharing classroom materials.

The development of that happy feeling one gets after sharing with another, without hope for recognition or reward is something that I will always work on building with my students.

My challenge is to help them understand the imbalance of wealth in the world and how they can make a difference.

The other day, when I asked my students in French, Would it be fair to NOT share some of your snack if your neighbour beside you didn't have any?, they know for certain what's fair and unfair. They get it, and happily share some of their snack with someone else.

Now, if only we could get our government to see the value (on so many levels) of sharing our resources with the most needy.

Jessica Campbell, Ecole Jules Quesnel, Vancouver, is a BCTF facilitator of two social justice workshops: "Breaking the silence: Talking about LGBTQ issues" and "From silence to action: Supporting LGBTQ secondary students and staff"

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I think about leaving my job almost every day

By Jane Bant

It's not a job really; it's what I am. You see, I'm a teacher and have been for 19 years. Or more accurately, I AM a teacher, and other than taking time off in the middle to have my own kids, I always have been. And I'm a good teacher. My students in Grades 4 and 5 and I smile and laugh each day. I'm quick with a hug or a high five, a granola bar for a kid who's hungry, or a quiet word with a kid who needs that instead. I don't believe in much homework, especially not for 9- or 10-year-olds. Kids should be outside, in boots and raincoats if necessary, building and digging and mucking about. At past meet the teacher nights I've said, "Go for walks with your kids. Play chess together. Play Monopoly. Watch something on Discovery Channel and then research it together. Snuggle on the couch and read a great book together. It's the relationship you build with the kids now that will hopefully see them through difficult times in their teens, or have them coming to you for advice instead of to their peers. Nothing is more important than that. Certainly not a math worksheet." I've almost had standing ovations.

But I think about leaving. I push kids to try things they think they can't, do things they think they can't, and find out more than they've ever known. But how can I do it all? How can I meet their needs every single day? Twenty-seven 9- and 10-year-olds: two who can't stop moving, two who would never move if I didn't encourage them, one who prefers complete silence, 10 more who need to talk and discuss and question to clarify

It's the relationship you build with the kids now that will hopefully see them through difficult times in their teens, or have them coming to you for advice instead of to their peers.

their thoughts. I have two students who call out answers and one who'd rather not say a word. One who needs this, two who need that, three who need a different this, four who need a different that. Five who can write and write and write some more, four who can't get anything down on paper. And that's today. Tomorrow, with a new lesson, a new concept, their needs might all be different.

I make connections with kids. I know who's into fishing and who's into horseback riding, who plays tennis and who plays ringette. I've been to watch my students play in baseball playoffs and soccer tournaments, and one wants me to go golfing with him. I'm fortunate to live in the community where I teach, so I run into current and former students at the grocery store or the mall. I get hugs from former students and their parents, and a holler and a wave from a long-ago former student now in secondary school, even as he was surrounded by his mates. And so I think, how can I leave?

Sometimes it's the money, and no, it's not what you're thinking: it's not the money I make; it's the

money I spend for use in my classroom. I have a classroom library with more than 1,000 books: 700+ novels and 300 non-fiction books almost all purchased with my own money. A few have been donated by generous families and a few have been purchased with bonus coupons from student monthly book clubs. But by far the majority I've bought at garage sales, used book

But every year that teachers are in negotiations for a new contract I feel that whatever I'm doing, it's not enough. Whatever amount of time I'm devoting, it's not enough.

stores, or online. And those are just the student books. I have professional references that suggest how to incorporate more of this and more of that into my teaching of reading comprehension, handwriting, math, and science, to name just a few. I purchased every poster on the wall and even the alphabet that hangs at the front of my classroom. I wonder, do doctors and nurses pay for the things they use to do their jobs in the hospital?

Sometimes it's the time. My school runs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., but I'm there by 8:00 a.m. everyday and I'm seldom out before 5:00 p.m. But that's not the end of it, because I usually take work home, often spending another two or three hours in the evening drafting e-mails or marking assessments. So much marking! Time on weekends or holidays is spent making unit plans or other long-range planning. I'm fit, but this fall I had a health scare and it suddenly made clear for me that I need to take time for my health too. I now try to leave work by 4:30 p.m. two days a week to work out, but it's honestly hard to do every week. And so I think about leaving.

Most years I keep going, knowing I'm making a difference with my students and their families. But every year that teachers are in negotiations for a new contract I feel that whatever I'm doing, it's not enough. Whatever amount of time I'm devoting, it's not enough. Whatever money I'm spending, it's not enough. Whatever work I'm doing, it's not enough. And now I feel like I'm being asked for more, because if I can't do more, reach more, teach more, I'll be asked to leave. Maybe I should leave.

In my classroom, when my students and I are discussing something, I always ask, "Does this make sense? Is it reasonable?" When we make a decision, we compromise. We learn, practice, and live the concept of give and take. I hear them using those words in their interactions. It makes sense to them. I wish the adults doing the negotiating on both sides of this stalemate would remember this concept. Because one day, me and a lot of other dedicated, experienced, and compassionate teachers will decide that all the work, time, and money could be spent differently. And that would be a shame. I'd miss my kids.

Jane Bant, Caulfeild Elementary School, West Vancouver

Daily tasks undertaken by teachers in BC every day

By Jack MacDermot

Recently an excellent article entitled "Just 5 Minutes" was written by a teacher for the Nova Scotia Teacher's Union magazine. It was a response to a familiar refrain for teachers: "This will just take five minutes of your time after school" and listed the many expected tasks that are part of that teacher's after-school routine.

Recently BCPSEA (rumoured to be the provincial bargaining agent for school districts in BC, albeit with little recent evidence of actual bargaining to support this claim) has gone to the Labour Relations Board, not once but twice, demanding that BC teacher salaries should be cut by 15% on the basis of tasks not performed during Phase 1 of the BCTF strike. It seems that these "educational leaders" need to be educated themselves about the daily tasks undertaken by teachers in BC.

Space does not permit anything close to a comprehensive list of such tasks, and although some might be done during normal teaching hours or before school these are representative of typical after-school activities of elementary teachers in British Columbia's public schools. Many also apply to middle school and secondary teachers, and to adult educators in the K-12 system:

Daily or very often

1. See the students out the door, ensuring that everyone has what materials they need to do their homework assignments, their agendas, and other daily communications.
2. Talk to student support worker about the day's progress for the student(s) with special needs in the class and discuss their ongoing program(s), making modifications and noting when they will have to be working on different activities.
3. Talk to parents/guardians or older siblings who are picking up their children at the end of the day.
4. Discuss with colleagues ongoing school-wide or grade-specific activities, concerns about specific students, and other relevant professional issues.
5. Plan lessons for tomorrow while considering academic, social, behavioural, and physical attributes of students. Make sure that the lessons are written in a day plan so that they can be delivered by a teacher teaching on call should the teacher unexpectedly be absent the next day.
6. Assess work completed by students that day by marking some assignments, using rubrics or performance standards to evaluate others, and adjust lessons and units based on how students are understanding and responding. Provide feedback through comments about their written and other work. Take home a stack of work that can't be completed in the time at work after school.
7. Plan upcoming units in one or more of seven subjects, keeping in mind upcoming events of the next day, week, and term. Research, plan, and book appropriate field trips, guest speakers, performances, video, models, or other activities that will support the lessons.

8. Check for messages in office mail slot, for e-mails on the frequently unreliable class computer (sometimes having to reload several times), for information from my union local, and remember to leave a note in the office for tomorrow's bulletin or morning announcements.
9. Search online for ideas for lessons, units, and computer programs since there are often no existing textbooks or other materials available to a whole class.
10. Go to supplies room(s) and library to get necessary books, science and math materials for tomorrow. Make sure sufficient pencils, erasers, pens, paper, and art supplies are available for the next day.
11. Put up and/or take down displays of student work. Clean and organize my desk, the blackboard and other parts of the room.
12. Reshelve and file materials already used to proper files, cabinets, etc. or return them to the school library (if it's open that day.)
13. Rearrange seating for new groupings or specific activities.
14. Figure out how to meet the 30-minute daily physical activity requirements added to teachers' responsibilities a few years ago.
15. Read up on subjects being taught to anticipate student needs and improve my professional ability to deal with student questions and difficulties. Those in Grades 5-7 will brush up on their French since they are expected to teach it, often with little fluency.

Sometimes

1. Meet with resource teacher to discuss students, whether they should be brought to school-based team, what support can be provided, and whether assessments are needed.
2. Meet with the teacher-librarian to plan a co-operative unit.
3. Meet with or answer phone calls from parents re: academic, behavioural, and/or social issues.
4. Attend school-based or district union meetings, and grade group meetings where these have not been possible during the day.
5. Attend IEP meetings for students with special needs with parents, resource teachers, support workers, and sometimes translators when these are not able to be scheduled during the school day.



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6. Plan for upcoming school-wide events such as assembly presentations, holiday concerts, sports day, etc. Decorate halls or gym for these events.
 7. Volunteer to coach a team in one of several sports. As well as twice-weekly practises before and after school, organize rides and drive the kids to and from the games, referee some games (knowing the rules thoroughly helps), keep track of the equipment, deal with any injuries or other upsets.
- Or volunteer to lead other extra-curricular activities such as clubs, musical groups, etc. again offering hours of personal time for the benefit of students.

It might be hard for a non-teacher to believe that this is a typical after-school experience for many teachers, but it is. As you can see, very few of these things can be done quickly or left undone for very long.

A positive aspect of our Phase 1 job action is that it's possible to get through a greater number of these tasks since non-essential work isn't being done.

So teachers, the next time you feel guilty about not being able to accomplish all of the demands put on you consider how many there are.

And for those who haven't done the job, we hope you will have developed a greater level of understanding and empathy for the worklife of the dedicated professional teachers in our province.

Jack MacDermot, Sir Charles Kingford Elementary School, Vancouver

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Are report cards necessary?

By Raza Mirani

British Columbia teachers currently find themselves in a contract struggle with the provincial government and as a result are in Phase 1 job action. Part of the job action is not producing report cards, with the exception of Grade 12 students who require marks for graduation, scholarship, or post-secondary admission. Why is this relevant? In part because it has led to a philosophical debate on the value of report cards. Are marks necessary for teaching?

Every teacher has developed an assignment or activity only to be asked, Is this for marks? That common refrain is maddening at times because the implication is that an assignment or activity only has value if marks are attached. As teachers, we are guilty of perpetuating this phenomena as we use marks as a motivator and bargaining chip to get students to complete

With a shift toward personalized learning and individualized curriculum must come a re-evaluation on the role marks play in education.

assignments. So this begs the question, are students driven by marks or learning? If marks were removed from the educational landscape would this allow true learning to take place? Think about the level of anxiety a student faces when she or he has to take a poor report card for parents to see. On

the other hand you have the elation a student feels when they bring home straight As.

With a shift toward personalized learning and individualized curriculum must come a re-evaluation on the role marks play in education. You don't need a report card to tell you you can ride a bike. Riding the bike becomes the goal and you know when you have achieved it when the training wheels come off. Why then do we insist on putting a letter grade on everything to label the level of "learning" a student has achieved. Research has shown fairly conclusively that the most influential practice a teacher can engage in is meaningful feedback on assignments. Nothing moves the learning of a student forward more than specific and focused feedback from a teacher. Once a mark or letter grade is attached to an assignment, the feedback becomes almost meaningless and is consequently ignored, thus negating the whole purpose of meaningful feedback. The student sees the assignment as completed once a mark is attached but sees the assignment as a work-in-progress if only feedback is given. So why do we insist on bell-curve students along an arbitrary grid of expertise? Should mastery of the content be the goal for every student, without exception? This requires the educational policy makers and curriculum specialists to peel back the layers of minutiae and arrive at the essence of what is required of all students. What is the ultimate goal of education? Is factual knowledge a requirement in a time where any and all information is only seconds away? This outmoded philosophy from the Gradgrind philosophy of education: "...what I want is facts, facts above all else are wanted in life." (*Hard Times*, Charles Dickens) has little place in our connected world. Critical thinking, problem solving,

learning to question and analyze are the skills we should be encouraging and no current BCeSIS-generated report card could adequately report those attributes.

Moving toward a "standards-based" report card would give students specific information about

The student sees the assignment as completed once a mark is attached but sees the assignment as a work-in-progress if only feedback is given.

how they are doing and pinpoint where they need to improve. For our elementary colleagues this is nothing new as this is exactly what they do on their report cards but the challenge becomes how do you do this with 200+ students in a secondary setting? Is the answer providing ongoing feedback, so a summative report at the end of the term is simply a formality and not an onerous task on the teacher? What then is the purpose of the report card if the student knows how he or she is doing and knows where they need to improve? Students can relay this information to parents and parents are always able to contact teachers for information on their child's progress.

Teachers, students, and parents would all feel liberated if the requirement for marks no longer existed. Remove the arbitrary timeline of terms and semesters and allow learning to become an organic process where understanding is the goal and not the thirst for marks.

Raza Mirani, Gladstone Secondary School, Vancouver



Une année scolaire suisse

par Amélie Marceau

Aéroport international de Genève, train CFF jusqu'à Fribourg, autobus jusqu'à Rossens... Bienvenue en Suisse pour y enseigner pendant une année. Je suis arrivée en Suisse en août 2010. Pourtant c'est à l'automne précédant que j'ai débuté mon application, par l'entremise du CEEF (Canadian Education Exchange Foundation). Mon rêve d'enseigner à l'étranger allait enfin devenir réalité.

Pour être admissible à un échange, l'enseignant doit avoir au moins cinq années d'expérience et posséder un poste à temps plein. Comme je travaillais pour le Conseil scolaire francophone depuis cinq ans, à Nelson, j'étais prête à me lancer et vivre cette expérience. Le CEEF m'a jumelée avec une enseignante de Rossens, dans la région francophone de la Suisse. Nos attentes respectives correspondaient. J'allais m'installer chez elle pour enseigner la première année

du primaire pendant environ 11 mois. L'enseignante suisse allait venir vivre dans mon appartement et enseigner à ma classe de maternelle-première année.

Enseigner à l'étranger peut se comparer à une première année d'enseignement. Dans les premiers mois, il y a beaucoup à apprendre, de nombreuses heures sont passées à l'école. Cependant, avec le temps, l'expérience et la confiance prennent place. Le partage d'idées pédagogiques avec mes nouveaux collègues m'ont permis de passer une merveilleuse année. Une période d'adaptation était de mise, afin de comprendre la société et les attentes en éducation, lesquelles se marient avec la culture et les traditions suisses. Les différences étaient parfois surprenantes, parfois réconfortantes.

Chaque jour, je faisais 6 km de vélo, en passant par les villages et les champs, pour me rendre à l'école de Posieux. J'enseignais à 17 élèves, ce qui correspondait à la moyenne d'élèves par classe dans cette école. Les parents et les

What's the difference between a bureaucrat and a teacher?

By Starleigh Grass

The title sounds like the set up to a joke, right?

Unfortunately there is no punchline. I'm mulling over a question posed to me by a community leader on educational transformation.

When we teachers talk amongst ourselves provincially about educational change and its impact on teaching in the past 20 years we talk about increased administrative tasks, attempts to standardize curriculum, increased emphasis on standardized testing, and attempts to deskill the profession by giving us cookie-cutter programs to administer to the children.

Last fall, while I was in the midst of assessment cycle mania, UBC Alumni Affairs called me up to ask what I did for a living.

"I'm a teacher," I answered.

"Can you describe your job to me?" the super-friendly person asked.

"I teach," I said.

"I know," she said, "but I have to write a description. Can you describe your job?"

"Well, I interpret and follow policies; I plan and deliver curriculum; I administer provincial-, district-, and school-based programs; I collect assessment and evaluation data; I report assessment and evaluation data; I assess the assessment and evaluation data..."

After we got off the phone I found myself strangely disturbed by my own description of what teaching is.

Anyhow, I had an opportunity to converse about school improvement, and I was politely evading the topic because I was trying to buy some time to think when the community leader brought up the phrase "too much bureaucracy" and suddenly I was like, "yes, that's it!"

In the current bargaining round I think that we need to communicate to the public the impact of ever-increasing bureaucratization on the teacher/learner relationship.

In today's educational environment in BC—where everything is about data data data and the people reading it don't even know what a standard deviation is, and where the "accountability" agenda emphasizes programs and policies over people—in this

environment we need the public to understand that fighting for professional autonomy and adequate resources is about ensuring that teachers are able to practice the art of teaching and focus on students.

When people send their kids off to school, their dearest wish isn't that bureaucrats will administer programs on their children so that the bureaucrats can assess their child's cohort's performance in

Most parents...want someone who will fill the child with curiosity, enthusiasm, and a love of learning.

order to decide whether or not the program is successful.

