

BC students short-changed compared to other Canadian students



DAVID DENYER PHOTO

BCTF President Susan Lambert presents the BCTF Education Funding Brief.

By Larry Kuehn

Legislators listened intently as Susan Lambert presented the BCTF Education Funding Brief to the Standing Committee of the Legislature on Finance and Public Services on October 1, 2012. Lambert characterized the situation as “BC students are short-changed compared to elsewhere in Canada.”

Perhaps the MLAs were expecting to hear a request for immediate funding to return to the funding level that existed before the cutting began a decade ago. Perhaps they were waiting to jump with the question—where will the money come from to pay for more services?

If so, the BCTF president disappointed them. Rather than a call for immediate restoration, she called for a plan—a plan that would not restore all services immediately, but one that would make improvements over time. Lambert said, “while we would like to be above average, it is a realistic goal to begin to move up at least to the Canadian

national average in the various indicators of educational effort.”

And she told them where to find the money before they asked. The plan

BC is far behind the Canadian average in improving spending on education, the staffing of schools and having specialists in place to support learning.

should be financed by an increase in taxes, restoring some of the taxes that were chopped when the BC Liberals came to office. Specifically, Lambert told the MLAs, the taxes on corporations and the wealthy should finance important public services—education as well as other services.

“21st Century Learning” has meant cuts, cuts, cuts

The pitch made by Lambert drew attention to a startling reality—BC is far behind the Canadian average in improving spending on education, the staffing of schools and having specialists in place to support learning. Funding in BC has failed every year in the new century to keep pace with other provinces in educational service—it turns out that “21st Century Learning” in this province has meant cuts, cuts, and more cuts.

In contrast, other provinces that have also faced declining enrolment, have used it as an opportunity to improve services to students. Improvements for students in other provinces; cuts for students in BC; this reality has eroded learning conditions in BC classrooms, with the level of support for students far below the Canadian average.

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Readers write

Baffled

In the September issue of *Teacher*, writer Noel Heron berates the provincial government over several issues, few relating to the teaching profession. He writes about the HST fiasco, the Basi/Virk scandal, and what he calls the Community Living shenanigans.

He goes on about government secretiveness and something he refers to as the BC Hydro caper, massive overruns on public projects, and Enbridge waffling. He speaks about Christy Clark's leadership and the number of Liberal Party members not running in the next election. These are all issues that embarrass the government and will probably cost them the next election. These areas have been discussed over and over in the media. There is no new news here.

What baffles me is why a teachers' publication brings up issues which have nothing to do with the profession.

Rick Joyce, Kamloops

Teacher keeps me informed

I retired in June 2000. Please continue to send me the newsmagazine; I enjoy reading it and especially keeping informed as to what is really going on in the education system.

I was teaching when the integration of students with special needs first happened. It was a bit of a scramble, if I recall, for a year or two, but then full assistance was provided. It upsets me to see how this assistance has eroded so much. When I retired we were already finding that help with students with special needs was becoming scarce, and now it's at a crisis point.

So, yes I would like to be informed of what the BCTF is advocating for on behalf of students and also the teachers who work in our classrooms.

Judith Parrish, Victoria

President's message

Unbelievably we are now beginning to collate our bargaining objectives for the next round of bargaining due to begin in March 2013. And unbelievably too, this round will be even more complex than the last. In structuring our bargaining package we will have to consider the interplay between a variety of forces in the current context.

To begin with we've never experienced a round of bargaining that has bridged a provincial election. What will bargaining look like between opening on March 1 and the election on May 14? What will the effect of the possible change of government have on bargaining? What strategy should we employ?

The news today is the looming provincial budget deficit due to the decline in natural gas revenues. In 2008, it was the global market collapse, in 2011, we had net zero, and for a fleeting moment we've had "co-operative gains." No matter the issue, this government has chosen to restrict government revenue and redirect spending away from public services. The tension in this context is the growing disparity between the relative value of the work we do (we're responsible for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth of children!) and comparative salaries in the private sector and in most other provinces in Canada. We deserve a commensurate salary increase and the working conditions that allow us to provide excellent learning conditions for our students.

We also need to take into account the world of public sector bargaining. Where will all the other public sector unions be in their bargaining come March? Our legal challenges form a



DAVID DENYER PHOTO

Susan Lambert

fourth dimension to the context. This government has taken unprecedented legislative steps to constrain our bargaining rights and we have mounted a series of legal challenges. What role will legislation and court decisions play in the next round?

Finally, we have to consider how we will deal with what we call "bargaining in a blogging world." Our last round of bargaining was the focus of intense media and public scrutiny and we can expect, no matter what level of confidentiality we impose on ourselves, that everything we say and do will be disclosed in detail and with great speed in the next round. We will need to devise an effective media strategy that does not compromise our strong democratic traditions of member involvement in decision making.

Each of these considerations will have to be taken into account both at our Bargaining Conference, and as we formulate our bargaining strategy in this next round. Once again the challenges of bargaining are thrust upon us. And of course, as usual, we're up for the challenge.

Susan Lambert, BCTF president

Teacher



Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

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CEPA Canadian Educational Press Association

CALM Canadian Association of Labour Media

Newsmagazine goes digital

Welcome to the first digital version of the *Teacher* newsmagazine. This year we will produce six issues (down from seven) and only three will be in print: September 2012, November/December 2012, and March 2013. The October 2012, and January/February 2013, will be online versions only. A special pre-election issue will be printed in April 2013.

We are making every effort to inform people when the online version is available and will send an e-mail to people on our BCTF Communications e-list. To this end, we have been asking schools to inform us as to how many print copies they require so we can keep our printing down.

All issues of *Teacher* will still be archived on our website:
bctf.ca/newsmag

Max A. Cameron Memorial Award winners 2012

The BCTF grants this award annually to an outstanding student completing the final year of the Bachelor Education degree in elementary and secondary school teaching.

Simon Fraser University

Marc Andres – Secondary
Jasmine Batra – Elementary

Thompson Rivers University

Ashley Relling

University of British Columbia Okanagan

Ajmair Sahota – Elementary
Taigen Williams – Secondary

University of Northern British Columbia

Danielle Schroeder – Elementary
Lauren Stelmaschuk – Secondary

University of Victoria

Rose Doerksen – Elementary
Chloe Faught – Secondary

Vancouver Island University

Sheryl Bowie – Secondary
Mary Ann Gait – Elementary
Michelle Fitterer – Spring

Looking back

70 years ago

October 1942—A few years ago the problem of unemployed youth was staring this country in the face. Nobody wanted to give the out-of-school boy of 1934 a job; nobody was willing to pay to keep him in school. So he drifted. He wandered aimlessly from one end of Canada to the other seeing the country from the top of a box-car. He stood around street corners watching life go by, or hung around the school grounds quarreling with the other boys when they came out to play. Now the youth is coming back in the role of the hometown boy who ran away and returned rich to bask in the warmth of the other boys' envy. He has one pocket full of candy and another full of cigarettes and he is very generous with both. These young people need guidance and there seems to be no way of giving it to them. The school has lost touch with them, and parents are frequently just as bewildered.

– *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

Sept./Oct. 1962—Many local associations now face pressure from their school boards to embark upon projects in payment of teachers according to merit. One consideration often overlooked by the advocates of merit pay is the complex interplay of factors in the educational process. No teacher is entitled to sole credit for the achievement of the pupils who are temporarily under his jurisdiction. His apparently meritorious record may be due in various measures to the effective preparation of the youngsters by excellent teaching in earlier grades, to the inspiration they may gain from other teachers in the current grade, and to constructive influences exerted by home and community. It seems manifestly unfair that a teacher should receive, or be denied, individual merit recognition on the basis of a record which has been influenced by so many factors which are beyond his control.

– *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

Sept./Oct. 1982—The crisis for education is not only an economic one. The provincial government is actively discrediting the public system of education and denigrating the people who work in it. Teachers are being told by provincial government that they must sacrifice either part of their salaries or one in 10 of their colleagues. You may have regarded that as a reasonable request, given the tenor of the times, or as a form of extortion not normally associated with civilized urbane societies. The propaganda mills—and the Bennett government is one huge propaganda mill—will be churning out the story that teachers, like other workers, were victims of the slumping world economy, of high interest rates, of a distressed housing market in the USA, of a decline in demand for BC's resources, of a subsequent loss of revenues, and the need to share the burden.

– *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

Sept./Oct. 2002—The Campbell government knew within days of the election that its proposed tax cuts would sink provincial finances and force cuts to health, education, and other public programs. But despite the reports, the premier continued to publicly claim the cuts would pay for themselves. Throughout the 2001 provincial election, the BC Liberals stated their proposed tax reductions would be self-financing and not result in drastic cuts to public-sector programs. However, documents obtained by CUPE show the Ministry of Finance was conducting studies within days of the election that examined both the impact of the tax cuts and of slashing public services to pay for those cuts.

– *Teacher Newsmagazine*

Chris Bocking
Keating Elementary School, Saanich

continued from page 1...

BC should catch up to the Canadian average student-educator ratio

The BCTF brief focused on a couple of expenditure areas to show how far BC has fallen behind the Canadian average.

It looked at the student-educator ratio (SER) and the gross domestic product (GDP).

The majority of school district employees are educators (including administrators, as defined by Statistics Canada). The student-educator ratio (SER) is the broadest indicator of the people resources available for teaching and supporting students. The extent of what is possible in class size, class composition, and specialist teachers is determined by the SER.

Over the last decade, the gap between BC and the Canadian average has grown relentlessly. The Canadian average for the most recent year, for which statistics are available, shows the Canadian average at 14 students per educator and the BC number at 16.6 students per educator.

[See Chart 1]

Canadian average for the most recent year for which statistics are available, shows the Canadian average at 14 students per educator and the BC number at 16.6 students per educator.

It is easy to see why our class sizes have increased, more classes have larger numbers of students with special needs, and the numbers of specialist teachers has declined. To correct this situation, just to get to the Canadian average, would require 6,100 more teachers at a cost of about \$500 million.

Having more students per educator than the Canadian average has significant impacts on students and their learning, Lambert told the committee.

Chart 1

Potential number of FTE educators in BC if the student-educator ratio (SER) in BC were based on the ratio for Canada (14.0) 2009-10

	BC FTE student enrolment	Student-Educator ratio, 2009-10	Number of BC FTE educators based on the ratio
BC	548,153	16.6	33,054
Canada	-	14.0	39,154
Difference: Additional FTE educators if BC had the same SER as Canada	-	-	+6,100

Source: BCTF calculations with date from: Statistics Canada. (2011). *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2005/2006 to 2009/10*, available at www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2011095-eng.pdf — 2009-10 FTE enrolment figures (548,153): Table A.2.1, p.10; 2009-10 SER figure for BC and Canada: Table A.14, p.27; 2009-10 FTE educators in BC (33,054): Table A.13.1, p.25.

