

Teacher

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Play is vital in primary



GLEN GOUGH PHOTO

The misunderstood learning activity: Play

by Julie Zoney

Play is choice. Play is an action or activity that a person has chosen to become involved in. It is light, free, and unencumbered.

Why is play being marginalized?

With all the emphasis these days on standardized test scores, data to support accountability contracts, and advanced curricula being pushed down to lower grades, something very important is being left out of our primary programs: children's play. Many classrooms across the province are eliminating play-based learning activities and turning toward more teacher-directed tasks so that their children can meet the benchmarks set for their grade level.

Our Primary Program

Play is validated in our provincial document, *The Primary Program: Framework for Teaching (2000)*: "Play engages children's whole being. It allows learners to project into the realms of possibility while enabling them to develop and refine current understandings as they explore, imagine, construct, discuss, plan, manipulate, problem-solve, dramatize, create, and experiment. 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."

Young children have the right to learn through play. Play is an integral part of a child's being. It is the business of childhood, and it has a unique and vital role in the whole educational process. Canadian Association of Young Children urges all Canadians to be advocates for play.

Children's perspective

Sue Dockett (2002), an author and educational researcher, interviewed children and found some interesting things about their perspective of play at school. One perspective was that

"Play should be seen as an essential experience that extends, enhances, and enriches a child's learning."

play was allowed outside on the playground, but rarely was it allowed in the classroom.

We educators should be concerned about this perspective. If we value play as a means of children's learning about the world and the people and places within it, it makes sense to see play as having a valued and valuable place within a school curriculum.

It is of concern that children regarded teachers as non-players and that children did not see teachers as having any role in play. Adult roles should be a major factor in promoting play, maintaining play, and helping develop complexity.

Today's child

As the years have gone by, I have seen more and more

children entering school not knowing how to play or interact socially with other children or use their imaginations to pretend. Bodrova and Leong's article (2003) caught my attention. They write: "Nowadays young children spend less time playing with their peers and more time playing alone, graduating from educational toys to video and computer games. ...when they do engage in sociodramatic play, today's children tend to rely on realistic toys and props, and they have a hard time using their imaginations to invent a substitute for a prop they do not have and rarely try a new theme in their play...we use the term *immature play stage* for these children." When children reach the *mature play stage*, play then contributes to children's learning and development in many areas.

Reaching the mature play stage

How do we educators help children to advance to the mature stage of play? Teachers need to take the time to observe, intervene, and be involved in the children's play and scaffold the development from immature to mature play. We can accomplish this by helping and guiding (but not directing) the children:

- Create imaginary situations.
- Learn to transform real objects into pretend ones.
- Expand the set of roles associated with a play theme.
- Expand their repertoire of play themes.

Learning through play

Four expected outcomes of play set the foundation of subsequent learning:

1. Play affects the child's

motivation.

2. Play facilitates cognitive decentering.
3. Play advances the development of mental representations.
4. Play fosters the development of deliberate behaviours—physical and mental voluntary actions. (Bodrova & Leong)

Furthermore, "Play does not compete with foundational skills: Through mature play, children learn the very foundational skills that will prepare them for the academic challenges that lie ahead." Some of the foundation skills are: memory, self-regulation, distancing and decontextualization, oral language abilities, symbolic generalizations, successful school adjustment, better social skills, reflective thinking and meta-cognition, abstract thinking and imagination.

Speak out for learning through play

As Oliver and Klugman (2004) ask, "If you feel that children's play and play-based learning needs to be the driving philosophy in our primary classrooms and you hope for someone to step up and lead the charge, take a look in the mirror."

Julie Zoney teaches at Fairview Elementary School, Maple Ridge, is president of the Maple Ridge Primary Teachers' Association, and is the web manager of the B.C. Primary Teachers' Association web site, bctf.ca/psas/BCPTA/.

See PRIMARY page 4

President's message



Jinny Sims

We, the teachers of B.C., have been successful in making education a central issue in the political arena. No party can ignore education underfunding and the deterioration of our students' learning conditions.

It is election time, and even the B.C. Liberals are responding. The recent announcement of \$150 million in additional funding is a sign that our message is working. The government clearly knows it is vulnerable on public education, and it is doing what it can to convince British Columbians that the B.C. Liberals' disastrous policies are not so bad after all.