While they might be slightly interested in where their child's school fits in relation to other schools, chances are they are more interested in whether or not their child has received individualized instruction in order to grow as much as possible in the precious 10 months a year the child is in class. Professional autonomy and adequate resources are key pillars in supporting teachers to individualize instruction and support students as much as possible.

Most parents hope that their child will find a caring, kind, compassionate person who will personalize instruction to meet the needs of their child. They want someone who will fill the child with curiosity, enthusiasm, and a love of learning.

These are the ingredients that can create sustainable conditions for lifelong learning, and we can't achieve them without professional autonomy and adequate resources. Hopefully we will be able to achieve these things in the upcoming round of bargaining without job action, but if we do have to have job action, these are things worth fighting for.

There's my rant.

Starleigh Grass, teacher on leave, Lillooet Secondary School—via blog: twinklshappyplace.blogspot.com

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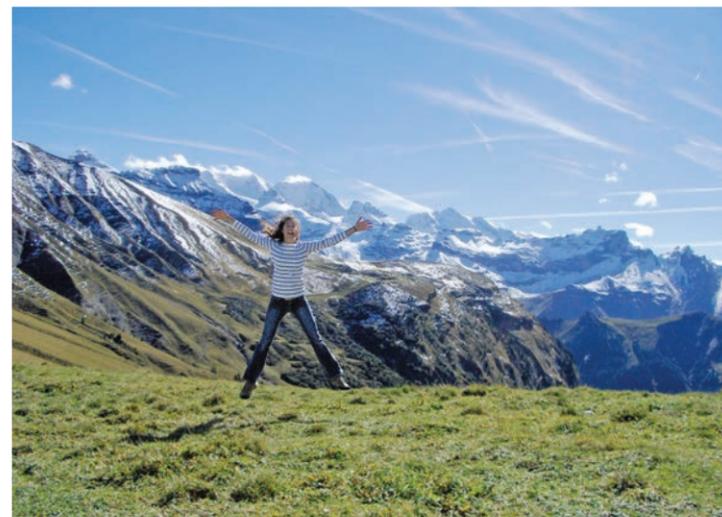
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collègues m'ont bien accueillie. J'ai d'ailleurs gardé contact avec certains d'entre eux. Pendant mon séjour, j'ai eu la chance de voyager et découvrir des beautés. J'ai aimé skier en Suisse et en France. L'Italie était ma destination préférée et si facile d'accès. Pendant les congés d'octobre, avril et juillet, j'ai eu le bonheur de visiter la Sicile (Italie), les îles Canaries (Espagne) et l'Irlande du Nord.

Quelle expérience magnifique

d'avoir vécu et enseigné en Europe pendant une année! J'encourage mes collègues de la Colombie-Britannique ainsi que mes collègues suisses de relever ce défi. Les bénéfices sont énormes. Oui, courage, motivation et sens de l'humour sont requis, mais les résultats s'avèrent positifs et sur plusieurs aspects de la vie. "Merci, c'était trop bien!"

Amélie Marceau, Ecole des Sentiers-Alpins, Nelson

Charitable drives in schools

Are we teaching equity or charity?

By Jennifer Fane

Here we are, back at school with the holiday season tucked neatly behind us. We hope that the holidays are as welcome and a happy time for our students and communities as they are for teachers, but sadly we know this is often not the case. Our province's increasing child poverty rate is a vivid and painful reminder of BC's continued cuts to social spending and our public safety net. This is not news to teachers, who know full well the reluctance of our government to fund programs most of us would consider essential in the first world country in which we live. As teachers who care about our students and communities we often engage our schools in charitable practices in part to help others, but also to teach our students empathy, caring, and that there are many in the world and in our own backyard who do not have enough. Food drives continue to be one of the most pervasive charitable drives in school. Year-after-year, school children are asked to bring in food to give to others in need. Success of

the drive is often measured in the amount of food brought in, but unfortunately not in quality. Too often food drives are filled with expired items, unwanted or unusable items, or nutritionally poor foods. Even the most well-intentioned items such as Kraft Dinner, or boxed cereal, which may seem like easy and palatable options, are often inappropriate for families and individuals who rely on food banks due to the scarcity of fluid milk in many food-insecure households. The upsetting fact is that food banks are meant to be an emergency measure, but unfortunately they have become entrenched in Canadian society as our answer to those who do not have enough to eat. Unfortunately, charitable food programs are a Band-Aid solution to what is the great societal injustice of thousands of Canadians not having access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food. The reason these programs exist is because of people, like teachers, who care and want to help others in need. They are a response to a crisis, but these charitable measures do not address the root cause of

hunger, which in our province, is intimately linked with an ever-increasing cost of living and further cuts to social programs.

As we enter the New Year entrenched in job action, BC teachers are keenly aware of our government's unwillingness to

Charitable responses to social programs is at best a temporary solution and at worst the perpetuation of the idea that private citizens, not government, are responsible for protecting those who are most in need.

protect public programs. We stand together in our belief for funding for education, programs and support for our students, and fair treatment and respect for teachers. We are in a fight for justice, where government must be held accountable to support public education. We share

this message with the public, including our students. It is important for our students to learn about taking a stand for what they believe in and becoming an advocate for change. With all the potentially negative impacts of job action on our students, the idea of justice and advocacy is a poignant lesson and teachable moment to seize with our pupils.

Teachers know that public education is in a dangerous place, and that real change must come from our government to protect students and teachers. I look at my own school as an example of how the lack of funding is affecting us. Our inability to afford the very textbooks mandated by curriculum is a blatant example of how deplorable it is that \$3 billion has vanished out of public education. Teachers want better, we want books, but more importantly we want change. We are in job action to demand this change and we rightly justify it to the public, but are we really looking at the big picture when it comes to our schools, students, and communities as a whole?

Holding a food drive to alleviate hunger is akin to holding a book drive instead of demanding funding for textbooks. Charitable responses to social programs is at best a temporary solution and at worst the

perpetuation of the idea that private citizens, not government, are responsible for protecting those who are most in need. While food drives can teach children about empathy and helping others, it also teaches them that it feels good to help others, even if the help is not what is needed. We can also teach children empathy and social justice by involving them in the issue and getting involved with organizations who are attempting to make grass-root changes to public policy and social spending in our province. The unfortunate truth is that as charity increases, so does our sense of justice and belief that our government could make real and lasting change for those most vulnerable. Finding meaningful and proactive ways to engage our students and communities in charitable action helps our students, society, and teachers. We are at a crossroads with public education, but we also stand at the same crossroads with public health and social programs. Justice and equity in policy for one, can work to translate into justice and equity in the others. BC teachers believe in justice, let's now teach it to our students and give them a chance at creating equity instead of charity and demanding change.

Jennifer Fane, Lord Kelvin Elementary School, Vancouver

The underside of "Funny Money" is less than funny

By Lyonoor Lardein

On October 21, 2011, I attended the conference of the BC Association of Business Educators. Right after breakfast, all the conference participants observed a presentation by the speaker for "Funny Money." I have serious concerns about the last part of the presentation and about the concepts these presentations could be transmitting to our students. I hope that my comments invite dialogue by challenging assumptions in the same way that I was challenged to understand why I took issue with certain concepts introduced during the presentation.

The "Funny Money" team provides these presentations to schools for free, as long as there are at least 500 students at the presentation. The website for "Funny Money" states that "the Funny Money for High Schools Assembly Program is sponsored exclusively in Canada by the Investor Education Fund and the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada (IIROC)." I found that out later, after checking the website. I was not aware of that fact at the time.

The presentation is a ready-made package, and we, the conference participants had to pretend to be Grade 11 and 12 students during the talk. Essentially, we observed what the real presentation is like. The speaker, with energy, enthusiasm, and a great deal of humour, using a PowerPoint presentation and volunteers from the audience, presented us, the "student audience," with facts about teenage spending in North America, and introduced the topics of cash flow, and budgeting one's expenses. He discussed the dangers of incurring credit card debt and of satisfying too many wants and desires. Up to this point, I thought that the presentation was reinforcing concepts the Planning 10 teachers must cover in their classes, and that students could benefit from the message.

Then, I was suddenly shaken out of my compliance. The screen showed a statement in large letters: "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer."

"Are you familiar with this?" The speaker asked, "But do you ever wonder why this is so? It is because

the poor spend their money on..."

Now, the bottom left-hand side of the screen filled with superimposed images of computers, iPods, cell phones, clothes, a car, some items of furniture, a large hamburger, etc., as the speaker named all the items. "And the problem with all these things is that as soon as you buy them, they begin to lose their value because of..."

"Depreciation!" the audience shouted back.

"...Whereas the rich spend their money on..." Now, the bottom right-hand corner of the screen filled with images as the speaker named them. "Real estate, gold, art—all things that increase their value over time."

There we had it: the screen telling us in words and images why the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The implication was clear: if the poor get poorer, it is their own fault.

We stared in silence at the screen, and then, the speaker moved on to show why investing in mutual funds is a sound investment over time, presenting us with a few graphs and figures. The presentation ended with more jokes and with time enough for the volunteers at the front to perform, as instructed by the speaker, some silly dances that elicited more laughter. The participants then left to attend the first workshops of the conference. I stayed to talk to the presenter.

I have to question the message given to students in the last part of the presentation, as soon as the statement, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer," appears on the screen. I believe that the information contained on that screen and elaborated by the speaker—deliberately or not—presents a distorted picture of inequity that completely dismisses the plight, exploitation, and suffering of a large segment of the world population, while at the same time introducing an element of disparagement toward that suffering.

First, not all the poor are equal, and just because some people are not rich, that does not mean they are poor. The financial struggles of people who spend their money on gadgets they do not need and who accumulate unnecessary debt cannot compare to the abject poverty experienced by those sectors of the

world population who are in the lowest percentile points of income.

The poor who work for pitiful wages for companies that close their operations in North America and in Europe to maximize their profits by reducing expenses on labour, those poor whose wages barely allow them to buy the necessary food so that they can return to work the following day, those poor are not getting poorer because they are buying unnecessary "stuff" and getting into debt. They have no hope of ever acquiring those frills.

Second, stating that "the rich get richer" because they spend their money on investments that appreciate over time, such as real estate, gold, and art, instead of buying those items illustrated on the bottom left-hand corner of the screen is also misleading. They do have computers, cell phones, furniture, and clothes, and go to restaurants and take trips. They have the items on both sides of the screen, but resenting them for having more would merely point to envy in those who have less. The fact is that many of the rich get richer because the poor get poorer.

In what else, besides gold, art, and real estate, do those who are financially more privileged than others invest? Are they large shareholders of companies that exploit their labourers, that profit from war, that establish themselves in countries where profits can be maximized by desecrating the environment, and that manufacture many of those same items that during the "Funny Money" presentation we are advised not to buy? Should we question the ethics of investing through mutual funds in the shares of many of those companies and which depend, for their profits on the consumption of their products?

Third, should we not question, in view of the economic upheavals of the last years, who are those who committed large scale fraud to enrich themselves? Who profited by the massive economic fraud of failed corporate speculative enterprises, which produce nothing but fraudulent and deceptive financial "products"? Who benefitted from that massive economic debacle requiring government bailouts in

many parts of the world? Who truly paid for those government bailouts but the working poor and middle-class earners through their taxes, thus subsidizing the gains of those in a much larger income category? Who committed that large-scale robbery of countries, their governments, and the people?

Interestingly, later in the day, another keynote speaker, Dr. Robert Ironside, informed us that the real median household income in Canada has decreased over the last 25 years. The word median is important, since averages include everybody's income—the incomes of both the rich and the poor. Then, *The Vancouver Sun* of October 28, 2011, informs us that, according to the Bloomberg report, the richest Americans, the top one per cent, saw their incomes increase by 275%

between 1979 and 2007. In contrast, those with incomes in the bottom 20% saw an increase of 18% over the same 28 years. These figures refer to income, not to spending, and do not consider the rest of the world population. Could it be, then, that there are reasons other than those stated by "Funny Money" for the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer?

If we invite those presenters to our schools, should we ask them to present an accurate and truthful message? Or, since we hopefully teach our students to analyze and think critically, the debriefing session in the classroom after the presentation would point out the information left out, and the students would be encouraged to question why it was left out. Even if we do not know all the answers, at least we can encourage questions.

Lyonoor Lardein, Point Grey Secondary School, Vancouver

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Thousands of kids left behind by governing Liberals

By Noel Herron

The decimation of special needs infrastructure over 11 years continues unabated, with increasing child poverty now added to the list.

After a decade of systematically denying over 20,000 of BC's most vulnerable kids the support they need, once again, the province's governing party with its recent "offer" of \$30 million in a class organization plan for the next school year continues with its egregious policy of keeping the instructional door slammed shut on thousands of this province's neediest students.

The 20,000 school-aged kids denied help over the past 11 years is, at best, a very conservative estimate based on the documented 12,400 overcrowded classrooms with four or more students with IEPs, plus the growing backlog of designated and undesignated students across the wide spectrum of special education and learning services in public schools. Add to this the recent upswing of school-aged children living in poverty—now in excess of 20%—and this number would jump considerably.

In 2002, Education Minister Christy Clark's sledgehammer legislation in the form of Bills 27 and 28, proved to be two of the most regressive pieces of education legislation affecting class size and composition this province has ever seen. And the BC Liberals fought tooth and nail for seven years, all the way to the Supreme Court, only to have their legislation rejected as unconstitutional and illegal with the government ordered to rectify its unfair strategy within a calendar year.

Hence the current "negotiations" at a separate provincial table by George Abbott's representatives, and the paltry offer of the return on \$30 million the next school year (2012–13) as part of a three-year class organization plan to replace the \$340 million cut over 11 years.

Lacking agreement with the BCTF, one can now anticipate the Liberals to table a so-called "corrective" class organization bill in the next legislative session.

Significantly, no attempt was made to remedy this situation during the current school year—with an interim special needs measure to address the backlog of overcrowded classrooms—underlining the ongoing reluctance of the Liberals to fully recognize the cumulative damage that Bills 27 and 28 have had on our schools.

There is simply no going back for the thousands of kids who have struggled over the past decade.

Apart from a vague and grudging reference to "doing the right thing" by teachers in response to Madame Justice Griffin's devastating Supreme Court order, Christy Clark, now our premier, has yet to apologize to students, teachers, and parents for the deep cuts that have denied them a fair shake. (Contrast that with the personally hand-delivered letter of the newly elected Alberta Premier, Alison Redford, to the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) promising the restoration of \$100 million in education funding in that province.)

These two pieces of legislation have systematically decimated BC's special education infrastructure, built up carefully over four decades, and turned the official policy of integrating students with special needs in mainstream classrooms on its head.

Across the board, the kids currently in our public school system who lost the skilled instructional support of upward of 1,500 learning specialist teachers will never again have the opportunity to

recover their instructional losses as they struggled to keep abreast of their peers.

There is simply no going back for the thousands of kids who have struggled over the past decade. Thousands, who have now left the system, were denied the opportunity they urgently needed at a crucial time in their lives, while others today still struggle, often with anguished parents pleading for help.

The documented presence of more than four students with special needs in 12,400 overcrowded, regular classrooms without the assistance of trained education aides, frequently leads to attentional disruptions. This has made a mockery of the integration of students with special needs, one of the most enlightened reforms in public schools in four decades. It has also placed hundreds of home-room teachers in an instructionally untenable situation.

Whereas with skilled assistance before cuts, many of these kids were able to work successfully at or near grade level.

Among the thousands of kids still left behind or shunted aside by the system are: kids with mild to severe learning difficulties; kids with mild to severe behaviour problems; refugee and immigrant kids needing added ESL assistance; First Nations kids; impoverished kids in inner-city schools and in schools with large numbers of kids living in poverty; and the so-called "grey area" kids who do not fit into rigidly discrete categories as defined by the ministry.

Cuts to teacher-librarians has had a negative impact on school literacy services, while the sharp and puzzling increase in the number of students in the Autism spectrum area has placed added pressure on schools unable to provide even minimal support.

The needier, identified kids who gain entry to special education classes were, on occasion, denied

the full help of special education assistants because of restricted hours and inadequate pay, making it difficult for boards to hold on to skilled education assistants. Worse still, the kids who did not gain entry to various special education classes languished in regular classrooms and continue to sit on growing wait-lists and frequently slip backward.

Now an appalling year-long, or even longer, wait list for diagnostic testing is the order of the day. Some schools have simply given up in maintaining viable waiting lists. And the annual September school organization plans, with their fragmented and disappearing teaching positions, have frequently become an organizational nightmare for both teachers and principals. As these cuts have deepened, back-up special education professional development workshops for teaching and non-teaching staff have simply died on the vine while entry-level teachers struggle to replace more experienced colleagues.