We can't offer students with special needs the service they require. The number of students with identified special needs has increased over the decade, but we have lost 752 special education teachers.

We can't identify all the students who have special educational needs. Many can't get assessed and "grey" area students are denied service because the reduced specialist support is all used up by more students with the greatest difficulties.

The number of English Language Learners (ELL) has increased, but we

have seen a decline of 340 ELL teachers over the decade.

Students who need counsellors to help them cope with stresses of home, school, and social life find empty offices or lineups of other needy students—117 counselling positions gone.

Many more students self-identify as Aboriginal (from 46,885 to 61,399 over the decade) and are entitled to Aboriginal programs—but the number of teachers providing Aboriginal programs has declined.

The demands of new technology, and an intense focus on literacy, call for an



expanding role for teacher-librarians, but teacher-librarian positions have declined by about 30%—that is some 250 teacher-librarians.

A lower BC student–educator ratio is required if we are to make improvements in all these areas—class size and composition and adequate numbers of specialist teachers.

BC is behind the Canadian average in funding effort

One measure of a government’s priority is the percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) spent on a particular service.

As Chart 2 shows, BC is well behind the average spending for Canada on this indicator as well.

For 2009–10, the last year of data available from Statistics Canada, BC spent 3.3% of GDP on K–12 education while the average for Canada was 3.6%.

The gap between BC and the Canadian average has increased in K–12 education funding as a percentage of GDP.

If we increased BC’s K–12 expenditures to the same percentage of the GDP as the average in Canada, that would produce about \$609 million and return us to the level of expenditures at the beginning of the century.



The case is strong—political will is required

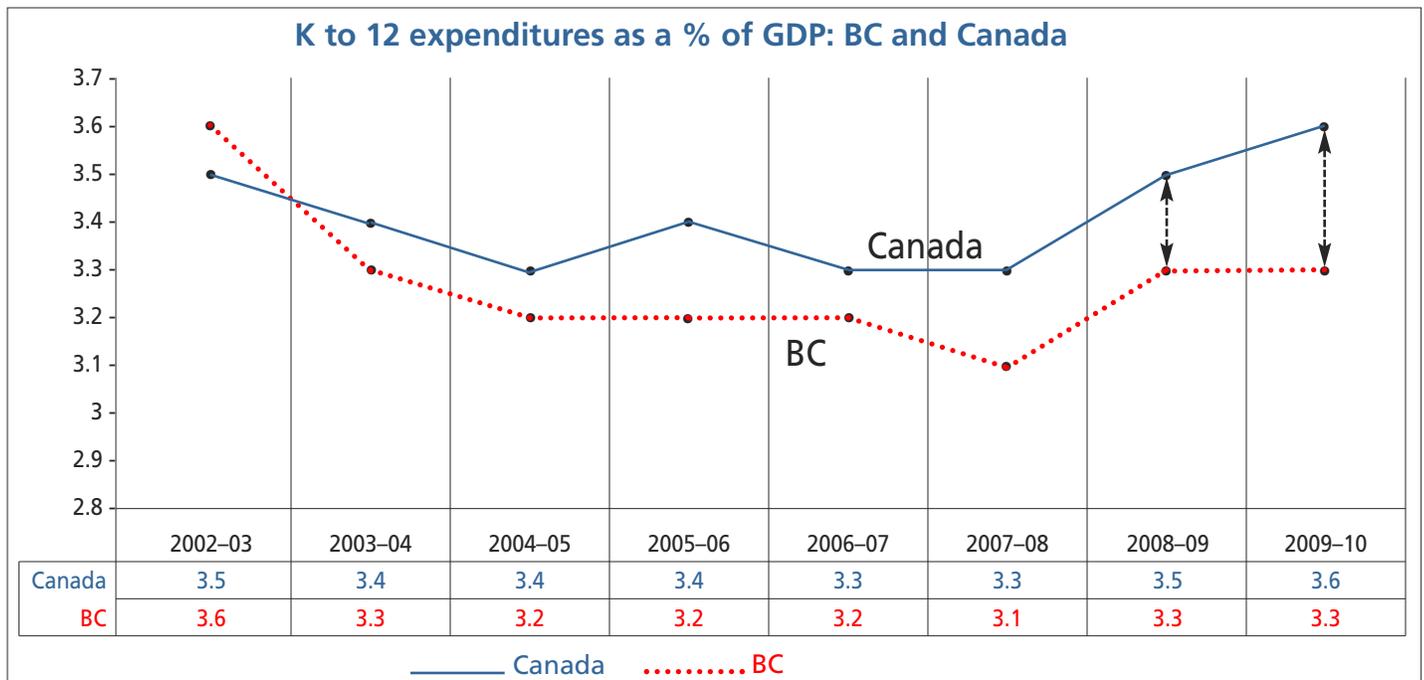
The Standing Committee on Finance and Public Services holds hearings around the province every fall. It consists of Members of the Legislature of both parties. It is supposed to make recommendations to government on the provincial budget for the next year, which will be a pre-election budget scheduled for February.

Lambert concluded by again urging the committee to recommend that government pursue a plan to increase funding for education to at least the average in Canada and to adopt the taxation necessary to accomplish this. She said, “Our children deserve better than we can currently provide them.”

A full copy of the brief, including a number of explanatory charts, is available on the BCTF web site at <http://bit.ly/SALcte>

Larry Kuehn
director, BCTF Research and Technology

Chart 2



Source: BCTF Research chart with data from Statistics Canada. For 2002–03 to 2006–07 figures, see the 2010 Statistics Canada report, *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2002/2003 to 2008/2009*. Catalogue no. 81-595-M, No. 088. Table.A.27, p. 37. For 2007–08 to 2009–10 figures, see the 2011 Statistics Canada report, *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2005/2006 to 2009/2010*. Catalogue no 81-595-M. No. 095. Table A.31, p. 46.

* Statistics Canada adjusted the 2007–08 figure for BC from 3.2% in the 2010 report to 3.1% in the 2011 report.

Wi-Fi technology in schools: Is it time to reconsider?

By Dan Baljak

I am a teacher, and because of health concerns, I question whether I want to be exposed to Wi-Fi every day. I wonder if there are others who also feel that there is simply not enough dialogue taking place about this untested technology?

The debate

In a previous *Teacher*, the potential health risks of Wi-Fi technology in schools has been explored. I intend to inform my colleagues of recent developments after discussing the recent history of the debate in this publication. Lynn Quiring's two-part article (published September and October 2010) advising caution was attacked (by Greg Payne and Kevin Amboe in the "Readers Write" section of the November/ December 2010 edition, and their subsequent articles in the January/ February 2011 edition) for being "erroneous" as well as "bursting with misinformation, distortions, and pseudo-science." Quiring's credentials, as well as his use of supposed lack of references, were vehemently targeted but in their respective rebuttals I found that both Payne and Amboe offered nothing extraordinary to suggest that Quiring's concerns or references were invalid. There is a whole body of peer-reviewed science showing that cells are damaged indirectly from non-ionizing radiation and their superfluous denial of this significantly weakened their positions.

Most importantly, I found that the condescending nature of their commentaries only served to represent a worrisome level of complacency on the subject; most notably, the regular use of facetious language in Payne's submissions. I do agree with Kevin Amboe, that not being an expert can lead to mistaken information. Amboe's article stated that the type of radiation emitted from Wi-Fi is "quite different" from cell phones because of their power levels and range. That, by definition and with all due respect, is both erroneous and misleading because the power level and range of a manufactured device has nothing to do with the classification, or type, of electromagnetic energy it releases, as he implied. Whether Amboe was referring to Wi-Fi as a general technological device or a wireless internet router, he is mistaken, because they both emit microwave radiation and this fact will be important to consider later. As far as Greg Payne's editorial is concerned, I found his critical stance and implication that Quiring's resources are leagues away from the "best science in the field" deeply contradictory to his recommendations after

googling one of his aforementioned "science-based resource(s)." Payne suggested that the BCTF and school district administrators begin their research on the subject by googling, among others, David Dunning, a "computer scientist" with no medical training who hosts a program called Skeptoid, "a weekly science podcast dedicated to furthering knowledge by blasting away the widespread pseudo-sciences that infect popular culture, and replacing them with way cooler reality."

Governments play a critical role

We all mean well in our attempts to inform others, and it goes without saying that until there is conclusive evidence, there will be debate. What cannot be debated is that the federal government plays a critical role in shaping policy in our country. The Wi-Fi devices placed in our schools must meet Industry Canada standards as specified by Health Canada's Safety Code 6. But what happens when new research begins to surface that casts doubt on even their standards? At what point, between a trickle of evidence and a downpour, do we begin to take action at the provincial and local level? Many people believe that in light of recent developments, we are precisely at that point. In May 2011, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer, classified radiofrequency electromagnetic energy as "possibly carcinogenic to humans (group 2B)" alongside lead, DDT, methylmercury, Type 2 HIV, and chloroform. This serious warning, albeit inconclusive, includes all wireless devices which emit radiofrequency electromagnetic fields. Health Canada subsequently released a statement in October 2011 that "encourages parents to reduce their children's RF exposure from cell phones since children are typically more sensitive to a variety of environmental agents. As well, there is currently a lack of scientific information regarding the potential health impacts of cell phones on children." Although not specifically mentioned, I would argue that encouraging a reduction in children's RF (radiofrequency) exposure due to health risks, which are magnified by their heightened vulnerability, can and should be interpreted by school authorities to include wireless internet routers. Others would agree. Following the WHO release, a resolution was passed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe encouraging governments to hardwire schools instead of increasing children's RF exposure with unproven Wi-Fi.

Are we creating a public health nightmare?

One of the most glaring concerns of Health Canada's landmark recommendation on cell phones and children is that it comes after approximately 20 years of regular cell-phone use and prevalent research worldwide, yet our government states that there is still a lack of scientific information.

Imagine that since the mid-1990s children all over BC had been supplied with cell phones by the school district and instructed to use them continuously while at school from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The political and judicial aftermath would have been chaotic, following these recent health advisories, if parents realized that the school boards were putting their children in a harmful environment. It begs the question: Can anyone prove with complete certainty that we are not creating a public health nightmare in schools by replacing safe, hardwired connections with Wi-Fi? Children are forced to be radiated in schools all over the province without consent, in a way that has never happened in history. That is not alarmist—it is a fact. It is irrelevant to suggest, as many do, that because there is Wi-Fi at Starbucks, White Spot, and the mall, we should unquestionably have it in schools. People are getting sick from wireless technology. They are pulling their children from school to protect them. Granted, not everyone will experience symptoms and for now, this is a crucial part of the debate. But regardless of where you side, this new information must be recognized and discussed. It is totally irresponsible for school boards to ignore these health warnings and carry on without a serious reassessment that recognizes informed parental rights to choose whether or not they want their children exposed to a known health risk.