It is the government that took away our rights to negotiate our working conditions and stripped our collective agreements of our students' learning conditions. We have 113 schools closed and the latest ministry figures show we now have 2,600 fewer teachers. Our classes are larger, we have fewer teacher-librarians, fewer counsellors, fewer learning assistance teachers, fewer ESL teachers, and fewer teachers to support our students with special needs.

Mr. Campbell is not fooling us. We are not going to forget the damage he has done!

We need to inoculate ourselves against further pronouncements. Our students' learning conditions are guaranteed only when they are in collective agreements. We will continue to fight for our right to bargain all our working conditions and our students' learning conditions.

We will continue to work to make public education a vote-determining issue on May 17, 2005!

Jinny

Responses to "It's all about achievement"

These letters were received in response to an article in *The Vancouver Sun*, which resulted from David Denyer's article "It's all about achievement," in the Nov./Dec. 2004 issue of *Teacher*.

Good news on the front page of *The Vancouver Sun* and someone is finally saying it and, most extraordinary of all, *The Sun* is picking up on it! These were my thoughts when I got the paper this morning. Your message is "right on," and it needs the widest circulation. Teachers all over the province will be cheering you on!

We are on the cusp of a defining moment: Do we want children to be enthusiastic lifelong learners, fully self-actualized citizens, or do we want them to be drudges in the George Orwell nightmare?

I write as the founder of the Drawing Network, which was created to demonstrate that children have a natural language in drawing that contributes to all language values except immediate and practical communication, and in a blessed confluence, contributes to the joyful acquisition of literacy at the same time.

When I worked with student teachers in the system (for some 28 years), the atmosphere was a good deal more conducive to the mental health of teachers and children. I keep in touch now with teachers who tell me how depressing the ambience is, and standards, constant supervision, and a narrow view of the "educated person," are the principle causes. Now the bureaucrats and educational right wingers have one thing in mind: to create a "work camp" for children.

Bob Steele, associate professor (Emeritus)
UBC, Vancouver

Thanks for your article about work camps. I agree completely and often suggest that school for many children is partly jail and partly child abuse. Rather than recognize learning differences, we cram more into smaller spaces and turn those who don't fit into behaviour problems or learning problems.

Students exist to generate numbers; the data is collected in a larger receptacle and sent on to the district, etc. It would make a good satirical cartoon. Perhaps students who finish work quickly should be made to stay in and practise working more slowly so they don't become a problem for teachers. Students who read well should be given glasses to make words blurry so they slow down.

Students who don't fit the mold become behaviour or learning problem students or simple failures. I have eight IEPs in my class of 31 because the system can't meet their needs and won't admit it. Failing them means the system has failed. Which it has. They are not failures; they just can't handle the work-camp atmosphere of school and its one-

dimensional approach to them. Our system has finally advanced enough to be effective in the Industrial Revolution.

Barry Loewen
Summerland

Thank you. I think it is wonderful that you have spoken out in "It's all about achievement."

I do not think your "work camps" statement nor the "war on childhood" statements are exaggerations (as the newspaper suggested about the former, as I recall). As for the "insulting assumption"—how refreshing to hear someone point it out.

I was so excited when I heard about the Year 2000 Program philosophy, which I take to have been the antithesis of all that you wrote about in your article. Unfortunately, my children entered the school system just about the year it was basically ditched. At least there were remnants of it (which I gather are all basically gone now) as they began elementary school, but in a short time it was dismantled piece by piece, and the relentless workbooks and worksheets have returned. And the testing. And the letter marks. And the homework mill. Much of it parent demanded, I realize. Yet I heard many teachers complain about Year 2000 too. So who, ultimately, is creating the "work camp"? It sure isn't the kids. They hate school the way it is.

I have two children, a girl, 21 and a boy, 15. My girl is gifted off the charts and ended up quitting school because of the climate you write about; she is now doing high school completion at VCC. My son is in the gifted/learning disabled (GOLD) program at Prince of Wales Secondary School, without which I do not think he would still be in school.

I am part of a group that Corinne Bees (the now-retired founder of the 26-year-old GOLD Program) is bringing into being, an action group for parents and others who want to support GOLD learners, getting GOLD programs into more high schools, and bring the GOLD issues to the table.

