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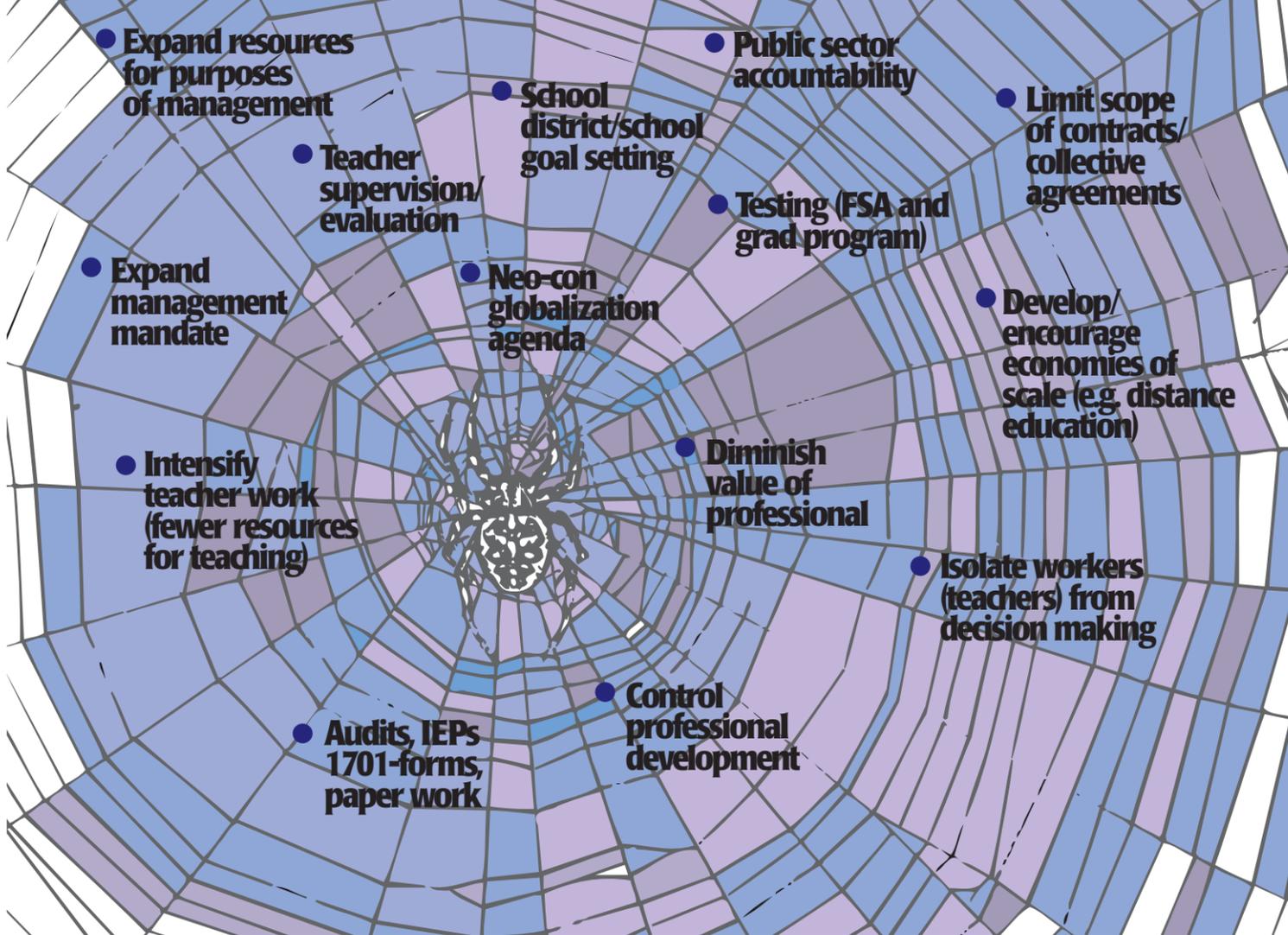
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Teacher



Web of control



by Pat Clarke

The neo-conservative agenda promotes privatization as a way to maximize profit and demands "accountability" as assurance that public costs are minimal and opportunities for profit unlimited. (See "Who took my Primary Program?" page 8 in this issue.)

- The neo-con globalization agenda**
You may not believe the neo-con globalization agenda has much to do with teachers. It does. The goal of the neo-con agenda is simple: maximize corporate profits and minimize costs. That goal is the source of a web of control that is turning teaching from a profession engaged in child-centred learning to an occupation tied to meeting goals and production quotas.
- Public-sector accountability**
In the view of the neo-cons, the public sector is a cost and has value only insofar as it can service the corporate sector and help maximize profit. *Accountability* is the buzzword for ensuring that public services serve the corporate sector. Providing service to the broader public is secondary.
- School and school-district goal setting**
For teachers, schools and school districts' accountability takes shape in endless rounds of goal setting and tinkering with *accountability contracts*. The so-called contracts are narrow in focus and must be measurable and readily *testable*.
- Testing**
The FSA program and the new graduation program are the B.C. version of accountability testing. Since the accountability

contracts are narrowly focussed and are entirely tied to measurable outcomes, the tests also are narrowly focussed. They are big on what can be measured by Scantron and oblivious to aspects of learning such as creativity and critical thinking.

- Expand resources for purposes of management**
Accountability regimes, like any bureaucratic system, cost money. But in the neo-con view, money spent on management control is well spent. So here in B.C. we have ever-expanding resources for management schemes, testing, and constant cheerleading for accountability, but we have diminishing resources for libraries, special education, and teaching resources.
- Expand management's mandate**
To expedite the agenda, tighten control, and ensure that the minutiae of the accountability scheme are attended to, managers need a broad mandate. They must be encouraged and assisted in developing and maintaining an array of mechanisms that will keep the accountability gizmos functioning. This means lots of training of administrators in techniques and procedures that assert management control and discourage the professional autonomy of teachers.
- Teacher supervision and evaluation**
One of the most important management control devices is supervision and evaluation of teachers. Principals in B.C. are now being encouraged to closely monitor teaching practice in order to ensure that the "goals will be met."

- Intensify teacher work**
Assure accountability through paperwork. Control teachers and erode their professional autonomy by giving them lots to do, especially paperwork. IEPs, 1701 forms, constant student reporting, testing, evaluation, and retesting all make teachers work like clerks and allow very little creative engagement in teaching. The neo-con agenda wants it that way. Creative teaching can't be measured.

- Isolate teachers from decision making**
An expanded management mandate, more control over teachers work, and mechanisms such as supervision have the added advantage of isolating teachers from real decision making and allowing even more top-down control of what happens in schools. Teachers don't have the time. They are too busy with paperwork, assessment, reporting, and so on and on. But if control is the goal, that's a good thing.

- Control professional development**
Accountability is all about results. Never mind what they are about; just get them. Professional development becomes staff development and is concerned only with setting and meeting goals. The professional concerns of teachers about such matters as child-centered learning, developing and modifying curriculum, and using alternative methodologies get no space in the mad dash to gather data, interpret it, set goals, and accomplish the accountability contract.

- Diminish the value of the professional teacher**
Isolating teachers from decision making, limiting the scope of their contracts, controlling professional development, and marginalizing teachers' work through economies of scale have the combined effect of turning teaching into an occupation, not a profession. For the neo-cons, that is good. Professionals are characterized by informed independent decision making and control of their working environment and conditions of work, all of which is dangerous to top-down decisions, externally set outcomes, and overall management control.
- Develop economies of scale**
If one of the desired outcomes is controlling costs unrelated to accountability, then economies of scale are crucial. Closing schools or school libraries, laying off special education teachers, and expanding online learning are examples of economies of scale. All of that of course intensifies teachers' work, isolates them from decision making and one another, and generally enhances the opportunities for tighter control of the system.

- Limit the scope of collective agreements**
Limiting the scope of collective agreements is often one of the first strands of the web of control. Since contracts affect working conditions, rates of pay, and other costs, control is vital. But contracts for teachers also apply to professional issues such as teacher autonomy. A web of control can have no space for such a nuisance.
- Pat Clarke is director of the BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division.*

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President's message



Jinny Sims

I recently travelled to Cuba to help evaluate our work with English as a second language teachers, one of the many exciting projects of our BCTF International Solidarity program.

On our last day there, we participated in a celebration of teachers and teaching. The event was so joyful and uplifting, it brought tears to the eyes of practically everyone present.

As I reflect back on that experience, I'm struck by how Cuba, a land with so many problems and so few resources, can teach us so much about valuing public education. And while many of our Latin American colleagues may be poor in economic terms, their professional lives are richer in terms of respect and rights.

Here in B.C., teachers strive to create an atmosphere of respect in our classrooms and our schools. We teach our students about standing up for their own rights and respecting the rights of others. We work at building respectful relationships with colleagues, parents, and administrators.

We frequently hear our politicians and their officials talk about their respect for teachers and the work we do, but we rarely experience respectful treatment. On the contrary, we've seen a total lack of respect in the way this government acts toward teachers and their union.

The B.C. Liberals have used their legislative hammer to gut our collective agreement and eliminate bargaining rights we fought for over decades.

They have imposed major policy changes without even pretending to consult the professionals they claim to respect.

They have implemented an intrusive program of teacher supervision that demonstrates utter disrespect for professional autonomy and personal integrity.

I returned home more determined than ever to work through our Federation to reassert our rights and reclaim the respect teachers in B.C. have earned through hard work and dedication.

Thank you for all you do for your students and our profession. I respect you for it!

Jinny

Teachers and the public need the truth

The origin of ProD days was not mentioned in the article "The case of the vanishing professional day" in the October 2004 issue of *Teacher*.

I think we should have much more and continuing publicity about the fact that teachers "paid" for ProD days when they were started in the 1970s. Minutes were added to the school day to make up for the five days that teachers "took off."

The idea of ProD days was for teachers to have time for meetings, workshops, training, etc. that was not available in the regular working day. Teachers were to plan these days for themselves as they saw fit. It was not for the government, the principal, the school board, or anyone else to plan them.

I think too many people, including teachers, do not know the purpose of ProD days. I hear parents, grandparents, and even non-teaching friends saying that there are too many holiday ProD days that they are paying for and that it is time that these days be taken away from teachers.

It is time the public and teachers knew the truth!

Do not let the government tell you what to do on these days! We have one of the best public school systems in the world. It's time for teachers to be encouraged—not demoralized—by constant negative criticism. Yes, there are areas for improvement as there are in any job, but encouragement is more likely to get results than the teacher-bashing that has been going on.

Lois Millington
Vancouver, retired

Achievement article not respectful of AOs

I think David Denyer's article "It's all about achievement" (*Teacher*, Nov./Dec. 2004) is not respectful of principals, district, and ministry staff.

They are not error free, but I have found them to be working long hours to do their best for teachers and children in spite of receiving little appreciation from others. To suggest that the activities involved in "It's all about achievement," and other efforts by these educational leaders, are "a top down paternalistic model of continuous surveillance" does not match my own experience in Burnaby and observations of their opinions or actions throughout the province. As well, I see no serious evidence that they are working to make "schools (become) work camps and children simply compliant human capital to be equipped with marketing skills" as he suggests.

I would suggest that David Denyer might turn down the rhetoric, and thoughtfully consider ways to provide helpful in-

formation and opinion that can engage others in real dialogue for the benefit of children and teachers.

Ray Myrtle
Burnaby

Trustees: Thanks for trying

I would like to take this opportunity to thank trustees Annie McKittrick and Patricia Wittaker for their passionate advocacy on behalf of Richmond students and teachers, and particularly for the motion they attempted to move through the October 18 school board meeting, calling on our elected trustees to write a letter to Minister of Education Tom Christensen and identify the effects of his ministry's drastic underfunding of our public education system here in Richmond. Unfortunately, trustees Linda McPhail, Sandra Bourque, Debbie Toblotney, and Andy Hobbs did not see the need to address this crucial issue with the minister, and defeated the heartfelt motion, citing the fact that we should not be looking to outside sources to solve our problems in Richmond, but attempting to address our difficulties internally through structural changes.

Well, I would like to dispel both the arguments of those trustees who believe we can solve the problems of our ailing classrooms and declining staff morale with a few internal shifts, and those in the education community who think professional development is going to give me the tools I need to meet the diverse and ever-growing needs of my ever-growing classes. I love being a teacher, and I believe I've been given a privilege and sacred trust to ensure that the students who spend one of their very precious years in my classroom are able to blossom and develop to their full potential in my care.

What our public schools need is not better teachers with better tricks up their sleeves. We already have one of the best educated and committed teaching populations in the world! What our public education system must have to function as it should is full-funding, adequate resources, and for the more than 2,500 bodies that have been removed from B.C. schools—such as teacher-librarians, ESL and resource specialists, teaching assistants, and a multitude of classroom teachers (increasing class size to unmanageable numbers) to be returned. This is not something the Richmond School Board is able to fix internally. This crisis in B.C. schools was created by our provincial Liberal government and their drastic underfunding. And only by the reversal of these situations will B.C. classrooms truly begin to meet the needs of B.C. students, and staff morale in schools begin to improve. We can only hope that, like Vancouver trustees, the Richmond School Board will realize their limitations, and put pressure in the only place it can truly make a differ-

ence—at the feet of the provincial government. It is their duty!

Tina Anderson
Richmond

Joining RTA pays off

In your September issue of *Teacher*, Owen Corcoran wrote a rather vigorous letter about the new college fees. Those of us not teaching would be relinquishing our permanent certificates unless \$37.50 found its way to the college treasury.

The newly elected council, sworn in on October 1, 2004, listened to our brief and moved quickly to eliminate that fee for teachers in receipt of a pension and not practising.

To those of the teaching fraternity who left the classroom this past year and joined the B.C. Retired Teachers' Association for the princely sum of \$35 in annual dues, your wisdom paid off, and you most assuredly got your money's worth. We will continue to keep your interests at heart, work on your behalf, and hope that you will encourage all of your colleagues to follow your example and join us.

Sheila Gair
President BCRTA

Teachers retired

These names were missed from the list of retired teachers in the Nov./Dec. issue of *Teacher*.

42 Maple Ridge
Mark Shirreff

39 Vancouver
Alan Crawford

47 Powell River
Bob Brewer
Bob Drage
Richard Hill
Richard Hughes
Victor Njume
Lorraine Parkinson
Ted Rodonets
Gail Scholefield
Pat Shortridge
Heinz Vitovec

78 Fraser Cascade
Ernestine Franson
Peter Morris
Muriel McMullen
Maureen Wendt

Reminder

The G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award may be made annually, at the AGM. Nominations of candidates for the award may be made by any Federation member or by a local of the Federation. For more details, see page 157 of *Members' Guide to the BCTF* or call Donna Coulombe, 604-871-2151, or toll free 1-800-663-9163, local 2151.

Deadline for nominations is Friday, February 18, 2005.

Public Education—Not for Sale II

Privatization of education at all levels is expanding as government cuts back on the funding of education. A conference called "Public Education Not for Sale II" being held on February 18–19, will examine the issues and focus on actions that can be taken to protect public education. It is a follow-up to a similar conference on the theme held in 2000.

Keynote speakers for the conference are both authors of books looking at the impact of commercialization on children. Heather-jane Robertson's book is *No More Teachers, No More Books: The Commercialization of Canada's Schools*. Juliet Schor's book is *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*.

In addition to these speakers, a range of workshops will look at issues related to privatization in the post-secondary system in B.C., as well as those affecting the K–12 schools, from school fees and fundraising to school district business companies. Action workshops will develop plans for challenging privatization and supporting public education.

Co-sponsors of the conference, along with the BCTF, are the other members of the B.C. Coalition for Public Education, as well as the B.C. Federation of Labour, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and the Charter for Public Education Network.

For more information on the conference and the registration form, check the BCTF web site at bctf.ca/notforsale/PrivatizationConference/.

Notice of AGM 2005

As required by *The Society Act*, the following formal notice of the 2005 Annual General Meeting is made to all BCTF members pursuant to By-law 8.1 by publication in this edition of *Teacher*.

The 89th Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation will be held in the Victoria Conference Centre, Victoria, beginning on Saturday, March 19, 2005 at 19:00 and continues to Tuesday, March 22, 2005.

General Provincial Election May 17, 2005

Teacher

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The B.C. Teachers' Federation does not endorse or promote any products or services presented in the advertising sections of the newsmagazine.

All advertisements will be reviewed and approved by the BCTF. They must reflect BCTF policy and be politically, environmentally, and professionally appropriate.

Canadian teachers support colleagues affected by tsunamis

Teacher organizations across Canada are rallying in support of over 10,000 teacher colleagues in South Eastern Asia whose lives have been affected and paralyzed by the recent disastrous waves of tsunamis.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) is actively responding to an urgent appeal issued by Education International (EI), the body representing millions of teachers worldwide.

"In classrooms across Canada, students and teachers mourn the monumental loss of lives while attempting to comprehend the sheer magnitude of this disaster."

"EI has already allocated 30,000 euros in aid of affected teachers in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and India," said CTF President Terry Price. "But more funds are urgently needed." CTF is inviting member organizations to contribute generously to

the EI Solidarity Fund in order to aid teachers and their families affected by the natural disaster.

Terry Price has written to the presidents of the teacher federations in countries affected by the December 26 tsunamis.

"In classrooms across Canada, students and teachers mourn the monumental loss of lives while attempting to comprehend the sheer magnitude of this disaster," she said in a January 5, 2005 letter.

"On behalf of over 200,000 Canadian teachers, please accept our heartfelt sympathy for the extensive loss of life and devastation caused by the tsunamis.

"We hope the worldwide response to the appeal issued by Education International (EI) will provide you with the springboard to help rebuild the future of the hundreds of thousands of innocent people whose lives were impacted by this crisis.

"Although we cannot bring back those who have died, we can help the ones who have survived. As teachers, we have a role to play in that we can help children of all walks of life comprehend the terrible images of this disaster which has brought home our vulnerability

to the forces of nature," concluded Price.

CTF is the voice of over 200,000 teachers across Canada. EI is the largest global

"Although we cannot bring back those who have died, we can help the ones who have survived."

teacher organization representing over 29 million education personnel from all education sectors, from preschool to university, through 345 member organizations in 165 countries and territories.

Related links

- Education International: www.ei-ie.org/main/english/index.html
- Canadian International Development Agency: www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/index-e.htm
- Oxfam Canada: www.oxfam.ca
- Canadian Red Cross: www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=000005&tid=003
- Save the Children Canada (excellent teachers' guide) www.savethechildren.ca
- UNICEF: www.unicef.org

Thinking of sponsoring a child? Read this before you decide.

by Pat Clarke

The tsunami catastrophe in South Asia may have many classes, schools, and school districts considering child-sponsorship programs through agencies such as *Plan* and *World Vision*. Before a decision is made to undertake that approach to disaster relief, consider the following.

Child-sponsorship agencies have administrative costs that are twice as high as other international organizations.

The well-known international agency *Save the Children* (SCF) did have a child-sponsorship program for many years. That organization has over the past several years withdrawn from child-sponsorship and has joined other international organizations such as *Oxfam* and *UNICEF* in discouraging that form of international assistance. The reasons for doing so are instructive and provide an insight into some of the problems with child sponsorship or, as it is sometimes described, "direct aid."