The evidence is mounting to suggest that the global use of wireless technology as a whole could be the new tobacco or asbestos disaster where children were unknowingly exposed to seriously harmful substances before health authorities could determine their positions. Certain parties have already been hedging their bets for years. A number of insurance companies have refused personal injury liability

insurance for the employees of wireless providers since the year 2000, because they have calculated the risk and chosen extreme caution. The reason is, that in recent court cases, where employees have been harmed by wireless exposure, the employers have been found liable for health damages. Now is the time for people to become informed and start a dialogue. Considering the information that has been presented here, are we expected to wait 20 years for an official warning from Health Canada that is specific to Wi-Fi in schools and only then take action? I am not willing to do that and believe that as of now, caution is the necessity.

Recent history has shown that similar public health debates can last for decades until a decisive conclusion is reached.

Wi-Fi in schools

The actions taken by the WHO, Health Canada, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the insurance industry are an admission of grave concern and uncertainty. In the case of Health Canada, it is a clear call for citizens to take action and protect children as they see fit. Let's put the pieces together ourselves and not be under any illusions. Wi-Fi in schools is an unprecedented and unethical experiment involving the continuous radiation of children with microwave level frequencies, a possible cancer risk according to the WHO, that is considered by our government to be harmful to children, and it is happening without the consent of children, parents and school staff, including pregnant women who are more vulnerable.

There are many potential health effects other than the possible threat of cancer that have been linked to RF exposure. Though not fully understood, it is unacceptable to dismiss those who are suffering from symptoms and the many reputable scientists whose peer-reviewed and published studies have been recognized by the WHO and Health Canada. There is now enough reason for all school districts to reassess this technology and exercise caution.

Reassess and use caution

In my elementary school, the health and safety committee has agreed to have the Wi-Fi router turned off when not in use. This is a very simple practice that reduces children's RF exposure but does not affect learning in any way. If you have a hard-wired computer lab that can be used instead of a laptop and a wireless router, take turns using both. Every school's situation is different and it is important that staff and parents are made aware of these health releases and given the chance to provide input and be provided with choice.

There is a complex network of dedicated individuals who legislate for and provide education to children in British Columbia and now is the time for proactive dialogue because at some point, indifference to people's concerns becomes negligence.

Recent history has shown that similar public health debates can last for decades until a decisive conclusion is reached. Following that, the litigation process involving citizens, governments and corporations, as seen with the tobacco industry, strains victims further and burdens our health care system. This is just the beginning and as more research is reviewed, (as Health Canada has committed itself to doing), it will continue to be pushed to the forefront of public debate not only in the education sphere, and yes, it is going to be a bumpy and uncomfortable road. It is also a necessary one because the warning signs are evident and being recognized at the top levels of governments. If the evidence one day proves that radiofrequency exposure, specifically microwave radiation from Wi-Fi routers, is not a health risk I will have no regrets that I advocated for caution at this point in the timeline.

If the concerns are scientifically validated at the government level, it will be a much uglier story. Do we as teachers and school boards have the right to expose children, hoping that the health risks are inconsequential? There will be no way to reverse the damage and I see absolutely no reason why anyone should be willing to bet on children's health. Let us do our part and exercise caution wherever possible.

Dan Baljak

W.E. Kinvig Elementary School, Surrey

What the latest ministry bulletin doesn't tell us about education funding

By Margaret White

Each year the Ministry of Education releases figures implying that BC schools are receiving “more funding than ever.” So it is no surprise to read in a recent Ministry of Education bulletin (August 28, 2012) that “Since 2000–01, government has increased funding to BC public schools by nearly \$1.4 billion.” What the ministry doesn't say is that when provincial funding falls short of needs, the extra costs are downloaded onto school districts, leaving school boards with the unenviable task of cutting programs and services to offset budget shortfalls.

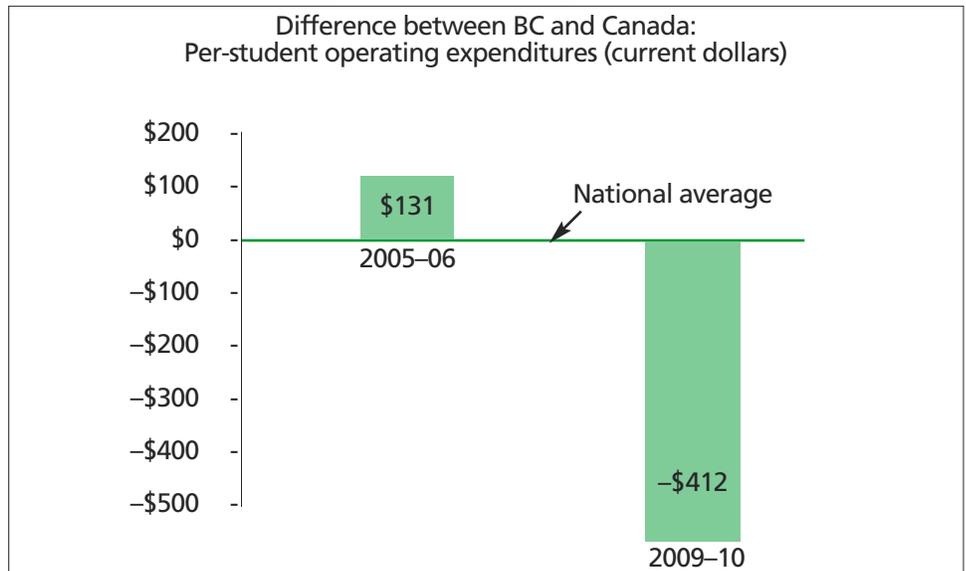
This \$1.4 billion (26%) increase in funding needs to be considered in the context of inflation, newly mandated services in public education, and the changing composition of students. It has barely kept pace with basic inflation, even before considering other cost pressures. BC Association of School

This \$1.4 billion (26%) increase in funding needs to be considered in the context of inflation, newly mandated services in public education, and the changing composition of students. It has barely kept pace with basic inflation, even before considering other cost pressures.

Business Officials (BCASBO) identified major cost pressures facing school districts in 2010–11, estimating a \$300-million funding shortfall. Since then, many districts have continued to experience significant budget shortfalls, resulting in ongoing cuts to K to 12 programs and services.

The ministry also states in the bulletin that “The average per-pupil funding for

Chart 1
BC falls behind Canada in per-student funding



Source: BCTF calculations with data from: Statistics Canada (2011). *Summary of Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 2005–06 to 2009–10*, p.36 (Table A.22).

2012–13 is now an estimated \$8,493, up 36% since 2000–01.” What the ministry doesn't tell us is that BC has fallen behind Canada in per-student funding. In 2005–06, operating expenditures per student in BC were \$131 above the national average. Over the next five years operating expenditures per student increased in BC and Canada, but less so in BC. By 2009–10, per-student funding in BC was \$412 below the national average.

[See Chart 1]

Finally, the ministry bulletin also states that “Since 2000–01, there has been a decrease of more than 63,000 students,” as if this somehow justifies chronic underfunding of public schools. A 2010 report by Saanich School District showed a significant provincial funding shortfall, even after accounting for declining enrolment, due to new cost pressures over the decade.

Nor should it be taken for granted that declining enrolment should mean

fewer services. The ministry could have used this period to improve support for students—other provinces did. Statistics Canada data shows that all provinces except Alberta experienced declining enrolment between 2005–06 and 2009–10, and six experienced a greater percentage decrease in student enrolment than did BC. Yet during that time, most provinces hired more educators to support students. Between 2005–06 and 2009–10, the number of FTE educators in Canada increased by 5%, but decreased in BC by 2%.

[See Chart 2 and Chart 3]

What the ministry doesn't tell us is that BC has fallen behind Canada in per-student funding. ...By 2009–10, per-student funding in BC was \$412 below the national average.

In fact, BC lags behind other provinces in improving funding support for public schools. While funding for elementary and secondary public schools increased across Canada (including BC) between 2005–06 and 2009–10, British Columbia ranked at or near the bottom in terms of the percentage increase in education expenditures, in all key areas.

For evidence of the impact of chronic underfunding on BC schools, one need only look at the 197 schools closed across BC since 2002, at the 3,188 classes

with more than 30 students in 2011–12, the 12,651 classes with four or more designated special needs students (an increase of about 3,000 such classes since 2006–07), and the significant loss of almost 3,000 teaching positions over the decade.

For a full list of references see: <http://bit.ly/SuMT35>

Margaret White,
senior research analyst, BCTF Research

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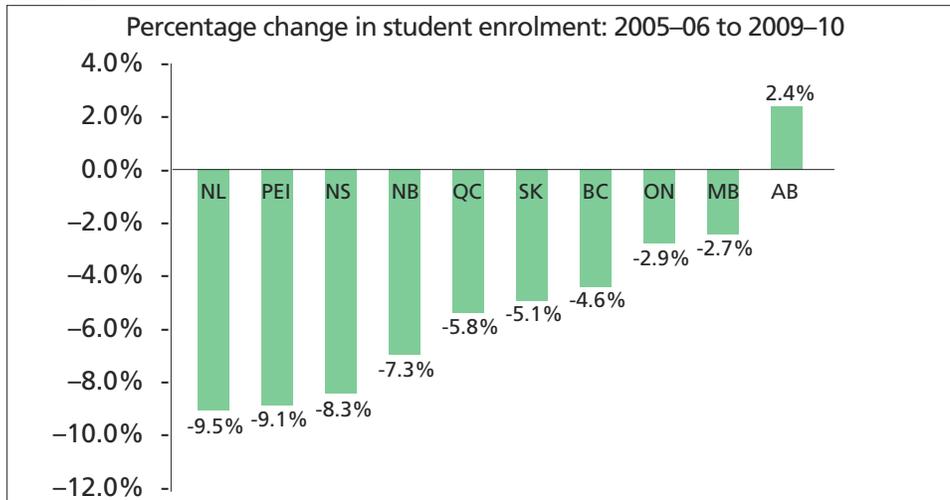
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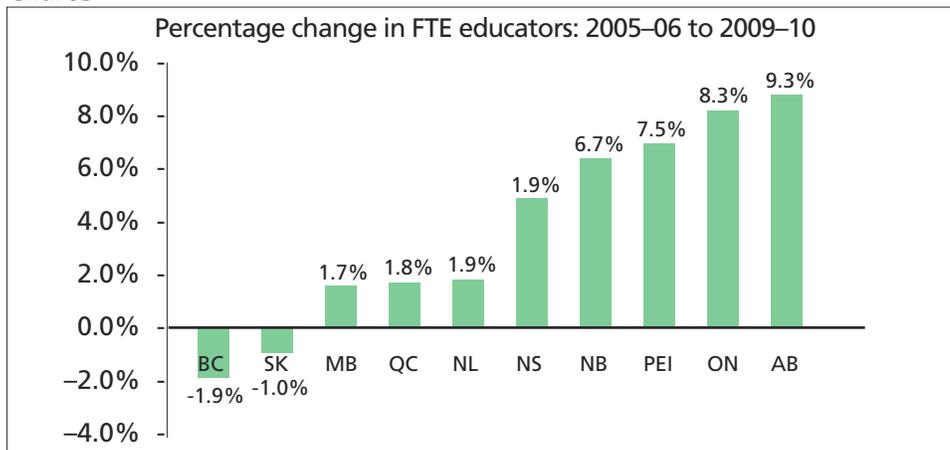
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Chart 2



Source: BCTF calculations with data from: Statistics Canada (2011). *Summary of Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 2005–06 to 2009–10*, p.10 (Table A.2.2.1).