GOLD learners have the most trouble with the kind of system you describe, with its narrow definitions of learning, the endless quantifying through things like standardized testing. Most GOLD students have significant anxiety, especially around testing so they don't do well on the tests. And of course, being visual-spatial learners, GOLD kids can't produce the kind of work that gets the marks. Our kids are really hurt by the work camp; they are wounded in ways that will stay with them for life. Hence, your article spoke to me.

An aside—I was a delegate to the recent BCFed convention and was impressed each time Jinny Sims got up to speak. She is an articulate and vocal advocate for public education.

I work in child and adolescent mental health at Children's Hospital. As a private personal observation, I believe that the mental health department is seeing the

students who are the walking wounded of the "work camp" system, and that's not counting the many many who are getting private treatment elsewhere.

Margo Catamo (parent)
Vancouver

Retired teachers' advocacy

Over the past two years, the B.C. Retired Teachers' Association Board of Directors has noted that retirees, as both seniors and educators, appear to be very hard hit by the economic and social changes brought in by the B.C. government. The members of our organization began to question what we were doing about the situation. The directors felt that we had to take a more pro-active approach, yet remain a politically non-partisan organization.

In the autumn of 2003, a sub-committee of the BCRTA Social Concerns Committee was established to discover if any other retired teachers' organization had faced this particular problem. It was found that the Retired Teachers of Ontario had, some six years earlier, established a committee to work on this very problem. After examining what Ontario had done, the BCRTA Board of Directors created a standing committee on advocacy.

One of the functions of the advocacy committee will be to prepare position papers on issues of concern to our members. Our position will be made known to any candidate running for political office in the province. Our first paper, which we hope to have ready for the next provincial election, is on healthcare. Another function will be to liaise with other educator and/or senior groups to make sure that decision makers understand our position. We will also be urging our members to take a more active role in the electoral process, by attending all-candidates meetings, asking questions of the candidates, and urging the candidates to support our position on issues of concern to us as seniors and educators.

For more information about the BCRTA's role in advocacy, please contact our office, 604-871-2260; they can redirect your question.

Glen Pinch
White Rock

It's determination not ability

It is amazing and gratifying to see the response of Canadians and others around the world to the victims of the tsunami that struck southern Asia. However, the response also points to a huge flaw in the neo-conservative management styles of many governments including Canada, the United States, and British Columbia.

Usually, when neo-conservatives are faced with a social problem, say homeless people, their response is to deny that there is enough money to deal with the problem and that money isn't the

solution anyway. Only when those problems become "disasters" (homeless people possibly freezing to death in unusually cold weather) is money "found."

The Asian disaster should clearly send a message to all of us that money is not the problem. Political will is the problem. We can have a decent equitable healthcare system, a stable equitable education system, and a compassionate equitable social-assistance system. The money is there. The political will to collect the money is not there.

When disaster strikes, people are usually only too willing to try to make amends through their monetary donations. It is an unfortunate reality that neo-conservatives and neo-conservative groups like the Fraser Institute and the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation have convinced us to elect governments that view crumbling healthcare, education, and social assistance not as disasters but as the result of "mismanagement." The only mismanagement I can see these days is with governments that refuse to have the political will to collect and distribute tax money for the benefit of the society rather than the benefit of individuals.

The tsunami relief effort allows us to see that neo-conservatives, like the emperor, have no clothes. Keeping more money in our individual pockets will not bring about solutions to the healthcare, education, and social problems we face any more than keeping more money in our pockets would help the tsunami victims.

A provincial election is looming, and I think the question we need to ponder is Do we want to build a province where some individuals prosper or a province where we work together to make a better society for all of us?

Peter Vogt
Nicola Valley

Jamaican thank you

On behalf of the president, other officers and members of the Jamaica Teachers' Association, we wish to thank the BCTF for the assistance sent to the Caribbean Union of Teachers to assist teachers affected by the hurricanes that passed through the region late last year.

The sum sent was divided equally among the four islands that received most damage from the hurricanes, namely, Bahamas, Grenada, Haiti, and Jamaica. The funds were used by the teachers' unions in the respective islands to assist some teachers.

Once again, we thank you and the members of BCTF for your generosity and caring. We wish for all a successful 2005.