The governing party's policies, starting in 2002 onward with cuts to inner-city programs and to the long-established network of community schools across the province, helped pave the way to the current crisis in child poverty. (Gordon Campbell's 2008 "replacement" for community schools was the beguiling, puffed-up but ultimately phoney "Neighbourhoods of Learning" project—in reality it amounted to nothing more than setting aside a single room for community use in some schools).

The annual, end-of-September, formal signing-off of overloaded individual and district school organization plans, misleadingly denoting teaching-learning situations as "satisfactory"—and demanded over the past decade of principals, superintendents, and school trustees—is a perversion of openness and accountability in our public schools. This mandated

requirement precluded any objections at a later date by senior staff and explains, in part, the silence at the top around what continues to be untenable teaching-learning environments.

Leaving it to the official representative of teachers—the BCTF, and more recently to individual teachers and a few principals to speak out publicly in the face of a worsening situation, points to an abdication of responsibility from trustees on down.

The new and patently superficial BC Education Plan, recently released by Education Minister George Abbott, long on jargon and short on deliverables, not to mention its zero budget, makes no mention of class size and composition and is a classic example of a studied avoidance of practical and genuine education reform. Given the special needs collapse of the past decade, it takes enormous chutzpah for Victoria to make references to "effective intervention strategies and supports available to teachers, students, and parents" in its new plan.

Talk to parents of kids with special needs who have sat for 18 months on school waiting lists for diagnostic testing about "effective intervention strategies" and they will openly scoff at the ministry's new technological plans for "renewal" especially, the hyperbolic reference to "personalized" learning for every student.

Where does this leave us now?

Students with special needs, in the broadest sense of the word, after a decade of willful neglect and given what appears to be the near collapse of separate provincial negotiations, are still a very long way away from receiving the court-ordered help required and also the broadly based assistance that a compassionate society should provide to meet the changing and diverse needs of all our kids.

Noel Herron, former school principal and school trustee

Yet another year without a poverty reduction plan

By David Denyer

Each year, First Call: the BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, releases a comprehensive and detailed report that examines the prevalence and impact of child poverty. Despite being one of the wealthiest provinces in Canada, BC has no plan or timeline for reducing poverty.

Once again, BC had the highest provincial poverty rate in 2009 using Statistics Canada's low income cut-offs after income taxes. This has been the case for the past eight years. The after-tax rate in BC was 12%—100,000 poor children—the national rate was 9.5%.

"Child poverty is the outcome of the corrosive and unsustainable income inequality that has been allowed to grow in BC and Canada..."

Many factors are identified in the report as contributing to the persistence of this deplorable situation. Abysmal welfare rates for both two-parent and lone-parent families that condemn people to living far below the recognized poverty line and which penalizes them when a job is obtained to supplement that income. Being an

immigrant, particularly a recent immigrant to Canada, shows a substantially higher risk of being in poverty. The child poverty rate in families that immigrated between 2001 and 2006 was an astoundingly high 49.6%. Growing income inequality has become a major culprit in fostering the perpetuation of families facing poverty. A high percentage of parents are in low paying jobs, and although working, they cannot provide even the basics for their children that are taken for granted by higher-income earners.

As in past years, the BCTF hosted the press conference that released the *Poverty Report Card*. A number of speakers spoke about the details contained in the report and related first-hand their experience of living with and confronting poverty.

Among them was Vancouver teacher Linda Young, who addressed the issues faced by many teachers as they witness the steady erosion of funding and services for all students, particularly the disadvantaged.

"Teachers all across this city can tell you of situations where children are coming to school in need of food, clothes, and comfort. These situations [include] worry and anxiety because of crowded and insecure housing; sadness and loneliness because the only time they see their parents is late at night or early in the morning because parents are both working and often at more than one job; poor nutrition, mental, and physical



Susan Lambert and teacher Linda Young at a BCTF-hosted press conference to release the *Poverty Report Card*.

health needs are not addressed which affects a student's ability to learn; children who are in need of before- and after-school childcare but it doesn't exist at their school or where it does exist there are long waiting lists; children wanting to participate in programs and activities at school that cost money but they can't because their family can't pay; and not having enough money creates feelings of shame and lowered self-esteem."

Young listed many of the cutbacks to resources and services over the last 10 years and the increasing cost of school fees and programs, which has created an inequitable system of have and have-not schools and students, and how this is such a disservice to the children who are most in need.

Fundraising and treating schools

as charity projects is fundamentally unfair and unsustainable, she says. "It may address the immediate needs of socks and shoes but it does not address the hidden needs of a child living in a low-income family—time with their parents, safe and comfortable housing, medical support, opportunities to participate in extra activities and holidays—a life free from the emotional and social effects of their family not having enough."

Research by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reveals that poverty costs British Columbians between \$8 billion to \$9 billion a year of increased healthcare, criminal justice, and other social costs. By contrast, the cost of providing accessible quality child-

care, paying fair wages, building affordable housing, and improving welfare rates is less than half as much—between \$3 billion to \$4 billion annually.

First Call, at the conclusion of the report, sums up this dire situation:

"Child poverty is the outcome of the corrosive and unsustainable income inequality that has been allowed to grow in BC and Canada. It undermines children's potential and provokes a host of short and long-term social and economic harms, which affect individuals, communities, and our collective future."

Read the full report at <http://tinyurl.com/d5s594w>

—David Denyer, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division

What you can do

1. Take time to let elected politicians of all parties know that you expect them to develop a poverty reduction plan for BC with set targets and timelines. Seven provinces and territorial governments already have these in place. Tackling child poverty is a non-partisan issue. It needs to happen now and not wait until the next election.
2. Continue our call for affordable housing within your community and equal access to publicly funded high-quality childcare. These are two of the highest costs facing children and families living in poverty.

3. Use the *Child Poverty Report Card* to teach your students about inequity and encourage them to take action through problem-based learning projects on this issue. Planning 10, Social Studies 12, and Social Justice 12 classes are ideal for these discussions and action plans.

4. Speak out about a "justice, not charity" solution to the long-term harms of child poverty. Donations to individual schools are helpful at times, but they are not a systemic solution to this critical issue. An "adopt-a-school" approach continues to foster inequities between schools and families across the province.

—James Chamberlain, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division

Zealous remarks misdirected

By Jim Holtz

This is a response to an article printed in the November 2011 issue of the College of Teachers' magazine, "Preparing and supporting teachers to integrate technology in the classroom," by West Vancouver School District Superintendent Chris Kennedy.

Although Kennedy had several interesting things to say, he should perhaps have addressed his remarks, not to teachers, but to fellow superintendants and those above and below him in the administrative/managerial/governmental chain of command. Kennedy's commentary addresses the fifth element of the BC Education Plan recently launched by Education Minister George Abbott. In typical fashion, the ministry has put together a wonderfully vague plan that concludes with element five—Education powered by technology. The ministry has chosen that metaphorical turn of phrase apparently to inspire superintendants and principals to exhort their teachers to develop on their own the specific goals, objectives, methods, and lesson plans that will enable students to use the desktops, laptops, tablets, and smart phones that every school district and most families have invested so heavily in.

Unfortunately, in order to "make sure our educational system creates environments to engage technically adept students," as Kennedy advises, the Ministry of Education and school boards will have to do a lot more than merely order teachers to make it happen. Kennedy's call for "those in the system" to "commit to embedding technology and digital literacy in our growth plans and in all our on-going professional development" is simply another plea for teachers to come up with ways to justify the enormous financial commitment that public schools have made to technology without any real understanding of how that technology aids or limits cognitive abilities.

The depth of Kennedy's unblinking commitment to digital education is evident when he states, "...replacing lectures with digital lectures or online videos simply substitutes one mediocre practice for another." His disdain for traditional pedagogy is not only somewhat insulting to all the teachers who have used the lecture as a teaching tool (including, of course, all the university profs who still do), but ironic as well—the British Columbia public school system that traditional pedagogy sustained was lauded as a model to be envied and copied. Yet today it simply follows the techno-herd. Instead of spending the time and resources necessary to determine what technological advances really are of value, the ministry, the school boards and all their administrative underlings seem interested only in distinguishing themselves by seeing who can commit the most money the most quickly to the highest number of digital projects.

To Kennedy's credit, he does state that, "...we need to be committed in how we prepare teachers and how we support them throughout their careers in the thoughtful and purposeful infusion of technology into their professional practice." Lip service, however, is not support. Too many teachers are simply told that they have to "make use of the internet" instead of text sources, and that they have to do so in ways which, as Kennedy says, "...truly support student learning." As revealed in another article in the same issue of the *TC*, "A Teacher-Librarian in the Digital Age," doing that for even one unit of one course is extremely time consuming. Suitable resources must be found on the Internet, then reviewed, developed, and worked into original lesson plans taking into account a variety of learning styles. After that, means of evaluation have to be determined that address the various levels of cognition. When one factors in the wide range of abilities now found in the average classroom, from students with special needs to the gifted, the development of even a single Internet unit for a course becomes daunting indeed. Good teaching was difficult enough when all one had to do was assign reading and activities already developed in ministry-approved textbooks. To ask teachers to develop their own Internet resources and then find fault, as Kennedy does, when he visited classrooms and encountered examples of "fake learning" where "interactive whiteboards were used as entertainment," demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the enormity and difficulty of the tasks involved.

Perhaps the ministry, long suspected of favouring private schools, should take note that none of the private schools with the highest academic achievement are rushing to shrink or shut down their libraries in favour of computer terminals, as many BC schools are. And none denigrate their teachers by suggesting that they should be mere guides on the side whose sole function is to steer students to the best web sites for their instruction.

Kennedy proudly states that he tells teachers "...when it comes to teachers and technology it is okay to be where you are, it is just not okay to stay there." And though such remarks seem to receive universal nods of approval in BC from administrators and politicians, I imagine that their counterparts in China would be somewhat perplexed. Their young math and science students reportedly outperform ours on standardized tests, and yet do so with little access to interactive whiteboards or computers. If we really wanted to emulate successful programs, perhaps we should copy the Chinese model—instead of an interactive white board in every classroom and a laptop for every student, we should just provide them all with an abacus.

Jim Holtz, retired teacher, currently works as a journalist and speaks to teachers and parents on educational issues. metaphorineducation.com.

Around the globe for mental health

By David Denyer

You might think that a person who had just completed a globe-spanning cycling journey of nearly 40,000 kilometres would take time to sit back and savour the experience. Not so for teacher Michael Schratter who has energy to burn.

After returning to BC this past November he has been keeping speaking engagements and continuing to work for a more open acknowledgement and discussion of mental illness.

Schratter's own brush with manic episodes following the early death of his father came together with the passion his family had for cycling, in forming the idea of a ride for mental health. Not just any ride, but one that that covered 33 countries and took 15 months. During the course of his journey he submitted 35 articles to the Vancouver daily *24HRS* that frequently spoke of the mental health issues of the country in which he was travelling. He admits that producing these articles often proved more challenging than the cycling itself.

The stigma and prejudice surrounding mental illness

(although not as evident now as in the past) is still present, and reflected in our attitudes and social policies. This is what Schratter wants to break down and it is captured in his phrase "ride, don't hide."

The stigma and prejudice surrounding mental illness... is still present... this is what Schratter wants to break down and it is captured in his phrase "ride, don't hide."

Both the media and our politics, he says, continue to engender fear and neglect of mental illness by reinforcing stereotypes and ignoring homelessness and poverty, and leaving the vulnerable to be preyed upon. This negative situation needs to be counterbalanced, in Michael's view, with the "powerful story-telling machine" that the 20% of the population who labour with mental illness could provide.

Knowing and understanding are the keys to promoting greater awareness and empathy. Teachers, he says, are ideally placed to have a frank and rational discussion with students and can play a vital role in recognizing the early signs of anxiety-related issues or depression, which tend to become more apparent in adolescence.

Schratter will be returning to teaching Grade 5 in an elementary school in Vancouver this month and admits that his own hyperactive personality is what draws him to the energy and involvement of that age group. Despite his determination, he recognizes that funding cuts and severe reductions in services are making it impossible for teachers to deal with the spectrum of intellectual and emotional abilities in their classrooms.

With his sights set on promoting the story-telling machine, we will no doubt be hearing a lot more about Michael Schratter as he urges the 20% to start the conversation; hence the tagline to the campaign, "end the stigma, let's get talking."

To contribute to the campaign visit: ridedonthide.com

David Denyer, editor, Teacher news-magazine



Vancouver teacher Michael Schratter rode his bike nearly 40,000 km around the globe to bring awareness to mental health issues. Clockwise bottom left: Bike repairs in China; hitching a ride in Cambodia; home at last.

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Another plan destined to founder

By James Duthie

There is a book called *Tinkering Towards Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* by Tyack and Cuban, which chronicles education reforms in North America. The book illustrates how successive waves of reform have crashed onto the beach of public education, stirring things up for a while, and then receded, leaving the beach, for the most part, unchanged. I am concerned that the BC Ministry of Education's latest education plan will meet the same fate. Remember Year 2000, Education Change, whole-language and portfolio-based assessment? Where are they now? It seems to me that the new BC Education Plan will founder for many of the same reasons that they did—lack of any research base, excessive haste, lack of any pilot projects, failure to involve those who will have to deliver it, false assumptions, lack of contact with the reality of schools and internal contradictions. My experience has been solely in secondary schools, so I will limit my remarks to them.

Secondary schools have a number of functions, not all of them educational. In addition to educating adolescents at a time in their lives when they are perhaps least educable, secondary schools provide a childcare service that keeps them safe and off the streets for most of the work day. While they have the young people corralled from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., schools are in the business of crowd control, using the time-honoured method of divide and rule by separating the crowd into manageable chunks and keeping an eye on them. This is not to denigrate the teaching and learning that go on, it's just the reality. Loosen those controls and you are going to have some young people wandering about both inside and outside the school causing trouble; not the majority, but enough to cause problems.

Apart from the apparent lack of practicality of the new education plan, there is a contradiction at the heart of the new initiative—we don't know what the future will bring so we must prepare for it by changing everything. With respect, if we don't know what the future will bring then we don't know how to prepare for it, and jettisoning a working education system in favour of an utterly untried one seems irresponsible. Even the technology the ministry is proposing to rely on to deliver this new model will be obsolete before the program gets off the ground.

I see no evidence in anything I have read of any research base for this plan. There is a lot of urgency expressed about the need for change, but no demonstrated need. Where are the research studies? Has there been any investigation of other jurisdictions where technology-driven personalized

learning has been tried? Has there been any investigation of schools within BC where this approach, or something like it, has been tried? Frances Kelsey Secondary School in SD#79 (Cowichan Valley) has been using self-directed learning for a number of years now. At the very

...the new BC Education Plan will founder...lack of any research base, excessive haste, lack of any pilot projects, failure to involve those who will have to deliver it, false assumptions, lack of contact with the reality of schools and internal contradictions.

least, the Ministry of Education should be investigating the student retention rate, number of years to graduation, number of students taking provincial exams, and achievement standards of that school and any others like it. Is it a model that could have province-wide application? From what I know of the Frances Kelsey experience, it only works for highly motivated, self-starting well-organized students—a small minority of the student population.

This leads us to the first false assumption, that all students are highly motivated learners capable of personalized independent study. This simply is not so. The great majority of secondary students require cajoling and coercion to attend school regularly and get any work done. One of the basic skills of teachers is to motivate reluctant learners. One of the pillars of this education plan is the idea that students will develop core competencies by pursuing their passion, but the fact is that most students don't have one, or if they do, it is too narrow to develop an adequate range of competencies. For example, a large collection of hockey cards and an encyclopedic knowledge of NHL statistics is not a sufficient basis for a fulfilling life, nor does it allow for the development of all the competencies that young people require.

The new plan also seems to rest on the assumption that classrooms today are the same as they were in an earlier century, and this is simply not the case. Teachers all over the province are expending large amounts of effort, and the ministry and districts are spending a lot of money to adopt the latest technology to keep education current. Classroom teaching is a very different proposition today from what it was even five years ago, and the pace of change shows no sign of slowing down. Teachers are using PowerPoint, electronic submission

of work, Internet-based research, WebQuests, interactive whiteboards, and so on as a matter of course. Does the ministry not know what its money is buying or how it is being used?