1. Save the Children discovered that too often sponsored children were resented in their communities and sometimes in their families. Sponsored children quickly achieve a position of privilege while surrounded by disadvantaged people. SCF found that sponsorship funds were often the cause of envy and sometimes conflict.

2. The agency also realized that child sponsorship has high

administrative costs. Child-sponsorship agencies have administrative costs that are twice as high as other international organizations. A larger number of administrative staff are required in addition to publicity and advertising carried out by sponsorship agencies. One dramatic example of SCF's costs is that one photograph of a child involving processing, mailing, and staff time was \$24, more than the child actually received for a month.

3. The greatest concern was the cycle of dependency that sponsorship could induce. Funds to individual children are not used to develop self-sufficient communities. They create a group of children dependent on charity for basic needs. In other words sponsorship is short term and ineffective, and it does not alleviate any of the real problems that cause poverty in developing countries.

The greatest concern was the cycle of dependency that sponsorship could induce.

In the case of the tsunami disaster, the primary concern will be the reconstruction of whole communities. Over the long term, the well-being of affected children will be ensured through stable, self-sufficient communities. While child sponsorship may offer our students a certain lesson in empathy, a longer lasting more meaningful lesson is the significance and value of community. Canada has many excellent international agencies dedicated to sustainable, equitable community development in the developing

south. UNICEF, Oxfam, and Save the Children are well known, but others such as Inter Pares, CUSO, and USC also have community-based programs in tsunami-affected countries. Any

...sponsorship is short term and ineffective, and it does not alleviate any of the real problems that cause poverty in developing countries.

of these, and other organizations offer worthy alternatives to child sponsorship.

Pat Clarke is director of the BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division. He was on the board of directors of *Save the Children BC* from 1992 to 1995 and worked for *CUSO* from 1986 to 1989.

Tsunami relief initiative

Teachers across B.C. are devastated by the impact of the South Asian disaster. In an effort to co-ordinate the BCTF response to the situation, we are developing a comprehensive Tsunami Relief Initiative in consultation with the Canadian Teachers' Federation and Education International.

Our response will focus on providing victims with immediate financial relief followed by longer term relief for children and their communities. Read more at bctf.ca/SchoolStaffAlert/Archive/2004-05/2005-01-05.html.



Education International (EI) President Thulus Nxesi and BCTF President Jinny Sims at the BC Fed Convention.

EI president visits B.C.

The new president of Education International (EI), Thulus Nxesi, thanked Canadians for the role they played in ending apartheid in South Africa when he spoke at the opening of the BCTF leadership institute in November. He thanked the BCTF, in particular, for its support in the development of his union, SADTU. Nxesi was elected head of Education International at its Congress in July, in Brazil.

Nxesi also spoke about what is happening to teachers around the world: "Whether you are a teacher in South Africa, Canada, or Asia, the issues are the same. The conditions may be different,

but the issues are the same: cuts in social spending, increases in class sizes, and casualization of teaching jobs. These actions of right-wing governments have set back global progressive forces."

He complimented the BCTF on joining the B.C. Federation of Labour and the recognition that we are all workers and must be acting together. Dividing progressive forces ensures loss, he said.

He urged the BCTF to continue the tradition of international solidarity it demonstrated in working with his colleagues in South Africa.

—Larry Kuehn

LOOKING BACK

70 years ago

There is an enemy within the gate. Apparently, there are those in the land who are taking advantage of the economic strain and stress under which we have been suffering to dim the light that has guided our course since pioneer days. It is being urged that we have spent too much money on education; that we are over-educated; that the schools are full of frills and fads and fancies that do our youth more harm than good; that all the education that is necessary for our children is a grounding in the three Rs.

Those who thus counsel us would turn back the clock for more than a hundred years. They do not seem to realize that civilization and education go hand in hand; that, in fact, education is the foundation rock upon which our civilization has been built. Weaken or destroy the foundation and the building erected thereon will totter or fall. It stands to reason that if universal education that supports and justifies our civilization is undermined, our civilization itself will suffer to a corresponding degree.

—The BC Teacher, January 1935

50 years ago

What is Sabbatical Leave? It is a period of time, not exceeding one year, which a teacher may spend in ways of self-improvement; he may use it for any or all of three important purposes: Research, Recreation, or Recuperation. During this period of self-improvement he may be paid a specific amount of wages. In 1952 the following suggestions were approved by the (BCTF) Annual General Meeting: That teachers seeking

Sabbatical Leave shall have at least seven years service with their boards, and that the rate of pay for a teacher on Sabbatical Leave shall not be less than 60% of his annual salary for the year immediately preceding the granting of such leave.

—The BC Teacher, January 1955

30 years ago

The universal language of music and song and dance should be introduced into our greatest people's institution, our public schools. Music is one of the great sources of life, health, strength, and happiness. Music has great unifying power. It is a great relaxer for tired nerves. It quickens the pulse and stimulates effort. It inspires lofty ideals and spreads the contagion of friendliness. It creates an atmosphere of unity and comradeship. Music is the great socializer.

—The BC Teacher, Jan./Feb. 1975

10 years ago

Why bother with induction of new members? And why have people recite or review the Code of Ethics at such events? Not only does the code let those new to the profession know the expectation of behaviors, but it serves as a reminder for experienced teachers. It reminds us how much simpler and productive our relationships with students, parents, and one another are when we follow the commonsense guidelines set out there. Our reciting the Code of Ethics at an induction ceremony serves not just as a welcome to the profession but as a link to those who have gone before.

—Teacher, Jan./Feb. 1995

Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich.

Vancouver teachers advocate for public education

by Verena Foxx

In your own province, at this very moment, the most basic principles of inclusive, universal, fully funded public education are being challenged." – John Ralston Saul, addressing SFU graduates.

It is becoming increasingly important for the minister of education and the publicly elected officials in British Columbia to know that there is strong support for a well-funded education system. Through advocacy and demonstrated success, the public education system can be preserved and improved. All individuals deserve to have access to the resources and opportunities that public education affords.

Vancouver teachers have become hands-on advocates of restoring adequate funding to public education, and also celebrating its success. In the month surrounding Education Week (March 1–5), elementary teachers in Vancouver will take part in *Schools in Action*. We will invite the neighbouring community into the schools and take the schools to the neighbourhood. Teachers in schools will share aspects of daily teaching routines with members of the public, who take part in, observe, and visit their community's schools.

Vancouver elementary teachers are represented at a district-wide advocacy committee, which includes representatives from all Vancouver School Board employee groups, elected trustees, and students.

The VSB Advocacy Committee has created an *Advocacy Toolkit*, implemented in various ways at different schools. For example, members of the school communities may fill out and send the minister of education a "Blue Ribbon" postcard, requesting an 8% funding increase to address the true needs of Vancouver students. Testimonials on the postcards reflect the diversity of the people writing them. Some are written in languages other than English. Toolkit suggestions include writing letters to the editor about issues that students are facing in schools today, discussing what adequate funding could mean for different programs, meeting with local MLAs to outline the ongoing impact of cumulative cutbacks, and contacting the school liaison trustee to speak at parent meetings.

The VSB Advocacy Toolkit, which can be adapted to other district needs, is available on the VSB web site: vsb.bc.ca.

Verena Foxx is the communications officer for the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association.



by Ken Novakowski

Don Wright, the government appointed one-person commission reviewing teacher bargaining structures, spent the better part of a year doing that review, and in the end, he got it wrong. Why?

Wright had two options with respect to his recommendations. He could see collective bargaining as a process in which a level playing field is essential to successful outcomes, a process in which parties (the employer and employees) come to a table as equals and can resolve differences because they are equals. Or he could view collective bargaining as a process in which one party comes to the table (government, which ultimately makes all the rules anyway) and maintains its control over bargaining outcomes, one way or another. Unfortunately Wright chose the latter. In doing so, he ignored over 30 years of teacher-collective-bargaining history and committed the next generation of teachers to a potentially career-long struggle for equality and fairness at the bargaining table.

History has shown us that teachers will not live with a bargaining system such as the one proposed by Don Wright.

Two fundamental rights of employees are integral to a full, free collective bargaining system: the right to negotiate all terms and conditions of employment and the right to withdraw services in order to resolve a dispute at the bargaining table. The current government took both rights away from teachers, and Wright chose to accept the "new order" as a given in his recommendations. In doing so, he ignored the rulings of the International Labour Organization of the United Nations against the Liberal government's legislation limiting the teachers' right to strike, and he re-established a framework for resolving teacher working conditions that existed over 15 years ago in pre-collective-bargaining days. We used to call that system collective bargaining, and for good reason.

History has shown us that teachers will not live with a bargaining system such as the one proposed by Don Wright. Beginning in the 1960s and into the 1970s, teachers, through the B.C. Teachers' Federation, engaged in campaign after campaign to reduce class sizes and to improve teachers' working conditions and students' learning conditions. But no amount of policy discussion with school boards or brief submissions to government got results that would provide teachers a significant say in determining their working conditions. It took collective action by teachers to achieve that.

In 1967, following a BCTF commission on intolerable learning conditions, the Federation launched an under-40 campaign, declaring that any

teacher with 40 or more pupils in her or his class would get full financial and legal support from the Federation if she or he refused to teach the class. That action took matters a step forward, but an even more significant event leading to reduced class sizes happened seven years later. On February 15, 1974, Surrey teachers walked off the job and travelled to Victoria to protest large class sizes and demand increased provincial resources for public schools. It was a spontaneous act decided at a well-attended general meeting the day before and overwhelmingly supported by the members of the Surrey Teachers' Association. That action was the stimulus for an agreement between the BCTF and the Dave Barrett NDP government of the day to implement a staged class-size reduction over a number of years. The agreement committed government to provide additional funding to reduce the pupil/teacher ratio (PTR) and class sizes, resulting in the hiring of thousands of teachers. In 1972–73, the PTR was 22.68, and by 1981–82, it had dropped to 16.70. The collective and united action of teachers had brought results.

But those results had not been enshrined in a collective agreement, and the restraint period that began in 1982–83 brought about funding cutbacks that increased class sizes and reduced the number of teachers. Up to that time, we had never had to deal with teacher reductions; the public school system was always growing, and the demand for teachers was high. Because we did not have the right to bargain all matters related to our employment, we had no seniority provisions, no means of determining a fair layoff procedure. And when the government introduced a package of 26 bills into the legislature on July 7, 1983, attacking labour, civil, and human rights on a broad front, the BCTF responded by helping

to organize Operation Solidarity, a common front of trade unions. As part of a wider labour action, teachers across B.C. withdrew their services for three days in November 1983 trying to get the government of the day to back off from its legislative assault and, in the case of teachers, to provide us the legal basis for negotiating seniority and layoff

in fact, final offer arbitration proposes a system much worse than what we had before 1987.

People in government and our partner groups constantly talk about the respect they have for teachers. I look forward to the day when "respect" will translate into a recognition of and support for some basic rights for teachers, starting with collective-bargaining rights. Don Wright could have led the way. By choosing not to, he makes it clear to teachers that if we want collective-bargaining rights, we will have to find other means to achieve them. Maybe the upcoming provincial election will give us an opportunity to begin to do that.

Ken Novakowski is the BCTF's executive director.

Without our right to strike, the employer need not take teachers seriously, and it usually doesn't.

procedures in our agreements with school boards. From that point forward, B.C. teachers saw the connection between bargaining and the right to strike. They realized that pressure on the employer or government to come to an agreement can be effective when we act collectively by withdrawing our services. The threat of withdrawal of services comes with the right to strike, whether or not the right is exercised. Without our right to strike, the employer need not take teachers seriously, and it usually doesn't. The right to strike makes collective bargaining work.

Our collective and united actions led to legislation four years later that gave teachers full bargaining rights: the right to bargain all terms and conditions of employment with the right to strike. When the current Liberal government legislated education as an "essential service" and made it illegal to negotiate class-size and composition into our collective agreement, it was setting the clock back a whole generation. Don Wright had the opportunity to recommend a system that would have given teachers some hope. Instead, he recommended a system that offers no solutions to the problems teachers raised in our discussions with him and,

The Wright Report: A summary

What's included?

1. Two-tier bargaining with additional items for negotiation at the local level, e.g., leaves, discipline and dismissal for misconduct, evaluation, layoff and recall, post and fill.
2. Policy discussions with government to deal with class size, class composition, and staffing levels.
3. Final offer arbitration of unresolved items following a phased bargaining process.
4. Creation of a single common provincial agreement by March 31, 2006.
5. Alternate year expiry dates for local and provincial agreements.

What's not included?

1. Right to negotiate all terms and conditions of employment, i.e., class size, class composition, staffing levels.
2. Right to strike/lockout.
3. More publicly accountable employer bargaining agent.



Two Langley teachers, Mohammed Chelali, a Muslim, and Ehud Yaniv, a Jew, received a standing ovation as they eloquently spoke of the need to bring down the walls that separate communities. The resolution in opposition to the Israeli wall being built inside Palestinian territory passed at the B.C. Federation of Labour Convention received overwhelming support from the delegates.

Teachers attend BC Fed convention

It is important for teachers to be represented at the B.C. Federation of Labour Convention because...



Jeanie Lucas
Delta

...public education is under attack. This government has ripped up our contract, slashed WCB protection, increased class size, closed schools and libraries, and yet sells our dogwood to other countries because of our excellent international reputation. This government is willing to use teachers' creative ideas and energy to bring in dollars, yet it doesn't support us in the classroom or in the media. BCTF affiliation with the B.C. Federation of Labour gives us the strength of half a million British Columbian voices, vital voices in our fight for the adequate funding of this marvelous institution. The B.C. Fed lobbies strongly for social justice issues that affect the students in our classrooms. The B.C. Fed lobbies for worker rights and salaries that result in the money that feeds and

houses our students. Affiliation only strengthens our fight for a properly funded public education system in British Columbia.



Ren Morley
Surrey

...the BCFed is the organization that shares the values of teachers. What do we value? We value equality of opportunity for all students. We care for the most vulnerable. We care about a public education system that produces students capable of thinking critically and equipped to be reflective, analytical, global citizens. We care about human rights, about listening to and acting alongside and on behalf of individuals and groups who are ignored by the powerful elites and corporations. We care about healthcare and public control over the management of our province's natural wealth and resources.

We belong at the BCFed because this is where our values can be moved forward into action. The BCFed is a team of affiliated unions like the BCTF. We belong on this team where we can fight for social justice alongside a diverse group of thousands of workers who are united in our struggle for a better society and a better world.



Mohammed Chelali
Langley

...teachers are at the heart of the movement to bring B.C. back to its grassroots, ordinary citizens. Being represented at the BCFed will help unite all the labour forces to stop the destruction of our public system. Unity is essential to defend public education. Public education is the unique way for a better and brighter future.

It is important because we have the same issues—healthcare, education, and jobs that are at the heart of our battle.

How to become a BCTF-endorsed candidate for the College of Teachers' Council

The second round of elections for the BC College of Teachers' Council under the new provisions of the *Teaching Profession Act* will take place in April/May 2005.

The BC College of Teachers regulates the teaching profession in B.C. The college has as its mandate teacher education, teacher certification, and member discipline.

Governing the college is the 20-person council. Twelve of 20 council members are elected by the membership; eight council members are appointed by the minister of education.

A council member makes policy decisions, makes quasi-judicial decisions concerning individuals and institutions, represents the college on various external committees, and communicates with members.

Elections are held in four of the 12 geographic zones each year. In 2005, elections will be held in North Coast (1), South Central (3), Lower Mainland East (8), and Lower Mainland West (10). The term of office begins August 1 and ends July 31 three years hence.

The BCTF provides for the zonal selection of a BCTF-endorsed candidate in each zone where an election is being held. Only active BCTF-member

candidates are eligible for BCTF endorsement.

Each local has the right to select one nominee endorsed by an executive, a delegate assembly, or a general meeting of the local. Each local nominee must undertake to abide by the endorsement process. Once a local has nominated a candidate, the name of candidate is forwarded to the BCTF staff co-ordinator. The co-ordinator ensures that each local in the zone conducts a vote to determine the zone's BCTF-endorsed candidate by secret ballot.

The BCTF publicizes among members the names of all BCTF-endorsed candidates. The BCTF provides funding to assist local nominees in seeking to become BCTF-endorsed candidates. The BCTF also provides funding to assist endorsed candidates in the college elections.

If you are interested in being considered as your local nominee for the BCTF-endorsed candidate in one of the college zones where an election is being held, contact your local president as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about BCTF procedures for endorsing candidates, contact Mike Lombardi, BCTF staff, 604-871-1849, toll free-1-800-663-9163, local 1849, mlombardi@bctf.ca.



Is it a library or a bookstore?

by Chris Bocking

My elementary school library has been closed for almost a week. Why? Well, a huge transnational corporation based in the United States has been using it as a profit centre. Yes, Scholastic Corporation has set up its books, pencils, stickers, and posters in attractive displays, and the students have been encouraged to bring money to school to support this "book" event.

Teachers who see Scholastic as a benign presence like being able to purchase books and stickers for their students. They argue that book sales raise money for the library. I suggest that these reasons are insufficient and that teachers should not support commercialism in the public school system.

Richard Robinson, who is not only chair, but also president and CEO of Scholastic Corporation, says on his company's web site that his company is "dedicated to helping children around the world to read and learn." How noble.

That mammoth company had revenues of \$2.23 billion in 2004. Elsewhere on the web site, we learn that the good people at Scholastic are "helping

children learn, grow and be happy."

Staggering profits could not be achieved without willing support and tireless efforts of the teachers who volunteer tens of thousands of hours promoting Scholastic's products to their students, collecting the forms, filling out papers, supervising book sales, and so on.

Scholastic is excited about the Internet's possibilities for bringing future growth. In May of 2004 alone, Scholastic's teacher web site had 1.26 million unique visitors. I have heard from teachers about the ease of ordering products online or using Scholastic's phone service.

Does anybody still want to consider the library the heart of a school? Closing it down and turning it into a private, for-profit book and junk-item store to raise money is wrong. That should not happen. And teachers' time could be spent in better ways than padding the profits of the largest book company on the planet.

Chris Bocking teaches at Keating Elementary School, Saanich.

For information on the upcoming *Public Education Not For Sale II* conference, February 18-19, 2005, see article on page 2 of this issue.

Teachers' tips

Instructional strategies for large classes

by Steve Naylor

Many teachers today are teaching larger classes because class-size limits were stripped from collective agreements. Teaching large classes is taxing and tiring. The undemocratically elected College of Teachers, the imposition of school planning councils, the intrusion of FSA and Grade 10 examinations, and the constant barrage of teacher-bashing headlines, add to our stress. Here are some ways to deal with oversized classes in a time of ongoing attacks on public education.

Ten instructional strategies that work with large classes

1. Whip around, pass option

Ask each student in your class to speak to an issue or a topic or say "I pass." The purpose is to increase the number of students who contribute ideas and to give students practice in staying on task. Some teachers limit the number of "I pass" statements.

2. Question, all write

After you ask a question, give the students a minute or two to write an answer before you call on one or more students or announce the right answer. All students will be thinking about the answer, not just the ones who respond by raising their hands.

3. Outcome sentences

Give your students a chance to reflect on the lesson or demonstration by giving frames such as *I learned... I'm beginning to wonder... I was surprised*. This technique allows students to create meaningful

learning for themselves and to help them develop the habit of reflecting on their learning.