Adolph Cameron
JTA Secretary General

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Tsunami fundraising

by Lynda Bird

Upon returning from Christmas break, I asked my Grade 4/5 class what interesting and important things they had experienced or learned about on their vacation. Naturally, they shared the usual excitement about Christmas and Santa Claus, getting together with family and so on. After we enjoyed some anecdotes on that theme, I asked them what important world events had happened. Hands went up, and a number of children mentioned learning about the tsunami in Southern Asia via TV, newspapers, and radio.

We discussed the terrible effects that natural disaster was having on people, families, businesses, government, etc. We discussed how lucky we are to live in the East Kootenays with comparatively tiny problems.

The next day, a girl in my class talked about what she had heard on the radio that morning. She said she had heard a teacher from Cranbrook issue a challenge to all schools in our district to raise money to help people suffering from the tsunami.

We discussed what the students thought we should do. Everybody agreed that we should contribute money. I asked the class from what source the money should come. Should they go home and ask their parents for a donation? Would that have any meaning to them? One of the boys suggested

In 10 days, our two schools had gathered almost \$1,500.

that the money they contribute should be their own. I asked how many of them get allowances. Very few do. So I asked them, "If you don't have an allowance, how can you give your own money?" Many hands flew up. Maybe they could do extra chores to earn the money, maybe they could donate some money they had received as gifts, and so on. We all agreed that they were great ideas.

I then asked if, besides the monetary donation, they would like to do something as a class to try to help the children of the countries hit by the tsunami know that other children care.

The students suggested that we make a huge card. On the cover would be a wall of bricks of hope. On the inside, we would include an outline of all the students' hands in rainbow colours. We would all sign our names and include a picture of our class. On the back would be a huge smiley face. We would also include students' poems about the tsunami.

I eagerly told our acting principal about my class's idea. He thought it a wonderful idea. He consulted with the principal

The money will help to feed and clothe families and also help in the rebuilding efforts of schools, hospitals, etc.

of Isabella Dicken Elementary School, also in Fernie. Coincidentally, and almost simultaneously, two girls at that school had had a very similar idea about collecting donations. For the next 10 days, both schools collected money from students, their parents, teachers, support staff, and administrators.

On January 20, we had a combined assembly in our gym, at Max Turyk Elementary School. Our acting principal, Mr. Smith, had made a computer slide show about the children in our schools and the children in the countries hit by the tsunami. After the slide show, we turned our attention to the children whose idea this had been. On the table beside them were rolls and rolls of coins collected by the two schools. Mr. Smith had invited Cindy Pace, a Red Cross volunteer, to accept a cheque for all the donations. In 10 days, our two schools had gathered almost \$1,500. With the matching funds from the federal government, the total was nearly \$3,000! Pace said she was overwhelmed at the generosity of the two elementary schools. The money will help to feed and clothe families and also help in the rebuilding efforts of schools, hospitals, etc.

I am proud and blessed to be part of such a wonderful school.

Lynda M. Bird teaches at Max Turyk Elementary School, Fernie.

International Women's Day March 8

March 8 is the day we celebrate women's history and achievements. It is an opportunity to honour the extraordinary courage and determination of women everywhere who work to make our world safer and more just. International Women's Day, March 8, recognized at the United Nations, a national holiday in many countries, is observed by women's groups around the world. Most communities in B.C. organize an event to mark International Women's Day, so please contact your local women's centre (if you still have one) to find out what will be happening in your community on March 8.

On International Women's Day

- Teach your students about

the history of International Women's Day, about the contemporary women's movement, and about issues that are of great concern to women.

- Join your community celebrations.
- Organize an event for your community.

Online resources

- Status of Women Canada (for organizers, tool kit, poster, buttons) www.swc-cfc.gc.ca
- Canadian Women's Internet Directory directory.womenspace.ca
- Celebrating Women's Achievements, National Library of Canada, www.nlc-bnc.ca/women
- The United Nations, www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/womday97.htm

International Day for the Elimination of Racism March 21

Since 1966, March 21 has been recognized by the United Nations as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On March 21, 1960, the Sharpeville Massacre occurred in South Africa; 250 black people, mostly women, were killed or injured by apartheid government police. March 21 has been recognized around the world as the day people of all races stand together to say, Never again will people be killed because of the colour of their skin.