Chart 3



Source: BCTF calculations with data from: Statistics Canada (2011). *Summary of Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 2005–06 to 2009–10*, p.25 (Table A.13.1).



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Summer holiday? I beg to differ...

By Steve Fairbairn

We are now well back to work, and the ongoing refrains of “how was your summer holiday” have now faded away, replaced by the common refrain, “will the rain ever end?”.

Since long before I entered this profession (it was 30 years ago that I walked into my first classroom), I have felt that my summers were somehow not a “vacation,” nor a “holiday” in the true sense of the word. I have come to consider July and August as an annual period of lay-off from employment.

Consider, if you will, the parameters of a vacation, as earned by a paid employee of a company or business.

It is paid for by your employer, through a regular component of your remuneration that is identified as “vacation pay” on your pay stub. It may be calculated as a percentage amount of your regular pay, or you may continue to receive your regular pay cheque during your annual vacation period.

In many businesses, you apply for vacation time.

During your period of vacation, you are still employed, you are not eligible for EI, you continue to be covered by benefits, and so on.

Let us look at the parameters of our summer time-off work.

Since long before I entered this profession (it was 30 years ago that I walked into my first classroom), I have felt that my summers were somehow not a “vacation,” nor a “holiday” in the true sense of the word.

Yes, teachers on a continuing contract continue to be covered by a benefit plan—but it is paid for in advance, deducted from your June pay cheque (not in monthly instalments as is the normal manner for premium payments and plan coverage). This benefit of

employment is a result of the requirements of the industry.

Normally, teachers are paid in 10 equal monthly payments (and an equal number of advances in many places). This pay structure divides your annual salary into 10 equal parts, even though you do not work as many hours/days in each month. We receive two weeks of vacation in December, and one week in March (two in some districts with altered calendars) for a total of three weeks paid vacation per 10-month contract. Your 10 pay periods support this view, as each one is equal, even though you work significantly less in December than in November.

A 10-month contract? Yes, automatically renewed in the case of teachers with a continuing contract. As a result of tradition, tax rules, and the potential costs to the EI system, teachers were never considered eligible for EI benefits during their annual lay-off, after all, recall to employment is a certainty for us.

Our work year traditionally—as defined in contracts—ended on June 30, and began on the Tuesday after Labour Day—bookends—we used to call them.

During July and August, we have always been allowed to take on paid work outside of our teaching contract. Workers on vacations don't normally use their vacation time to get a second job, do they?

Most teachers have to save throughout the school year to cover the costs of living through July and August. Those teachers who are on a 12-month pay plan are only on that plan as a result of a collective agreement...

Another consideration is the role of summer school employment and teachers on continuing contracts. If you were on a (paid) vacation, why would your employer hire you under a completely different set of rules (pay, hours of work, preparation time, and so on) during your vacation time? Why not just shift your vacation time so that your total number of hours/days of work remain the same for the full year?

Now look at the conditions around teachers on term or temporary contracts. Their contracts never extend over the summer. Contracts begin on the first Tuesday after Labour Day, and they terminate as of the last Friday in June. Even if you are hired into a term contract in June (for the next school year) the contract does not begin until September, and you are not eligible for benefits until then, even though you were hired in June.

A teacher who has reached the end of their employment in June, and has not received a term contract for the next school year, is eligible for EI as of the end of their employment. TTOCs get their hours of work calculated so that they may reach eligibility for EI as of July, so how can July be a paid vacation period for them?

Have a look at the first day of employment—the Tuesday after Labour Day. That is when contracts take effect, not the date you were hired (June, July, August). The full conditions of employment (including pay and the accrual of sick days) do not begin until that Tuesday in September. And what about resignations? Traditionally they occur at natural breaks in the school year. Do you resign a position effective the end of June, or the middle of August? (Ok, sometimes people quit during the summer, but that is more the exception than the rule, is it not?)

Planning on retiring June 30? Even the TPP rules say that if you retire in July or August your pension is back-dated to the first day of the month that you are no longer working (July), and yes, I simplified the words, but the point is the same. If you were on a vacation, you'd still be being paid, and you would not be able to collect your pension during that period of time (you can not teach on contract and receive a pension payment).

Most teachers have to save throughout the school year to cover the costs of living through July and August. Those teachers who are on a 12-month pay plan are only on that plan as a result of a collective agreement, and likely, the payments over July and August are actually an automatic withdrawal from an employer-sponsored savings plan that was negotiated into a Collective Agreement. If you were paid during July and August, you could be assigned work during that period (so no need to hire for summer school). Thankfully we are protected by our collective agreements as to the maximum number of minutes 'per school year'.

So, how do I deal with the issue of the May/June lay-off season, that time of the year when notices of lay-off are delivered to our colleagues and us? Rather simplistically I think. The system of educational employment has developed so that the default lay-off/re-employment cycle is assumed to be positive, in that all employees are facing a lay-off for July/August and they will be recalled, and so is no requirement to notify of lay-off or recall into employment. The period of lay-off is common to all in the field, and it has

always been this way, and so there is no practical need to notify anyone about the summer lay-off period. Additionally, under the collective agreement, receipt of a notice of lay-off would entitle every teacher to either remain on a recall list, or elect to take their severance in exchange of their forfeiture of recall rights.

Imagine if you will—the mess that would ensue if every teacher was put on a recall list and the employer had to place us every fall based on seniority (or suitability), or the costs involved in paying out severance of those who choose that route! By neatly avoiding the concept of an annual lay-off, the system is sustained. Those who receive notice are those who were employed in a position that the employer feels will not be needed during the next period of employment, and so they are being notified, not of their summer lay-off, but of the lack of (perceived)

We do not get 11 or 12 weeks of vacation per year. We get 3 weeks—3 weeks that we cannot alter.

employment for them in the next employment period, which begins in September, two months after the end of their last employment period. The date of lay-off is of course the end of the school year, and those teachers are eligible to receive severance effective July 1—the end of their employment—not the first day of their annual two-month paid holiday.

We do not get 11 or 12 weeks of vacation per year. We get 3 weeks—3 weeks that we cannot alter. We also live through an 8-week annual period of lay-off (unemployment if you will). We need to take control of the language, we need to tell people that our summers are not a vacation; they are a 2-month period of lay-off without pay, 2 months we must save for all year, every year of our entire career.

*Steve Fairbairn
Elkford Secondary School,
Fernie*

BCTF staff and friends run for the cure



The BCTF Run for the Cure team, September 30, 2012, raised \$1,265. L-R: Kathleen Thomson, Marj Ross, Jessie West, Megan Hines, Susan Fonseca, Jim Iker, Pat Hamilton, Darlene Waggett, and Ruby Best. Camera-shy friends, Sugar and Myles.



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Voluntary activities and the WCB

By Sarb Lalli

The Special Representative Assembly passed the following motion in August:

That, for the 2012–13 school year, members be encouraged to maintain a focus on teaching and work-life balance in determining whether they participate in extra-curricular activities, evening performances, or other voluntary activities as the union enters into another round of bargaining.

Another consideration to bear in mind before you decide to participate in an extra-curricular activity is whether you will be covered by Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) if you are injured. The WCB requirement is that a personal injury is compensable if it arises out of, and in the course of the worker's employment. Be aware that not all injuries suffered during extra-curricular activities will be covered.

When deciding on the compensability of an injury to a worker, the WCB considers many factors, such as:

1. Did the injury occur on the employer's premises? If so, this factor favours coverage.
2. Was the activity supervised by a representative of the employer having supervisory authority?
3. Did the injury occur in the course of action taken in response to instructions from the employer?
4. Did the injury occur while the worker was using equipment or materials supplied by the employer?
5. Was there an intention to foster good relations with students, parents, or the community?
6. Did the injury occur during paid working hours?
7. Was the injury caused by an activity of the employer or of a fellow employee?
8. Did the injury occur while the worker was performing activities that were part of the worker's job?

Some cases decided on appeal include the following decisions:

1. An injury that the worker suffered when playing in a student-staff volleyball game as a lunch-hour fundraiser was found to be

compensable. Key evidence included:

- The fundraising activity occurred during normal working hours on the employer's premises.
 - The employer supervised the event.
 - It was an annual event.
2. A worker's injury suffered while participating in a staff-only soccer game during the lunch hour at the end of the school year was not compensated. Key factors weighing against compensation included:
 - Participation was voluntary.
 - The worker's regular job duties did not include coaching, teaching, or supervising sports.
 - The game was not supervised by the employer.
 3. A worker's injury suffered at a year-end staff function, which involved various challenges and scavenger hunt-type games, requiring participants to run, was compensated. Key factors in the positive decision included:
 - The vice-chair accepted that students who watched the staff play saw an example of "relationship building skills," which likely had a positive impact on some of them.
 - The event was supervised by the employer through the principal's approval to the social committee

to conduct the event during school hours.

- The event was a team-building exercise that likely benefited the employer.
4. A worker's injury suffered in a student-teacher volleyball game was not found to be compensable. Key evidence included:
 - Participation was voluntary.
 - The worker's regular job duties did not include coaching, teaching, or supervising sports or physical education.
 - The injury was not caused by an activity of the employer or a fellow employee.
 - The activity occurred after school hours.
 - There was no indication that the volleyball game was supervised by the employer.