4. Voting

Ask questions such as *How many of you... Who agrees... Who feels...* Having students respond with a show of hands maintains the pace of the lesson. Also, some students may feel less intimidated when they can raise their hands with their classmates instead of answering individually.

5. Turn to your neighbour

Sometimes during a lesson or lecture, it is a good idea to vary the pace and give the students a chance to talk. Having them discuss with a partner for a few minutes encourages students to summarize and listen. Follow-up questions such as *Bob and Jane, what did you talk about?* are a good extension.

6. Choral work

Remember when you learned your times tables by chanting them? At times, rote learning is essential. Having students repeat information aloud in unison helps them memorize material in a relatively easy way. The energy of the class is also heightened.

7. Speak/Write

If you feel you must lecture for an extended period, pause every few minutes and have your students write personal reactions, summaries, questions, etc., about what you have been saying. The learning power of lectures is increased, and students are encouraged to be active listeners.

8. Think aloud

When you are analyzing a poem, describing a process, or

working through a problem, talk out loud to the class, and describe your thinking. You give students a model of how your thinking proceeds. In fact, it is good for students to see you struggle once in a while and to illustrate that thinking is not always linear.

9. Guided practice

Once you have demonstrated a technique or procedure, guide the students through a similar question or problem. Ask, *What is the next step?* or *What should we do now?* as you work with the class. This is an important step in moving students toward independent work. The ultimate goal is, of course, mastery of the concept.

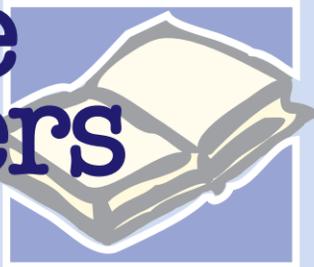
10. Review test

Working through a sample test one question at a time may be less intimidating than having a whole test as a review. Reveal one question on the overhead, and have all the students write an answer. Then announce the correct answer, or ask for a range of answers before moving to the next question. Students will review the subject matter and quickly correct any misunderstandings. Most students should feel successful and ready for the next stage of learning.

The ideas in this article are adapted from *Inspiring Active Learning: A Handbook for Teachers*, by Merrill Harmin. The book was published in 1994 by ASCD, 1250 N. Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA, 22314. ISBN 0-87120-X.

Steve Naylor teaches at Salmon Arm Senior Secondary School, Salmon Arm.

New Westminster Secondary School Students are SmartReaders



by Sarah Wethered

New Westminster Secondary School's reluctant readers are coming to the library on their own to choose novels to read. Helping to bring that about is the SmartReading program, developed by Susan Close, assistant superintendent, and implemented by Judy Adamson, library department head, and Nadya Rickard and Robin Speed, English teachers and part-time learning facilitators for the district.

Drawing on her 20 years of experience as a teacher-librarian, she began acquisitioning a new collection of high-interest books that would meet the criteria for fluency.

SmartReading grew out of the need for students to meet the literacy standards set by the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), of which Canada is a member nation. The literacy standards require students to "consider, discuss, and talk about their understandings of text, and also about the various processes of reading" (Allington, 2001; OECD/PISA, 1999).

Close drew on the findings of the Learning for Success project she was leading as she developed SmartReading. With Learning for Success, 14 school districts worked together to develop strategies to improve thinking, reading, and writing. Close also drew on the research by Richard Allington and his six Ts of effective reading instruction:

Time—Teachers give to students at least 90 minutes a day of "eyes on" and "minds on" text.

Texts—Teachers provide a rich and extensive supply of texts.

Teaching—Teachers explicitly demonstrate cognitive strategies good readers use.

Talk—Teachers encourage teacher-to-student and student-to-student talk.

Tasks—Student work is substantive, is challenging, and requires self-regulation.

Aligning testing and teaching—Teachers use rubric- or performance-standards-based assessment and evaluation.

Allington advocates a three-pillared approach for reading instruction:

- Word work, including phonemic awareness and symbol imagery.
- Fluency, decoding test with a 95% accuracy.

- Comprehension, using the eight strategies that powerful readers do.

Close structured the six Ts and three pillars into a nine-step SmartReading framework that pulled all the research together.

SmartReading with independent texts was introduced to NWSS students in the fall of 2003. Nadya Rickard and Robin Speed worked with Judy Adamson to implement the process. All three teachers (as well as many of the other NWSS staff members) attended training. Students were then brought to the library to apply SmartReading strategies through self-direction.

Adamson spent most of the summer of 2003 choosing novels for SmartReading students. Drawing on her 20 years of experience as a teacher-librarian, she began acquisitioning a new collection of high-interest books that would meet the criteria for fluency. Students need to be able to read at the speed of speech. Adamson wanted to find award winning and/or highly recommended books that students would love to read, not have to read. Out of Adamson's initial selections grew the SmartReading collection, now more than 1,200 novels. SmartReading is housed in the fiction section at NWSS, but it is on a separate bank of shelves. Each book bears a "SmartReading" sticker, a smiley face. Students know that the smiley-face books are the newest, most interesting novels the library has.

Classes are brought to the library for up to four days, and the classroom teacher and Adamson lead the class through a selection process.

When not leading classes in the library using SmartReading techniques, Adamson spends a lot of her time finding new books for the collection and creating book talks on the acquisitions. Students know that she is the fiction expert and that if she cannot find the perfect book at the moment, she will find it or create a list of books that are nearly perfect. Behind her is Marnie Chandler, library technician, and me, the second teacher-librarian, who process and catalogue the books for circulation and read many of the new novels so that we can also make recommendations to students.

Independent SmartReading was introduced at NWSS to help improve the reading and confidence of struggling students. Students who had never read independently were required to read one novel a week and be accountable for it through such activities as

interviews with the teacher and class writes. Students rose to the challenge, and in two months, doubled the circulation of the previous year.

This year, independent SmartReading has spread to all levels of the English curriculum, from ESL to IB English. Classes are

Many students move from never having read a novel in their entire life (not even the ones assigned in class) to reading 15 or more a semester.

brought to the library for up to four days, and the classroom teacher and Adamson lead the class through a selection process. Students read in 10-minute chunks and practise SmartReading strategies. A different novel is used for each chunk. Students also engage in meaningful structured talk (A/B partners), discussing not the plot, but the big ideas. Originally, the books for students to choose from fit onto a few carts wheeled into the reference section. Now, the novels take up several banks of shelves in the fiction section, so tables are rearranged in the section to accommodate the class. It is a rare week that the tables are moved back to their original arrangement.

Many students move from never having read a novel in their entire life (not even the ones assigned in class) to reading 15 or more a semester. Students are excited to share their opinions about their recent reads with the library staff, their teachers, and, most important, their classmates. Students have learned that reading is fun and are not afraid to tell anyone who cares. As one student noted in her reflection, "SmartReading helps me [keep thinking all the time] and it let me feel like I am really using my brain."

As a result of SmartReading, fiction circulation has increased 650% since September 2002. The library staff are constantly checking in the returned items and reshelving them to keep up with the demand of the SmartReaders. Additional copies of extremely popular items have to be ordered. The novels fly out of the library. All libraries should have that problem. With the spread of SmartReading into other curriculum areas, who knows what will happen next year, but it will be an exciting adventure for the library staff, teachers, and students of New Westminster Secondary School.

For more information on SmartReading, visit www.smartreading.ca.

Sarah Wethered is a teacher-librarian, New Westminster Secondary School, New Westminster.

The college versus the columnist

by Nancy Knickerbocker

Every other week for the past couple of years, Andrea Phillpotts' work has appeared on the Opinion page of her community paper, *The Richmond Review*, circulation 46,000. She writes upbeat columns on issues in schools and the wider community: the debate over school uniforms, the four-day week, multiculturalism in the classroom, and the truth about teens (they're wonderful people).

"After the birth of my second child, I felt this new creativity and I started writing," said Phillpotts, a secondary English teacher. "My column is very positive, very pro-kids and pro-education." It's certainly not controversial: "It's actually quite fluffy."

In a January 2004 column, Phillpotts explored the personal question of whether to enroll her daughter in French immersion, and the political and practical aspects of the growing demand for immersion and the resulting overcrowding in local schools. She also reported on various factors parents discuss when deciding where to enroll their kids: "French immersion programs generally have fewer students with special needs, often have very committed parents, and always have more funding than regular programs."

Within days, the father of a student with special needs had written a letter of complaint, not to the editor but to the superintendent. He concluded with a demand for an apology in the next column.

Richmond Superintendent Bruce Beirsto suggested that because Phillpotts was writing as an independent citizen, not a representative of the district, she alter her byline to ensure greater clarity on that point. She promptly did so. In addition, at the end of her next column, she wrote: "I would like to acknowledge and applaud all the dedicated and hardworking students and parents, of all abilities and backgrounds, in Richmond and other school districts."

With that, Phillpotts felt she had done what the superintendent and the parent had requested. As a strong proponent of integration, she wanted to set the record straight on "who I am as a teacher," she said. "What hurt most was the thought that even one of those students I care so deeply about would feel that I didn't value them—that really hurt."

That's why it came as such a shock to receive an official letter stating she was under investigation by the B.C. College of Teachers as a result of her column. Ironically, the letter came on May 3, World Press Freedom Day.

Phillpotts' editor at the paper, Bheandain Clugston, wrote to the college. "As you are aware, the British Columbia College of Teachers has no jurisdiction over *The Richmond Review* nor its content. It has nothing to do with Ms. Phillpotts' teaching performance or abilities. This should be an issue between a reader and a newspaper and I would hope that the College not pursue the matter further."

Ah, but the college *did* pursue it further. Its preliminary



Andrea Phillpotts is taking her case to the B.C. Supreme Court, arguing that the college's actions infringe upon her right of free speech.

investigations subcommittee determined that the matter was serious enough to warrant further action, and it required her to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Do you now have a better understanding of the role you must play as a professional in your community? Please explain.

2. Do you understand that your out-of-school conduct is not congruent with a public school teacher's professional image?

3. What reassurances can you provide the College that this conduct will not be repeated?

Phillpotts response? "I honestly could have answered number one in the positive, but not two and three. They said my behavior was inappropriate, unprofessional. I absolutely don't accept that."

Her initial reactions were self-censorship and self-doubt. She thought about quitting writing the column. "I realized I had started to silence myself," she said. "I was paranoid about the role of a teacher in society. Could the college control all aspects of our lives even outside school?"

"It's my duty to fight this," she said. "It's important to do it for all teachers."

As the stress mounted, Phillpotts lost sleep, lost weight, even began to lose her hair. But with moral and legal support from her local and the BCTF, she became determined to fight the college's attempt to stifle her right to free expression. She's taking her case to the B.C. Supreme Court, arguing that the college's actions infringe upon her free speech rights as enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"I've always encouraged my students to speak out, and taught them about the rights we have here in Canada under the Charter. If I quit, what's the message to them?" she asked.

A former student, Aviva Levin, echoed that question in a letter to *The Richmond Review*: "...to me, this struggle is about essential lessons as much as it is about basic freedoms. In Ms. Phillpotts' class I was taught to take pride in my ideas and in my writing and never be ashamed to share them."

When she's feeling discouraged, Phillpotts turns to a thick file of letters of support from students, parents, and colleagues and feels her resolve renewed. "It's my duty to fight this," she said. "It's important to do it for all teachers."

Nancy Knickerbocker is the BCTF's media-relations officer.

Health and Safety

What's that you say?

by Maureen L. MacDonald



Universal truth: Good acoustics enhance all students' ability to learn.

Unfortunate truth: Poor acoustics abound in schools.

Is anybody listening?

Hard-of-hearing students learn better in classrooms that have good acoustics. All students learn better, and all teachers teach better in classrooms with good acoustics. The following specific student populations receive great benefit: profoundly deaf, hard of hearing (including children with recurring ear infections), central auditory processing disorder (CAPD), learning disabilities, developmental delays, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD), and second-language learners.

Students with special needs have IEPs that outline plans to optimize their learning. Are acoustical engineers on the planning teams? Who, if anyone, is recommending how to eliminate the noise problems by installing sound-absorbing walls or ceilings or by using portable or built-in sound-field systems?

School planners are late to learn the importance of acoustics. Schools often have no acoustical design. There are no

provincial standards for school acoustics. It is common to have poor acoustical environments, with excessive noise and reverberation. This is detrimental to communication between teachers and students, to learning and language development, and to the health and well-being of teachers. This situation is not confined to old schools. The newest schools, built on the cheap, can be the worst. Hard surfaces, sloped ceilings, and industrial steel beams absorb no sounds.

What makes the little red schoolhouse "green"?

There is a "green school" movement that sounds appealing at first. However, it includes the notion that natural ventilation will occur if the windows open and the walls between the classrooms do not reach all the way to the ceiling. If I remember my elementary school science lessons correctly, when the air flows over the walls, the sound goes with it. Will you volunteer to teach next to the music room or the metalwork shop or the Kindergarten?

When there is too much noise, teachers usually raise their voices. Students need to hear over the bothersome heating/

ventilating/air conditioning (HVAC) system, the PE class outside the window, and the traffic on the busy street a few metres away. Teachers speak up despite the fact that loud does not mean clear. Vowels mask the high frequency sounds such as th, sh and ch. Not all the students understand the message. Learning suffers. The teacher's voice suffers.

We teachers depend on our voices as professional tools, but unlike singers and actors, we are not trained to use them effectively. Many of us simply accept sore throats and loss of vocal power as occupational hazards. Drinking lots of water and using non-verbal signals will help save the voice, but speech therapy or medical treatment may also be needed.

Teachers' voices are at risk

WCB statistics show that the incidence of voice dysfunction among teachers is on the rise. Teachers are five times more likely than the general population to have voice problems. According to Dr. Linda Ramnag, program director, half the patients at the Provincial Voice Care Resource Program at Vancouver General Hospital are teachers. Voice problems among teachers represent a rising cause of teacher illness, use of sick leave, stress, and WCB claims. Many of the same teachers have concerns about indoor-air quality. In extreme cases, teachers have been forced to cut short their careers.

Make a noise

The Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee at each

worksite is there to receive information about health and safety hazards, including noise levels and voice dysfunction. The committee will recommend solutions to problems. If the problems cannot be resolved at the school level, they will be referred to the district level. The district must respond to recommendations within 21 days. You've heard me sing this song before! It's a favourite of mine.

Whether a teacher's voice dysfunction is caused by the working conditions or by a separate medical condition, the employer has a duty to accommodate the worker. File a WCB claim. See your doctor. Keep a written record of events. Don't give up. Call your local president for help.

Buying basic portable sound-field systems, when required, for about \$1000 each, would save money for school boards, the WCB, and the healthcare system. At the same time, teachers and students would benefit. There would be no losers.

SNAG

SNAG, the ad hoc School Noise Action Group on which I represent the BCTF, is actively attempting to change the way schools and classrooms are designed. SNAG is setting up a research program in preschool (Berwick), elementary and secondary (Vancouver), and post-secondary (UBC) classrooms. Preliminary local studies indicate that noise levels only rarely and for short periods go down to ANSI (American National Standards Institute) standards, and teachers talk much louder than was previously thought.

Sound advice

Tell your school trustees and your MLAs to recognize expertise. If 42,000 BCTF experts tell them that school acoustics need upgrading, they'll have to listen.

Recommend to your local that it get involved in planning good acoustics for new schools, and for renovations of existing acoustically inferior schools.

Goodbye

This is the last in a series of articles I have written as the prevention officer in the Health and Safety Department. My term appointment to the BCTF staff ends on February 11. I'll become a teacher-librarian at the brand new Elsie Roy Elementary School, in Vancouver's Yaletown, on February 14. If you wish, you can reach me there at my school e-mail address:

mmacdonald@vsb.bc.ca.

It has been my privilege to be on the BCTF staff. Working with grown-ups is just as enjoyable as teaching children. I'm happy to have had a chance to do both.

For the next four years and six weeks, our health and safety program is in the capable hands of Mark Keelan (mkeelan@bctf.ca) from Surrey, on the prevention side and Gail Montgomery (gmontgomery@bctf.ca), from Prince George on the WCB claims and appeals side.

Maureen L. MacDonald is the prevention officer in the health and safety department for a few more days.

To add your name to the BCTF Occupational Health and Safety e-mail list, contact Whitney Burgess: wburgess@bctf.ca.

On being well

Spirituality in the workplace

by Julia Johnson

The National Quality Institute promotes workplace health by setting aside one week each October when organizations and businesses learn the importance of healthy workplaces. Interest in spirituality, its relationship to personal wellness, and its role in creating a healthy work environment is burgeoning. Practical applications appear in books on "spirituality in the workplace" by Matthew Fox, Deepak Chopra, Stephen Covey, and Thomas Moore. In light of the articles by Amber Harvey in the September and October issues of *Teacher* entitled "Why teach Spirituality?" I thought I would share some views regarding workplace health, wellness, and spirituality.

In the *Financial Post*, November 22, 2004, Laura Fowlie wrote that the Frank H. Sobey Faculty of Commerce at Saint Mary's University (SMU) in Halifax is going to be "the first business school in Canada to launch a full-fledged centre devoted to the teaching and study of spirituality at work" with the aim of making Atlantic Canada a leader in this field of study. Allan Miciak, dean of Saint Mary's business school, states, "Spirituality at work is about creating better workplaces and has little to do with religious dogma and theology." The educational goals will be to teach "business in a better, more humane, and more sustainable way."

Martin Rutte, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*, suggests that society has

a compelling inner longing for spiritual fulfillment brought on by the generation now entering their 50s. Typical of this age group is the exploration of long-term values, legacy, personal fulfillment, and service. As this demographic group is atypically large, their new concern for the bio-environment, with their increased understanding for the need to become involved in its

In an age of uncertainty, where downsizing and having to do more with less is the norm, employees are fearful and insecure.

preservation and their emergent spirituality, is making spiritual exploration mainstream.

Michael Stephan, career coach and former chair of the insurance and financial services firm Aetna International, points out that even though "companies for years have created mission statements, credos and codes of conduct to express their corporate ideals, there is a difference between saying it and really meaning it." Stephan believes that "spirituality at work" arises from the ethical concerns resulting from corporate scandals.

At the grassroots, "spirituality in the workplace" or "spirit at work" represents a trend in business, where employees are seeking to find, at work, ways to address the needs of their heart

and soul. In an age of uncertainty, where downsizing and having to do more with less is the norm, employees are fearful and insecure. They are looking for an atmosphere of trust, where everything a business does is grounded in sustainable values, where the beliefs and values of the employees are aligned with the work they do, where work is creative and meaningful, where employees feel supported, and where a sense of community enables employees to integrate their personal growth into their daily work life thus enabling them to live lives with greater congruity.

In 1999, I completed a masters thesis on teacher wellness in the context of spirituality in the workplace. I asked, "Do teachers think their spiritual well being is important in the work they do?" I was interested in teacher wellness because I found myself among colleagues who looked as if they wanted to be somewhere else.

When SMU established the Centre for Work and Spirituality, Cathy Driscoll, associate professor, stated, "Work, for many people, has no connection to what they love. It's a job, a paycheque, or it's all about getting to the next level, the next job. It has little to do with family or friends, nothing to do with making the world a better place, and does not allow people to express themselves or their deepest beliefs. No wonder millions of Canadians would rather be anywhere but at work."