The education plan also assumes that there is no corpus of knowledge that it is important for our children to know. It promotes fragmentation of knowledge. But we constantly hear complaints from the public about how little Canadian history secondary school students know, or how little they know of the structure of government and their civic duties. Many are the complaints we hear of the lack of literacy and numeracy of our young people. These tend to be overblown, but even if the situation is as bad as the critics say, it will not be improved by allowing young people more latitude in the choice of what they are going to study. How many adolescents would, for choice, study the Canadian constitution, or grammar, or polynomials? How many would read classic literature, or study a second language? Supporters of the plan will no doubt say that I am exaggerating the amount of freedom to be given to students under the new regime, which is hardly surprising given how little is known about what the plan really involves. What I read suggests that there will be less emphasis on content and more on competencies, so we can reasonably assume that the amount of content students know will be less than it is now. But this leads us to the next false assumption of the plan—that access to information through technology is the same as education.

In terms of content, it is not enough to say that having content available a few mouse clicks away when it is needed has removed the need to teach it. Students need to learn content in order to internalize it and make it their own; if they are going to learn they've got to "churn." Information out there in the "cloud" might as well not exist for most students. Without an adequate knowledge base inside their heads, students don't even know enough to guess at what they don't know. Curiosity derives from knowing enough to know that you don't know enough. It is true that there are a lot of neat teaching programs available, particularly in the math area, but interacting with computer apps and even interacting with other people by means of social media, is not an education. Group work, either in the flesh or through electronic media, is a powerful teaching tool, but it requires very careful planning and structure on the part of a teacher to ensure that it is fruitful. The pooling of collective ignorance does not generate wisdom. And for every really effective electronic teaching tool there are scores of tedious soul-destroying exercises consisting of such tasks as filling in work-

sheets. The new plan overlooks one of the most important elements of school education—the chemistry that takes place between students and teacher in the classroom. This is an intangible, but it exists, and it matters. An apt analogy is that learning on computer is to classroom learning what recordings are to live performance—a totally different experience. In both cases the electronic version is vastly inferior to the live one.

There are also deep concerns being voiced about the effect of the electronic environment on the development of the human brain. Frank McNeill has pointed out that it is sustained mindfulness, or concentration, which is a precondition for neuroplasticity, or the growth of new brain circuits. The electronic environment, with its multitasking and distractions, is inimical to sustained concentration and the comprehension of complex thought. Susan Greenfield of the

Long after it has become obvious that the new BC Education Plan is an expensive failure, ministry officials will quietly shelve it, defeated by reality. And so yet another well-intentioned but ill-conceived education wave will crash onto the beach and ebb away.

University of Oxford maintains that the electronic environment represents as great a threat to the species as climate change, "skewing the brain...to operate in an infantilized mode." Maryanne Wolf's research into the brain is revealing that the new medium has significant adverse effects on the development of neural circuits. And Greenfield points out that the short attention span fostered by the use of electronic media may be behind the increase in hyperactivity. In the light of these emerging concerns it seems irresponsible of the ministry to want to expose adolescents to even more screen time. Neil Postman described teaching as a conserving activity; there are times, and this is one of them, when prudence suggests that a conservative course of action is wiser than radicalism.

Here's another fact of life; electronic devices in the classroom are the most powerful form of distraction yet devised. Texting, facebooking, playing games, tweeting, and so on exert an enormous pull on teenagers, and it is simply naïve to think that students equipped with electronic devices will not engage in these

activities a large proportion of the time. The motivated few will ignore the distractions, but the less-motivated many will waste vast amounts of time. Furthermore, if the ministry hopes to implement this new plan on the cheap by relying on students to provide the hardware, it is going to end up in court. Remember the issue of course fees? The courts ruled that they could not be charged for curricular essentials, and if computers are essential to the new plan the Ministry is going to find itself on the hook for them.

Then there's the issue of technology. Murphy's Law holds that the technology will never work as planned, and costs will always be higher than anticipated. Remember BCeSIS? Classroom teachers predicted that this would never work, and they were right, because they are in touch with reality. The software designers promised too much and delivered too little. The costs soared, and still the system proved inadequate. On what basis do the ministry's planners believe that ensuring connectivity and data storage for every student and teacher in the province on demand all of the time is going to work? There will be crashes. Hardware will malfunction. Machines will break. Students will lose them. Software will be hit with viruses. Servers will overload. There will be a public outcry against the effect of all that microwave radiation on the brains of the young people. Teachers, working all day in rooms full of WiFi radiation, will be most exposed, and if there proves to be any link between radiation and brain cancer, then look out for lawsuits. And all of that is before the issue of obsolescence arises. The costs involved in keeping a province-wide system up-to-date and functioning will be higher than anticipated. Machines will, in a very short period of time, be too antiquated to function, becoming little better than doorstops. Schools are full of them already.

Here's what I predict: all of the above will come about, plus some other glitches I have not foreseen. There will be behaviour problems. High school completion times will increase as self-directed students flounder, taking longer to graduate, and standards will have to be lowered in order to keep the graduation rate respectable. There will be a parent backlash against these lower standards, fuelled by the feeling that parents' tax dollars are paying for an ineffective system. Lawsuits will fly. Costs will escalate out of control.

Long after it has become obvious that the new BC Education Plan is an expensive failure, ministry officials will quietly shelve it, defeated by reality. And so yet another well-intentioned but ill-conceived education wave will crash onto the beach and ebb away.

James Duthie, retired teacher, Nanaimo



From dream to reality: Why implementation is as important as goal-setting in e-learning

By Tony Bates

Two recent developments have brought home clearly the need to consider and discuss implementation strategies at the same time as setting educational goals. The following two publications discuss two remarkably similar sets of goals for education, one developed in Europe and one here on the West Coast of British Columbia.

- British Columbia (2011) BC Education Plan, Victoria: Ministry of Education
- Redecker, C. et al. (2011) The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change, Seville Spain: Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, JRC, European Commission

I have already commented on the European report (<http://tinyurl.com/82kgten>). The BC plan is focused on schools rather than post-secondary education, but the goals are remarkably similar:

- Personalized learning for every child
- Quality teaching and learning
- Flexibility and choice
- High standards
- Learning powered by technology.

While guidelines about expectations are important, personalized learning requires a great deal of flexibility on the part of the teacher to ascertain needs, set realistic learning goals within the constraints of available time, and manage the learning experience...

What's not to like about this? Well, the BC Teachers' Federation's newsmagazine, *Teacher*, raises some interesting questions about these motherhood statements:

The first question, which applies equally to the European report, is one about resources. (Kuehn, L. "Experiments with kids' learning," *Teacher*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2011) There is no money attached to what in BC will be major changes to the way children will learn and teachers will teach, although the Ministry recognizes that professional development (read "in-service training of teachers") will be critical for the success of this change. It should also be noted that the teachers in BC are currently in stalled negotia-

tions with the government, which has offered no increases over the next three years: hardly an atmosphere conducive to change.

Second, Kuehn is concerned that there is a conflict between the idea of personalized learning plans for students and the ministry's requirement that these learning plans meet predetermined learning outcomes (e.g., detailed competency performance targets) that will be set by the ministry. Kuehn fears that a teacher will have to develop a different learning plan for every student—up to 200 per teacher in a high school. Let's be clear about this. While guidelines about expectations are important, personalized learning requires a great deal of flexibility on the part of the teacher to ascertain needs, set realistic learning goals within the constraints of available time, and manage the learning experience, which runs completely contrary to recent moves by governments around the world to set standardized performance measures. This means putting much more trust in the professionalism of teachers. So it is not just the teachers who will need to make some major changes in attitude if these goals are to be successfully implemented. (I speak from experience—my first job was as a teacher in a small rural school in Britain in 1964 with 42 children ranging in age from seven to eleven, and including all levels of ability. Personalized learning is not new.)

A third concern is with the technology goal. There are two objections in the *Teacher*. The first is in Kuehn's article. The government wants to allow children to bring their own technology to class—iPads, iPhones, etc. Kuehn's concern is obvious—what about equality of access? Kids from poorer homes will be disadvantaged. I would have been less concerned about this criticism if I had seen something in the plan about providing extra technology resources (e.g., equipment that students could borrow) for schools in poorer neighbourhoods (and yes, we do have those here).

The second objection comes from Jim McMurtry, a secondary school teacher. This is a general attack on fully online learning. A lot of it reads like the old David Noble arguments, driven by a concern that the government wants to use technology to save money on teachers and schools, but there is a point here that I think is worth further consideration, and that is, what is an appropriate balance between online and face-to-face teaching for students of different ages? How much time do we want a seven-year-old to spend on a computer as part of their studies? I have to confess to feeling a lot more comfortable arguing for fully online

learning for adult learners than I do for young children. Again, this is a question of finding the appropriate balance.

The third concern is the timeline. Kuehn claims the plan calls for a six-month process where the ministry will work with "education partners" (read "teachers and

However, even in a jurisdiction with good relationships between government and teachers, extensive consultation and collaborative working will be essential to bring about the changes proposed here.

parents") to implement the plan, which involves no less than a complete redesign of teaching from Grades K to 12.

At the end of the day, I do fully support the BC Ministry of Education's goals for the K-12 sector. The emphasis on personalized learning, skills development and technology integration are all right on target. In George Abbott, BC has the brightest and best minister of education in the 21 years since I've been living in the province. BUT, you have to give as much attention to implementation as to goals. The Education Plan is no more than 800 words long and with no details about implementation. In particular, teachers must be onside for these strategies to work. BC has a history of vitriolic and toxic relationships between government and the teachers' union that goes back before even my time in BC. However, even in a jurisdiction with good relationships between government and teachers, extensive consultation and collaborative working will be essential to bring about the changes proposed here. Some additional resources need to be found to support the changes, particularly regarding in-service training of teachers, but also to ensure equity in access to modern technology. And this kind of change isn't going to happen in six months; it needs to be spread out over several years.

So I look forward to seeing the government's implementation plan, which I hope will be done in collaboration with the teachers, and not imposed on them. To do this, the government has to get the bargaining settled and off the table if it is to have any hope of getting any progress on the educational changes that are much needed and in the right direction.

Tony Bates specializes in consultancy and training in the planning and management of e-learning and distance education.

Source: Tony Bates blog, reprinted with permission

Smartphones dehumanize users

By Joy Penner

As the push for cutting-edge technology in the classroom grows, and the available resources shrink, educators are looking for ways to exploit what is available without depleting valuable resources. This is where the smartphone can add value, but the question needs to be asked, "Is it a value we want to promote?"

Smartphones have been around since 1993 (Reed 2010). IBM's Simon was the first smartphone, affordable only to industries. Subsequently Palm, Nokia, and Blackberry each developed their own versions. In 2007, Apple introduced the iPhone to the mass market. Today, the smartphone continues to develop with the introduction of android—open sourcing technology. Essentially smartphones are mobile computers, and as such they have great implications for education.

Traditionally, administrators and teachers have fought hard to keep phones out of schools, with offenders being punished. Concerns are many—distraction, cheating, Wi-Fi funding, privacy, equitable access, and politics. Proponents cite as many positive outcomes—promotes interest and interaction, no training required, no technical support needed, relatively inexpensive, kids take charge of their own learning, and utilizes students preferred mode of communication. In a recent poll, students considered banned technology to be the biggest obstacle to learning (Project Tomorrow 2010).

While technological determinists will continue to battle over the positive and negative effects of the use of smartphones in the classroom, here I will briefly consider some psychological and sociological issues. Firstly, what does the designation smartphone imply? If the phone is smart, what of the user? If our students use smartphones, does this infer that they have eschewed "smartness" in favour of a brain that dominates their brain? And what are the psychological implications for the many who find smartphones too "smart" for them?

If we assume that the user is smart and dominates the tool, what are we to make of the dehumanizing effects of this tool? Students send on average, 80 texts per day (Haffner 2009). To be efficient, well-crafted writing is avoided in favour of "text-speak." Here is proof of a motivating factor and educational value, because in a remarkably short time, students become fluent (unlike any language course) in this second language. New Zealand caught onto its "educational value" when in 2006



its Qualification Authority allowed students to answer their national exams in "text-speak." Ironically, principals are now questioning this decision, especially as it relates to English exams. Students may also text in full sentences but the "smart" tool auto-correct often controls the words, resulting in rude, unintended comments.

Smartphone use has also led to a decline in judgment, followed by health. Students have, in the name of communication, given up their ability to think wisely in terms of what is harmful to them. Physicians and psychologists are now concerned over the increase of texting, which is leading "to anxiety, distraction in school, falling grades, repetitive stress injury (Blackberry Thumb), and sleep deprivation" (Haffner 2009).

A student hunched over her/his phone, thumbs rapidly moving over the keyboard, texts issuing forth akin to grunts, feels like a step down the evolutionary chain in terms of actions and intelligence.

So while the use of smartphones in the classroom sounds reasonable to many, it is also a tool that dehumanizes. A student hunched over her/his phone, thumbs rapidly moving over the keyboard, texts issuing forth akin to grunts, feels like a step down the evolutionary chain in terms of actions and intelligence. There are valid uses for the smartphone in education, but we must certainly consider carefully all the ramifications of using this technology in our classrooms and take steps to avoid fostering dehumanized users.

Joy Penner, master's student, UBC. References in online version.



BC technology educators declare need for standards

Technology education in BC schools has changed in recent years as a result of funding cuts and the removal of maximum class-size numbers by government. There are fewer technology education teachers, and those remaining are teaching larger classes with less supplies, equipment, and maintenance than ever before. In an attempt to address the resultant problems in program quality and teaching and learning conditions, the BC Technology Education Association (BCTEA), a provincial specialist association of the BCTF, has compiled a comprehensive document outlining recognized best practices—*BCTEA Best Practices Guide*. Health and safety is an underlying theme in all sections.

The technology education environment

Teaching and learning in technology education take place in school facilities that are similar to industrial workplaces. WorkSafe BC health and safety policies cover the teachers and other school district employees, who work in these settings, but not the students. The BCTEA believes that WorkSafe BC should cover students, and that a separate set of WorkSafe BC policies should be developed to address the unique safety issues pertaining to students working and learning in an industrial environment. The most significant factors that influence safe learning environments for technology education students are class size and composition, teacher qualifications, education assistant (EA) training, facilities, and budgets.

Class size and composition

Current class-size legislation allows technology education classes

of 30 students, the same limit as any other subject area, despite the unique safety issues in the industrial settings typical of shops in middle and secondary schools. Previously, 45 school districts had agreed to put class-size limits of 20–24 students in collective agreements, often as firm numbers that were exempted from a flex factor, and also agreed that the number of students in a shop shall not exceed the number of students who can be safely accommodated, or the number for which the facilities were designed or equipped. Complicating the issue is the growing trend of multigrade, multicourse classes that see a teacher instructing two to four grade levels of students in different curricula during the same class. The government stripped these provisions from teacher collective agreements in 2002, but the liability for safe teaching and learning environments in technology education shops remains.

The BCTEA takes the position that class size in technology education classes should be based on:

- the inclusion of EAs in any class count.
- an absolute limit of 20 students and EAs per teacher (with the exception of drafting classes) or the number that can be safely accommodated in the facilities as designed and equipped, whichever is lower.
- possible further reductions if the class includes beginning ESL students or students with special needs who require additional or unique safety supervision.
- a teacher-student ratio that allows for adequate supervision considering the number of courses running concurrently,

and the equipment required for the course, e.g., a senior wood shop presents different supervision challenges than a senior electronics shop.

- a minimum floor area, defined in terms of useable floor area, i.e., not covered by machinery, furnishings, etc., that is adequate for the specific program and its associated equipment, storage, and workspace needs.
- a minimum area per student to allow for safe working space in the context of the specific program and its associated equipment and activities.

The BCTEA...has compiled a comprehensive document outlining recognized best practices—BCTEA Best Practices Guide.

The BCTEA supports the inclusion of students with special needs in technology education classrooms but argues that many students with or without any identified special needs may require an individual education plan if they are to function safely in a shop environment and achieve the goals of the curriculum. Aspects particular to technology education should be clearly defined in the IEP.

Teacher qualifications

For a variety of economic, social, and educational reasons it has become increasingly difficult to employ and retain well-trained

technology education specialists in the province's public schools. This has resulted in many teachers without specific training in technology education teaching technology education courses. Some have industry experience and/or qualifications, while others are self-taught or hobbyists. The BCTEA takes the position that the minimum qualifications for teaching middle school or secondary technology education classes is successful completion of a Teacher Qualification Services (TQS) recognized technology education training program, inclusive of a practicum sponsored by a teacher who has these qualifications. The nature of teacher qualifications is a factor in program quality and in the safety of the teaching and learning environment.

Training for education assistants (EAs)

Increasingly, technology education classes have EAs working with special needs students. EAs, like all other employees, are subject to rights and responsibilities under WorkSafe BC legislation, including the right to training and the right to refuse unsafe work. For an EA to effectively supervise and assist the assigned student(s), they must have a reasonable and verifiable understanding of the procedures, practices, machinery, and tools being used in a particular course and setting. Employers have an obligation to provide training in safe work protocols and to ensure that these protocols are being followed.