It is clear from the examples above that the decision in each claim will be based on the specific circumstances of the claim. The greater the number of factors mentioned above to which you can say, "yes," the greater the chances that your claim will be accepted if you are injured.

For further information, contact the BCTF WCB Advocate, Sarb Lalli at 1-800-663-9163, local 1892, or slalli@bctf.ca

Sarb Lalli
BCTF Income Security Division



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Struggles in teaching a second language: Commonalities between Peru and BC

By Karen Andrews



Karen Andrews and Carina Soderlund, BCTF Peru Project facilitators, with Peruvian teacher participant.

This summer, I spent two-and-a-half weeks teaching with the BCTF Peru Project, an initiative that is in its fifth year of supporting international solidarity with the Peruvian teachers' union, SUTEP. My assignment was to provide professional development on English language methodology and English conversational workshops to my Peruvian colleagues. During my workshops, I had lengthy discussions with numerous Peruvian English language teachers from different parts of the country. It is from these discussions that I discovered that we have many issues in common.

In Peru, like in British Columbia, teachers can specialize in second-language teaching and are passionate about sharing their love of languages with their students. And, much like BC's language teachers, they have frustrations and face struggles in their ability to impart their passion.

We share these struggles. The Peruvian teachers shared with me their concerns about students who have poor attendance due to family obligations, such as having to look after a younger sibling or going to work. They described how students arrive to school hungry and unable to concentrate. In addition,

they told me that Aboriginal students in the more remote areas of Peru are struggling to learn Spanish as their second language—without support—and they are also expected to learn English as a foreign language.

Like many of the students in BC, students in Peru see no reason to learn a second language. They come to class unmotivated; however, unlike teachers in BC, Peruvian teachers do not have access to the technology that we do to engage our students. DVD players, computers, internet access, and smart boards are supports that these teachers can only dream about using in their schools and classrooms. Instead, they are limited to a government-mandated textbook with a curriculum that is grammar-based, with an emphasis on reading and writing. But, with as many as 40 students in a high school class, the communicative approach would be challenging for our Peruvian counterparts, and they questioned how they would implement some of the newly learned methodology strategies in their classrooms.

Although my workshops couldn't offer solutions to all their concerns, the Peruvian teachers were very grateful to have the opportunity to acquire some strategies that they could implement.

Professional development is virtually a foreign concept for our Peruvian colleagues, as their school administration mandates in-service for its teachers. There are few opportunities for them to participate in second-language methodology workshops and those that they might attend are very expensive. They were intrigued to learn that the union could play a role in offering professional development opportunities for teachers. Some were resolved to set up a network of English-language teachers, with the help of SUTEP, in an effort to continue to support one another's professional growth and development.

Participating in the BCTF Peru International Solidarity Project renewed my passion to teach languages but also made me realize that in BC we struggle with many of the same issues that Peruvian teachers face a continent away. As teachers, we want our students to have the conditions that they need and deserve, for learning a second language. It was clear that we have the same resolve in making public education a priority for our governments.

*Karen Andrews
French Immersion teacher, Terrace*



L-R: Karen Andrew, Carina Soderlund, Elias Guerrero Bravo (SUTEP local president), Pilar Eguizabel, and Sonia Zavaleta, Peruvian project facilitators.

Youth against violence project

Social justice teachers and students in action

Youth Against Violence is a province-wide initiative to empower youth to take action on ending violence against women and girls in their communities. Youth work with adult mentors to organize events in their school and community to raise awareness about the issue, and to spread violence prevention messages. Here are a few examples of ways that students are getting involved with this project with support from their teachers.

A team of Social Justice 12 students at Thomas Haney Secondary School worked with their teacher to put on a shoe memorial as a part of 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-based Violence. The team was formed after one of the students was directed to the Youth Against Violence program as a leadership development opportunity, and approached her teacher about taking it on. The team collected shoe donations from the community, and on December 6 held a memorial in the

school's atrium. Candles and signs, with facts about violence against women and girls, were displayed alongside the shoes representing women who died at the hands of their partners. More than 300 students and staff formed the audience and the shoes were then donated to a local women's shelter.

Social science students at Lake Cowichan Secondary School prepared a display for an Historical Fair on the 16 Days of Activism, and collected items for the local women's shelter. They also worked with their teachers to undertake a needs assessment on the issue of violence against women and girls in the middle school.

In Nanaimo, an Aboriginal leadership class teacher led her students at Wellington and Woodlands Secondary Schools to undertake activities to raise awareness about the murdered and missing Aboriginal women. Students took a vow of silence, delivered presentations in other classes, and for Valentine's Day, held a fundraiser selling carnations with all of the proceeds

going to Sisters in Spirit initiative by Native Women's Association of Canada.

And in Nelson, students in their Quest for Community class watched a film about women in the media and organized a community-wide film screening of Miss Representation followed by a discussion. This worked to raise awareness in their community and created a safe space for exploring these often difficult themes.

At least 15 Youth Against Violence teams are currently running throughout the province, and there is still the opportunity to form a team and be trained. Existing teams also worked on organizing events for International Women's Day and the provincial Violence Prevention Week.

The Youth Against Violence project is funded by the Status of Women Canada through Blueprint Initiative.

For more information and to get involved, visit www.wecanbc.ca/resources/youth
Tamarah.Prevoost@JusticeEducation.ca
604-660-7459, Justice Education Society

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Sexual health education: Is it the last frontier of social justice education?

By **Myriam Dumont**

I recently went through training to become a certified sexual health educator. Although I have finished the course component, I am still working on my practicum. Options for Sexual Health (OPT, formerly Planned Parenthood BC) is the only organization that offers certification for people who want to know how to teach sexual health education. The course has been running for about 10 years and each cohort usually has 12 to 15 participants.

I've realized in my short time as a teacher in Vancouver that teachers were not taking on sexual health education.

I became interested in sexual health education when I realized in university that I was required to teach it, but I would not be trained to do so. This seemed odd to me, considering it is probably one of few topics that teachers have the most difficulty teaching. I began educating myself by taking workshops, and eventually decided to take the Sexual Health Education Certification (SHEC) program offered by OPT. In my SHEC cohort, I was the only teacher. Considering that the other participants were nurses, social workers, and support staff, I wondered how other teachers learn the tools to teach sexual health to their students and, more importantly, how are students getting the comprehensive sexual health education that the Ministry of Education mandates?

I've realized in my short time as a teacher in Vancouver that teachers were not taking on sexual health education. Most of the time they were asking a nurse or a privately hired sexual health educator to come into their classroom for one session. I see this as problematic on so many levels because:

- Students who receive one-off sessions are not receiving comprehensive sexual health education. This is the only subject matter we teach where it seems acceptable to do a lesson once and never revisit it. We would never teach long division by doing a 45-minute lesson and then assume the students learn everything about long division. I often wonder how much knowledge students gain from these single sessions.

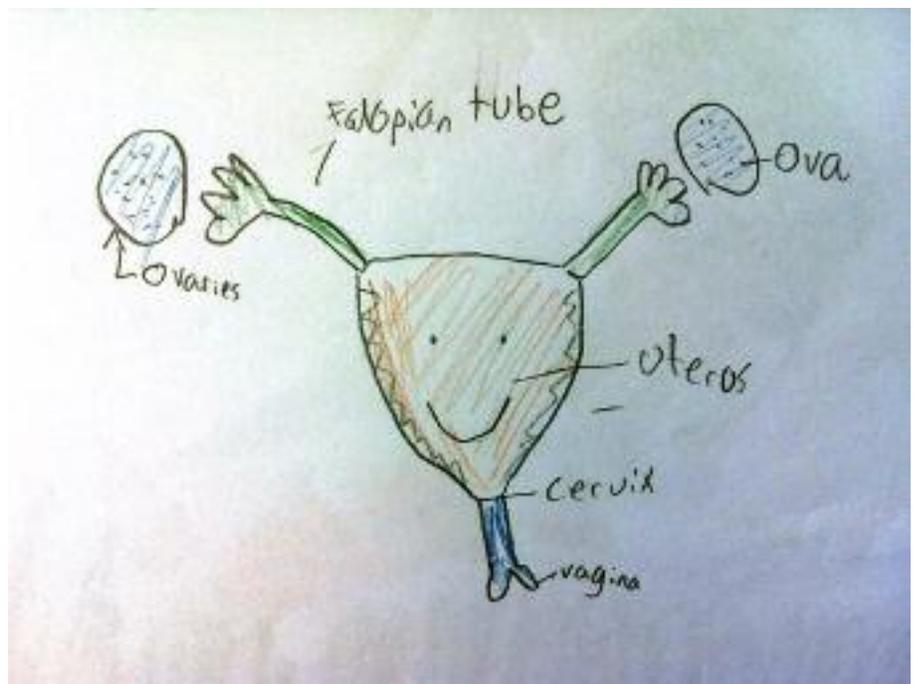
- The BCTF has a strong policy against bringing in outside people to teach the curriculum that member teachers are supposed to be teaching. However, we often need to bring in a nurse or privately hired sexual health educator to teach that portion of the curriculum.
 - The sexual health educators that we hire cost a lot of money! They will charge anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000 for a day in the classroom. Considering all the cuts that are happening in education throughout the province, it seems ridiculous to me to be spending thousands of dollars a year to hire people to do work that teachers are supposed to be doing and could be doing, with the right training.
 - This work is mandated in the curriculum. Sexual Health Education PLOs are visible from Kindergarten to Grade 10 and the Ministry of Education expects us to teach it. This is no different than any other PLO that we are required to teach as professionals.
- Some teachers say that sex ed is "different" from any other subject area. It is loaded with values and personal feelings, which often bring about unease and even shame. However, teachers need to realize that you don't need to know everything to

teach effective and comprehensive sex education. Like anything else, teachers require professional development and need to keep up-to-date with information, but that is no different than any other subject

Children might laugh or giggle once in a while, but my experiences have shown that most of them are curious and amazed...

area. For example, in my first year of teaching, I did a unit on residential schools. This year, I once again did a unit of residential schools, but it looked quite different than it did the first year, because my materials and sources were different.

I often hear other teachers say, I do sex ed, but when I probe a bit deeper, it is apparent that what that teacher is actually doing is abuse prevention. It is so important that we do abuse prevention with students of all ages; however, this is not comprehensive sexual health education, and students should not be learning about their bodies for the



first time in the context of abuse. This, I believe, is due to a lack of proper training. Teachers mean well, but by doing this, they may be doing harm without realizing it.