For my study, I defined wellness as "the integration and harmony of the physical,

intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of our lives and is affected by the degree to which one is able to progress forward and upward toward a higher potential of functioning," and spirituality as "Spirituality in the workplace is not religious, but a spiritual discipline that is experiential and humanistic, where each individual is viewed as having a responsibility to develop to their highest potential in order to serve the needs of the world."

In the workplace where my study was conducted, spiritual wellness was given little regard. Only 56% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that spiritual wellness is important in the work they do. When teachers

Every situation, relationship, and problem we encounter on the road to maturity offers lessons about ourselves.

were asked to rate their spiritual well being, less than half, 44%, rated their wellness in this domain as good or excellent. According to Brian Luke Seaward (1991), "spiritual well being transcends all other components of the wellness paradigm, and is the very core of wellness." If we believe this to be true, then clearly, for teachers in this study, spiritual wellness needs attention.

Harvey believes that we are already teaching spirituality in

many ways and all we need to do is acknowledge these teaching practices. However, even though I concur with this point of view, I also think teaching spirituality is more complex when viewed in the context of personal wellness, workplace health, and social responsibility.

I believe that each of us is a spiritual being on a path of self-discovery. Every situation, relationship, and problem we encounter on the road to maturity offers lessons about ourselves. As we journey on this earth, we must bring our spiritual beings into balance, for only when we experience wellness in all of our domains will the gifts with which we have been blessed flourish, enabling us to bring balance to the world.

When we commit to making personal wellness a priority in our lives, we become healthier. In doing so, we become instruments of healing, for ourselves, for others, and for our planet. That is our reason for being, and that is what we must teach.

Julia Johnson, a learning resource teacher at Red Bluff School in Quesnel, is a BCTF-PD wellness associate. johnsonj@abccom.bc.ca.

Who took my Primary Program?

by Lori Robinson

As a primary teacher in this province for almost 20 years, I was always proud that B.C. led the way in developmentally appropriate teaching approaches, especially our *Primary Program: A Framework For Teaching (2000)* and its predecessor, the Primary Program (1990). However, over the past year, classroom primary teachers in B.C. have had to deal with a growing number of issues. With Federation and PSA Council support, the B.C. Primary Teachers' Association (BCPTA) is working with teachers to provide support, research, and strategies for dealing with some serious challenges.

Data-collection frenzy

Some districts have implemented a Kindergarten screener or assessment-data-collection tool that has required K teachers to collect information through individualized assessment of four- and five-year-olds. Some districts intend to use the information to provide "baseline data" for school growth and district accountability plans. Information being collected includes reading level, phonemic awareness, letter recognition, spelling ability, and writing skills—all in Kindergarten. The Ministry of Education's curriculum resources currently support Kindergarten as a developmental year; the earliest outcomes are established for late Grade 1. Districts are creating their own lists of expected outcomes, and in some cases, they are setting outcomes that are more difficult for students to attain than the Primary Learning Outcomes established by the Ministry of Education. There are no performance standards for Kindergarten in reading, writing, or numeracy.

One local primary chapter reports that K teachers are being asked to administer the assessment tool three times during the K year. Teachers in that local estimate that up to six weeks of teaching/observing/conferencing time is lost in class for that testing.

Ready, Set, Learn

In September 2004, the minister of education announced *Ready, Set, Learn* (RSL), to bring three-year-olds into the school for two visits. The program gives schools and districts the opportunity to bring together parents and resource staff from within the district and community to give parents information on support and contacts available to support child development. Each school participating will receive \$2,500. This is a positive step to bridging home, school, and community and create an inter-ministerial welcome wagon for families to the public school system.

Districts, however, are approaching RSL in a variety of ways. In some cases, teachers are being directed to organize and implement the project on their own time. One Fraser Valley primary chapter president reports that all K teachers were told they had to be at their schools at 6:30 p.m. to host the event with no compensation or time in lieu.

Loss of play

More teachers are reporting that the play centres and time for learning through play have been reduced over recent years, because of outside influences. Part of this has come from district directions for programs. Time spent at learning centres is, in some classes, being replaced with guided reading, worksheets, and writing practice. Play, advocated by the Primary Program as an essential component in all primary classrooms, is being lost.

The Canadian Association for Young Children is quoted in the Primary Program:

For over 100 years, researchers have studied play and have found that play:

- enhances a child's language development.
- encourages creativity and problem solving.
- provides a context through which the child develops representational thought, an essential foundation for reading, mathematics and science.
- develops higher motivation to learn and develops higher self-esteem (page 33).

Primary teachers are concerned that if we become so intent on teaching product-based learning, learning the processes and being an active participant in the learning process will be lost.

The Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching, may be downloaded for viewing and printing at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/primary_program/welcome.htm.

Childhood stress

I was encouraged to read in a recent *Macleans* article, "Stressed Out," by Sue Ferguson, November 22, 2004, that parents are starting to strike back at the pressures being placed on children at home and in the school. "Called into action by evidence of mounting stress levels among kids, the [parents] are dedicated to bringing child's play back to childhood." Ferguson cites educational and medical experts who attribute "anxiety as the most common cause of childhood psychological distress, affecting up to 20% of North American youngsters."

The author also homes in on "the term *school readiness*, "once denoting a child's ability to separate from her/his parents for a few hours without too much fuss and go to the bathroom by herself/himself, now refers to her/his mastery of early numeracy and literacy skills."

The article is available at www.macleans.ca; search for "Stressed Out."

Early literacy programs and professional autonomy

Increasingly, districts are targeting literacy as a goal in the accountability plans. To do this, some districts are targeting intervention programs for their youngest learners. Instead of looking at young children as "at promise," they are labeling students as being "at risk" for not meeting an arbitrary standard at an early age. There is a definitive loss of autonomy in primary classrooms as districts mandate programs.

In a joint position statement from the International Reading Association and the National

Association for the Education of Young Children, researchers present many powerful tenets about early literacy programs, including:

"Until children reach a certain stage of maturity all exposure to reading and writing, except perhaps being read stories, is a waste of time or even potentially harmful."

"Recognizing the early beginnings of literacy acquisition too often has resulted in use of inappropriate teaching practices, suited to older children or adults perhaps, but ineffective with children in preschool, Kindergarten, and the early grades."

These powerful statements, part of a joint position statement by the IRA and the NAEYC, titled "Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children," originally published in *Young Children*, July 1998, 53 (4): 30-46, are available at www.naeyc.org/ece/critical.asp.

Primary teachers are dismayed at the challenges being imposed from outside influences and driven by the quest for accountability. The excellence in our system has always been in the quality of the teaching and learning opportunities in our classrooms. Together, let's ensure that the Primary Program, the hallmark of our educational excellence, supported by research and practice, is easily found on our desks, in our staff-rooms, and in our programs.

The B.C. Primary Teachers' Association works with its members to support developmentally appropriate primary education in this province. More information and updates on current issues may be found on our website: www.bctf.ca/bcpta.

Lori Robinson teaches at Nicola-Canford Elementary School, Lower Nicola, and is the president of the B.C. Primary Teachers' Association.

The Primary Program: Power within the pages

by Glen Gough

In 1990, the Ministry of Education released *The Primary Program*. In 2000, the ministry updated and rereleased it as *The Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching*. Today, despite practices that contradict its spirit, the document is still "recognized by Minister's Order #M283/98, which identifies *The Primary Program* as an educational program guide." It is the only "comprehensive, general overview for primary educators" recognized in our province, it has achieved worldwide recognition and exposure (by notable educators Carla Hannaford and Alfie Kohn, to name just a couple), it has been used in other jurisdictions as their model for quality primary instruction (Iowa, Nebraska, Kentucky, Oregon, and others), and it "integrates current knowledge and research (italics mine) on learning and teaching" (*The Primary Program*, p. 13).

The philosophy is rock solid. There is power within its pages. What makes it such a worthwhile document for all primary teachers? Revisiting the most important aspects of the document should remind all teachers of its relevance in our professional practice.

Contained within its pages is unmistakable genuine care for children. Teachers care. We know we are not simply teaching to the top 80% of children.

Every teacher can attest to the individuality of the children they teach. We are serving children from a diverse community, with a multitude of experiences, histories, and cultural realities. It is ridiculous to think, and irresponsible to assume, that any cookie-cutter program, test, policy, or teaching style, will work for all children. Let us be honest: The hardest hit when such tactics are used or imposed are the most vulnerable children in the system. *The Primary Program* graciously allows teachers to teach and modify to every child's needs to facilitate

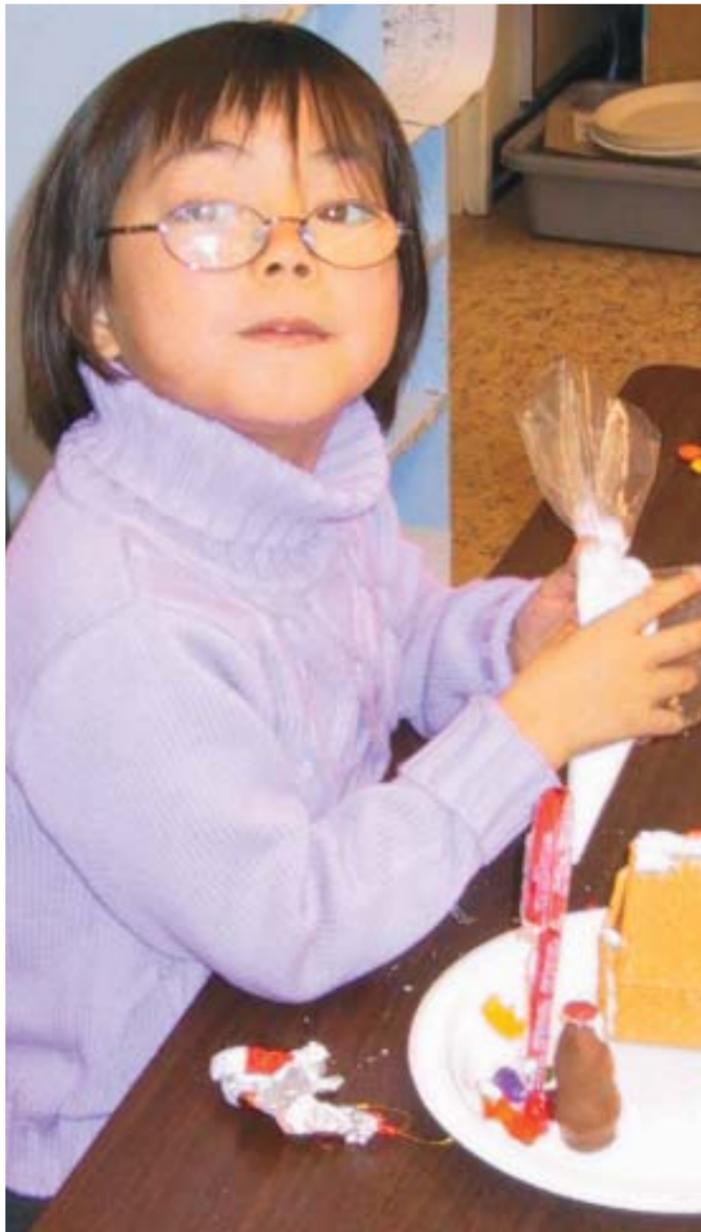
Play is vital for children to learn how to interact with the world.

continuous learning mindful of where they start. "Cookie-cutter education" simply points out who is being left behind. The ability to teach within the primary program's philosophy allows teachers to guide every child toward her or his highest potential.

"The program addresses the development of the whole child." (p. 16). The five areas of development—the artistic, the emotional and social, the intellectual, the physical, and the socially responsible—are crucial for all human beings. The primary years are the foundation on which we build the future success of students in school, and adults in society. Sacrificing one area of development for another, risks damaging the all-important foundation. "The five areas that together address the development of the whole child provide the foundation on which *The Primary Program* is built." (p. 20).

It recognizes that the value of play in the primary classroom should never be minimized. "Through play, children represent their knowledge and further explore their world. Play should be seen as an essential experience that extends, enhances, and enriches a child's learning (p. 33-34). We need only to stop by a primary classroom to see when the students are most engaged: during the playtime. Play is vital for children to learn how to interact with the world. Even as we age, although the play may change, our need for engaging in the activity does not. However, increasingly, playtime, whatever you may call that time, is being lost for "more accountable" activities. This is a loss to the quality education our children deserve. One researcher, J. Brierley, as quoted in the program, states, "all forms of play appear to be essential for the intellectual, imaginative, and emotional development of the child and may well be necessary steps to a further stage of development." (p. 34).

One of the greatest assets *The Primary Program* gives to us is the section on assessment, evaluation and reporting (p. 158-175). Whatever the techniques used by teachers to gather information on their students'



LORI ROBINSON PHOTO

learning or how that information is reported to parents, we know from countless sources that assessment and evaluation must, in the end, support the child's learning. It must help teachers to make new plans for instruction. The whole process is aimed at student improvement, and it values the student

However, increasingly, playtime, whatever you may call that time, is being lost for "more accountable" activities.

as an individual, as well as the teacher's professional experience, knowledge, and caring for each student.

The involvement of parents in a child's education is also a priority outlined in the primary document. Parents' involvement in the primary years is important, but "the benefits of parental involvement are not confined to the early years; there are significant gains at all ages and grade levels" (p. 180). Communication is the key.

Without effective, ongoing communication, there is little likelihood that you will have the positive parental involvement that is necessary to develop a beneficial learning partnership.

What contributes to the power within the pages more than anything, however, is the abundance and variety of research support for the principles of *The Primary Program*. All the research: had similar conclusions from a variety of sources and methodologies, met rigorous criteria, had conclusions that were appropriately comparable, and the evidence is compelling (p. 17-18). The program is full of quality and convincing research on how best to meet the needs of the primary children in British Columbia.

The Primary Program is still relevant, or should be, to ALL primary teachers today. Take it off your shelf, and give it another read. There is power within the pages. Despite current trends in our education system, the research contained within this document is irrefutable, and if primary teachers are to provide the highest quality of education to our youngest learners, *The Primary*

It is time we take a stand, holding up our copy of The Primary Program, and let those who attempt to minimize it know that the highest quality should never be taken from our children.

Program is a must. Find your copy today, or go to www.bced.gov.bc.ca/primary_program/welcome.htm to download or print yourself a new copy.

It is time we take a stand, holding up our copy of *The Primary Program*, and let those who attempt to minimize it know that the highest quality should never be taken from our children.

Glen Gough is a Kindergarten teacher at G.W. Carlson Elementary School, Fort Nelson, and first vice-president of the B.C. Primary Teachers' Association.



Louise Gonsalvez with a group of women from the Ghana National Teachers' Association offices. Project Overseas sponsored Gonsalvez to help them develop their business and computer skills.

Project Overseas

by Louise Gonsalvez

In the spirit of volunteerism, as a Longfellow admirer, I take up "the battle to help a brother in his strife." My Project Overseas task coordinator and I are to teach business and computer skills to women working in Ghana National Teachers' Association offices, GNAT. As with many

voyages, the journey alters our perceptions. Expecting to deliver skills to advance the women's positions and economic status, I am rewarded with my own lesson: Amid poverty, disease, and near non-existent infrastructure, the human spirit can still soar with reverence and joy. The key ingredient is valuing one another and revering the opportunities each day affords.

I am reluctant to leave the coastal beaches of Accra, to embark upon our long journey to the distant north. Yet, that is where we experience life-altering events. "Honk, honk, rattle, rattle, crash, beep, beep," and we are on the road to Tomale. Overloaded trucks on the red-earthed road to deposit books, soccer balls, and frisbees to a remote village. We are

greeted by cheering children, Blonnie! Blonnie!—many of them have never seen a "white woman." Mud huts, thatched roofs, and we are escorted to greet the chief. After the ceremonial presentation of the books, we are presented with 200 pounds of yams and a bleating goat digging in its heels. A van full of supplies and suitcases, gifts we must not refuse.

Our first day of classes, and we are greeted with singing by our students. Their voices are as melodic as a fine choir. In Ghana your name reflects the day of the week upon which you are born and your sibling position in the family. I become Abiba Manu or Ama Mensa, depending on whether I was born in the southern Christian area or the northern Islamic area. But within a few days, I am greeted as Sister Louisa! To these women, a week of professional development, is valued no less, than a week-long seminar at a resort. They demonstrate reverence for learning, commitment to work, and a youthful vigour to *carpe diem*. Their educational highlights are *Yahoo.com* and *Google.com*, as these were their vehicles to another world. Their chatter resonates on the return from our grassroots Internet cafe. The women's hearts capture my soul, and I'm the one most grateful for this experience.

Louise Gonsalvez teaches at Sparwood Secondary School, Sparwood.

Un défi: comment garder nos élèves dans le programme d'immersion jusqu'à la fin des études secondaires

Par Ghislaine Varin

Le programme d'immersion continue à grandir en Colombie-Britannique. Cependant, nous entendons parler du nombre décroissant d'élèves en immersion au secondaire. Dès l'élémentaire, plusieurs facteurs minent la persévérance scolaire. Conséquemment quand les élèves qui choisissent de persévérer en immersion arrivent en onzième et douzième année, leur nombre a diminué à un tel point qu'on ne peut souvent offrir une variété de cours ce qui contribue à la décision de continuer dans le programme ou non. Nous devons donc chercher à améliorer la persévérance scolaire afin de garantir la continuité de ce programme qui est reconnu et qui permet à nos jeunes de terminer leurs études secondaires dans le programme d'immersion.

Saanich est un des districts où nous retrouvons un taux élevé de persévérance scolaire en immersion. Madame Anne-Louise McFarland, enseignante à l'école secondaire Stelly's, a développé et guidé le programme bilingue dans le district. Elle relie le succès au fait que Saanich soit un des rares districts scolaires qui offrent le programme de français de base à compter de la maternelle ce qui a un effet positif et stable pour le programme d'immersion. Le français est valorisé et les parents protègent leur choix d'inscrire leur enfant dans le programme d'immersion ou en français de base. Le travail acharné du chapitre local de Canadian Parents for French a joué un rôle majeur pour garder

le début du programme de français de base au niveau de la maternelle.

De plus, il n'y a pas de limite à l'inscription dans le programme d'immersion.

Pour créer un sentiment d'appartenance et de communauté, les élèves du secondaire participent à des activités avec les plus jeunes. Par exemple, les jeunes du secondaire écrivent des contes de fées qu'ils transforment en grands livres illustrés et qu'ils lisent aux élèves de l'élémentaire. Ils aident les plus jeunes durant les activités culturelles telles que le carnaval. Afin de valoriser l'habileté de parler en public en français, tout le monde participe au concours oratoire. Les discussions dans les salles de classe sont toujours encouragées au début de chaque cours - le plus de controverse le meilleur. Pour rendre les classes plus amusantes, il y a des compétitions de repas de classe, habituellement autour d'un thème comme Noël ou Pâques. « Après tout, une culture est comment vous vivez dans la langue » dit madame McFarland. Il y a aussi le voyage en Europe qui est ouvert à tous les élèves d'immersion française et d'anglais durant la semaine de relâche.