Facilities

The BCTEA recommends the establishment of a provincial program advisory committee,

comprised of technology education teachers appointed by the BCTF and representatives from industry and post-secondary institutions, to establish provincial standards regarding facility design and a minimum equipment inventory.

Two areas critical to facility design are:

- a minimum floor area, defined in terms of useable floor area, i.e., not covered by machinery, furnishings, etc., that is adequate for the specific program and its associated equipment, storage, and workspace needs, and
- a minimum area per student to allow for safe working space in the context of the specific program and its associated equipment and activities.

The advisory committee's recommendations would be used to plan and maintain shop facilities throughout the province. In the meantime, the BCTEA offers standards for both facilities and equipment needed to effectively run technology education programs in our schools. The standards are intended to apply to new construction or renovations to existing facilities.

Budgets

The BCTEA recommends the formation of a provincial program advisory committee to assist in the establishment of a basic equipment inventory that school districts could use to develop realistic budgets. This group would be comprised of representatives from industry, post-secondary training, and teachers of technology education and would have a good understanding of costs relating to tools and equipment necessary to carry out technology education programs.

For the full report: www.bctea.org

Peace and global educators: A brief history

By Pummy Kaur

In 1986, BC teachers rose to the challenge at a time in history of the US wanting to test nuclear submarines in BC coastal waters, of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl, of the devastation of uranium mining in BC, of airplanes being hijacked by Shi'ite Muslims for issues ultimately linked to energy; of Palestinians seizing a cruise ship to highlight their plight, again, linked to energy; of the USA selling \$30 million of arms to Iran while under a weapon sales embargo, with the money making its way to Nicaraguan Contras, once again linked to energy; and the nuclear arms race showing no signs of slowing down.

The BC Teachers for Peace Education (PE), with a membership of 130 already, became The Peace Educators' PSA of the BCTF to provide a network, resources, education, and training in bringing peace education into the schools and classrooms, with the focus on eliminating wars. Under the presidency of Carol King, UBC students formed a local chapter, and other independent groups and PSAs interested in the issues joined together over the years to co-ordinate annual conferences; groups such as Peace Education Associates of the BCTF, Educators for Social Responsibility, Social Studies PSA, the Environmental Educators' PSA, *The Green Teacher*, UVic, and many individuals such as Pat Clarke, Mike Zlotnik, and Larry Kuehn at the BCTF.

One such group, the Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) with BC President Susan Hargrave, and 10,000 members in North America,

had a focus that was much broader than the peace educators, including many other issues of social justice. ESR and PE joined to form the Peace And Global Education PSA, officially recognized in 1998, with the first president being Francis Jovic.

The acronym PAGE refers to "peace" twice since the four components of global education are peace, human rights, environment, and development, and the "P" of PAGE is strictly for *peace*. This name was selected to show the combining of the two original groups, with somewhat different focuses.

...we have seen our vision of the world for all children become reflected in virtually all aspects of the BCTF.

Presidents who followed brought a diversity of strengths to the organization. Mary Gillanders, the first president of the infant PSA, came with a gigantic vision. David Talbot brought international co-operation with Majority World countries, Beata Hittrich brought a love for the "enemy" and great compassion, Judy Brayden brought a higher level of professional understanding of the workings of politics and education, I brought an honouring of the cultural diversity of the world, and the importance of the spiritual growth of being human, Donald Wilson brought his ferocious intellectual capacity and integrity, and respect for the First Peoples, and now Susan Ruzic has taken all of these and all of our original purposes to a bigger world,

and interestingly, Ruzic came to PAGE through her interest in eliminating wars. Full circle!

Twenty-five years ago, PAGE was considered a collection of a slightly flakey group of peaceniks. Nonetheless, we took on difficult challenges long before they were in vogue. We raised awareness of issues of teaching controversial issues, linked violence to consumption, introduced the connection between oil and The Middle East conflict, defended homosexuality and minority rights, and raised the issue of ethical pensions. We went from a two-page newsletter to "the most substantive PSA journal" according to the editor of the national *Green Teacher* magazine. Our journal is now found in university libraries, received praise from the likes of David Suzuki, initiated the Gandhi Youth Award, and increased our membership to 450 at our highest point, including memberships in Africa and Australia.

It was due to the efforts of all the presidents to date, all editors of the superb journals, all the membership, and many officers of the BCTF that we have seen our vision of the world for all children become reflected in virtually all aspects of the BCTF. We have become the social conscience of BC teachers, parents, and students.

This is why the PAGE PSA was created and now must not only continue to exist, but continue to thrive. For it is only through education for responsible global citizenship of teachers and children that we can hope to survive as an honourable species worthy of the gift of life.

Pummy Kaur, director, Global Education Center

Visit: pagebc.ca

A community of small schools

By Virginia Ivey

The BC Rural & Small Schools Teachers' Association (BCRSSTA) began in the 1980s as the BC Rural Teachers' Association and was primarily made up of educators teaching in rural communities, but the name was later changed to include small schools, that may, or may not be considered rural. Our members teach in schools within small communities on the fringe of larger centres, in isolated one-room schools, or in schools of three to four staff, hours away from an urban centre. Something we all have in common, however is we often have multigrade/age combinations, usually three, four, or more grades in one class. Whether it's an elementary grade combination, or a K-12 combination, rural and small schools have a strong sense of community, instruction is always differentiated, and educators have to think differently than their counterparts in larger centres.

Teaching with these kinds of grade combinations can be very daunting at first, especially for early career teachers whose first job is often in a school outside an urban center. A goal of the BCRSSTA has been to help to influence teacher education programs in this province to be conscious of rural education. Our PSA was part of the ministry's former rural strategy where some light was shone on rural education for a few years. Currently, the PSA is involved with Linda Farr-Darling, professor of the Eleanor Rix Rural Education Endowment Fund at UBC. Thanks to these initiatives and others, early career teachers are beginning their first years better prepared for the challenges of multigrade, and sometimes isolated, teaching situations.

Besides being involved with teacher education, the BCRSSTA is a great way for teachers in rural and small schools to connect and network with other teachers, share

Something we all have in common, however is we often have multigrade/age combinations, usually three, four, or more grades in one class.

ideas of what works, or doesn't work, and meet other teachers in similar teaching situations through our website, newsletters, and conferences. This year our conference is being held May 11, 2012, on the north end of Vancouver Island at Alert Bay Elementary School, in the beautiful community of Alert Bay. For more details, please visit our website, bcrrallteachers.org.

The BCRSSTA has also rewritten the K-7 English Language Arts IRP in a multigrade format, which is available on our website, and we publish a newsletter called *The Rural Root*, two or three times a year, which is also available on the website.

Like most things rural, we are small and spread out, so if you can find the time to "put on another hat," please join our PSA by logging onto bctf.ca and following the links. We welcome new members and ideas, whether you teach in a rural school, or not!

Virginia Ivey, president, BCRSSTA, Pinantan Elementary School, Pinantan Lake, SD73 Kamloops-Thompson

Visit: bcrrallteachers.org

Lower Mainland English Reading Assessment (LOMERA)

ESL assessment consortium

In June 2008, as representatives from 12 school districts and a university, we convened a group that established the Lower Mainland ESL Assessment Consortium (www.eslassess.ca). The goal of the consortium is available on the website. The first activity was to review the assessment instruments and procedures employed in the separate districts to assess EAL students.

The LOMERA was administered to 4,810 students in Grades 8 to 12 in 11 school districts; including 1,363 English speakers.

Assessment survey results

Results were surprising. The Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) (Ballard, Dalton, & Tighe, 2001) was the measure most often used with primary level students. Other assessments were the Brigance, (1983) the Bilingual Syntax Measure (Burt, Dulay, & Hernández, 1973), the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (Woodcock, Various), the Woodcock-Munoz, (Woodcock & Munoz-Sandoval, 1993) the Pre-IPT, the Comprehensive English Language Test (Harris & Palmer, 1986), informal reading inventories, the Waddington Diagnostic Reading Inventory (Waddington, 2000), the Alberta Diagnostic Reading Inventory, the SLEP, the Gap (McLeod & R. McLeod, 1990), PM Benchmarks (a system for placing students in levelled books), the RAD (Reading Achievement District—a local assessment measure), the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1997), and a variety of locally developed listening, speaking, reading, and writing assessments.

The wide diversity of assessment instruments and interpretation protocols represented a serious problem because of high student mobility rates. Since there was no assessment uniformity, students who transferred had to be assessed a second, and sometimes a third time. Levels distinctions also differed across, within and between districts, so level three, for example, did not always represent the same language abilities. There are serious consequences for learners when assessment results are neither valid nor reliable (Shohamy, 2000).

The LOMERA

There was consensus among consortium members that a secondary-level measure (Grades 8 to 12) should be developed. It was concluded that the measure should be easy to administer and simple to score and that scores should be categorized into levels. It was concluded the measure should result in four and five levels. It was concluded that a reading test involving the “maze” procedure would be developed and that it should contain text approved for the provincial curriculum and so passages were selected from science, math, social studies, and language arts materials. Four different readability measures were used to estimate grade levels for the passages (Fry, Flesch-Kincaid, Flesch Reading Ease, and Forcast). Eight passages varying from second to twelfth grade were selected to form the assessment. The time limit established for the administration of the test was 35 minutes.

The LOMERA Study

The LOMERA was administered to 4,810 students in Grades 8 to 12 in 11 school districts; including 1,363 English speakers. Hundreds of teachers and their students participated. A test manual was developed that includes level designations. Percentile scores and other descriptive data are presented in the manual. The LOMERA is in use in a number of districts.

Alternate and online forms

An important related goal was to develop alternate forms of the LOMERA so the test/retest cycle would continue to be more valid and reliable. One alternate form has been developed and has been placed on the consortium website. Three other forms are in development.

An on-line version was developed. Murphy Odo (in process) administered the LOMERA to students in both forms and has concluded that they are highly comparable.

Conclusion

The number of new immigrant students who enrol in provincial schools continues to increase. Valid and reliable assessment is a cornerstone of thoughtful instructional planning. The secondary LOMERA, however, was never designed to be a diagnostic assessment. It has been criticized as a measure that does not provide diagnostic information for teachers. It has been criticized as a measure that does not provide much information about individual students' processing of connected discourse or their oral reading fluency. The LOMERA was designed to be an easily administered assessment that provides broad-stroke information about English-reading levels. It does so quite successfully. It involves a substantial ESL norm group and is not meant to be the only assessment administered.

The ESL Assessment Consortium was established to explore assessment issues. With cut-backs in budgets and ESL personnel affecting school districts, it is essential that issues related to ESL assessment and instruction be explored. A solid foundation has been developed for further consortium activities.

Members of the consortium

Mark Angerilli, *ESL Assessment helping teacher, School District 36 (Surrey)*

Karen Beatty, *district teacher—ESL, School District 35 (Langley)*

Reginald D'Silva, *University of British Columbia*

Lee Gunderson, *University of British Columbia*

Sylvia Helmer, *visiting adjunct professor, UBC/VSB*

Catherine Humphries, *program consultant, English language learners, School District 41 (Burnaby)*

Betty Kosel, *ESL consultant (Retired), SD 39 (Vancouver)*

Raffy LaRizza-Evans, *district ESL support teacher, SD 37 (Delta)*

Daphne McMillan, *district ESL resource teacher, School District 40 (New Westminster)*

Dennis Murphy Odo, *University of British Columbia*

George Monkman, *ESL co-ordinator, School District 44 (North Vancouver)*

Donna Neilson, *district ESL resource teacher, SD 45 (West Vancouver)*

Dale Shea, *ESL co-ordinator, School District 43 (Coquitlam)*

Diane Tijman, *ESL & multiculturalism co-ordinator, School District 38 (Richmond)*

Julie Wright, *ESL helping teacher, School District 34 (Abbotsford)*

Self-paced adult ed programs coincide with ministry's 21st century objectives

So why are they being cut?

By Laura Barker

I have taught English and humanities for 20 years in an alternative, self-paced program for adult learners. These courses at Invergarry Adult Education Centre in Surrey have been reduced and are now at serious risk of being eliminated by increasingly stringent and discriminatory ministry funding rules. All this just when the Liberal government has declared its focus on 21st century “personalized learning,” and its intention to “Make BC the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.”

These appear to be worthy goals, but we are all wondering if the province will support such objectives with the funding required to achieve them. If past practice is any indication of future actions, and if the government continues with its net-zero mandate and its “no more money” mantra, then these goals merely look like a recipe for failure for adult students.

Alternative programs, such as self-paced courses, offer more flexibility and are better suited to helping adults achieve their academic goals.

Many adults who return to school have needs that regular, structured classes do not meet. Alternative programs, such as self-paced courses, offer more flexibility and are better suited to helping adults achieve their academic goals.

However, adults are falling victim to the Liberal government's increasingly stringent funding and accountability policies. These measures are directly contrary to the more individualized, flexible programs developed by educators throughout the province and seemingly desired by the Liberals in their 21st century learning initiative.

Most adults who return to school must maintain a delicate balance of the obligations of work, family, and education. Those who were not successful in school the first time around tend still to struggle with learning challenges and other personal issues such as increased health problems, a tendency toward higher incidence of mental health and addictions issues, as well as less stable personal lives especially with new immigrants.

New immigrants, who make up a large portion of adult students in

the Lower Mainland, are dealing with the stress of learning a new language and culture, as well as supporting their families often while being unemployed or under-employed.

Despite this disproportionate level of need, adults are funded at a significantly lower rate than students in the K–12 system, and there is no additional funding for those with special needs, learning issues, or for school counsellors. There appears to be a case that could be made for age-related discrimination.

For over 20 years, Invergarry Adult Education Centre in Surrey has served thousands of students in its self-paced math, science, and humanities courses aimed at adult learners who don't fit the usual night-school model. Invergarry has its own facility and thus can offer various styles of part-time and full-time day and night classes to meet the differing needs of our learners.

As in most self-paced programs, students can begin their courses at almost any time throughout the school year. They spend their weekly class time—usually five to ten hours per course—working in a large open classroom filled with students working on various subjects and teachers circulating to assist them. They are given suggested due dates for individual assignments as well as an end date by which they must complete the course. Regular attendance is required but the schedule is flexible to accommodate the hectic and sometimes unpredictable lives of adult learners.

Adult learners progress at a pace that works for them within the time-limits outlined. The flexibility of the program allows students to work quickly through concepts they find easier, and to get more time and assistance with those areas they find challenging. Teachers also have the ability to personalize course work and projects to suit the individual needs of adult learners. This system works well for certain types of students but requires adequate funding, support, and reasonable class sizes to be successful.

Flexibility and individualized assistance are the cornerstones of the self-paced program. However, despite touching on many of the concepts and buzzwords in the ministry's 21st Century Learning Initiative, this program and others like it are currently being squeezed from the adult education roster, in favour of more traditional, semestered, easily audited and

accounted courses—ironic in the face of the ministry's “new F-word”—flexibility.

Up to a year ago, our centre offered 25 different academic courses, from Grades 8 through 12, and employed over five FTE teachers for day and evening

Despite this disproportionate level of need, adults are funded at a significantly lower rate than students in the K–12 system.

courses. Until recently, we also had an adult special needs program, a children's daycare on site, as well as two full-time counsellors to assist students in overcoming any barriers that may have prevented them from reaching their academic goals.

Due to cuts, Invergarry now focuses its self-paced program on Grades 10–12 with only two FTE teachers and a corresponding cut to course offerings. This was a serious blow to adults who had come to rely on the program.

The ministry's new funding rules for self-paced courses are creating an unfair bias against students who have different learning needs than the norm, yet these are generally the students who need education programs the most, and they are often the same students who were not well served the first time they went to school.

Adults—arguably more so than youth—need flexibility in their education options. Therefore, at least some of the programs we offer should accommodate the work schedules, learning needs, family lives, and other personal issues that prevent many adults from achieving graduation.

Ironically, the ministry and its new focus on 21st century learning claims to want many of the attributes that self-paced programs currently offer. The Premier's Technology Council states that a 21st century education system would be “rooted in personalized learning” and proposes that schools must move “from one size fits all to tailored learning.” Talk is cheap and lofty “Great Goals for a Golden Decade” make good sound bites, but individualized education programs that already exist are still on the chopping block.

Laura Barker, *Invergarry Learning Centre, Surrey*

Visit: adultedpsa.wordpress.com



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Make a Future
CAREERS IN BC EDUCATION



BC teachers making a difference, globally

International solidarity workshop:
February 11, BCTF building. For information, see bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=6292
Please register for attendance or live-streaming: ajfield@bctf.ca or staylor@bctf.ca

International projects

CUBA
Conversational English for union leaders, March 16–25, 2012 (Spring Break). Deadline: February 6, 2012.