My sexual health education unit looks very different this year than it has looked in the past. I teach it once a week, usually on Tuesday. The students are making their own Puberty Book of information they are learning. When I don't know the answers to their questions, we call the "sex sense line" together (1-800-sex-sense) and I model how to find good, reliable, up-to-date, and non-judgmental information. In one semester, we have covered the following topics:

- proper names for body parts
- the female/male reproductive systems
- changes in puberty
- different types of families
- stages of pregnancy
- HPV and how the vaccine works
- support systems (who to talk to and HOW to talk about puberty and sex)
- resources (where to go for reliable information)

It would be impossible to cover all these topics in a 45-minute session, especially since the students are asking so many questions during this time. We are constantly reviewing information that they have learned, in a fun and meaningful way.

There is lots of research that demonstrates the benefits of comprehensive sex education. Meg Hickling (the "grandmother" of sex ed) went into a prison to interview men who had sexually abused children and what she found was, amongst other things, that they targeted children who did not know the proper names of their body parts. They realized that children who did not know the science words for their genitals clearly would not be able to talk to adults about their bodies and what was, or was not, appropriate touching.

Research has also shown that comprehensive sexual health education in teenagers reduces undesirable outcomes, i.e., unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. If students are equipped with the tools they need to make decisions that are in line with their own values, they will know how to keep themselves safe.

Children might laugh or giggle once in a while, but my experiences have shown that most of them are curious and amazed at all the incredible things that our bodies are capable of doing. Yesterday, my students and I learned about the different stages of pregnancy. I watched them as they observed a video of what takes place in a mother-to-be's uterus from weeks eight to thirty-eight. They watched in amazement while taking

notes, and had many questions when we would pause the video. They were completely fascinated.

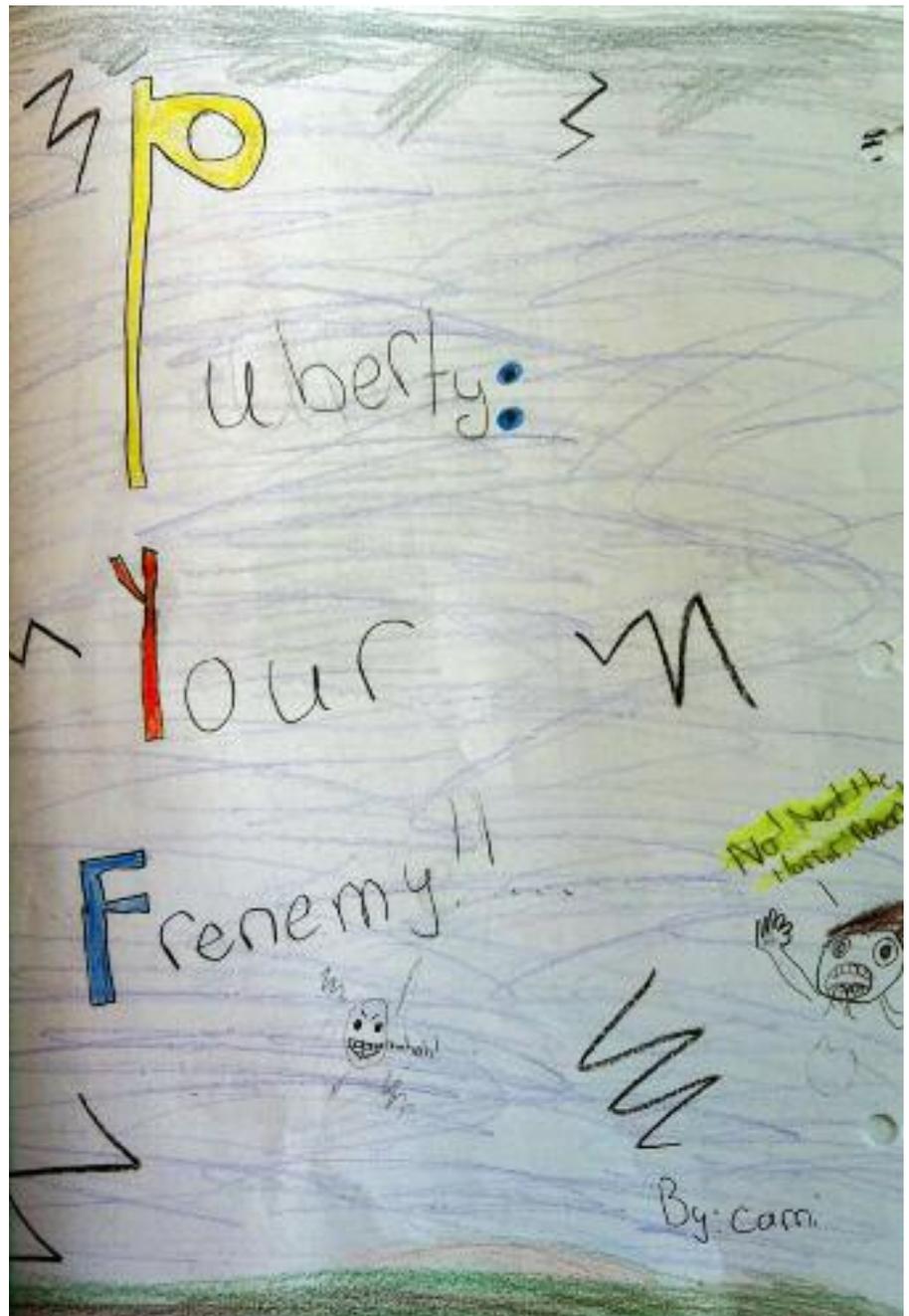
Students all over the province are missing out on crucial and necessary education that they are entitled to in the public education system. In my opinion, it is long overdue for the government to ensure that pre-service teachers are required to take a course on

teaching sexual health education, and that certified teachers get the necessary professional development to help them with the current curriculum.

Myriam Dumont, Laura Second Elementary School, Vancouver. BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice, LGBTQ Action Group

For more information on lesson plans, go to:
teachingsexualhealth.ca

For courses on how to teach sexual health education, go to:
optionsforsexualhealth.org/education



Unique opportunity for music teachers

By **Debbie Middleton**

School may have been out for students for the summer, but for several music teachers from across British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba, their summer was spent at Vernon Army Cadet Summer Training Centre (VACSTC) where they ran a band program for 150 cadets aged 12 to 18.

The band program at VACSTC consists of a pipes and drums band and a military band. The cadets who participate in the courses offered arrive in Vernon with a wide variety of music skills and abilities, so the challenge of offering each of them the opportunity to advance their individual skill levels is a

VACSTC offers the opportunity for music teachers to come together to guide the young musicians for the summer.

complex undertaking. In order to accomplish this, a powerful team of instructors and leaders is required. Jamie Davis, for example, has taught the Grade 9–12 high school marching band and band classes at Spectrum Community School in Victoria since 2006. Taylor Collishaw has taught music and musical theatre at Point Grey Secondary School in Vancouver since 2006, and instructs the senior military band at VACSTC.

VACSTC offers the opportunity for music teachers to come together to guide the young musicians for the summer. Typically there is usually only one music teacher in each school, with little opportunity to discuss their challenges with musical colleagues. By coming together during the summer in such a unique way, they are able to collaborate and offer suggestions or ideas on ways to approach different learning situations. At the end of the summer, each of them has learned from one another, and they leave with a whole new toolbox filled with ideas they can



Jamie Davis, who earned a Commanding Officer's Commendation for his work at Vernon Army Cadet Summer Training Centre, conducts the Military Band at the annual evening concert for all members of the centre. Davis teaches at Spectrum Community School in Victoria.

take back to their individual classrooms. In fact, one of the music instructors, Erika Sinhuber, is using the opportunity to draw on the vast wealth of knowledge to work on her masters degree in music education at UBC.

Another key to the success of the band program at VACSTC is that many of the

instructors, as well as the cadets, keep coming back. According to Jayme Daniels, director of Pipes and Drums at VACSTC and a music teacher at Chase Secondary School, "There is a strong sense of loyalty here amongst both the adult staff and the cadets. Many of them want to keep coming back



In step with her pipers, Jaime Daniels, Director of Pipes and Drums at Vernon Army Cadet Summer Training Centre, marches in the summer parade at Oliver.

WAYNE EMDE PHOTOS



Taylor Shaw, who teaches musical theatre and choir at Point Grey Secondary school in Vancouver, conducts the senior military band during the evening concert.

year after year, often until they are not able to come back." Daniels says that either work or family commitments are the main reasons that the instructors decide not to return. As for the cadets, many of them become what they affectionately call "Vernon Lifers," spending five summers at VACSTC before they turn 19 and graduate from the cadet program. Some of the instructors who came to VACSTC as cadets returned as members of the teaching team.

Over the years, the program has evolved to meet the needs of both the cadet program requirements, as well as the specific skillsets of the cadets and their need to develop at their own individual levels. The dedication and level of commitment shown by all of the staff makes each summer a rewarding and challenging experience for everyone involved. It's not unusual to see one or more of the instructors working with their cadets in the evenings on Coutts' Common, the green space in the middle of the training centre, perfecting drum rolls or fingering techniques on the chanters.

The bands make public performances throughout the Okanagan Valley each summer, marching in parades in Oliver and Penticton this year. They also perform annually at Noric House, a long-term care facility in Vernon.

Within the training centre, they provide the music for a number of events. "A parade without music is just drill," is a common refrain. During the final week, the band

cadets host the cadets, officers, and other staff for an evening of music and highland dancing, a requirement for the pipes and drums course. When the cadets return from their field training exercises, they are met by a piper who leads them past the senior staff at the headquarters building.

Over the years, the program has evolved to meet the needs of both the cadet program requirements, as well as the specific skillsets of the cadets and their need to develop at their own individual levels.

The summer's training for the cadets and instructors ends with the Final Parade and Sunset Ceremony when they have one last opportunity to showcase their music before hundreds of visitors who attend the parade. At VACSTC, summer officially ends when the lone piper silhouetted on the backdrop of the main parade square plays "Amazing Grace" as the sun slips below the Okanagan hills.

*Capt Debbie Middleton
VACSTC unit public affairs representative
Wayne Emde
VACSTC community public relations officer*



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The drawing network credo

By **Bob Steele**

It is now clear that spontaneous drawing is a language medium for children. We used to think it was just another option in the visual arts roster aimed at enriching culture and leisure time. We now see that it has a deeper, more fundamental role to play. It would seem that this is what nature had in mind as children are born with this uncoded, easy-to-use language just when they need it most for optimal development. Alas, it remains stillborn without the daily involvement of a parent or caring adult for a brief period of thematic motivation.

Children use spontaneous drawing to articulate, express, and communicate their most complex, meaningful, and heartfelt perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.