Pour couronner la fin de l'année scolaire et la remise des diplômes aux finissants de la 12^e année, un grand événement est organisé. Les finissants ont un lien très fort avec le programme. Un outil efficace est l'échange de cadeaux entre les petits de la maternelle et les finissants. En fait, c'est l'événement le plus grand du chapitre CPF de Saanich. Les finissants écrivent une lettre

inspirante à un jeune partenaire décrivant quelques-unes des choses merveilleuses dont ils ont fait l'expérience en étant dans le programme d'immersion. Puis il y a une grande fête où tout le monde est invité : les parents des enfants de la maternelle et de la douzième année, les parents des gagnants du concours oratoire, les parents des enfants de l'orchestre et de la chorale car il y a de la musique durant l'intermède, les commissaires d'écoles et le directeur général du district, ainsi que les députés, le maire et les journaux ! Les finissants prononcent leur discours en français et en anglais et tout le monde est là pour célébrer le succès du programme d'immersion. C'est une grande publicité en même temps.

Pour accueillir les débutants de 12^e année, madame McFarland organise un barbecue chez elle en septembre. « Cette année, c'était pour 50 ! J'ai un mur de photos dans ma salle de tous les barbecues précédents, voyages et activités que mes étudiants ont appréciés au cours des années. Le nouveau groupe d'étudiants de 12^e année reconnaît les anciens étudiants et ceci a un impact sur la continuité du programme. »

Le programme d'immersion est un programme de choix et de haute valeur qui est de plus en plus populaire en Colombie-Britannique. Plus de 35 000 élèves y sont inscrits cette année et les nombres continuent à augmenter. Les enseignants et enseignantes qui se consacrent à ce programme exigeant continuent à investir leur énergie et leur passion dans leur salle de classe de façons

créatives pour encourager les jeunes à persévérer dans le programme. Cependant, la persévérance scolaire au secondaire continue à être une inquiétude. Selon les modèles de succès tels qu'à Saanich, l'inscription au programme d'immersion doit être non restrictive ce qui garantit un nombre suffisant d'élèves au secondaire pour pouvoir offrir plusieurs options de cours nécessaires pour l'entrée à l'université. Les directeurs d'écoles et de conseils scolaires doivent appuyer le programme. Les parents peuvent jouer un rôle important dans la défense et la promotion du programme à ces niveaux et dans la communauté. Les enseignants et enseignantes doivent être les défenseurs et les porte-paroles du programme en utilisant tous les moyens de publicité disponibles à l'intérieur de leur école et partout dans leur communauté. Avec cet appui et cette publicité, les élèves reçoivent un message clair : le programme d'immersion est spécial, captivant, valorisé et mène à l'obtention d'un diplôme à la fin des études secondaires.

Synopsis

School districts that strongly support the French immersion program are successful in retaining their students until graduation. The involvement of teachers, principals, school boards and Canadian Parents for French continue being important factors in valuing French and making the French immersion program a success.

Ghislaine Varin, Coordonnatrice des Programmes et Services français de la FECSB.

ACCOUNTABILITY, TES

Where are the Finns?

by Richard Walker

If you knew that I had recently seen *Finding Nemo*, you might suspect that my headline indicates questionable spelling proclivities. However, I thought I would “scale” back on my usual soapboxes and spend some time with “accountability” in this issue. Teachers have been facing some pretty “fishy” manifestations of accountability promoted by our current government—everything from FSA scores driving accountability measures to the

Although the group concluded that B.C.’s education system is world-class, they cited a few areas, like Aboriginal students’ success rates and meeting the needs of students with special needs, that could be improved.

latest five-minute drive-by teacher supervision model.

The scope of the government’s strategy should come as no surprise to anyone who read the first draft recommendations of the Select Standing Committee on Education the Liberals sponsored at the start of their mandate. Although the group concluded that B.C.’s education system is world-class, they cited a few areas, like Aboriginal students’ success rates and meeting the needs of students with special needs, that could be improved. The measures needed to correct these deficiencies apparently required massive changes to the entire education structure. One could argue that the changes have worked to the detriment of the majority of students in the province and have provided no gains for the groups for whom they were supposedly enacted. The entire exercise has been like finding a patient with a broken ankle and attempting to correct it with brain surgery.

And how does anyone assess how B.C.’s education system is doing? Do we rely on international testing, the equivalent to our FSA? It’s tempting because these tests show B.C. doing extremely well compared with other countries. The U.S. does not rate very highly. On the other hand, I came across an article that took an unusual approach to school-system assessment. It examined graduation rates and participation rates in post-secondary institutions. It also examined the socio-economic backgrounds of

the students. The measure of a public school system’s success was the degree to which public schooling equalized the success rates between have and have-not students. It was gratifying to see that, comparatively, we did reasonably well on that measure as well. The U.S.A.’s rating

The entire exercise has been like finding a patient with a broken ankle and attempting to correct it with brain surgery.

worsened in this style of measurement.

I received an e-mail the other day from one of the elected college councilors. He said that a young teacher he had sponsored had gone to Texas to teach. She had won some kind of state recognition award as the “best teacher in Texas” for the year. That put her in the running for an equivalent award at the national level. The councillor acknowledged that the person was indeed quite good for a beginning teacher. However, he was left with some skepticism about the quality of a school system whose “best” teacher was an import in her second year of teaching.

We in B.C. live close to the “elephant” Pierre Trudeau identified. As educators, we understand Trudeau’s metaphor, and we feel the grunts and scratches. In our case, it manifested itself in the deluge of educational “reforms” that emanate from our neighbours to the south. We’re quick to pick up the latest and eager to try for ourselves some of these initiatives—even if by the time we see them, they’re starting to fail down there. We invite

On the last set of international tests that were widely publicized, Finland just edged out Canada in several literacy areas. So, when it comes to inviting delegates to help improve our educational system, where are the Finns?

southern gurus to lead us to the promised land. Yet by every assessment measure that I’ve seen, their system is much worse than our own. On the last set of international tests that were widely publicized, Finland just edged out Canada in several literacy areas. So, when it comes to inviting delegates to help improve our educational system, where are the Finns?

Richard Walker is president of the Comox District Teachers’ Association.

Reprinted from the Comox District Teachers’ Association Newsletter, November 2004.



B.C. students score well on PISA results

The Organization for Co-operation and Development carries out a testing program in 41 countries to produce international comparisons of “outcomes.” In announcing the results, *The Vancouver Sun* front-page headline on December 7, 2004, said “B.C. students among world’s best in reading, math, science.”

The results of this test of 15-year-old students reflect a decade of learning experiences. The high results for B.C. students do not reflect the changes to the education system made by the current government. The Liberals’ education policies will likely lead to worse results in future years.

The students who wrote the exams in 2003 were among the first to begin school using *The Primary Program* created in the early 1990s.

The Primary Program provided a good start by addressing the development of the whole child. It reflected an understanding that children learn through engagement and play, accommodating the broad range of children’s needs, their learning rates and styles with an integrated curriculum incorporating a variety of instructional models, strategies, and resources.

Changes made in the last three years will likely have a negative effect on the students who will be writing the PISA a decade from now:

- larger class sizes
- less support for students with special needs
- changes to *The Primary Program*
- increased standardized testing, thereby narrowing the curriculum, at the Grade 10 and 11 levels.

The country that has led all others in the two rounds of the PISA exam program is Finland. The school system in Finland does not use standardized tests that narrow the curriculum. We should be looking to Finland as a model, rather than bringing in approaches and “experts” from the U.S., whose system produces results that are not as good by these measures.

—Larry Kuehn

The problems behind the Fraser Institute awards

Many media outlets have carried news that five Vancouver public schools (Magee, King George, Kitsilano, Byng, and U-Hill) have refused a nomination for an award from the Fraser Institute.

Alex Grant, principal of Magee, sent a polite note declining the nomination and stating he had little confidence in the institute’s “ability to conduct a meaningful assessment.”

Peter Cowley, the institute’s director of school performance studies, asked for clarification. Here is Alex’s response.

Dear Mr. Cowley,

It was not my intent to enter into a debate regarding your awards program; however, I would be pleased to have Magee recognized for excellence in any aspect of our school program, including academic excellence, if the assessment of excellence was credible.

Your Report Card on Secondary Schools purports to rate and rank schools, yet it ignores entire dimensions of student performance. My criticism of the Fraser Institute ratings is not based solely on the fact that areas such as Music, Art, Drama, Business Education, Physical Education, Special Education, and Technical Studies are completely ignored; I object to the manipulation of a limited data set to produce a rank ordering of schools from 1 to 279 as though such a feat had meaning or validity. One of the more obvious shortcomings of your data analysis is evident in your rationale for including a rating according to the number of provincially examinable courses taken per student. It is simplistic in the extreme to suggest that, “for most students a decision to take advantage of these courses is a good one and a school that is successful in encouraging students to take

these courses shows that it offers practical, well-informed counselling.” This is analogous to ranking diets on the basis of their recommended intake of protein; since protein is essential for a healthy diet, those that recommend the greatest daily intake of protein (regardless of age, sex, weight, medical condition, etc.) must be the healthiest!

A hallmark of practical, well-informed counselling is the tailoring of advice to the individual’s talents, interests, and aspirations. Among those students who plan to attend university, three to five provincially examinable courses may be required for admission to a range of programs, although certain specialized programs require or recommend some Grade 12 level courses that are not provincially examinable. Once admission requirements are met, there is no compelling argument for assigning value to a provincially examinable course and no value to a non-examinable course. If Magee students stopped enrolling in Music courses and switched to provincially examinable courses (even if those courses were neither of interest to the students nor required for their post-secondary plans), then

I object to the manipulation of a limited data set to produce a rank ordering of schools from 1 to 279 as though such a feat had meaning or validity.

Magee’s ranking on this indicator would go up. This is not evidence of a well-considered indicator.

Each of the eight indicators you have chosen has some surface validity; however, by limiting your assessment to those indicators that are easily reduced to a number (and then forcing a rating of 0 to 10 for each, coupled with some dubious statistical methods, including calculating an average examination percentage from a



TESTING, AND RANKING

set of weighted mean scores on a diverse set of examinations), you have missed most of what really matters in schools. The main reason that you have no competition in the business of ranking schools is that those who understand schools also understand how complex, contextual, subjective, and in the end, how meaningless an exercise it is.

You ask for suggestions regarding output measures for music and/or art. Your question betrays the flaw at the heart of your ranking/rating system—if it cannot be easily measured or reduced to a number, it will not

It would be more honest to report average examination scores by subject and weight each of them according to participation rates.

fit into your system. I do not mean to suggest that it is not possible to distinguish between music or art programs of greater or lesser quality; rather, it is possible but not simple. After spending a bit of time considering how one might rate or compare a choral jazz program to a classical strings program it is quite natural to question just what is gained and what is lost by reducing an entire school to a number that is reported to one decimal place.

I note that you have plans to include participation in inter-school sports teams as a new indicator in future ratings. Again, you may be taking something with surface validity and reducing it to a meaningless number by ignoring contextual issues such as:

- Are staff members required by contract to coach or sponsor teams?
- Are students required to sign up for one or more sports?
- Is there a strong community-based league in competition with schools for the athletes' time?
- Does the school have a strong intramural program?
- To what extent do climate, community facilities, cultural, and socio-economic factors limit or encourage participation?
- If some participation is good, is more necessarily better?

In summation, the best suggestion I can offer in regard to improving your Report Card (short of eliminating it) is to stop amalgamating disparate types of data to produce a single rating/ranking for schools. It would be more honest to report average examination scores by subject and weight each of them according to participation rates. The disaggregated data are much more meaningful and provide a clearer picture of student performance. It would also help to clarify that you are not actually rating schools (they are far too complex for your limited data set to capture), you are rating student performance on provincial examinations.

Alex Grant, principal, Magee Secondary School, Vancouver.

Who funds the Fraser Institute?

by Donald Gutstein

Aspirant reporters are taught to "follow the money" when doing business or government stories. Who's financing the project? Who will benefit from the rezoning or the tax break? Who will lose out?

Last year, the Fraser Institute celebrated its 30th anniversary. A gala was held in Calgary for 1,200 well-fed libertarians, conservatives, and reactionaries. Only two numbers were mentioned in the news coverage: 30 and 1,200. Missing was the more important number: 100 million, the dollars, more or less, that have been funnelled through the institute over the years.

Early on, Executive Director Michael Walker had to scramble to meet his payroll of \$100,000. Last year, he brought in \$6.6 million, the largest amount in its history, vaulting it past some of its sister propaganda outfits in the U.S. When averaged, the grand total is about \$100 million.

Forgetting what their journalism pros told them, reporters never asked who's pouring that much money into the think tank, and why?

True, it isn't easy to answer this question unless Walker divulges the information, and for once, he's not talking. Canadian law for tax-exempt societies does not require contributors to be made public.

In their fawning coverage of the institute's anniversary party, reporters never asked who has poured \$100 million into the right-wing think-tank, and why.

The institute's annual report provides a breakdown by category of donor: 52% from foundations, 38% from organizations, and the remainder from individuals.

Tax-exempt foundations must list recipients of their grants, so it is possible to identify most of the foundation money. Four large Canadian foundations provide the lion's share of nearly \$3.5 million from that source.

Until recently, the leader was the Donner Canadian Foundation, a key organization in the project to change the ideological fabric of Canadian society. It is known as paymaster to the right, and it's safe to say that the reactionary right would have made little headway in Canada in the past decade without Donner's backing. Stephen Harper would be a nobody, for instance.

Donner, with assets of \$200 million, gives out two million a year to right-wing causes. In the



LORI ROBINSON PHOTOS

mid-1990s, it established three new libertarian think tanks: the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, in Halifax, the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, in Winnipeg, and the Montreal Economic Institute.

Corporate contributions are buried in the institute's accounts.

In 2002, the latest year for which figures are available, Donner contributed nearly half a million dollars to the Fraser Institute, including \$200,000 for Donner Awards in the Delivery of Social Services. This is a program to undermine government by ostensibly demonstrating that the voluntary sector does better than the public sector in delivering social services. (So who needs government?)

In their fawning coverage of the institute's anniversary party, reporters never asked who has poured \$100 million into the right-wing think-tank, and why.

Donner also gave \$100,000 to start CanStats, a Fraser Institute division that purports to monitor how the media report science and statistics. Most of the work is done by ideologues who are neither scientists nor statisticians. Noam Chomsky and Ed Herman call this activity "flak." By criticizing and harassing mainstream media, flak organizations can pull media reporting to the right.

By the late 1990s, right-wing Canadian foundations were exhibiting the same coordinated funding behaviour

There's a representative from Pfizer, the world's largest multinational drug company.

that made the American foundations so formidable. This dangerous development occurred after Michael Walker joined the board of Calgary-based Max Bell Foundation in 1996. (He left in 2003.) Along with Donner, Bell began providing large sums for school-choice

projects, which are designed to destabilize public education, including \$500,000 to the Fraser Institute and similar amounts for charter schools in Alberta. Max Bell also provides money for an intern to marshal the evidence in favour of for-profit healthcare.

Walker reined in two more foundations to support the school-choice work, the Lotte and John Hecht Memorial Foundation, whose money came from selling arms, and the W. Garfield Weston Foundation, whose money comes from a less colourful source: selling biscuits. Galen Weston, Canada's second wealthiest person, and his family are becoming the most important funding source. They have committed more than \$10 million on the institute's school vouchers program.

Corporate contributions are buried in the institute's accounts. It's been 20 years since Walker released a list of corporate members. But a look at the board of trustees reveals some interesting patterns.

If the media don't tell the story, Canadians won't know about the Fraser's reactionary agenda.

There's a representative from Pfizer, the world's largest multinational drug company. Just coincidentally, since Walker claims no trustee can tell the staff what to do, the Fraser has a pharmaceutical-policy division, which attacks internet pharmacies that provide cheaper drugs for Americans, disparages critics of drug-company policies regarding distribution of HIV/AIDS drugs in Africa, attacks generic drugs, and opposes the ban on direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs, all of benefit to Pfizer.

There's big and small oil and gas money from Calgary (Gwyn Morgan of EnCana, R. J. Pirie of Sabre Energy). Just coincidentally the Fraser has supported climate-change skeptics for nearly a decade.

There are investors from Vancouver (Peter Brown, of Cannacord Capital) and Toronto (James McGovern, of Arrow Hedge Partners, who manages \$300 million in hedge funds for high-net-worth individuals). Just coincidentally, cutting corporate and income taxes has been a Fraser mainstay.

If the media don't tell the story, Canadians won't know about the Fraser's reactionary agenda.

Another interpretation is that the Fraser is a small cog in a global wheel of reaction designed to roll back the democratic gains of the 20th century.

It's not obvious why the CBC's coverage of the gala was so uncritical and boosterish. Perhaps the public broadcaster is cowed by decades of anti-CBC flak generated by the institute.

CanWest Global's slavish coverage is more understandable. David Asper is no longer a trustee. He resigned when he became publisher of *The National Post*. But *The Calgary Herald* was a sponsor of the event, and former Fraser Institute intern Danielle Smith, a *Herald* editorial writer and now host of Asper's *Global Sunday*, emceed the evening.

The Ottawa Citizen editorialized that the Fraser Institute is a dissenting hero standing up to the socialist establishment. Another interpretation is that the Fraser is a small cog in a global wheel of reaction designed to roll back the democratic gains of the 20th century. Hundreds of millions of corporate and foundation dollars make the wheel go round.

Donald Gutstein is a senior lecturer in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. He was co-director of Project Censored Canada and NewsWatch Canada and is currently working on a book about corporate propaganda. Source: www.straightgoods.com

TOC call-out systems—the need for objectivity

by Kendra Litke

BCTF policy 49.19 states the following:

(a) That the BCTF encourage locals through mid-contract modifications, to secure contract language that provides for an objective TOC callout procedure. (b) That the BCTF locals be encouraged to seek elimination of the practice of contract teachers calling out, selecting, or expressing a preference for particular TOCs to fill a teacher absence.

The rationale for the policy is based on five principles:

1. Professionalism
2. Code of ethics
3. Solidarity
4. Workplace rights
5. Social justice

Current practice

There exists in some districts a common practice of contract teachers calling out, selecting, or expressing a preference for particular TOCs to fill a teacher absence. This is either done directly or through programming the preferred teacher into an automated dispatch system. This practice, based upon informal evaluations of teachers by their own colleagues, results in inequities among our members.

Professionalism

TOCs are required to have the same professional qualifications as contract teachers and are hired as teachers on that basis and in the same manner. For contract teachers to express a preference among TOCs undermines our professionalism.

BCTF Code of Ethics

Provision 5 of the BCTF Code of Ethics declares it inappropriate for members to openly critique the teaching performance and related work of a colleague. Contract teachers rightly expect not to have their

teaching performance openly ranked or evaluated by their peers. The selection of one TOC over another implies that a contract teacher has evaluated the performance of the TOC.

Solidarity

Divisions, competition, and power inequalities among the members of any trade union undermine the effectiveness of the trade union goals. By allowing a system where contract teachers express a preference for TOCs, an informal but nevertheless powerful employer-employee relationship is created. In addition, the need for TOCs to "sell themselves" creates competition between TOCs. This undermines both our solidarity and the dignity of our profession.

Workplace rights

Contract teachers have fought for, and rightly demand, due process.

In appointments to teaching positions, contract teachers rightly expect a clear objectivity based on seniority. This removes favouritism and nepotism in a process where the teacher's livelihood is at stake. This transparency, due process, and accountability are great assurances for contract teachers. A callout is the livelihood of the TOC and, as teachers, TOCs deserve no less. When a contract teacher calls out, selects, or expresses a preference for a TOC, there is no transparency, no accountability, and no due process available to the TOC.