Check “The Cuba Project” at: bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=19096

PERU
Pedagogical Professional Development for Teachers of English, July–August, 2012. Deadline: February 11, 2012
Check “The Peru Project” at bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=19096

BCTF Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2011

President's comments

The accompanying financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2011 have been prepared in accordance with the by-laws of the Federation and the provisions of the Society Act. They reflect the stewardship of the Executive Committee over the resources of the Federation and the committee's accountability to the membership for the effective management of those resources.

On a combined (all funds) basis, expenditures exceeded revenues (a deficit) by \$569,000 for the 2010-11 year compared to a surplus of \$841,000 for the 2009-10 year. The deficit represents 1.7% of the overall revenue.

The General Operating Fund (GOF) contributed to the results with a deficit of \$202,000 for 2010-11. The actual deficit was \$54,000 less than the budgeted deficit of \$256,000.

The Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (CBDF) contributed a surplus of \$671,000 for the 2010-11 year (Schedule 2) which increased the fund balance from \$10.3 million at June 30, 2010 to \$11.0 million at June 30, 2011.

The Provincial Bargaining Fund (PBF) deficit was \$982,000 for the 2010-11 year (Schedule 4) which increased the negative fund balance of \$274,000 at June 30, 2010 to a negative fund balance of \$1,256,000 at June 30, 2011. The increase in expenditures in 2010-11 was significantly higher than the prior year.

The Public Education Defence Fund (PEDF) surplus of \$134,000 for the 2010-11 year (Schedule 5) reduced the PEDF negative fund balance from \$156,000 at June 30, 2010 to a negative fund balance of \$22,000 at June 30, 2011.

At their December 8-10, 2011 meeting, the Executive Committee considered the Finance Committee's 2012-13 status quo recommendation on total fee. This is recommended to remain at 1.49%

The operations of the Salary Indemnity Fund (SIF) reflect a surplus of \$24.6 million for the 2010-11 year (Statement 3) compared to a deficit of \$11.2 million for 2009-10. The fund balance has now increased from \$55.5 million at June 30, 2010 to \$80.1 million at June 30, 2011. The \$24.6 million actual surplus occurred mainly due to investment income. The 2011 AGM approved a fee of 1.73% for 2011-12 and the Income Security Committee is recommending a fee of 1.63% for 2012-13.

Susan Lambert

Independent Auditors' Report

To the Members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the General and Other Funds (not including the Salary Indemnity Fund) of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, which comprise the statement of financial position as at June 30, 2011, and the statements of operations, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2011, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

As required by the *Society Act* (British Columbia), we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

SmytheRatcliffe, Chartered Accountants

Vancouver, BC

November 25, 2011

Management Responsibility for Financial Statements

The accompanying financial statements and all other information contained in this annual report are the responsibility of the management of the Federation. The financial statements have been prepared by management in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and have been approved by the Executive Committee.

Preparation of financial information is an integral part of the ongoing operation of the Federation. A system of internal accounting controls is maintained to ensure that transactions are accurately recorded on a timely basis, are properly approved and result in reliable financial statements.

The Finance and Audit Committee reviews the financial statements and recommends them to the Executive Committee for its approval. In addition, the Finance and Audit Committee meets with the officers of the Federation and the external auditors, and reports to the Executive Committee.

The financial statements have been examined by the Federation's auditors who are engaged by the Executive Committee on recommendation of the Finance and Audit Committee and whose appointment was ratified at the Annual General Meeting. The auditors have free access to the Finance and Audit Committee, without management present, to discuss the results of their audit work and their opinion on the adequacy of internal accounting controls and the quality of financial reporting.

Moira Mackenzie, Executive Director

Manchan Sonachansingh, C.A., Treasurer

STATEMENT 1

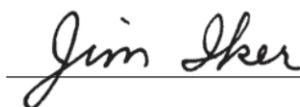
Statement of Financial Position as at June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Assets		
Current		
Cash	\$ 6,134	\$ 7,349
Marketable securities (Note 3)	4,903	4,825
	11,037	12,174
Membership fee and other receivables	4,192	3,555
Due from Salary Indemnity Fund (Note 9)	191	—
Prepaid expenses	378	356
	15,798	16,085
Capital Assets (Notes 5 & 6)	13,256	13,823
	\$ 29,054	\$ 29,908
Liabilities		
Current		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 2,361	\$ 1,670
Employee future benefit obligation (Notes 2 e. & 7)	4,085	4,473
Due to Salary Indemnity Fund (Note 9)	—	486
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	1,010	1,112
	7,456	7,741
Members' Funds		
General Operating Fund (including investment in capital assets) (Schedule 1)	11,832	12,034
Internally Restricted Funds:		
Collective Bargaining		
Defence Fund (Schedule 2)	10,999	10,328
Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)	(203)	131
Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)	(1,256)	(274)
Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)	(22)	(156)
William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund (Schedule 6)	226	89
Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund (Schedule 6)	22	15
	21,598	22,167
	\$ 29,054	\$ 29,908

Contingency (Note 13)

Approved by the Executive Committee





See Notes to Financial Statements

STATEMENT 2

Statement of Changes in Net Assets for the year ended June 30

	General Operating Fund		Internally Restricted Funds				2011	2010	
							(in thousands)		
	Operating	Invested in Capital Assets	Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	Contingency Fund	Provincial Bargaining Fund	Public Education Defence Fund	Other Funds	Total	Total
Balance, beginning of year	\$ (1,789)	\$13,823	\$10,328	\$ 131	\$ (274)	\$ (156)	\$ 104	\$22,167	\$21,326
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	(202)	—	671	(334)	(982)	134	144	(569)	841
Net change in capital assets	567	(567)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Balance, end of year	\$ (1,424)	\$13,256	\$10,999	\$ (203)	\$ (1,256)	\$ (22)	\$ 248	\$21,598	\$22,167

See Notes to Financial Statements

STATEMENT 3
Statement of Operations for the year ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 33,388	\$ 32,868
Net investment income	253	250
	<u>33,641</u>	<u>33,118</u>
Operating expenses		
General Operating Fund (Schedule 1)	29,754	28,869
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2)	1,065	1,388
Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)	566	244
Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)	1,670	564
Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)	786	688
Other funds (Schedule 6)	447	615
	<u>34,288</u>	<u>32,368</u>
Subtotal	(647)	750
Unrealized gain on investments	78	91
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	<u>\$ (569)</u>	<u>\$ 841</u>

See Notes to Financial Statements

STATEMENT 4
Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Cash flows from operating activities		
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	\$ (569)	\$ 841
Items not affecting cash:		
Depreciation	1,075	1,339
Employee future benefits	2,377	1,380
Unrealized gain on investments	(78)	(91)
	<u>2,805</u>	<u>3,469</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital items		
Membership fee and other receivables	(637)	222
Due to/from Salary Indemnity Fund	(677)	1,136
Prepaid expenses	(22)	79
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	691	(788)
Employee future benefit obligation	(2,765)	(1,709)
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	(102)	1
	<u>(3,512)</u>	<u>(1,059)</u>
Cash flow from investing activities		
Purchase of capital assets	(508)	(723)
Sale of marketable securities	—	986
	<u>(508)</u>	<u>263</u>
Change in cash	(1,215)	2,673
Cash, beginning of year	7,349	4,676
Cash, end of year	<u>\$ 6,134</u>	<u>\$ 7,349</u>

See Notes to Financial Statements

Schedule 1
General Operating Fund
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance
for the year ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 29,573	\$ 29,112
Net interest expense	(57)	(55)
	<u>29,516</u>	<u>29,057</u>
Divisional operating expenses		
Communications/Campaigns	3,626	3,430
Management	2,808	2,720
Professional and Social Issues	2,761	2,961
Finance and Administrative Services	939	897
Field Service	917	902
Research and Technology	673	618
Income Security	37	78
	<u>11,761</u>	<u>11,606</u>
Salary and Benefit Compensation	10,817	10,921
Grants to Locals	5,321	5,255
Future Benefits	1,855	1,087
	<u>29,754</u>	<u>28,869</u>
Subtotal	(238)	188
Unrealized gain on investments	36	60
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	(202)	248
Transfer to Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	—	(2,000)
	<u>(202)</u>	<u>(1,752)</u>
Fund balance, beginning of year	12,034	13,786
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ 11,832</u>	<u>\$ 12,034</u>

Schedule 2
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance
for the year ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 1,382	\$ 1,586
Net investment income	312	306
	<u>1,694</u>	<u>1,892</u>
Expenses		
Bills 27 and 28	486	434
Legal costs over GOF budget	445	938
Bargaining mobilization	134	—
VESTA/BCeSIS grant	—	11
BC Paramedics Support	—	3
GVTA prep time	—	2
	<u>1,065</u>	<u>1,388</u>
Subtotal	629	504
Unrealized gain on investments	42	31
Excess of revenue over expenses	671	535
Transfer from General Operating Fund	—	2,000
	<u>671</u>	<u>2,535</u>
Fund balance, beginning of year	10,328	7,793
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ 10,999</u>	<u>\$ 10,328</u>

Schedule 3
Contingency Fund
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance
for the year ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fee (Note 4)	\$ 230	\$ 227
Net investment income	2	1
	<u>232</u>	<u>228</u>
Expenses		
Legal costs over GOF budget	520	218
Bill 42	46	11
Canadian Red Cross (Haiti)	—	10
Central Falls	—	5
	<u>566</u>	<u>244</u>
Deficiency of revenue over expenses	(334)	(16)
Fund balance, beginning of year	131	147
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ (203)</u>	<u>\$ 131</u>

Schedule 4
Provincial Bargaining Fund
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance
for the year ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 691	\$ 453
Net investment expense	(3)	(1)
	<u>688</u>	<u>452</u>
Expenses		
Provincial negotiations	1,670	564
	<u>1,670</u>	<u>564</u>
Deficiency of revenue over expenses	(982)	(112)
Fund balance, beginning of year	(274)	(162)
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ (1,256)</u>	<u>\$ (274)</u>

Schedule 5
Public Education Defence Fund
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance
for the year ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 921	\$ 907
Net investment (expense) income	(1)	(1)
	<u>920</u>	<u>906</u>
Expenses		
Commitment to public education	786	695
Public education advocacy	—	(7)
	<u>786</u>	<u>688</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	134	218
Fund balance, beginning of year	(156)	(374)
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ (22)</u>	<u>\$ (156)</u>

Schedule 6
Other Internally Restricted Funds
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance
for the year ended June 30

	WR Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund	Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund	Total 2011	Total 2010
	(in thousands)			
Revenue				
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 560	\$ 31	\$ 591	\$ 583
Expenses				
Grants	423	24	447	615
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	137	7	144	(32)
Fund balances, beginning of year	89	15	104	136
Fund balances, end of year	<u>\$ 226</u>	<u>\$ 22</u>	<u>\$ 248</u>	<u>\$ 104</u>

Notes to Financial Statements Year Ended June 30, 2011

1. BACKGROUND AND BASIS OF COMBINATION

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (the BCTF or the Federation) is incorporated as a society pursuant to the *Society Act (British Columbia)*, and is a trade union pursuant to the Labour Relations Code of BC and the *Public Education Labour Relations Act*. The Federation is exempt from income tax.

The financial statements of the Federation include the results of the seven funds described below.

General Operating Fund: The purpose of the fund is to meet the goals of the Federation through program expenditures planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly. The General Operating Fund also holds the investment in capital assets.

Collective Bargaining Defence Fund: The purpose of the fund is to pay costs directly related to strikes, lockouts, the honouring of picket lines in third-party disputes, and contract enforcement in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the Representative Assembly.

Contingency Fund: The purpose of the fund is to meet, without delay, special or emergent expenses that could not reasonably have been anticipated and to promote the cause of public education by providing the financial means to respond effectively to any crisis in education. Expenditures from the Contingency Fund are made in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the Representative Assembly.

Provincial Bargaining Fund: The purpose of the fund is to pay costs related to provincial contract negotiations. Expenditures from the fund are planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly.

Public Education Defence Fund: The purpose of the fund is to ensure adequate resources are available to effectively respond to the attack upon public education launched by the government and to support the implementation of the Federation's Public Education Advocacy Plan. Expenditures from the fund are planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly.

William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund: The purpose of the fund is to improve public education in developing countries.

Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund: The purpose of the fund is to promote socially responsible teaching practices.

The **Salary Indemnity Fund** is reported to the membership in a separate set of financial statements and is not included in these financial statements. The purpose of the Salary Indemnity Fund is to meet the obligations of the Salary Indemnity Plan which provides income benefits to members disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident. The total fee allocated to the Salary Indemnity Fund was 1.89% of gross salary for the 2010–11 membership year (2009–10 was also 1.89%). Any Fund deficiency is the responsibility of the Federation. The financial statements of the Salary Indemnity Fund should be read concurrently with these financial statements.

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Significant accounting policies used in the preparation of the financial statements are summarized below. These policies are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and the recommendations of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA).

a. Fund Accounting

The Federation follows the restricted fund method of accounting for membership fee whereby the fee is allocated to each fund on the basis approved annually at the Annual General Meeting.

b. Financial Instruments

All financial instruments are classified as one of the following: held-to-maturity, loans and receivables, held-for-trading, available-for-sale, or other financial liabilities. Financial assets and liabilities classified as held-for-trading are measured at fair value with gains and losses recognized in net income. Loans and receivables and other financial liabilities are measured at amortized cost using the effective interest method.

Receivables are classified as loans and receivables and liabilities are classified as other liabilities. Cash and marketable securities are classified as held-for-trading and presented at their fair unrealized gains or losses recognized in excess/deficiency of revenues over expenses for the year.

c. Revenue Recognition

Membership fee is recognized as revenue in the year in which it relates. Realized and unrealized investment income from the Federation's investments is recognized as revenue as it is earned and is allocated to the appropriate restricted fund based on the investments held by the fund.

d. Capital Assets

Capital assets are recorded at cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is calculated on the straight-line method based on anticipated useful lives:

Asset	Useful Life	Asset	Useful Life
Building	30 years	Furniture & equipment	3–10 years
Renovations	9–10 years	Computer hardware & software	3–10 years
Tenant improvements	10 years		

Several capital projects relating to the upgrading of computer software for the Federation approved for the 2009–10 and 2010–11 budget years were not completed prior to year end; the cost of the work-in-progress of these projects is included in capital assets and depreciation has not been taken.

e. Employee Future Benefits

The Federation maintains a defined benefit registered pension plan for all support staff of the Federation including casual and temporary employees and any administrative and excluded staff who are not eligible to join the Teachers' Pension Plan.

The pension expense and plan funding requirements are determined tri-annually by independent consulting actuaries. The date of the most recent pension valuation was January 1, 2010. The cost of pension benefits earned is determined using the projected benefit method prorated on service and is charged to expense as services are rendered. Adjustments arising from plan amendments, changes in assumptions, experience gains and losses, and the net pension assets are amortized on a straight-line basis over the estimated average remaining service lives of the employees.

In addition, the Federation provides non-pension benefits to qualifying retirees consisting of supplementary health insurance benefits. The cost of post-retirement benefits other than pensions is recognized on an accrual basis over the working lives of employees. The expense reported in the current year, based on tri-annual independent actuarial assessment, is an allocation of estimated future benefits under these plans related to the service of employees in the current year. Future obligations for these benefits are funded when they occur. The date of the most recent non-pension benefit valuation was June 30, 2009.

f. Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires the Federation to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Estimates in these financial statements include the collectability of receivables, the useful lives of capital assets, and the liability and expense related to employee future benefits. Actual results could differ from those estimates and could impact results of operations and cash flows of the Federation.

g. Future accounting pronouncement

In April 2010, the CICA issued new accounting standards for not-for-profit entities. For fiscal years beginning on or after January 1, 2012, not-for-profit entities will be required to choose between reporting under these new standards or International Financial Reporting Standards on an ongoing basis. This will affect the Federation's annual financial statements for the June 30, 2013 fiscal year, and may require the restatement of the Federation's June 30, 2012, figures for comparative purposes. The Federation has decided that it will adopt these new standards at the required transition date.

3. MARKETABLE SECURITIES

The market value of marketable securities at June 30, 2011 was \$4,902,636 compared to the carrying value of \$4,825,034 (2010 market value—\$4,825,034, carrying value—\$4,734,246).

4. MEMBERSHIP FEE

The membership fee for the year ended June 30, 2011 was 1.45% of the gross salary of each member.