This nine-part statement is our definition of language, and drawing

passes with flying colours. Indeed, because it is uncoded and literacy is multicode, children are able to tell their stories with ease and concentration, which makes it possible for them to achieve deep levels of empathy. (Much is made of empathy these days, but drawing, its deepest source for children, tends to be overlooked.) A 20-year study of hundreds of spontaneous drawings—I use spontaneous to distinguish the child's own personally invented language from the specious formulas frequently offered children—has taught me the following:

Drawing, an aid to literacy

In addition to being a language in its own right, drawing is an aid to literacy. Words and drawing together constitute a powerful "third" language. Here is a summary of how these two interact in a "daily draw."

1. Parent and child converse about a possible theme.
2. The child proceeds to draw and silent unspoken words accompany the performance in a stream of consciousness that follows the drawing's lead.
3. The finished drawing is discussed, strengthening vocabulary and syntax, i.e., how units of language (words, graphic schemata) are used effectively.
4. If appropriate suggestions are made, the drawing may point to related topics for discussion and further drawing.
5. Printed words begin to appear in empty spaces.
6. The free drawing experience leads to ever-more complex pictures, which motivate new words and with older children, sentences and paragraphs.

Children use spontaneous drawing to articulate, express, and communicate their most complex, meaningful, and heartfelt perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.

Bonding

It is difficult to engage children in conversation at the best of times, but with a drawing or a drawing theme acting as a focal point, self-consciousness is diminished. Topics not likely to come up otherwise, are dealt with objectively. Post-drawing analysis may lead children to “open up” and, over time, bonding is likely to take place.

The four parts of language for children

Drawing is a language in its own right, but we believe that it comes into its own when it is included in a four-part interlocking combination—oral expression, drawing, writing, and reading. If this integrated language approach begins early, the gradual shift to literacy is almost painless. Drawing then becomes an auxiliary. There is another advantage—oral expression is prone to disappear over a memory horizon making the syntax of speech difficult and writing is still in the future. The elements of drawing, in contrast, remain visible throughout as new elements are added in easy relationship to those already in place. This is perfect for syntax and its growth in both languages.

Reading a special case

Reading is a special case because it is a medium for interpreting the code rather than using it creatively. Reading aloud to children is hugely important, as are public libraries, school libraries, and teacher-librarians, but we should be careful not to isolate reading from the

rest because it is nurtured by writing and writing is nurtured by oral expression and drawing. An integrated language program seems the best way to go.

Aesthetic energy, empathy, and enhanced values

It is important to recognize that spontaneous drawing is a source of empathy, which is a precondition for “aesthetic energy”—the “hidden order of art.” Some drawings are thus elevated to “works of art.” Language values then take on a special significance. These values are worth noting: (1) intellectual growth, (2) mental health and healing, (3) a different and valuable source of learning (drawing supports literacy but has its own unique perceptual modes), and (4) the positive effect drawing has on literacy.

Drawing overlooked

What a pity then, that most children never experience a “daily draw” routine at home or school. In the developmentally critical preschool years, children do not get an opportunity to use the language they were born with, and drawing as a natural language withers on the vine. In Kindergarten/early primary the situation is better but the unique values of drawing in the morning language segment are often wiped out by spurious art activities in the afternoon. It is safe to say that before and after the primary grades, spontaneous drawing is almost non-existent and, indeed, is underused in the primary grades.

Drawing requires no teaching-only motivation

Parents and generalist teachers should realize that it is not necessary to teach drawing. Each child is born with the potential to invent her or his own! What needs to be established is a supportive ambience that gives children the encouragement they need to realize this potential. Efforts to achieve ‘correctness’ are counter-productive because they constantly interrupt the free flow of form-making as the drawer feels impelled to check results. This does not happen with contour line, the child’s natural way to draw. Realism is the legitimate goal of all children, but not ‘naturalism.’ It should probably be called symbolic realism as opposed to ‘correct’ naturalism.

The Drawing Network

The Drawing Network is an unfunded and informal collection of reform-minded parents, teachers, academics, and interested citizens. We have no membership dues, no meetings, no table officers. We publish pamphlets and books, which we distribute at close to cost. We have an internet address and website. We urge you to join us in supporting an integrated language practice and to bring drawing into the lives of children as nature seems to have intended.

Bob Steele

*Associate Professor (Emeritus) UBC
drawnet@shaw.ca
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The Education Plan: Ways to engage

By **Charlie Naylor**

The BCTF is preparing a series of short papers that address the central concepts in the BC Ministry of Education's "Education Plan" (2011).

One issue of concern with much of what has been published to date in the Education Plan, is the almost total lack of literature references, so that when terms such as "quality teaching" are used, there may be some uncertainty as to what perspective is held by the government or ministry. One way to assess such perspectives is in terms of both the language used, and the explicit or implicit linkage, to their other preferred directions such as teacher evaluation and performance reviews. A second, is by having access to literature that allows for a better understanding of the range of approaches to each concept in the plan.

Rather than identify with a fixed position, each of our papers aims to offer access to areas of research and information, which will assist locals and members to explore ideas, engage in discussions, and consider directions appropriate within local contexts. In some cases, an essentially welcome concept may run into problems when inappropriately applied. In others, there may be quite different interpretations of what is meant by a concept or just how it might be applied. The idea of these papers is to offer a frame for consideration and analysis, rather than offer a single interpretation.

We have outlined the five perspectives that we believe offer a frame for engagement:

- Concept: What are we talking about?
- Application: Where is it applied and how?
- Interpretation: Is it common, dichotomous, or on a continuum?
- Potential: What might be positive in the concept?
- Concerns: What do we need to be cautious about?

For each of these perspectives we have produced a one-page document that offers a synthesis of key information and quotes from relevant academic literature. See sample page (Finland/

Singapore vs USA/England). The idea is to make information and research accessible so that members can better engage in discussions about teacher quality by accessing research and understanding a range of perspectives

and positions on key features stated, but as yet unexplained in the Education Plan.

Check out the full report on the BCTF web site at: <http://tinyurl.com/9dflcx>

Charlie Naylor,
researcher, BCTF Research



- **Finland/Singapore vs USA/England**
- **Enabling vs accountable**

Countries such as Finland and Singapore have identified quality teaching as key to their success, explicitly linking quality to high levels of teacher education and collaboration. They aim to enable teachers to be their best by offering considerable autonomy and professional learning opportunities embedded into the work of teaching. On the other end of the continuum, some US jurisdictions focus on the "rewards and punishment" syndromes, linking the success or failure of teachers to student test scores, and firing teachers who are considered "underperforming," an approach favoured by Hanushek.

Finland: The true Finnish difference is that teachers in Finland may exercise their professional knowledge and judgment both widely and freely in their schools. They control curriculum, student assessment, school improvement, and community involvement. Much as teachers around the world enter the profession with a mission to build community and transmit culture, Finnish teachers, in contrast to their peers in so many countries, have the latitude and power to follow through. (p. 7)

Sahlberg, P. (2011). *Finnish lessons: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* New York: Teachers College Press.

Singapore: Now it is Singapore that is going in search of Dewey, looking for methods that would awaken student interest and creativity. Getting high test scores is not enough, Singapore's education leaders are now saying. Something is missing. That something is creativity, critical thinking, engaging activities. One very interesting point made in the article linked here is the reference to teacher quality. The U.S. has been obsessed with the issue of raising teacher quality, and has decided that the best way to identify it is to evaluate teachers by student test scores. In Singapore, however, raising teacher quality has meant improving teachers' prestige and working conditions.

Diane Ravitch's blog, May 31, 2012. <http://dianeravitch.net/2012/05/>

USA: Eric Hanushek, an educational researcher at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, argues that poor-quality teachers explain America's education woes. "The bottom end of the teaching force is harming students," he writes. "Allowing ineffective teachers to remain in the classroom is dragging down the nation." (2009) Hanushek uses a statistical model to show that just removing underperforming teachers could significantly improve student achievement. He proposes for the nation's schools what Jack Welch, the legendary CEO, did each year at General Electric: Fire the bottom 10% of the company's poorest performers. (p. 60)

Futernick, K. (2010). *Incompetent Teachers or Dysfunctional Systems?*

Phi Delta kappan, 9, 2, 59–64.

VIU offers new Global Education Graduate Diploma

Vancouver Island University is introducing a new program for certified teachers entitled Global Education Graduate Diploma (GEGD).

“Since the inception of VIU’s education programs, many students have expressed a keen desire to further their understanding and practice of global education in Canada and abroad,” said Education faculty member Nadine Cruickshanks. “This program will appeal to certified teachers who want to become leaders in global education.”

Program curriculum is designed to provide teachers with a broad field of study that explores the urgent need for global education in schools.

Through a critical study of world events and circumstances, teachers will learn to weave diverse perspectives into their practice and foster a sense of citizenship and recognition of the world’s diversity among their students. Participants will examine a culturally rich and interconnected world, including the significant interrelatedness of the natural world.

Students enrolled in the program will create and implement best practices for

incorporating global education into the K–12 curriculum. The content includes the cultivation of three strands—local and global awareness, transformational understanding, and responsible, active citizenship.

The Global Education Graduate Diploma consists of six interrelated courses (five credits each) and will be delivered as a part-time, cohort-based model to practising educators. Face-to-face classes will meet Friday night, Saturday, and during one July session. The program begins with story, conversation, and community-building, and ends full circle with a unifying field study, reconsideration of prior understandings, and a strong foundation for moving forward in global education.

Teachers who complete the program will receive a 5+ salary increase and be one project away from a Masters degree.

The program start date is September 2013.

For further information, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/9gtj3sd> and/or contact Heather Burke, Heather.Burke@viu.ca or call 250-740-6221.

Participate in the “Every Teacher Project”

Inclusive education for LGBTQ students’ survey

The Every Teacher project is focused on inclusive education practices for sexual and gender minority students.

This is a national study being carried out throughout the country. It is designed to identify and make widely available the collective expertise that exists among Canadian teachers on inclusive education practices.

This study will enable the researchers to learn what educators think about the climate of Canada’s schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two Spirit, or questioning (LGBTQ) students. It will help to identify which approaches to inclusion of these students seem to work—in what contexts. It also has a focus on what supports educators in doing this work, and what holds us back.

Results will be made widely available throughout the school systems across Canada.

Completing the Every Teacher survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Participation is possible between October 11 and mid-February 2013, but we encourage participation as soon as possible in order to reduce the need for follow-up reminders.

All members of teacher organizations are encouraged to participate.