Social justice

In a preferential system, those TOCs who have the time, money and assertiveness to market themselves receive the most callouts. This puts those who are less aggressive, without transportation, or unable to bear additional childcare costs at a distinct disadvantage and runs counter to the BCTF principle of social justice.

Consistency

In the last provincial bargaining round an objective (seniority

based) callout procedure, along with seniority credit for each day worked, was demanded by the BCTF. It is difficult to ask our employer for something that we do not practice ourselves. Seniority-based callout along with accrual of seniority for each day worked will assist TOCs whose goal it is to become contract teachers.

Future practice

The 2003 Annual General Meeting passed the motion "That the BCTF investigate call-out procedure options and contract language to provide as models for locals..."

Three different models have been developed:

- **Rotation**—In this model, the board assigns TOCs on a rotating basis within their areas of qualification. The first person on the list is offered employment; the procedure continues until every TOC has been contacted and then the cycle repeats.

- **Seniority by number of days**—In this model, the board assigns TOCs on the basis of frequency of call-out. At the beginning of September, the number of days previously worked by each TOC is determined. The first offer of employment is made to the TOC with the most number of days and the necessary qualifications. The process continues until every TOC has been contacted.

- **Seniority by date of hire**—In this model, TOCs are assigned on the basis of seniority, calculated from date of hire. The first offer of employment is made to the TOC with the longest service and the necessary qualifications. The process continues until every TOC has been contacted.

It is time for TOCs to be hired for assignments in the same manner as contract teachers.

You can visit the new BCTF TOC page at www.bctf.ca/toc/

Kendra Litke is a member of the Teacher on Call and Under-employed Advisory Committee.

Teachers' Pension Plan Day-one enrolment July 1, 2005

In June 2004, the Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees amended the plan rules to require employers under the Teachers' Pension Plan to enrol all eligible employees, including regular and casual employees. The trustees made the decision after an extensive survey of school districts indicated that the change would make it easier for the districts to administer the plan-enrolment rules. The rule change will also reduce employers' liability for future enrolment arrears.

The rule change, coming into effect July 1, 2005, will mean the following for employees under the Teachers' Pension Plan:

New employees hired on or after July 1, 2005—Employees employed in a less than half-time capacity must be immediately enrolled in the Teachers' Pension Plan, and they will no longer be allowed to opt out of enrolling in the plan.

Existing employees as of July 1, 2005—Employees who had previously waived enrolment in the plan must also be enrolled effective July 1, 2005. Employers are not required to retroactively enrol those employees to their employment start date, and these employees are not eligible to purchase their prior non-contributory periods of service.

In January 2005, the plan will remind school districts of the enrolment rule change and of the timeline so that the districts can be ready to enrol affected employees in July 2005.

The change does not affect retired members, as they will still be able to choose not to contribute to the plan. As before, if they do choose not to contribute, they will continue to receive their pension as well as their regular pay without making pension contributions.

— Communications Branch, Teachers' Pension Plan

Pension seminars 2004-05

- Saturdays (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., with a question period following)
- Seminars cover such topics as the Teachers' Pension Plan, Purchase Rules, Pension Options, On-Line Tools and Retirement Issues.
- Pre-registration is NOT required.

| Date | Location | Facility |
|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| January 29, 2005 | Abbotsford | Abbotsford Ramada Inn & Conference Centre |
| February 12, 2005 | Coquitlam | Executive Plaza Hotel |
| February 19, 2005 | Delta | Delta Town & Country Inn |
| March 5, 2005 | Prince George | Inn of the North |
| March 5, 2005 | Kamloops | University College of the Cariboo |
| March 12, 2005 | Kelowna | Road Best Western Inn Kelowna |
| April 2, 2005 | Castlegar | Sandman Inn Castlegar |
| April 2, 2005 | Campbell River | Ramada Hotel |
| April 9, 2005 | Terrace | BW Terrace Inn & Con. Centre |
| April 16, 2005 | Fort St. John | Quality Inn Northern Grand Hotel |
| April 30, 2005 | Cranbrook | Heritage Inn |
| May 7/05 | Richmond | Hilton Vancouver Airport |
| May 14, 2005 | Victoria (Sidney) | Mary Winspear Centre at Sanscha |

Ten new BCTF lesson aids

1 LA 9343A Canada, On the Wings of Our Song: Audio CD by Rhonda Draper, ©2004, 60-minute audio CD. This CD, featuring 15 Canadian folk songs, tells the story of how Canada came to be. Narrated by the voices of children, it covers the complete 'light' history of Canada from the first nations to the present. It is entertaining and important, allowing children the opportunity to imbue our story into their hearts and minds through the power of music. For Grades K-6. \$20.00. Also **LA 9343B Canada, On the Wings of Our Song** Audio CD and Teacher's Guide \$25

2 LA 9926 Early Literacy: Part 1 Produced by the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association, Fall 2002, 74 p. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1, features articles, ideas, materials, and programs and services available on early literacy in B.C. For Grades K-4. \$12

3 LA 9927 Early Literacy: Part 2 Produced by the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association, Spring 2003, 79 p. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, features articles, ideas, materials on early literacy. For Grades K-4. \$12

4 LA F8513 J'observe le ciel, Billon, Gilles et Barrette, Doris. Documentation jeunesse Éditions Michel Quintin. ©1992, 105 p. Ce livre grouille d'expériences pratiques pour découvrir le comportement des petites bêtes et de conseils pour les élever. Destiné aux enfants à partir de 10 ans. Utile aux enseignants apprenti-naturalistes. Dessins de qualité dont le réalisme plait aussi aux plus jeunes. 2e-4e année. \$15.95

5 LA 2031 A Teaching Unit on Global Warming Produced by VIDEA, ©2003, 27 p. This resource book is part of VIDEA's Global Learner Series. Other units in this series are: LA 1072 "A Teaching Unit on Consumerism and Media Literacy," LA 1073 "A Teaching Unit on Music and Society," LA 2032 "A Teaching Unit on Peace and Conflict," and LA 2033 "A Teaching Unit on the Coffee Trade."

This unit includes five detailed lesson plans. Students examine global warming causes and assess how it is being managed on a global level. The research project is designed for online research. Overheads, handouts and worksheets and four recent news articles on the Kyoto Protocol are included. Suitable for use in Geography 12, Social Studies 11 and Science 9 and 10. Grades 9-12. \$8.95.

6 LA 9922 Middle and Secondary School Produced by Learning Assistance Teachers' Association, Fall 2000, 155 p. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3, features articles and strategies for learning assistance teachers in middle and secondary schools. Grades 6-9. \$12

7 LA 9609 Mei Yu's 5 Easy Steps—How To Draw Your Favourite Cartoon Animals by Mei Yu, ©2004, 48 p. This art book is written and illustrated by Mei Yu, an 18-year-old award-winning Canadian artist from Burnaby. Yu who won 16 art awards and scholarships, locally, provincially, and nationally in 2003. Book includes over 340 original colour illustrations, which are super simple, step-by-step secrets to cartoon drawing success. The book offers the basics on how to create professional-quality animal characters. Easy to follow and clear instructions. Suitable for self-taught students or for classroom instruction. Grades 4-12. \$15.95

8 LA 2232 Out of the Darkness: Teens and Suicide by Marion Crook, ©2003, 167 p. Based on interviews with teen suicide survivors, parents and professionals, the author sensitively explores all aspects of teen suicide, in particular the reasons why certain young people are driven to it. The author also examines the history of teen suicide in Western and other cultures, as well as what roles parents and schools can play in suicide prevention, and coping strategies for teens in crisis. This book breaks the silence surrounding teen suicide and offers hope for those who think there is none. Grades 8+. \$21.95.

9 LA9972 Teaching for Social Justice: Vancouver, Coquitlam, Maple Ridge Teacher Research edited by Mohammed Shamsheer, Elaine Decker, Gabrielle Minnes-Brandes, Deirdre Kelly, ©2004, 200 p. Book includes research by teachers on teaching for social justice. This collection of research reports by a diverse group of 16 Lower Mainland teachers reflects their passion for, and commitment to teaching for social justice. Their stories relate the voices of teachers and students on critical social justice issues that they face. One of the most striking themes is that the teacher authors care deeply about their students as human beings and at the same time, care just as deeply that all students have rich opportunities to learn and succeed. Suitable for teachers. \$10

10 LA ESL212B Vancouver Talks: ESL Handbook for Teachers, Tutors and Students by Sharon Dinur and Danny Laufer, ©2004, 105 p. This resource and activity handbook is intended to be used in conjunction with BCTF lesson aid ESL212A, "Vancouver Talks: Audio CD." \$16.95 The handbook is useful for intermediate to advanced English learners. The book is illustrated, coil bound and includes reproducible pages for classroom use. Vocabulary and an answer key are also included. Suitable for Grades 4+. \$24.95.

More curriculum resources and information are available at www.bcslmer.ca. To order any of the above lesson aids, enclose a cheque payable to the BCTF or authorized purchase order to BCTF Lesson Aids Service 100-550 West 6th Ave., Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2 or telephone 604-871-2180 or toll free 1-800-663-9163, Local 2180, with a Visa or Mastercard. GST and postage/ handling are included in the prices. Orders are sent by return mail. Lesson Aids office and display room hours: 9:00-5:00 Mon. to Fri. from Sept. to June; 9:00 to 5:00 Tues. to Fri. during July and Aug.; 9:00-12:00 on Sat. during Sept., Oct., Jan., and Feb. bctf.ca/LessonAids

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BCTF Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2004

President's comments

The accompanying financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2004 have been prepared in accordance with the by-laws of the Federation and the provisions of *The Society Act*. They reflect the stewardship of the Executive Committee over the resources of the Federation and the committee's accountability to the membership for the effective management of those resources.

On a combined (all funds) basis, revenues exceeded expenses (a surplus) by \$474,000 for the 2003-04 year compared to a surplus of \$2.2 million for the 2002-03 year. The decrease in operating results was due mainly to higher expenditures in the Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (CBDF) and Public Education Defence Fund (PEDF) in 2003-04 as compared to 2002-03.

The General Operating Fund achieved a surplus of \$628,000, which represented an improvement to the \$147,000 deficit budget approved by the Representative Assembly. This improvement was due mainly to higher fee revenue as a result of a lower FTE membership loss than budgeted. At their January 2005 meeting, the Executive Committee will be considering the Finance Committee 2005-06 total fee recommendation of 1.38%, which represents a status quo fee from 2004-05.

The CBDF surplus was \$1.1 million for the 2003-04 year compared to a surplus of \$2.3 million for the 2002-03 year. The decrease in operating results was due to lower fee revenue as a result of a reduced fee allocation to the fund in 2003-04 and increased legal expenses. Reduced by the transfer of \$260,000 to the PEDF as approved by the Representative Assembly (RA), the fund balance increased from \$18.8 million at June 30, 2003 to \$19.7 million at June 30, 2004.

The Provincial Bargaining Fund surplus was \$4,000 for the 2003-04 year, which increased the fund balance of \$96,000 at June 30, 2003 to \$100,000 at June 30, 2004.

The PEDF deficit of \$142,000 was offset by the transfer of \$260,000 from the CBDF which increased the fund balance from \$47,000 at June 30, 2003 to \$165,000 at June 30, 2004. For 2004-05, the AGM authorized the RA to approve a transfer to the PEDF from the CBDF of up to \$5 million to support the Commitment to Public Education campaign.

The operations of the Salary Indemnity Fund reflect a surplus of \$3.6 million for the 2003-04 year compared to a deficit of \$24.8 million for 2003-04. The improvement in operating results was primarily due to higher investment income and membership fee revenue. The fund balance has now increased from \$6.8 million at June 30, 2003 to \$10.4 million at June 30, 2004. The Executive Committee is recommending a status quo fee of 2.00% for 2005-06 to the 2005 AGM.

Jinny Sims

Auditors' Report

To the Members of British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2004, the statements of operations, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Federation's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

In our opinion, these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Federation as at June 30, 2004, and the results of its operations, and the changes in its financial position for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. As required by the *Society Act of British Columbia*, we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

SmytheRatcliffe, Chartered Accountants, October 22, 2004

Management Responsibility for Financial Statements

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

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

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

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

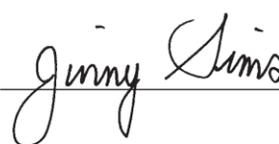
Ken Novakowski, Executive Director

Rob McLaren, C.A., Treasurer

STATEMENT 1 Statement of Financial Position as at June 30

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2003</u> |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| (in thousands) | | |
| Assets | | |
| Current | | |
| Cash | \$ 9,453 | \$ 5,623 |
| Marketable securities (Note 3) | 12,444 | 11,028 |
| | <u>21,897</u> | <u>16,651</u> |
| Membership fees and other receivables | 2,891 | 3,088 |
| Inventories and prepaid expenses | 296 | 323 |
| | <u>25,084</u> | <u>20,062</u> |
| Due from Salary Indemnity Fund | 420 | 1,238 |
| Capital Assets (Notes 5 & 6) | <u>15,751</u> | <u>16,531</u> |
| | <u>\$ 41,255</u> | <u>\$ 37,831</u> |
| Liabilities | | |
| Current | | |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | \$ 4,477 | \$ 1,334 |
| Due to Provincial Specialist Associations | 1,094 | 929 |
| Deferred building revenue | — | 358 |
| | <u>5,571</u> | <u>2,621</u> |
| Members' Funds | | |
| General Operating Fund (including investment in capital assets) (Schedule 1) | 15,389 | 14,761 |
| Restricted funds: | | |
| Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2) | 19,678 | 18,801 |
| Contingency Fund (Schedule 3) | 284 | 1,434 |
| Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4) | 100 | 96 |
| Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5) | 165 | 47 |
| William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund (Schedule 6) | 57 | 58 |
| Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund (Schedule 6) | 11 | 13 |
| | <u>35,684</u> | <u>35,210</u> |
| | <u>\$ 41,255</u> | <u>\$ 37,831</u> |

Approved by the Executive Committee





STATEMENT 2 Statement of Changes in Net Assets for the year ended June 30

| | <u>2004</u> | | <u>2003</u> | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| | (in thousands) | | | | | | | | |
| General Operating Fund | Restricted Funds | | | | | | | | |
| Operating | Invested in Capital Assets | Collective Bargaining Defence Fund | Contingency Fund | Provincial Bargaining Fund | Public Education Defence Fund | Other Funds | Total | Total | |
| Balance, beginning of year | \$ (1,770) | \$ 16,531 | \$ 18,801 | \$ 1,434 | \$ 96 | \$ 47 | \$ 71 | \$ 35,210 | \$ 33,047 |
| Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses | 1,627 | (999) | 1,137 | (1,150) | 4 | (142) | (3) | 474 | 2,163 |
| Purchase of capital assets | (219) | 219 | | | | | | | |
| Transfers between funds | | | (260) | | | 260 | | | |
| Balance, end of year | <u>\$ (362)</u> | <u>\$ 15,751</u> | <u>\$ 19,678</u> | <u>\$ 284</u> | <u>\$ 100</u> | <u>\$ 165</u> | <u>\$ 68</u> | <u>\$ 35,684</u> | <u>\$ 35,210</u> |

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT 3

Statement of Operations for the year ended June 30

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|---|----------------|-----------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Revenue | | |
| Membership fees | \$ 26,910 | \$ 26,369 |
| Net investment income | 758 | 803 |
| Donations | 46 | 47 |
| | <u>27,714</u> | <u>27,219</u> |
| Operating expenses | | |
| General Operating Fund (Schedule 1) | 22,645 | 22,776 |
| Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2) | 1,193 | 345 |
| Contingency Fund (Schedule 3) | 1,222 | 313 |
| Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4) | 584 | 369 |
| Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5) | 1,124 | 843 |
| Other funds (Schedule 6) | 472 | 410 |
| | <u>27,240</u> | <u>25,056</u> |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | <u>\$ 474</u> | <u>\$ 2,163</u> |

STATEMENT 4

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended June 30

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Cash flows from operating activities | | |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | \$ 474 | \$ 2,163 |
| Items not affecting cash: | | |
| depreciation | 999 | 1,064 |
| employee future benefits | 833 | — |
| | <u>2,306</u> | <u>3,227</u> |
| Changes in non-cash working capital items | | |
| Membership fees and other receivables | 197 | 535 |
| Inventories and prepaid expenses | 27 | (8) |
| Due from Salary Indemnity Fund | 818 | (899) |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | 2,310 | (332) |
| Due to Provincial Specialist Associations | 165 | 8 |
| | <u>3,517</u> | <u>(696)</u> |
| Cash flow from investing activities | | |
| Building revenue | (358) | 358 |
| Purchase of capital assets | (219) | (294) |
| | <u>(577)</u> | <u>64</u> |
| Change in cash and marketable securities | 5,246 | 2,595 |
| Cash and marketable securities, | | |
| beginning of year | 16,651 | 14,056 |
| Cash and marketable securities, end of year | <u>\$ 21,897</u> | <u>\$ 16,651</u> |

Schedule 1

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

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Revenue | | |
| Allocation of membership fees (Note 4) | \$ 23,520 | \$ 22,472 |
| Divisional operating expenses | | |
| Management | 2,329 | 2,296 |
| Communications/Campaigns | 3,708 | 3,642 |
| Finance and Administrative Services | 2,084 | 2,277 |
| Research and Technology | 1,882 | 1,934 |
| Income Security | 362 | 363 |
| Professional and Social Issues | 3,835 | 3,818 |
| Field Service | 2,277 | 2,149 |
| CA Protective Services | 2,240 | 2,137 |
| | <u>18,717</u> | <u>18,616</u> |
| Grants to Locals | 3,928 | 4,160 |
| | <u>22,645</u> | <u>22,776</u> |
| Net interest expense | 247 | 191 |
| | <u>22,892</u> | <u>22,967</u> |
| Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses | 628 | (495) |
| Fund balance, beginning of year | 14,761 | 15,256 |
| Fund balance, end of year | <u>\$ 15,389</u> | <u>\$ 14,761</u> |

Schedule 2

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

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Revenue | | |
| Allocation of membership fees (Note 4) | \$ 1,363 | \$ 1,720 |
| Net investment income | 967 | 907 |
| | <u>2,330</u> | <u>2,627</u> |
| Expenses | | |
| Support to locals | 685 | — |
| Legal costs over GOF budget | 196 | — |
| Third party dispute | 129 | 3 |
| Bill 37 | 99 | — |
| Legislative intervention response | 74 | 342 |
| Protest day GOF fees | 10 | — |
| | <u>1,193</u> | <u>345</u> |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | 1,137 | 2,282 |
| Transfer to Public Education Defence Fund | (260) | — |
| Fund balance, beginning of year | 18,801 | 16,519 |
| Fund balance, end of year | <u>\$ 19,678</u> | <u>\$ 18,801</u> |