The following summarizes the fee allocations:

	2010–11	2009–10
General Operating Fund	1.31%	1.31%
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	0.06	0.07
Public Education Defence Fund	0.04	0.04
Provincial Bargaining Fund	0.03	0.02
Contingency Fund	0.01	0.01
	<u>1.45%</u>	<u>1.45%</u>

The General Operating Fund allocates 1.86% of its fee revenue to the William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund. In addition, the General Operating Fund allocates \$1 per member per year to the Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund.

5. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2011 Net Book Value	2010 Net Book Value
			(in thousands)	
Land	\$ 4,430	\$ —	\$ 4,430	\$ 4,430
Building	12,736	(6,626)	6,110	6,585
	<u>17,166</u>	<u>(6,626)</u>	<u>10,540</u>	<u>11,015</u>
Renovations	670	(389)	281	366
Tenant improvements	1,081	(471)	610	597
Furniture and equipment	976	(514)	462	415
Computer hardware & software	1,973	(767)	1,206	1,323
Work in progress	157	—	157	107
	<u>\$22,023</u>	<u>\$(8,767)</u>	<u>\$13,256</u>	<u>\$13,823</u>

6. NET ASSETS INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS

Net assets invested in capital assets are funded as follows:

	2010–11	2009–10
		(in thousands)
General Operating Fund	\$ 8,870	\$ 9,002
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	4,386	4,821
	<u>\$13,256</u>	<u>\$13,823</u>

In 2000, the Representative Assembly authorized a loan of \$8,400,000 from the Collective Bargaining Defence Fund to the General Operating Fund to finance the purchase of the remaining interest in the Federation's building. For presentation purposes, the inter-fund loan payable and receivable are eliminated in the statement of financial position.

The outstanding principal balance at June 30, 2011 was \$4,385,838 (2010—\$4,821,314). The loan bears interest at an effective annual rate of 3.56% and is repayable in monthly principal and interest payments of \$49,773. The current term is renewable on December 31, 2015. Loan interest for the year 2010–11 was \$161,804 (2009–10—\$176,761).

7. EMPLOYEE FUTURE BENEFITS

(i) The following table pertains to the Federation's employee future benefit plans for pension and non-pension plans, and provides fair value of plan assets, benefit obligations, and funded status as follows:

	2011 (in thousands)
Accrued benefit obligation—pension and non-pension benefits, end of year	\$ 55,419
Fair value of pension and non-pension plan assets, end of year	(34,382)
Unfunded liability	21,037
Minus:	
Unamortized net actuarial losses and other	(16,039)
Adjustment for contributions after measurement date	(913)
Employee future benefit obligation, end of year	<u>\$ 4,085</u>

The funded status of plan assets is as follows:

Pension benefit—unfunded liability	\$ 1,842
Non-pension benefits—unfunded liability	19,195
Total unfunded liability	<u>\$21,037</u>

The net expenses for the Federation's plan are as follows:

Pension benefit expense	\$ 437
Non-pension benefit expense	1,499
	<u>\$ 1,936</u>

(ii) Contributions and disbursements from the plan were as follows:

Pension plan employee contributions	\$ 493
Pension plan employer contributions	1,573
	<u>\$ 2,066</u>
Non-pension benefit disbursements	<u>(\$ 1,192)</u>

(iii) The actuarial determinations were based on the following assumptions during the year:

	2011	2010
Pension benefits:		
Discount rate	6.25%	6.50%
Expected long-term rate of return on plan assets	4.00%	6.50%
Rate of compensation increase	0%–4.50%	0%–4.50%
Non-pension benefits:		
Discount rate	6.00%	8.00%
Expected long-term rate of return on plan assets	6.50%	6.50%
Rate of compensation increase	2.50%	2.50%

The assumed health care cost trend rate at June 30, 2009 was 7.5%, decreasing to 5% after five years.

8. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

a. Fair Value

The Federation's financial instruments include cash, marketable securities, membership fee and other receivables, due to Salary Indemnity Fund, accounts payable and accrued liabilities, and due to Provincial Specialist Associations. The fair value of these financial instruments, excluding marketable securities, approximates their carrying value due to their short term to maturity. The fair value of marketable securities is as disclosed in Note 3.

b. Interest Rate Risk

The Federation is exposed to interest rate risk due to the long-term maturity of certain of the investments. Interest rate risk refers to the effect on the fair value of the Federation's assets and liabilities due to fluctuations in interest rates. These investments are interest rate sensitive although this risk is actively managed by both management and professional investment advisors.

c. Credit Risk

Credit risk arises from the possibility that a counter party to a financial instrument would fail to fulfill its financial obligations; therefore, the Federation is exposed to credit risk with respect to its cash, accounts receivable, and marketable securities.

The credit risk associated with cash is minimal as cash has been placed with a major financial institution. The Federation is not exposed to significant credit risk with respect to its accounts receivable and marketable securities as the majority of these amounts are due from school districts and governments.

c. Market Risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value of an investment will fluctuate as a result of changes in market price. The Federation is closely monitored by a professional investment manager, which mitigates this risk.

9. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The amount due from the Salary Indemnity Fund of \$191,000 (2010—\$486,000 due to) is unsecured, non-interest-bearing and due on demand. The amount arises from the transfer of fees received and payments made by BCTF on behalf of the Fund. The BCTF has recovered the following salaries, benefits, building and related building costs from related parties as follows:

	2011	2010
		(in thousands)
Salary Indemnity Fund	\$572	\$512
BCTF Assistance Society	6	7
Professional Service Associations	130	132

The recovery is based on an estimate of administrative time spent and space occupied by the related parties.

9. SALARY INDEMNITY FUND

A summary of the financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund at June 30 is as follows:

	2011	2010
		(in thousands)
Total assets	<u>\$245,486</u>	<u>\$219,695</u>
Total liabilities	165,356	164,158
Fund balance, end of year	<u>80,130</u>	<u>55,537</u>
	<u>\$245,486</u>	<u>\$219,695</u>

A summary of the revenue and expenditures for year ended June 30 is as follows:

	2011	2010
		(in thousands)
Total revenue	\$ 59,584	\$ 53,488
Total expenditures	(49,376)	(47,567)
	<u>10,208</u>	<u>5,921</u>

Unrealized gain (loss) on investments	14,385	5,251
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	<u>\$ 24,593</u>	<u>\$ 11,172</u>

A summary of cash flows for the year ended June 30 is as follows:

Cash flows from Operating Activities	\$ 11,510	\$ 3,845
Cash flows from Investing Activities	(11,487)	(1,496)

11. CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

The Federation preserves and manages its capital with the intention of promoting public education in British Columbia, obtaining improvement in conditions for its members and ensuring the continued existence of the Federation.

The Federation's capital includes cash, marketable securities, accounts receivable and accounts payable, and accrued liabilities.

12. COMPARATIVE FIGURES

Certain of prior years' figures have been reclassified to conform with this year's presentation.

13. CONTINGENCY

The Federation, from time to time, will guarantee certain loans made to locals.

Salary Indemnity Fund

Independent Auditors' Report

To the Members of the
British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Salary Indemnity Fund of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, which comprise the statement of financial position as at June 30, 2011, and the statements of revenue, expenditures and fund balance, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2011, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

As required by the Society Act (British Columbia), we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

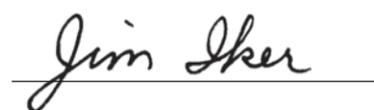
SmytheRatcliffe
Chartered Accountants
Vancouver, BC

November 25, 2011

STATEMENT 1
Salary Indemnity Fund
Statement of Financial Position as at June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Assets		
Accounts receivable	5,345	4,771
Due from General Operating Fund	—	486
Investments (Note 3)	238,681	213,881
Capital assets (Note 4)	1,460	557
	<u>\$245,486</u>	<u>\$219,695</u>
Liabilities and Fund Balance		
Overdraft	\$ 703	\$ 726
Accounts payable	718	686
Due to General Operating Fund (Note 8)	191	—
Provision for claims (Note 5)	163,744	162,746
	<u>165,356</u>	<u>164,158</u>
Invested in capital assets	1,460	557
Fund balance	<u>78,670</u>	<u>54,980</u>
	<u>80,130</u>	<u>55,537</u>
	<u>\$245,486</u>	<u>\$219,695</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee



STATEMENT 2
Salary Indemnity Fund
Statement of Changes in Net Assets for Year Ended June 30

	Fund Balance	Investment in Capital Assets	2011	2010
	(in thousands)			
Balance, beginning of the year	\$54,980	\$ 557	\$55,537	\$44,365
Excess of revenue before unrealized gain on investments	10,208	—	10,208	5,921
Depreciation (net of disposals)	169	(169)	—	—
Purchase of capital assets	(1,072)	1,072	—	—
Unrealized gain on investments	14,385	—	14,385	5,251
Balance, end of year	<u>\$78,670</u>	<u>\$1,460</u>	<u>\$80,130</u>	<u>\$55,537</u>

STATEMENT 3
Salary Indemnity Fund
Statement of Revenue, Expenditures and Fund Balance for Year Ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Membership fees (Note 1)	\$41,375	\$40,727
Teachers' share of employment insurance premium reductions	2,654	2,505
Investment income, net	15,555	10,256
	<u>59,584</u>	<u>53,488</u>
Expenditures		
Short-term claims paid	11,471	11,589
Long-term claims paid	26,838	26,509
	<u>38,309</u>	<u>38,098</u>
Increase (decrease) in actuarial valuation of provision for claims (Note 5)	998	(308)
Total claim expenditures	<u>39,307</u>	<u>37,790</u>
Excess of revenue over claim expenditures	20,277	15,698
Administrative expenses	9,115	8,747
Investment management and trust company expenses (Note 6)	954	1,030
	<u>10,069</u>	<u>9,777</u>
Excess of revenue before unrealized gain on investments	10,208	5,921
Unrealized gain on investments	14,385	5,251
Excess of revenue over expenditures	<u>24,593</u>	<u>11,172</u>
Fund balance, beginning of year	<u>55,537</u>	<u>44,365</u>
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$80,130</u>	<u>\$55,537</u>

STATEMENT 4
Salary Indemnity Fund
Statement of Cash Flows for Year Ended June 30

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Cash flows from operating activities		
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$24,593	\$ 11,172
Items not affecting cash		
Unrealized gain on investments	(14,385)	(5,251)
Increase (decrease) in actuarial valuation of provision for claims	998	(308)
Depreciation	169	161
	<u>11,375</u>	<u>5,774</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital items		
Accounts receivable	(574)	(906)
Accounts payable	32	113
Due to/from General Operating Fund	677	(1,136)
	<u>135</u>	<u>(1,929)</u>
	<u>\$ 11,510</u>	<u>\$ 3,845</u>
Cash flows used in investing activities		
Purchase of capital assets	(1,072)	(188)
Increase in investment portfolio	(10,415)	(1,308)
	<u>(11,487)</u>	<u>(1,496)</u>
Change in overdraft	<u>23</u>	<u>2,349</u>
Bank indebtedness, beginning of year	<u>(726)</u>	<u>(3,075)</u>
Bank indebtedness, end of year	<u>\$ (703)</u>	<u>\$ (726)</u>

See Notes to Financial Statements

SIF Notes to Financial Statements for Year Ended June 30, 2011

1. BACKGROUND AND FEES

The purpose of the Salary Indemnity Fund (the Fund) is to meet the obligations of the Salary Indemnity Plan (the Plan), which provides income benefits to members disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident.

The membership fee for the year ending June 30, 2011 was 1.89% (2010—1.89%) of the gross salary of each participating member as set at the 2010 Annual General Meeting.

The financial position of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (the Federation) is reported to the membership in a separate set of financial statements and is not included in these financial statements. The Federation is incorporated as a society pursuant to the *Society Act* (British Columbia), and is a trade union pursuant to the *Labour Relations Code of B.C.* and the *Public Education Labour Relations Act*. The Fund is part of the Federation and is therefore exempt from income tax. The financial statements of the Federation should be read concurrently with these financial statements.

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Significant accounting policies used in the preparation of the financial statements are summarized below. These policies are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and the recommendations of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA).

- Fund Accounting:** The Fund follows the restricted fund method of accounting for membership fees.
- Financial Instruments:** All financial instruments are classified as one of the following: held-to-maturity, loans and receivables, held-for-trading, available-for-sale, or other financial liabilities. Financial assets and liabilities classified as held-for-trading are measured at fair value with gains and losses recognized in net income. Loans and receivables and other financial liabilities are measured at amortized cost using the effective interest method.

Receivables are classified as loans and receivables, and overdraft, accounts payable and due to general operating fund are classified as other liabilities. Investments are classified as held-for-trading and presented at their fair value with unrealized gains or losses recognized in excess of revenue over expenditures for the year.
- Revenue Recognition:** The membership fee related to the Fund is recognized as revenue in the year to which it relates. Realized and unrealized investment income on the Fund's investments is recognized as revenue in the year it is earned.
- Capital Assets:** Capital assets are recorded at cost. Depreciation is calculated on the straight-line method based on anticipated useful lives:

Furniture and equipment: 3 to 10 years	Computer hardware and software: 3 to 10 years	Renovations: 10 years
--	---	-----------------------

Use of Estimates: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenditures during the reporting period. Estimates in these financial statements include the collectibility of receivables, the useful lives of capital assets, claim expenditures, and the provision for claims. Actual results could differ from those estimates and could impact future results of operations and cash flows of the Fund.

Future Accounting Pronouncement: In April 2010, the CICA issued new accounting standards for not-for-profit entities. For fiscal years beginning on or after January 1, 2012, not-for-profit entities will be required to choose between reporting under these new standards or International Financial Reporting Standards on an ongoing basis. This may affect the Fund's annual financial statements for the June 30, 2013 fiscal year, and will require the restatement of the Fund's June 30, 2012 figures for comparative purposes. The Fund has decided that it will adopt these new standards at the required transition date.

3. INVESTMENTS

The market value of long-term investments as at June 30, 2011 was \$238,681,149 compared to a carrying value of \$203,699,752 (2010 market value—\$213,881,400, carrying value—\$193,248,780).

4. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation (in thousands)	2011 Net Book Value	2010
Furniture & equipment	\$ 100	\$ (91)	\$ 9	\$ 23
Computer hardware & software	1,429	(100)	1,329	371
Renovations	331	(209)	122	87
Work in progress	—	—	—	76
	<u>\$1,860</u>	<u>\$ (400)</u>	<u>\$1,460</u>	<u>\$ 557</u>

5. CLAIM EXPENDITURES AND PROVISION FOR CLAIMS

The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims is based upon an actuarial valuation as of June 30, 2011 performed in accordance with standards established by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries using data supplied by management of the Plan. This valuation uses standard claims tables modified to reflect Plan experience and is performed manually. In subsequent periods the accrued liabilities and provision for claims are adjusted based upon actual Plan experience. These adjustments can be significant. The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims for the individual segments of the Plan are set out below:

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Short term claims	\$ 4,813	\$ 5,315
Long term claims	158,931	157,431
Total provision for claims	<u>\$163,744</u>	<u>\$162,746</u>

As a result of the current period's actuarial review, adjustments were required for claim benefits and pension contributions attributable to prior periods. These adjustments are included in the operations of the current period.

	2011	2010
	(in thousands)	
Decrease related to current period	\$ 1,500	\$ (105)
Increase related to prior periods	(502)	(203)
Total change in provision for claims	998	(308)
Opening provision for claims	162,746	163,054
Closing provision for claims	<u>\$163,744</u>	<u>\$162,746</u>

6. INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT AND TRUST COMPANY EXPENSES

The investments of the Fund are managed by independent investment management firms in accordance with investment policies and restrictions as established by the Federation and the *Trustees' Act (B.C.)* and are lodged for safekeeping with a trust company.

7. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

- Fair Value:** The Fund's financial instruments include accounts receivable, investments, overdraft, accounts payable, and due from General Operating Fund. The fair value of these financial instruments, excluding investments, approximate their carrying values due to their short-term to maturity. The fair value of investments is determined by using market price.
- Interest Rate Risk:** The Fund is exposed to interest rate risk due to the long-term maturity of certain investments. Interest rate risk refers to the effect on the fair value of the Fund's assets and liabilities due to fluctuations in interest rates. These investments are interest rate sensitive. To mitigate this risk the investments are actively managed by both management and professional investment managers.
- Currency Risk:** The Fund owns certain securities that are denominated in foreign currencies and as such is subject to risk due to fluctuations in exchange rates. Currently the Fund is exposed to currency risk with respect to approximately CAD\$36,068,000 (2010—CAD\$39,902,000) in investments held in foreign currencies. The Fund mitigates this risk by using professional fund managers.
- Credit Risk:** Credit risk arises from the possibility that a counter party to a financial instrument would fail to fulfill its financial obligations; therefore, the Fund is exposed to credit risk with respect to its accounts receivable and investments. The Fund is not exposed to significant credit risk with respect to its accounts receivable as the majority of these amounts are due from school districts. The credit risk inherent in investments is mitigated by the fact that the investments are professionally managed and must conform to strict investment guidelines.
- Market Risk:** Market risk is the risk that the fair value of an investment will fluctuate as a result of changes in market price. To mitigate this risk the investments are actively managed by both management and professional investment managers.

8. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The amount due to the General Operating Fund of \$191,000 (2010—\$486,000 due from) is unsecured, non-interest-bearing and due on demand. The amount arises from the transfer of fees received and payments made by the General Operating on behalf of the Fund.

The Fund has reimbursed the General Operating Fund \$572,000 (2010—\$512,600) for shared salaries, benefits and related building costs. The amount is based on an estimate of administrative time spent and space occupied for the operation of the Fund.

9. CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

The Fund preserves and manages its capital with the intention of providing short-term and long-term benefits to members who are disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident together with ensuring the continued existence of the Fund. The Fund's capital includes investments, accounts receivable, and accounts payable.

Colombia and British Columbia are more alike than we think

By Joanna Larson

The picture most Canadians have in their minds of Colombia is of a violent and dangerous country, ruled by drug traffickers and the corrupt wealthy elite. There is much truth in this belief. Here in British Columbia we see ourselves as something entirely different though. We do not see the commonalities of corruption and loss of democracy we both share, and this is our mistake. What struck me most about my recent visit to Colombia was how vastly similar we are, not how different.

It is true the level of violence, murder, and disappearances in Colombia is in great contrast to our own struggles, but if we were able to lift the violence away from Colombia, we would see the struggles for democracy, greater social equity and the fight against a neo-liberal agenda are entirely the same.

Of the many tragic accounts I heard during my visit to Colombia as part of the BCTF International Solidarity program, one that has stayed with me came from the University of Cordoba. The taking by "blood and fire" of the University by a paramilitary group (United Self Defense Forces of Colombia) led by Salvatore Mancuso Gómez (Mancuso). Mancuso controlled the university for more than a decade, prior to the demobilization of the paramilitary groups by the national government in 2008.

Sergio Castro, an education professor at the University throughout this time and to the present, shared with us his own experiences of being threatened for his work as a union and political activist. He was once the target of a planned hit with an ambush set up along a road he often travelled. It was called off when the attackers saw that he had his young daughter with him.

Castro's story was chilling and seems so far from anything imaginable in Canada, but reflecting on what I heard, I realize the goal of Mancuso by taking the University is not very different than the goal of Canada's wealthy elite, as they have reshaped our universities over the past 20 years.

In Cordoba, right-wing paramilitaries used guns, threats and violence to subdue, control and attempt to eradicate all the autonomy from university educators and students. In Canada, our right-



Some members of the CoDevelopment Canada delegation—Larry Kuehn, (BCTF staff), Joanna Larson and Rick Guenther (BCTF Executive), and Irene Lanzinger (BC Fed)—recently attended an Education International congress in Colombia. They had opportunities to meet with many people to discuss education and human rights issues. Pictured here is Sergio Castro (second from right), president of the University of Cordoba teachers' union.

wing corporate elite use political influence and public policy.

Most Canadians still have memories of our universities as places where old and new ideas are challenged, creativity is highly prized, and where intellectual discourse and critical thought is expected.

...if we were able to lift the violence away from Colombia, we would see the struggles for democracy, greater social equity, and the fight against a neo-liberal agenda are entirely the same.

Yet, the intellectual freedoms that allow for this view of our post secondary institutions has been eroding for decades, and many of our most prestigious institutions are left hollow shells of their former selves, as was also made evident at the University of Cordoba after the paramilitaries were demobilized and Mancuso jailed and eventually extradited to the U.S. on drug trafficking charges.

Whether the neo-liberal agenda is advanced by an armed group of paramilitaries in Colombia, or the wealthy elite of corporate Canada

using money and political influence, the end result is the same. Universities become places of conformity and compliance, unwilling to push the envelope and challenge the status quo. Professors and students both lose their autonomy and rights to free intellectual thought. Research is stunted and restricted.

Mancuso led the campaign of blood and fire that overtook and controlled the University of Cordoba, after painting the picture that the university was a nest of corruption and a hot bed for the left, a breeding ground for leftist guerrillas and their ideas.

There were many cases of disappearances or people who fled into exile, teachers who thought differently than what the paramilitaries believed were considered targets.

The case of Dr. Alberto Alzate Patiño a renowned environmental researcher, illustrates not only the loss of a brilliant mind, but served as a warning to any researchers challenging right-wing economic projects.

Patino was studying and opposing the Urrea Dam in Colombia. The project, funded by Dutch and Canadian banks and the Canadian Export Development Corporation (to provide inexpensive power to mining interests in the region), flooded the traditional territory of the Embera.

raise my hands in honour and respect to Riley, Krysta, and Kayla for doing such a fabulous job! As well as an express thanks to Gail Stromquist, the Aboriginal district teacher in the Langley School District, for inviting me and sharing her wealth of knowledge and kindeartheness.

Langley School District has over 1,600 Aboriginal students and is engaged in the implementation of its second Enhancement Agreement. Aboriginal PALS has been an important program in the Langley community for the last decade. Programs like this are an essential bridge between the community and the schools. Many children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, and support staff have benefited from building this strong connection through PALS. Kayla and Krysta are now in Grade 4 and made their first connection to PALS in the Kindergarten Eagle program (Aboriginal Kindergarten).

Marjorie Dumont, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division

This is the same message being received in our universities in Canada at present, although without the threat of loss of life. Instead, the fear is for loss of employment, benefits, and pensions.

Consider the example of the multimillion dollar donations of Peter Munk, chairman and founder of Barrick Gold to the University of Toronto. His money and name were used to establish the Munk School of Global Affairs and the Munk Center for International Studies.

According to Neil Brooks and Linda McQuaig's book, *The Trouble with Billionaires*, Munk's donation came with strings attached to ensure that the school would "fit with the political views and sensitivities of Peter Munk."

Brooks and McQuaig write that: according to Munk's written agreement with the university, the Munk donations will be paid over an extended time period...subject to the Munk family's approval of the school."

With policy changes that have left our universities underfunded and dependent on donations such as Peter Munk's, there should be no surprise in the fact that the priorities of our universities are being skewed to favour the economic interests of Canada's wealthy elite.

The interests of faculty and students who are engaging in critical analysis, research, and teaching become a hindrance instead of desired goals.

The power of money in undermining democracy is so evident, in both Colombia and Canada. We may have much more in common than we care to believe.

Joanna Larson, BCTF Executive member-at-large



Artwork from the offices of the human rights lawyers' co-operative.

Hadeeh /Greetings

I would like to say a special thank you to the BCTF's Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (AEAC) and local contacts for Aboriginal education for all they have done to improve the success, not just for Aboriginal students, but for all students. It has been such an honour and privilege to work with so many wonderful and dedicated teachers. Sending all of our activists good thoughts for a wonderful year to come. There have been so many positive experiences as the assistant director for the Professional and

Social Issues Division, too numerous to mention. However, I would like to recognize and honour the students and their parents who attended the Parents As Literacy Supporters (PALS) in Langley on November 30 and December 7, 2011. I was fortunate to meet and share a drum song with the students. Riley, Krysta, and Kayla Serviss stepped in and helped me despite the fact they did not know the drum song, however they quickly learned it during that short time span of about 15 minutes. I



The Inconvenient Truth behind Waiting for Superman

A grassroots group of parents and teachers poke big holes in last year's blockbuster documentary about America's schools—insisting that real reform will require more than brand-conscious initiatives such as increased testing standards and access to charter schools.

The result is a new documentary, wryly titled, *The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting For Superman*.

"It says...we're mad as hell and we're not gonna take it anymore," said Diane Ravitch, a New York University education historian and former US assistant secretary of education, during a speech after a recent screening. "Teachers across this country are...demoralized."

After months of seething about what they view as the one-

sidedness of Davis Guggenheim's film, hundreds of teachers gathered at Riverside Church in uptown Manhattan to vent their frustrations and anger.

"We want to start a movement," Brian Jones, a teacher and one of the movie's narrators, said in a panel after the film. He linked the documentary with the recent waves of teacher-led protests that seem louder and larger than ever before. Julie Cavanagh, one of the film's producers and a teacher in Red Hook, Brooklyn, minced no words, thanking the audience for gathering "as we battle the corporate reform movement."

Order a free DVD from BCTF

For a copy of *The Inconvenient Truth behind Waiting for Superman*, contact Larry Kuehn at luehn@bcf.ca.

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HORNBY ISLAND. 2 bdrm. beautiful fully furn. house, 12 acres, nr coop, Tribune, beaches. \$950/wk. summer, \$120/night off-season, elkin@shaw.ca, 250-480-1027.

RENT/EXCHANGE

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

CHILLIWACK EXCHANGE. Want to try life in the Fraser Valley? Let's exchange your Greater Vancouver house/townhouse for our beautiful, private, 4 bdrm. Fairfield Island home for 6-12 months. Grow your own veggies!! Hiking, paddling minutes from your door. Vicgladish@shaw.ca

VANCOUVER Furnished home, centrally located, available for rent May through July 2012. For details check www3.telus.net/VancouverHouse

MISCELLANEOUS

RETIRING SOON? Join the B.C. 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.

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. Reasonable rates. Call Arnie Lambert at 604-354-5624 or e-mail arnielambert@shaw.ca

FRENCH FIELD TRIPS. Contact Sandy, Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

FIELD TRIPS. K-12 curriculum based. Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

FOR PEAT'S SAKE. A classroom study on Burns Bog and other peatlands. K-7 curriculum based. 206 pages, \$59.95 plus HST. Special rate for multiple copies. Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

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

TILING & PAINTING. Want to get the job done right? Call Vito. Glass and slate specialist. Indoor, outdoor painting. Serving the Vancouver area since 1996. www.tile-rific.ca or call 604-831-4013.

SELLING all of my teaching supplies. Nanaimo. Kijiji 328159628.

FOR SALE. Costa Rica Home, Spanish Style built in 2009 : \$350,000 in province of Alajuela, 10 min. from Atenas and the NEW highway to San Jose and the Pacific Ocean, Cima Hospital and major shopping areas. 210 sq m home, 3 bdrms, 3 bath, quality products throughout. Located in the mountains where it is cooler. Beautifully landscaped with many tropical flowers. A coffee farm 8000 sq m, mangoes, bananas, oranges, lemons, sugar cane, avocados. Phone 604-824-2125, trishlewis@shaw.ca

PD calendar

FEBRUARY 2012

2-4 Vancouver. "The Development of Children's Mental Health: How Do We Become Who We Are?" This conference will stimulate dialogue, reflection, a deeper understanding of a child's total development as rooted in their earliest relationships, and may revolutionize our approaches and practices with young children, their families, and their communities. For further information, visit the conference website at www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Early_Years.htm. To register, contact us at ian.ipc@ubc.ca or 604-827-3112. The conference brochure is available at www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Brochures/Brochure_Early_Years2012.pdf.

13 Squamish, BC. The Sea to Sky Teachers' Professional Development Committee is hosting "DIY! Do it yourself—Build your own PD." Our keynote this year is Jane Turner, presenting "Professional autonomy and self-directed PD," and Turner will give the workshop on the "how to's" of planning your self-directed PD. Our fantastic line-up of speakers include Anne Bracey (Personal Safety: Self-defense for you and your students), Lisa Manzini (PE with Pizzazz!), Helen VanSpronsen (Music), Jackie Sutherland (Voicethread—Web 2.0 tool), Janice and Whitney (Drama in the classroom) and more! Visit the SSTA website bctf.ca/ssta/ for workshop descriptions and to register.

16-18 Vancouver. BCATA (BC Art Teachers' Association) conference "Visual Celebrations." Visual art teachers have a lot to celebrate: teaching, learning and art in our lives while host school Magee Secondary celebrates 100 years of education. Join us! This conference is for elementary and secondary teachers wanting a variety of workshops in the visual arts and media arts. Conference includes a marketplace of vendors. Visit our website at visualcelebrations.wikispaces.com. Contact: Myra Morgan at morgan_m@sd36.bc.ca.

MARCH 2012

1-2 Vancouver, BC. SEA (Special Education Association) is proud to present the 37th Annual Crosscurrents Conference, at the Westin Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver. Keynote: To be announced, plus a variety of quality sessions and exhibitors for regular and special education. For information, contact or visit the website www.bctf.ca/sea/ or contact Conference Chair Leann Buteau at: seaconferencechair@gmail.com.

APRIL 2012

13-15 Squamish, BC. "Finding Your Edge in Experiential Education." Join a variety of experiential educators in this weekend of professional development through idea sharing of progressive practices that will inspire you and your students to grow beyond the limits of your own comfort zone. Workshop strands may include K-12, outdoor education, education based training and development, adventure-based programming, leadership development, facilitation/processing, mind/body/spirit, social justice and ethics, adventure therapy. Conference co-convenors: Bev Oldham: boldham@enviros.org and Janey Chang: janeysea@gmail.com. Website: <http://northwest.aee.org/conferences>

20 Whistler. Date Change! PITA's Supporting Struggling Students in Literacy and Math, Sixth Annual. Learn practical strategies to support all students. Sessions focussed on intermediate classroom teachers and learning assistance. For

information, contact Ray Myrtle, president@pita.ca or visit www.pita.ca.

MAY 2012

5 Vancouver. "Investigating Our Practices 2012," 15th annual conference. Co-sponsored by the UBC Faculty of Education and the BCTF. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings and questions. Registration fee \$25 (\$15 for students). Lunch and refreshments included. Scarfe Education Building, 2125 Main Mall, UBC. Proposals for presentations can be submitted online at eplt.educ.ubc.ca/iop-cfp. The deadline for submissions is February 20, 2012. For more information about IOP 2012, visit www.eplt.educ.ubc.ca/iop or contact Judy Paley at 604-822-2733 judy.paley@ubc.ca.

6-8 Vancouver, BC. Child and Youth Mental Health Matters. This conference brings together an interdisciplinary group of professionals working in the field of mental health to share knowledge and experiences related to child and youth mental health. Three themes woven through the conferences: Parental mental health, children of parents with mental illness and young carers. A forum for focusing on the needs of families as they struggle with issues related to mental health concerns across the generations. The overall goal is help us develop a common language and understanding of the needs of young people and families. By bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, we hope to enrich our collective knowledge of mental health strategies, best practices and the latest research in order to improve outcomes for young people and families. For further information please visit our website www.interprofessional.ubc.ca, or contact us at ipcde2@interchange.ubc.ca or 604-827-3112.

11 Alert Bay. BCRSSTA (British Columbia Rural and Small Schools Teachers' Association) Annual conference "Learning from Each Other" featuring innovative school organization from Zebalous Elementary, as well as presentations on teaching practices from other North Island rural communities. Host school: Alert Bay Elementary. Contact information: cmacdonald@sd85.bc.ca or vcivey@xplornet.com.

OCTOBER 2012

18-20 Victoria. Sponsored by BCAMT (BC Association of Mathematics Teachers). BC Northwest Mathematics Conference "Math in Bloom." For further information, go to www.nwmc2012.com.

Future October PSA days
BCTF procedure statements:
30.A. 14 That for the purposes of a province-wide PSA day, the BCTF supports the third Friday in October as the day on which all districts hold a professional day, except in years in which Thanksgiving Monday falls in the same week, in which case the fourth Friday would be the designated day.
36.30.10: That the BCTF's PD Calendar not publish PD events by outside agencies scheduled for the provincial PD day.

2012-13: October 19, 2012
2013-14: October 25, 2013
2014-15: October 24, 2014
2015-16: October 23, 2015

PD Calendar website:
bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProDIPD-Calendar.cfm
Additions/changes—contact Betty Goto at bgoto@bctf.ca

GERRY DEE 2012 7 UP LIFE AFTER TEACHING COMEDY TOUR

January 18 - Victoria, BC
McPherson Playhouse

January 19 - Nanaimo, BC
Port Theatre

January 20 - Abbotsford, BC
Abbey Arts Centre

January 21 - North Vancouver, BC
Centennial Theatre

January 22 - Kelowna, BC
Kelowna Theatre



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Rally around our schools

A roundup of photographs from the 'Rally Around Our Schools' that took place during the month of November 2011. These rallies were held in front of schools to highlight support for adequate funding and fair bargaining for the local and provincial media. Share your photos at standingupforbcstudents.tumblr.

Special needs neglected