To participate, go to <http://tinyurl.com/8hvkn6c>

The Every Teacher project team is led by Dr. Catherine Taylor at The University of Winnipeg in partnership with The Manitoba Teachers’ Society. The project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

For further information, contact by e-mail: everyteacherproject@gmail.com

Factor 88? Don’t wait

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

In making application for withdrawal, you should ensure that in the event of serious illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave which, when combined with 120 days of benefit from SIP short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach factor “90” or the end of the month you attain age 65, whichever comes first.

Principals and vice-principals should contact their HR department to inquire if they are members of the BCTF SIP or the disability plan offered through the BCPVPA. The BCPVPA plan will have its own withdrawal guidelines.

Applications are available online at: <http://tinyurl.com/7qrrnxx> or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.



Classified ads

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preddyplace@telus.net

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604-885-0651.

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SOUTH OF FRANCE villa in lively, lovely market town of Limoux. 4 bdrms. 2 bath. Sleeps 8. All mod cons. Near lake and river swimming and historic Carcassonne. Great rates. Deep discounts for long-term, off-season.
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MESA/PHOENIX Park model trailer in 55+ park, sleeps 4, 4 pools, tennis, bocce, pickle ball, golf, shopping...huge variety of daily activities. \$1350/mo.Nov/Dec. \$1500 Feb/Mar/Apr. includes utilities. 604-463-3151.

WHISTLER 1 bdrm, 2 bath, lux condo. Sleeps 4-6, fully equipped. 3 min from Creekside. Av. Xmas-New Yrs, Mid-wk & W/E. Good rates. Pics & more info: 604-802-4899. ddunn@sd38.bc.ca

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CAT-SITTER. In-home cat-sitting by bonded and insured teacher-librarian for Vancouver westside. For info and rates: www.meowminder.ca

WHISTLER townhouse, sleeps 6. Fully equip. 604-925-7669 or Gary 604-669-7212.

FRANCE FRANCE 2013/2014 holiday rental. Well renovated converted barn & stone houses in ancient, traditional vineyard village, SW France. Great walking, cycling, food, wine, Cathar castles. C\$815/C\$1120/wk. per family. U 18. E-mail mjcapper@hotmail.com visit www.ourhouseinfrance.com.au

FRANCE Alsace and Vosges Mountains, 3 bdrm. heritage house on wine route, furnished, modern kitchen, 45 min. from Germany, 35 min. from Switzerland. C\$500/wk., mano936@gmail.com

WATERFRONT CONDO Birch Bay, WA. 2 bdrm, 2 bath, for week or weekend rentals. Complex has indoor pool, hot tub, games room. \$150/night or \$900/wk (plus \$50 cln. fee), birchbayrentals.com or call Teresa 604-831-4080.

For 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

SURREY 1 bdrm. Chimney Heights for rent. \$600. 604-916-7931, for pics: canuel_s@surreyschools.ca

VANCOUVER. Furnished 1 bdrm apt. 1 block to seawall and beaches, Aquatic Centre, Granville Island Ferry and bus to UBC, or downtown. \$1500/mo utilities & internet connection incl. Short term, min. 3 months. Avail. Jan 2013 to June 2013. blrice@shaw.ca for more information and photos.

VANCOUVER West-End gem, between Stanley Park and Denman St. Refurbished, furnished studio apartment with free parking and pets permitted. Monthly rentals. jkathleen@shaw.ca

Miscellaneous

VARIETY – THE CHILDREN'S CHARITY. Working with children is your passion. Leaving a legacy to Variety in your Will for BC's kids is your gift of a lifetime. There are estate planning benefits too. Contact Peter Chipman or Paul Spelliscy for information. Toll free 310-KIDS (5437) or 604-320-0505 or e-mail peter.chipman@variety.bc.ca

HOME-BASED TUTORING Referral Agency. Immediately awarding franchises in the Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Okanagan and Prince George. Good income, flexible lifestyle, proven system. 1-877-ITS EASY or visit: www.schooliseasy.com

SCHOOL TATTOOS. Temporary tattoos printed with your school's art. Free Graphic Service and Free Tattoo Proof. Website: www.schooltattoos.ca E-mail: info@schooltattoos.ca or call 613-567-2636.

NEED TEACHERS to write self-paced courses for all secondary subjects. For examples and contact information, For examples and contact info, visit www.mathwnpc.ca

FIELD TRIP. Book a Burns Bog field trip today! A two-hour guided tour costs \$150 per class of up to 30 pupils. Visites guidées en français aussi! Buy For Peat's Sake, our educator's resource guide to peatlands. www.burnsbog.org 604-572-0373, info@burnsbog.org

AGRI-TOURISM – Classroom in the Corn and Pumpkin time. Anti-bullying theme story "Spookley the Square Pumpkin." Contact Chilliwack Corn Maze for tour options in the fall and spring. 604-845-7771 or info@chilliwackcornmaze.com

GENEALOGY IN THE CLASSROOM Free learning resource. victoriags.org/school, e-mail: Projects@VictoriaGS.org

NEW RESOURCE from School Specialty: Blended-media intervention for Comprehension, Word-Study, and Writing. "MCI" integrates explicit instruction with individualized online training. Includes teacher/student web links, teacher manuals, online/print assessment tools, consumable student booklets, and varied genre graded reading materials. Grade 6–8+ HS interest levels with Grade 3–6 readability. No required staff PD. Contact Eric MacInnis, M.Ed., eric@eduskills.ca 1-800-709-1952, www.eps.schoolspecialty.com/MCI

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PD Calendar

NOVEMBER 2012

12 Prince George, BC. Depression—Practical Intervention Strategies. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: www.ctrinstitute.com, 204-452-9199, e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com.

14–16 Edmonton, AB. ATLE (Alberta Technology Leaders in Education) Annual Conference: "Convergence". Keynotes: Drew Dudley (Founder of Nuance Leadership), Alex Samuel (Director of Social+Interactive Media Centre, Emily Carr University), and Steve Dembo (Director of Social Media Strategy and Online Community, Discovery Education). Conference registration includes informative breakout sessions, a large exhibition hall, all meals and break snacks, as well as two evening entertainment receptions. Registration also includes an annual membership in ATLE. Location: Mayfield Inn, Edmonton, AB. Visit atle.ca for more information or to register.

15 Vancouver, BC. Anxiety—Practical Intervention Strategies. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or more information: www.ctrinstitute.com 204-452-9199, e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com.

15–17 Vancouver, BC. Interprofessional Continuing Education, "The 3rd Health & Well being in Children, Youth and Adults with Developmental Disabilities." Location: Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites, Vancouver, BC. For more information, go to: interprofessional.ubc.ca/HealthAndWellbeing/documents/Brochure.pdf; to register, go to: interprofessional.ubc.ca/HealthAndWellbeing/registration.asp.

15–17 Vancouver, BC. Health & Well being in Children, Youth and Adults with Developmental Disabilities Challenging Behaviour—The tip of the iceberg. Conference objectives: To promote best practices in physical and mental health for individuals with developmental disabilities; recognize the multifactorial determinants of challenging behavior; recognize the role of traumatic

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NOVEMBER continued from page 25

experiences in understanding challenging behavior; maximize health and wellbeing in order to minimize disability and improve quality of life; and share knowledge and common experiences with others working in the field. Our Call for Abstracts is currently open at: interprofessional.ubc.ca/HealthAndWellbeing/CallForAbstracts.asp. For further information visit our website www.interprofessional.ubc.ca or contact us at ian.ipce@ubc.ca 604-827-3112.

16 Vancouver, BC. Depression—Practical Intervention Strategies. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, www.ctrinstitute.com e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

16–18 Seattle, WA. Seattle National Council for the Social Studies 92nd Annual Conference. Theme: Windows Opening to the World. Location: Washington State Convention Center. Accommodation: Headquarters hotel—Sheraton Seattle Hotel (and others). Information coming soon: www.socialstudies.org

21 Nanaimo, BC. Anxiety—Practical Intervention Strategies. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, www.ctrinstitute.com e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

22 Nanaimo, BC. Depression—Practical Intervention Strategies. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, www.ctrinstitute.com e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

22–24 Vancouver. 18th annual provincial conference on Aboriginal education. Theme: “Reconciliation through Education.” Event information: www.fnesc.ca/events

23 West Vancouver. Technology in the K–7 classroom. All day conference with speakers, iPad training, SMARTboard training, Apps, Twitter and much more. Also includes breakfast and lunch. Connect with educators on technology. Register today at www.weeboot.ca or contact us at weeboot@gmail.com

DECEMBER 2012

10 Kelowna, BC. Critical Incident Group Debriefing. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, www.ctrinstitute.com e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

12–13 Vancouver, BC. Suicide Prevention, Intervention & Postvention Strategies. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, www.ctrinstitute.com e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

14 Vancouver, BC. Critical Incident Group Debriefing. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, www.ctrinstitute.com e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

18 Victoria, BC. Critical Incident Group Debriefing. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, www.ctrinstitute.com e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

JANUARY 2013

29–31 Edmonton, AB. Train the Trainer Certification Program. De-escalating Potentially Violent Situations. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, www.ctrinstitute.com e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

FEBRUARY 2013

14–15 Vancouver. BCAEA (BC Alternate Education Association) “Challenge and Change.” Keynote speaker: Gabor Mate. Thirty different sessions focused on helping at-risk youth presented in varying styles and topics including technology, film-making, art, outdoor education, and mental health. Location: Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre, 1088 Burrard Street, Vancouver. Register online starting October 2012 at www.bctf.ca/bcaea/conference.html For more information, contact DJ Pauls at djpauls@shaw.ca

21–22 Richmond. SEA (Special Education Association) Annual spring conference “Scattered Minds, Beyond the Medical Model: A bio-psychosocial view of attention deficit disorder and other childhood developmental disorders.” Keynote: Gabor Mate. Two-day conference at Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, 7551 Westminster Highway, Richmond. Contact information: Alison Ogden, conference chair, seaconferencechair@gmail.com. Please see our website www.seaofbc.ca for conference program information starting November 1, 2012.

Future October PSA days (BCTF procedure statement 30.A.14)
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.
2013 - 2014: October 25, 2013
2014 - 2015: October 24, 2014
2015 - 2016: October 23, 2015

PD Calendar website

<http://tinyurl.com/94nz4m5>

Additions/changes:
Contact Betty Goto at bgoto@bctf.ca

On
**Remembrance
Day 2012**

teachers and
students will be
honouring
sacrifices
of the
past and
working
for peace
in the
future.



Drop everything and **READ** challenge



READING is
a beautiful
thing. Today.
Every day.
Read for
twenty
minutes.

October 22, 2012 | National School Library Day

The DEAR Challenge is sponsored by the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association bcctl.ca/bcrla
www.dropeverythingandreadbc.ca | Follow us at: @BC7LA_DEAR | Find us on Facebook 