Schedule 3

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

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Revenue | | |
| Allocation of membership fees (Note 4) | \$ — | \$ 190 |
| Net investment income | 26 | 89 |
| Forest fire relief donations | 46 | — |
| | <u>72</u> | <u>279</u> |
| Expenses | | |
| Bills 50 and 51 | 712 | 74 |
| Legal costs over GOF budget | 360 | 187 |
| Forest fire relief grants | 110 | — |
| Marysville Education Association | 10 | — |
| Ferry & Marine Workers' Union | 10 | — |
| Citizens for Public Power campaign | 5 | 15 |
| Save the Coquihalla Coalition | 5 | — |
| United Steelworkers of America | 5 | — |
| Canadian Federation of Students | 5 | — |
| Surrey book ban defence | — | 20 |
| Guatemala strike support | — | 10 |
| UBC TA strike support | — | 5 |
| Grainworkers' Union Christmas fund | — | 2 |
| | <u>1,222</u> | <u>313</u> |
| Deficiency of revenue over expenses | (1,150) | (34) |
| Fund balance, beginning of year | 1,434 | 1,468 |
| Fund balance, end of year | <u>\$ 284</u> | <u>\$ 1,434</u> |

Schedule 4

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

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|--|----------------|--------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Revenue | | |
| Allocation of membership fees (Note 4) | \$ 584 | \$ 765 |
| Investment interest | 4 | — |
| | <u>588</u> | <u>765</u> |
| Expenses | | |
| Provincial negotiations | 584 | 369 |
| Net interest expense | — | 5 |
| | <u>584</u> | <u>374</u> |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | 4 | 391 |
| Fund balance, beginning of year | 96 | (295) |
| Fund balance, end of year | <u>\$ 100</u> | <u>\$ 96</u> |

Schedule 5

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

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Revenue | | |
| Allocation of membership fees (Note 4) | \$ 974 | \$ 765 |
| Donations | — | 45 |
| Net investment income | 8 | 3 |
| | <u>982</u> | <u>813</u> |
| Expenses | | |
| Public education advocacy | 388 | 609 |
| BC Federation of Labour | 298 | — |
| Commitment to public education | 263 | — |
| Support for teaching and learning | 134 | — |
| Charter for public education | 41 | 137 |
| Affiliation with labour | — | 97 |
| | <u>1,124</u> | <u>843</u> |
| Deficiency of revenue over expenses | (142) | (30) |
| Transfer from Collective Bargaining Defence Fund | 260 | — |
| Fund balance, beginning of year | 47 | 77 |
| Fund balance, end of year | <u>\$ 165</u> | <u>\$ 47</u> |

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

| | W.R.Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund | Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund | Total 2004 | Total 2003 |
|---|---|--|---------------|---------------|
| (in thousands) | | | | |
| Revenue | | | | |
| Allocation of membership fees (Note 4) | \$ 437 | \$ 32 | \$ 469 | \$ 457 |
| Donations | — | — | — | 2 |
| | <u>437</u> | <u>32</u> | <u>469</u> | <u>459</u> |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Grants | 438 | 34 | 472 | 410 |
| | <u>438</u> | <u>34</u> | <u>472</u> | <u>410</u> |
| (Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses | (1) | (2) | (3) | 49 |
| Fund balances, beginning of year | 58 | 13 | 71 | 22 |
| Fund balances, end of year | <u>\$ 57</u> | <u>\$ 11</u> | <u>\$ 68</u> | <u>\$ 71</u> |

Notes to Financial Statements Year Ended June 30, 2004

1. BACKGROUND AND BASIS OF COMBINATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The **Salary Indemnity Fund** is reported to the membership in a separate set of financial statements and is not included in these financial statements. The purpose of the Salary Indemnity Fund is to meet the obligations of the Salary Indemnity Plan which provides income benefits to members disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident. The total fee allocated to the Salary Indemnity Fund was 2.0% of gross salary for the 2003-04 membership year. Any fund deficiency is the responsibility of the Federation. The financial statements of the Salary Indemnity Fund should be read concurrently with these financial statements.

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

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

a. Fund Accounting

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

b. Revenue Recognition

Membership fees are recognized as revenue of the appropriate restricted fund as received or receivable. Investment income from the Federation's investments is recognized as revenue as earned and is allocated to the appropriate restricted fund based on the investments held for the fund.

c. Marketable Securities

Marketable securities are originally recorded at cost. If there is an other than temporary decline in value, these investments are written down to provide for the loss.

d. Inventories

Inventories of lesson aid materials are valued at cost or net realizable value, whichever is the lower.

e. Capital Assets

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

| | | | |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Building | 30 years | Furniture & equipment | 3-15 years |
| Renovations | 9-10 years | Computer hardware & | |
| Tenant improvements | 10 years | software | 3-10 years |

f. Employee Future Benefits

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

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

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

g. Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires the Federation to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets

and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates and would impact results of operations and cash flows.

3. MARKETABLE SECURITIES

The market value of marketable securities at June 30, 2004 was \$12,333,000 compared to a carrying value of \$12,444,000 (June 30, 2003 market value—\$11,287,000; carrying value—\$11,028,000).

4. MEMBERSHIP FEE

The membership fee for the year ended June 30, 2004 was 1.38% of the gross salary of each member.

The following summarizes the fee allocations:

| | 2003-04 | 2002-03 |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| General Operating Fund | 1.23% | 1.20% |
| Collective Bargaining Defence Fund | 0.07 | 0.09 |
| Contingency Fund | — | 0.01 |
| Provincial Bargaining Fund | 0.03 | 0.04 |
| Public Education Defence Fund | 0.05 | 0.04 |
| | <u>1.38%</u> | <u>1.38%</u> |

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

5. CAPITAL ASSETS

| | Original Cost | Accumulated Depreciation | 2004 Net Book Value | 2003 Net Book Value |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| (in thousands) | | | | |
| Land | \$ 4,430 | \$ — | \$ 4,430 | \$ 4,430 |
| Building | 12,736 | (3,300) | 9,436 | 9,911 |
| | <u>17,166</u> | <u>(3,300)</u> | <u>13,866</u> | <u>14,341</u> |
| Renovations | 583 | (172) | 411 | 488 |
| Tenant improvements | 661 | (277) | 384 | 310 |
| Furniture and equipment | 458 | (318) | 140 | 229 |
| Computer hardware & software | 1,584 | (634) | 950 | 1,163 |
| | <u>\$20,452</u> | <u>\$(4,701)</u> | <u>\$15,751</u> | <u>\$16,531</u> |

6. NET ASSETS INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS

Net assets invested in capital assets are funded as follows:

| | 2003-04 | 2002-03 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| (in thousands) | | |
| General Operating Fund | \$ 8,614 | \$ 9,053 |
| Collective Bargaining Defence Fund | 7,137 | 7,478 |
| | <u>\$15,751</u> | <u>\$16,531</u> |

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

The loan bears interest at an effective annual rate of 3.56% and is repayable in monthly principle and interest payments of \$49,773. The current term is renewable on December 31, 2005. Loan interest for the year 2003-04 was \$256,310.

7. EMPLOYEE FUTURE BENEFITS

The following tables pertain to the Federation's employee future benefit plans, and provide fair value of plan assets, benefit obligations, and funded status for the year ended June 30, 2004:

| | Pension | Non-pension | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| (in thousands) | | | |
| Fair value of plan assets | \$ 22,087 | \$ — | \$ 22,087 |
| Accrued benefit obligation | (17,328) | (10,340) | (27,668) |
| Funded status—plan surplus (deficit) | <u>\$ 4,759</u> | <u>\$ (10,340)</u> | <u>\$ (5,581)</u> |

The net expense for the Federation's future employee benefit plans is as follows:

| | Pension | Non-pension | Total |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| (in thousands) | | | |
| Plan expense (recovery) | <u>\$ (894)</u> | <u>\$ 1,920</u> | <u>\$ 1,026</u> |

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

| | |
|--|------|
| Discount rate | 6.5% |
| Expected long-term rate of return on plan assets | 7.0% |
| Rate of compensation increase | 2.5% |

The assumed healthcare cost trend rate at June 30, 2004 was 10%, decreasing to 5% after five years.

8. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

a. Fair Value

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

b. Interest Rate Risk

Financial risk is the risk arising from changes in interest rates. The Federation is exposed to interest rate risk due to the long-term maturity of certain of the investments. These investments are interest rate sensitive although this risk is actively managed by both management and professional investment advisors.

9. SUBSEQUENT EVENT

The B.C. Teachers' Federation is currently holding in its accounts \$1.7 million on behalf of individual members who remitted their 2004 College of Teachers' fees to the Democratic College Fund. It is intended the repayments to the contributing members will be made in early 2005.

10. SALARY INDEMNITY FUND

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

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| (in thousands) | | |
| Total assets | <u>\$178,676</u> | <u>\$170,586</u> |
| Total liabilities | 168,233 | 163,794 |
| Fund balance, end of year | <u>10,443</u> | <u>6,792</u> |
| | <u>\$178,676</u> | <u>\$170,586</u> |

A summary of the revenue and expenditures is as follows:

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|
| (in thousands) | | |
| Total revenue | \$ 51,924 | \$ 24,326 |
| Total expenditures | (48,273) | (49,135) |
| Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses | <u>\$ 3,651</u> | <u>\$ (24,809)</u> |

Salary Indemnity Fund

Auditors' Report

To the Members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation Salary Indemnity Fund as at June 30, 2004, the statements of revenue, expenditures and fund balance and changes in cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Federation's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

In our opinion these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Fund as at June 30, 2004, and the results of its operations and the changes in its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. As required by the *Society Act of British Columbia*, we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

SmytheRatcliffe
Chartered Accountants
October 22, 2004

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

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| | (in thousands) (Note 8) | |
| Assets | | |
| Cash (Bank indebtedness) | \$ 721 | \$ (664) |
| Accounts receivable | 4,245 | 2,749 |
| Investments (Note 3) | 173,012 | 167,708 |
| Capital assets (Note 4) | 698 | 793 |
| | <u>\$178,676</u> | <u>\$170,586</u> |
| Liabilities and Fund Balance | | |
| Accounts payable | \$ 463 | \$ 388 |
| Due to General Operating Fund | 420 | 1,238 |
| Provision for claims (Note 5) | 167,350 | 162,168 |
| | <u>168,233</u> | <u>163,794</u> |
| Invested in capital assets | 698 | 793 |
| Fund balance | <u>9,745</u> | <u>5,999</u> |
| | <u>10,443</u> | <u>6,792</u> |
| | <u>\$178,676</u> | <u>\$170,586</u> |

Approved by the Executive Committee




STATEMENT 2 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Revenue, Expenditures and Fund Balance for the Year Ended June 30

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Revenue | | |
| Membership fees (Note 1) | \$37,208 | \$22,431 |
| Teachers' share of employment insurance premium reductions | 1,758 | 1,616 |
| Investment income | 12,958 | 279 |
| | <u>51,924</u> | <u>24,326</u> |
| Expenditures | | |
| Short term claims paid | 9,212 | 9,211 |
| Long term claims paid | 27,313 | 25,705 |
| | <u>36,525</u> | <u>34,916</u> |
| Increase in actuarial valuation of provision for claims (Note 5) | 5,182 | 8,363 |
| Total claim expenditures | 41,707 | 43,279 |
| Excess (deficiency) of revenue over claim expenditures | 10,217 | (18,953) |
| Administrative expenses | 5,842 | 5,404 |
| Investment management and trust company expenses (Note 6) | 724 | 452 |
| | <u>6,566</u> | <u>5,856</u> |
| Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures | 3,651 | (24,809) |
| Fund balance, beginning of year | 6,792 | 31,601 |
| Fund balance, end of year | <u>\$10,443</u> | <u>\$ 6,792</u> |

STATEMENT 3 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended June 30

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|---|----------------|-----------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Cash flows from operating activities | | |
| Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures | \$ 3,651 | \$(24,809) |
| Items not affecting cash | | |
| Increase in actuarial valuation of provision for claims | 5,182 | 8,363 |
| Depreciation | 112 | 116 |
| | <u>8,945</u> | <u>(16,330)</u> |
| Changes in non-cash working capital items | | |
| Accounts receivable | (1,496) | (8) |
| Accounts payable | 75 | 62 |
| Due to General Operating Fund | (818) | 899 |
| | <u>(2,239)</u> | <u>953</u> |
| | \$ 6,706 | \$(15,377) |
| Cash flow from investing activities | | |
| Purchase of capital assets | (17) | (30) |
| (Increase) decrease in investment portfolio | (5,304) | 15,502 |
| | <u>(5,321)</u> | <u>15,472</u> |
| Change in cash | 1,385 | 95 |
| Bank indebtedness, beginning of year | (664) | (759) |
| Cash, end of year | <u>\$ 721</u> | <u>\$ (664)</u> |

Notes to Financial Statements Year Ended June 30, 2004

1. BACKGROUND AND FEES

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

The membership fee for the year ending June 30, 2004 was 2.0% of the gross salary of each member. For the year ending June 30, 2005, the 2004 Annual General Meeting approved a fee of 2.0% of the gross salary of each member.

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

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

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

a. Fund Accounting: The Salary Indemnity Fund follows the restricted fund method of accounting for membership fees.

b. Revenue Recognition: Restricted membership fees related to the Fund are recognized as revenue of the Fund in the year they are earned.

Investment income on the Fund's net resources is recognized as revenue in the year it is earned.

c. Investments: Investments are originally recorded at cost since they are held as long-term investments. In the event of a permanent decline in market value, the investments are written down to reflect the decline in market value. The resulting balance is known as the carrying value. The carrying value is not increased to reflect any subsequent increase in market value.

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

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Furniture and equipment | 5 to 15 years |
| Computer hardware and software | 3 to 10 years |
| Renovations | 10 years |

e. Use of Estimates: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates and would impact future results of operations and cash flows.

3. INVESTMENTS

The market value of long-term investments as at June 30, 2004 was \$196,113,000 compared to a carrying value of \$173,012,000. (June 30, 2003 market value—\$176,897,000; carrying value—\$167,708,000).

4. CAPITAL ASSETS

| | Original Cost | Accumulated Depreciation | 2004 Net Book Value | 2003 Net Book Value |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Furniture & equipment | \$ 174 | \$ (76) | \$ 98 | \$ 113 |
| Computer hardware & software | 549 | (171) | 378 | 441 |
| Renovations | 320 | (98) | 222 | 239 |
| | <u>\$1,043</u> | <u>\$ (345)</u> | <u>\$ 698</u> | <u>\$ 793</u> |

Depreciation expense for the year ended June 30, 2004 was \$111,713 (2003—\$116,237).

5. CLAIM EXPENDITURES AND PROVISION FOR CLAIMS

The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims is based upon an actuarial valuation as of June 30, 2004 performed in accordance with standards established by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries using data supplied by management of the Plan. This valuation uses standard claims tables modified to reflect Plan experience. In subsequent periods the accrued liabilities and provision for claims are adjusted based upon actual Plan experience. These adjustments can be significant. The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims for the individual segments of the plan are set out below:

| | June 30 2004 | June 30 2003 |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Short term claims | \$ 4,286 | \$ 3,984 |
| Long term claims | 163,064 | 158,184 |
| Total provision for claims | <u>\$167,350</u> | <u>\$162,168</u> |

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

| | June 30 2004 | June 30 2003 |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | (in thousands) | |
| Decrease related to current period | \$ (4,533) | \$ (3,575) |
| Increase related to prior periods | 9,715 | 11,938 |
| Total change in provision for claims | 5,182 | 8,363 |
| Opening provision for claims | 162,168 | 153,805 |
| Closing provision for claims | <u>\$167,350</u> | <u>\$162,168</u> |

6. INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT AND TRUST COMPANY EXPENSES

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

7. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

a. Fair Value: The Fund's financial instruments include cash, accounts receivable, accounts payable and due to General Operating Fund. The fair value of these financial instruments approximates their carrying values. The fair value of investments is disclosed in Note 3.

b. Interest Rate Risk: Financial risk is the risk arising from changes in interest rates. The Fund is exposed to interest rate risk due to the long-term maturity of certain of the investments. These investments are interest rate sensitive although this risk is actively managed by both management and professional investment managers.

8. COMPARATIVE FIGURES

The comparative figures are reclassified to conform with the current year's presentation.

Volunteer to teach English second language methodology in Cuba

The BCTF needs volunteers for its ongoing project with the teachers of English in Cuba. The current phase of the project runs until December 2005. It consists of a two-week methodology and language-enhancement course. The credit course is offered through Cuban teachers' colleges and is sponsored by the Cuban Teachers' Union, the Cuban Ministry of Education, and the BCTF.

Members involved in the project must have native speaker proficiency, be flexible, have excellent facilitation skills, have experience working with adults, be able to work co-operatively as part of a team, be able to teach with minimal resources and have the ability to improvise. They must also be very knowledgeable of modern/second language methodology and strategies.

Applicants must be BCTF members in good standing. They will be required to prepare a six-hour pedagogical workshop, 12 hours of language enhancement classes and have the flexibility to teach without technological aids. Once participants are recommended for a team, they must commit themselves to all preparatory activities.

In addition, volunteers must be available for either the first two weeks in July 2005 or the two weeks of the December 2005 break, depending on the program's needs. There are some repeats to facilitate the ongoing nature of the program. Ability to speak Spanish and specialized training in teaching languages are assets. Teachers will be living in very spartan developing country conditions and therefore need to be very flexible and adaptable; personal preferences, i.e., vegetarian, cannot always be accommodated. The teaching is in very hot and humid weather conditions. The BCTF pays transportation costs; food and lodging are provided by our Cuban partners.

Deadline:

February 21, 2005

Please send a detailed résumé to Leona Dolan, BCTF International Program, 550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2, f: 604-871-2294, ldolan@bctf.ca.



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INFORMATION MEETINGS

Monday, January 31, 2005 7:00 - 9:00 pm
SFU Harbour Centre Room 1425
515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver

Tuesday, February 1, 2005 7:00 - 9:00 pm
SFU Surrey Campus Room 630
2400 Central City
10153 King George Hwy, Surrey

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INFORMATION MEETING

Tuesday, February 15, 2005 6:30 - 8:00 pm
SFU Harbour Centre Room 1600
515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver

Those unable to attend who require information may contact:
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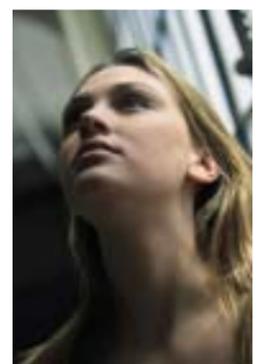
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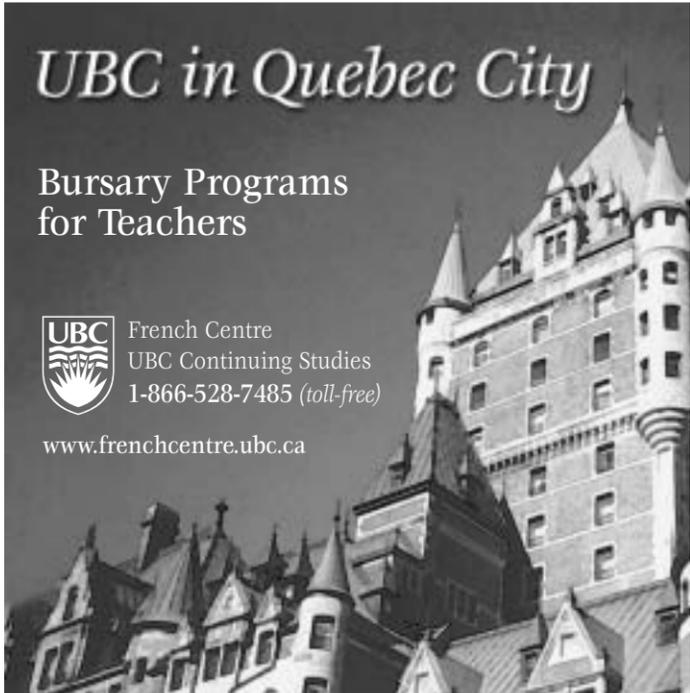
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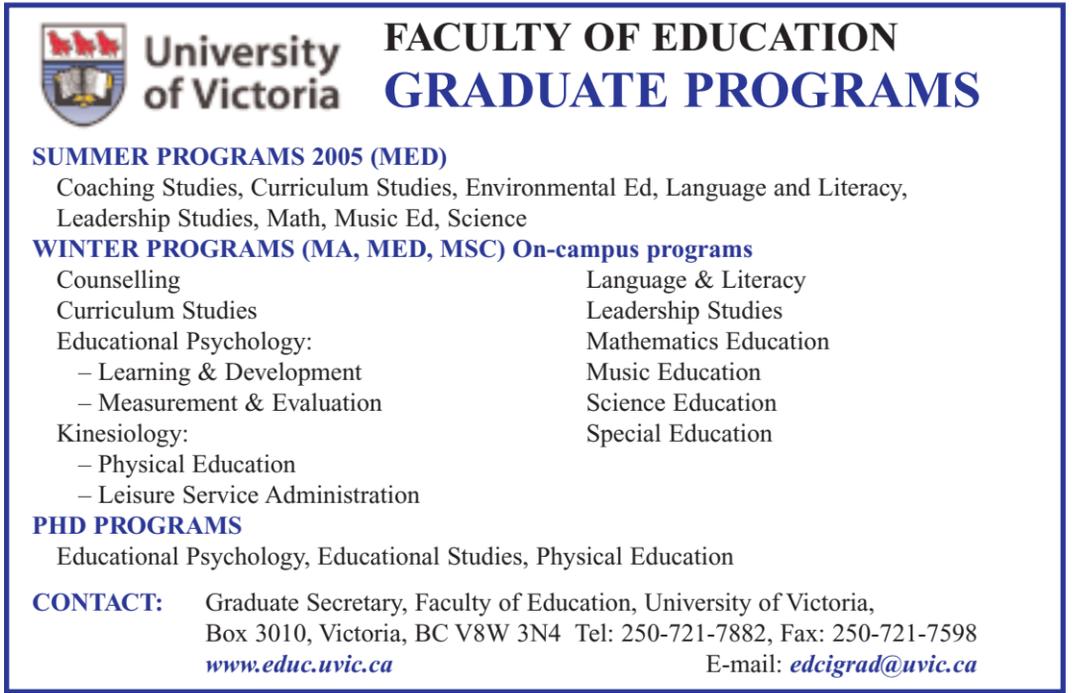
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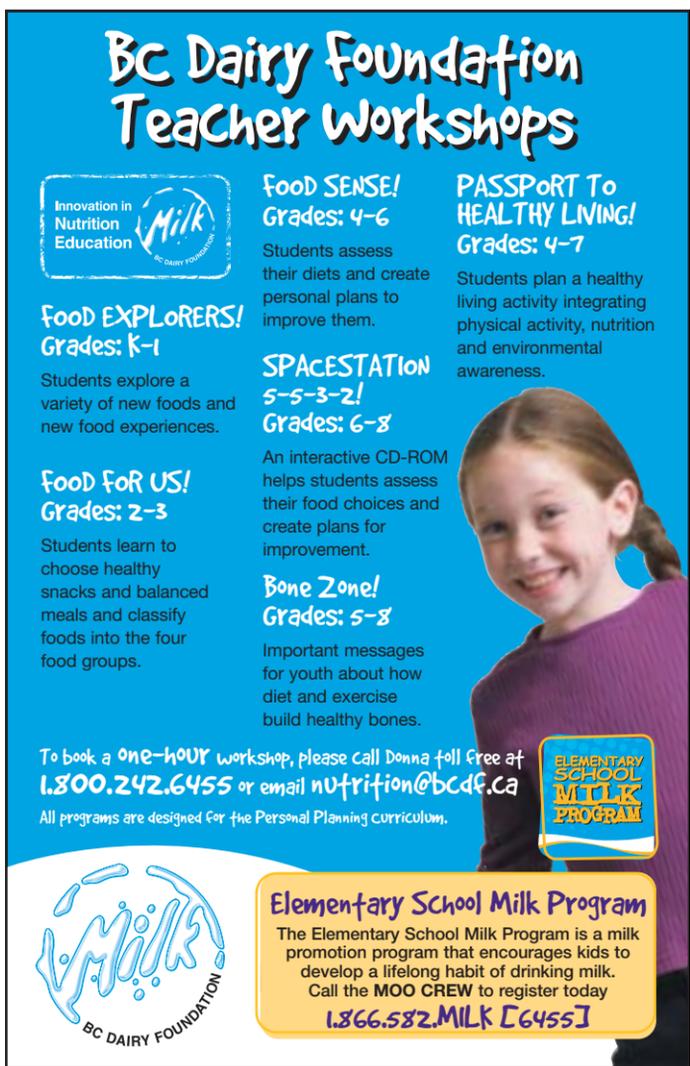


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- Collaboration – Models of Inter-Professional Collaboration
- Verbal/Non-Verbal – Non-Verbal LD: NLD & Aspergers
- Technology – LD Software Comparisons
- Adult Learners – First Names First: Cooperative Strategies for LD Adults; Transition to Post-Secondary; Transition to Employment: Career Development for LD Students; Employment for Individuals with Asperger Syndrome or NLD
- Occupational – Messy Writers, Clumsy Movers: A Motor LD
- Instruction – Mathematics Learning Problems and Instruction; Key Components of Programming for Students with LD; Dyslexia
- French Immersion – When to Transfer; Phonemic Awareness

For information, contact Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan via e-mail at reception@ldas.org or by phone at (306)652-4114.

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FEBRUARY

16 Chemainus. Orchestrating success in reading: Assessing and teaching all readers, with Dawn Reithaug, presented by School District 79 (Cowichan Valley), Chemainus Secondary. \$125 per person (includes lunch and handouts). Make cheques payable to School District 79, and send to 2557 Beverly Street, Duncan, BC V9L 2X3, attention: Wendy Fielding, by January 28, 2005. Contact Candace Spilsbury, cspilsbu@sd79.bc.ca.

17-19 Richmond. B.C. Student Activity Advisor Conference, Working together to empower youth, for anyone working with students' councils, leadership, peer helpers, CARS, or rec leadership groups, Vancouver Airport Marriott. \$175 before January 15; \$200 thereafter. Contact Gloria Solley, 250-477-6945, gsolley@shaw.ca, or bcasaa.bc.ca.

18 Vernon. B.C. Music Educators' Assn. (BCMEA) one-day regional miniconference. Contact Colleen Widden: Box 729, 108 Mile Ranch, BC V0K 2Z0 phone: 250-791-6376 fax: 250-395-3621, bctf.bc.ca/bcmea.

18 Kelowna. Learning Assistance Teachers' Assn. (LATA) conference, Rethinking Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, with Dr. Alison McInnes, Department of Psychiatry Research, Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, on ADHD as a cognitive disorder rather than a disruptive behaviour disorder and instructional choices and approaches to managing behaviour difficulties, Coast Capri Hotel. Contact Alan Peterson, lataconference@hotmail.com, f: 250-376-4579, bctf.ca/psas/LATA/conference/events.htm.

18 Victoria. Greater Victoria Physical Educators (GVPE) 2nd Annual GVPE Conference, Educate, Activate, Participate! Celebrating the International Year of PE & Sport, Spectrum Community School, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Full program details available January 4, 2005. Contact Michelle Kilborn, 250-477-0181, f: 250-477-0143, gvpe@shaw.ca. bctf.ca/locals/Local_61/LSAs/LSA%20HOME.html, click on "physical educators"

23-27 Online. KnowTIPS online conference, Survive and Thrive, for anyone interested in working online and developing online skills. \$100 before February 1, 2005; \$150 thereafter. Online payment and registration are available. Visit <http://knowtips.ca>, or contact flog@knowplace.ca.

24-26 Burnaby. B.C. Art Teachers' Assn. (BCATA) conference, ArtWorks 2005, with keynotes by Shari Graydon (media educator), Bing Thom (architect), Ross Penhall (painter), and Joane Cardinal Schubert (artist/educator), Mospoc Secondary Registration: paid@north.sd41.bc.ca. Contact Margaret Scarr, mescarr@north.sd41.bc.ca, or Robin Gore, rgore@central.sd41.bc.ca, bctf.ca/psas/BCATA/2005/.

24-26 Victoria. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Equality of Access: Rights and the Right Thing To Do, Interprofessional Continuing Education at UBC. Brings together experts in law, ethics, policy, and research to explore ways to ensure equal access to the law for people with FASD. Features a half-day educational session, FASD and schools: What's working? Where should we be headed? Contact Heather, 604-822-2801 or ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca. View the brochure on-line at interprofessional.ubc.ca.

MARCH

1-5 Victoria. B.C. Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy. Fifteen teachers will be selected to attend the 2nd annual Institute offered at the Parliament Buildings to discover first hand B.C.'s parliamentary system during four days of professional development. Contact Public Education & Outreach at 250-387-8669 or PEO@leg.bc.ca, leg.bc.ca under Public Education & Outreach.

4 Prince George. B.C. Music Educators' Assn. (BCMEA) one-day regional miniconference. Contact Colleen Widden: Box 729, 108 Mile Ranch, BC V0K 2Z0 phone: 250-791-6376 fax: 250-395-3621, bctf.ca/bcmea

4 Prince George. Educational Excitement: North Central Zone Conference, including PITA (Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Assn.) North and BCMEA (B.C. Music Educators' Assn.) Segue 2005 northern regional mini-conferences, offering a wide variety of workshops for all grades. Contact: Sharel

Warrington, Prince George District Teachers' Assn., 251-1515 Second Ave., Prince George, BC V2L 3B8, 562-7214, f: 562-5743, swarrington@sd57.bc.ca, or Deb Vandal, 250-963-7060, dvandal@sd57.bc.ca.

17 Vancouver. Preschool Children with Developmental Disabilities: Improving Peer-related Social Competence, Interprofessional Continuing Education at UBC. A half-day workshop with Dr. Michael J. Guralnick. Contact Heather, 604-822-2801, or ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca. View the brochure on-line at interprofessional.ubc.ca.

17-18 Vancouver. Special Education Assn. (SEA) Crosscurrents Conference, Westin Bayshore Hotel. Contact Madeline Pohlmann, 604-290-1282, madelinelp@nesc.bc.ca, bctf.ca/psas/SEA/.

APRIL

6-8 Saskatoon. Tenth National Congress on Rural Education, Pillars of the past become the foundation for the future, Saskatoon Centennial Auditorium. \$294.25. Visit usask.ca/education/ruraled.

8-9 Kamloops. Educators Against Racism (EAR) Conference. IMAGINE the world without racism. IMAGINE the world in harmony. Ten workshops for teachers and secondary students. Register: kta@telus.net, KTTA office, 202 - 1157 12th Street, Kamloops, V2B 7L2. Ph: 150-554-1223. Contact Jan Walling 250-674-3328.

16-17 Kelowna. French and Spanish Immersion Weekend, UBC at Manteo Resort in Kelowna. \$250 includes meals. Accommodation extra (\$47 plus taxes per night, double occupancy). Teachers can use their Tuition Fee Certificate toward the fee. Visit languages.ubc.ca/lg/travel.html#1, or call toll-free 1-866-528-7485.

21-23 Coquitlam. Encompass Conference (inaugural year) on social/emotional development and academic success. Dr. Kim Schonert-Riechl, Marc Kielburger, Gordon Neufeld, Dr. Martin Brokenleg, and 50 workshops. Registration information available February 2005. Contact Gerry Lush, 604-936-9971, pd43@bctf.ca.

22 Vancouver. Forestry: Science Made Practical, information and ideas on the number-one resource industry in B.C.: forestry, an applied science with real-life applications in biology, geography, chemistry, and physics, UBC. FREE! Bring your walking shoes and outdoor clothing. Contact Steve Baumber, 604-827-5195, steve.baumber@ubc.ca. Fifteen participants required for event to run.

27-28 North Vancouver. Fast Forward Educational Media Showcase at Capilano College Sportsplex. Preview, evaluate and compare the latest videos, DVD, and multimedia programs: general interest, curriculum specific, business & human resource development. Early bird prior to February 23. www.langara.bc.ca/ffwd. Contact Susan Weber 604-323-5533, sweber@langara.bc.ca.

MAY

7 Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices 2005, 8th Annual Conference. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings and questions. Call for Proposals - Share Your Classroom Inquiries. Submission deadline: March 11, 2005. Scarfe Education Building, 2125 Main Mall, UBC. Contact Judy Paley, 604-822-2733, judy.paley@ubc.ca, epl.educ.ubc.ca/workshops.

JULY

4-21 Quebec City. Institut de Français, UBC à Québec, French Bursary Program for Teachers. This French-immersion program is intended for all teachers and administrators interested in learning or improving their French language skills. Visit frenchcentre.ubc.ca, or call toll-free 1-866-528-7485.

13-16 Vancouver. Engaging the imagination in teaching and learning, Third International Conference on Imagination and Education, featuring Dr. Maxine Greene, Coast Plaza Hotel. Contact Josh Coward, event and conference co-ordinator, jcoward@sfu.ca, ieng.net.

PSA PD Day—October 21, 2005

PD Calendar web site
<http://pdonline.bctf.ca/conferences/PD-Calendar.html>
Additions/changes? E-mail
Debby Stagg, dstagg@bctf.ca

Generations of friends



SHARON MACKENZIE PHOTOS

Clockwise from top left: Mrs. Rendell didn't know how to play pool, but she was a good sport. Mr. Craib provided some sad recollections about the war when the boys visited on November 10. During buddy time, the children played croquet or just walked. As part of social studies and language arts, students generated interview questions for seniors about their lives. A piñata party is one of several celebrations we have while there.

by Sharon MacKenzie

My Grade 6s and I work on a cross-generational curriculum for part of the school year. On the first of October, we move our classroom into the chapel of the Coldstream Meadows seniors' residence. We stay five weeks, building cross-generational friendships. *How incredibly rich these four years have been for me, getting to know the seniors at this retirement community, watching the Grade 6s interact with them daily.* Who would have thought the project could be so powerful, so filled with love?

It wasn't all easy. When we began, four years ago, we waited in our little chapel classroom for three weeks before one senior ventured to make contact with us. The stereotypes are so strong, so hard to break down. The students were ready for their senior buddies, but we seemed to be getting nowhere.

Then, one day, thanks to dear, adventuresome 90-year-old Mrs. French, we had a breakthrough. She agreed to come to the chapel to talk to the children. That tidy little English lady had us rolling in the aisle. She told us that her first job was at Eaton's in Toronto, and she was standing in the store, being given instructions by her supervisor, when the elastic in her underpants broke. She said, "I never took my eyes off of my supervisor's face. I just bent down, picked those pants up, stuffed them into my pinafore pocket and carried on like nothing unusual had happened!" Mrs. French continued to delight us with her stories, and soon had worked her magic on other seniors. Suddenly, we were making the connections of which we had dreamed. Sadly, we were due back at our home school in just a week. They suddenly wanted to take us up on our offers of the one-hour twice-a-day buddy program. They were ready to walk, talk,

be read to, and play pool and shuffleboard. They were even ready to just share a roll of candies. There were tears for both generations, some for opportunity lost, and some for new friendship gained.

When we returned the following year, seniors lined up with canes and walkers to watch us unload our boxes. Within hours, we were well into our project mandate. One-third of the program was academics. We did the study of the body, and signs of aging, which related back to why we should take good care of ourselves while we are younger, to prepare for future good health. We also got caught up in a study of local history—we had it walking and talking all around us! I think we poked holes in the wall map in the chapel showing the birthplaces of the seniors with whom we worked.

Oh, and the math! That old Eaton's catalogue came in handy, providing lessons on

The children have learned how to set tables, rake leaves, wash cars, and clean windows.

spending family savings on scratchy undershirts and cream separators. We learned a great deal about inflation and the value of a dollar. Many of the seniors saw our workbooks and got quite a chuckle out of showing the children their first bike or those comical one-piece over-the-shoulders bathing suits for men. Bathing took on a

whole new meaning one day on a visit to the local cemetery. The children read an inscription on a headstone: "Died while bathing in Long Lake." They were shocked that a young gentleman could drown having a bath, but then the light bulb went on when they realized the language of the day meant the young man had been swimming.

Dealing with language was interesting in more ways than one. The children quickly learned that studying and going to school at a seniors' home requires a language adjustment—slower speech, shorter phrases, enunciating, and no "You guys" or "Huh?" They made the transition well, though, and would catch themselves the odd time. Both they and their senior buddy would have a good laugh. One day, Mr. Roma accidentally let a wee profanity slip when he hit the cue ball into the pocket. Now, that was worth writing home about! I got the last laugh, though. When the wellness coordinator asked each of the children for a short comment for the community newspaper,

describing their five-week stay in the beautiful garden setting, one student wrote "Nice seniory." Indeed it was, however you spell it.

On the first day back that third year, Mr. Morse was sitting at one of the pews pulled up to the student worktable. "Mr.

I wish more children and seniors could share this amazing learning experience.

Morse, welcome," I said; to which he responded, "I'm your new student. Sign me up!" He stayed through the whole morning with us, and although seniors frequently would drop in, having Mr. Morse greet us in that way on our first day of Meadows School warmed our hearts. We had become *us*.

Another third of our time was spent in service. The children have learned how to set tables, rake leaves, wash cars, and clean windows. They have helped Mr. Pascal in the garden. Once or twice, I've seen him slip

a chocolate bar or two to students who came to visit while he was digging and pruning. He flew one of the biggest bombers during the war. He's such a diminutive man; it's hard to imagine him in such a profession.

The best third of all happened twice-a-day for an hour. That's when the children buddy up with the seniors. What fun they have! They so love their uninterrupted time talking, laughing, listening to the old stories again and sometimes again. They have the magic of shared time. The seniors have the time, and the children need that time.

We revisit the residence regularly after our initial five-week immersion. Every time, the same love is there waiting, and every time it grows a little more. We're actually returning for an additional three weeks in the spring this year. In a way, it's the planning to get back together that keeps us all going, because the being apart is hard now. We have become connected, right across the generations.

I call myself the teacher, but I really am a facilitator. How could something so beautiful, so gentle, and so powerful be so easy, and right under our noses? I hope we are breaking down barriers forever. The children will never forget this time with the older generation, and, as Mrs. Lindle said just before we left, "I want them to stay. They must come back. They are family."

Have a wonderful year. Even though the global front looks scary and uncertain, some good things never change. We will continue to be at the Meadows School every fall and again in the spring. I wish more children and seniors could share this amazing learning experience. I dream that other teachers, in this province and all across Canada, will think about participating, too.

Sharon MacKenzie teaches at Kidston School, Coldstream, B.C.

For more information, e-mail meadowsschoolproject@shaw.ca