Commemorate March 21 with your colleagues, students, and communities. You can:

- join with multicultural community organizational activities.
- sponsor a BCTF social justice workshop.
- support student, teacher, and community initiatives that challenge racism.
- celebrate the lives and accomplishments of people of all races.
- make it clear that you stand against racism, bullying, and discrimination.

For further resources and information, visit

- www.tgmag.ca/march21/order.html
- www.pch.gc.ca, search "March21"
- or call 1-888-MARCH21.

Are you missing your teacher-librarian?

Has teacher-librarian time been cut in your school? Has this had an impact on you and your students? Tell us how. The B.C. Teacher-Librarians' Association is collecting examples of the effect of reduced teacher-librarian time on classroom teachers.

Please send your story to klindsay@sd61.bc.ca.

Teachers' tips

Disaster relief

Many schools are fundraising in response to the tsunami in South Asia. In some cases, teachers have organized the efforts, but in many cases, students themselves initiated them. Here are some tips on how to maximize what students learn from those projects:

1. **Research the disaster.** What caused it? Were there multiple factors (environmental degradation, civil war, lack of infrastructure, etc.)? Could it have been avoided? Could the effects have been lessened? What, if anything, can be done to prevent such a disaster from occurring again? What should you do if this happened where you live? There are always social studies connections to explore. In the case of natural disasters or disease, there are also science connections. Their research will give students some context for making decisions about how best to help.
2. **Avoid fundraising scams.** Sadly, there have been many fraudulent solicitations for relief funds, especially by e-mail. Encourage students to exercise appropriate skepticism. Identify ways they can check on the authenticity of a charitable organization (through government registration for charitable status and the Better Business Bureau, etc.).

3. **Do research on charitable organizations.** What percentage of the funds raised go directly to relief efforts, what percentage to administration and advertising? What is the focus of the relief work? Do they have experience in such relief work? Do they have experience in that part of the world? Are they sensitive to, and respectful of, the local cultures and religious beliefs?

4. **Avoid unnecessary items.** Students often want to personalize their donations by donating clothes, toys, school supplies, hygiene items, blankets, or canned goods. Those may not be the items that are most needed. Even if they are needed, items purchased here may not be

culturally appropriate in other parts of the world. Food that violates traditional beliefs goes unused, even by people who are starving. Illustrate this point for younger children by compiling an aid package for them that is culturally foreign.

Most needed items are available locally. Purchasing locally avoids transportation costs and supports the local economy. Sending money may seem impersonal, but it is usually the most helpful thing to do.

5. **Help groups rather than individuals.** Again, students are often attracted to personalized charitable efforts such as sponsoring a child. Engage them in discussions about how that might affect other children, other families, and the community. Have them brainstorm ways that a community can be helped to become self-supporting again.

6. **Think long term.** It is relatively easy to identify emergency needs—clean water, shelter, food, medical attention, burying the dead. It is harder to identify and support long-term needs, but they are critical. Engage students in discussions about short-term versus long-term needs. Encourage students who are organizing charitable projects to think and act over the long term. Charitable organizations do emergency work and those that do long-term work differ. Students engaged in long-term efforts may need to direct monies raised to different organizations during a long-term project.

7. **Think globally.** Have students investigate other areas of the world in need of humanitarian aid. Challenge older students to examine what makes people in Canada respond to one humanitarian crisis over another. Does where the disaster occurs (geographically or culturally close or far) affect our response? Does the cause of a disaster (natural causes, diseases like AIDS, civil or inter-country wars) affect our response?

— Anita Chapman

LOOKING BACK

70 years ago

Whereas, there recently appeared in local theatres news films purporting to show scenes of a particularly revolting and degrading murder trial in the United States; and whereas, there are appearing from time to time films of equally obnoxious nature; be it resolved that a more rigid censorship of films of this nature be exercised with a view to their elimination. (Resolution to the 1935 Easter Convention).

— The BC Teacher, March 1935

50 years ago

Be it resolved that the BCTF adopt as policy that Primary classes should be limited to an enrolment of 25. (Passed 1954 AGM resolution). Department of Education answer: In view of the existing shortage of teachers, this would be an impossible pupil-teacher ratio to meet, nor is the Department convinced

that it is a desirable one educationally. There is no research to prove that such small classes would be more efficient than classes of 30 to 35. If the suggestion were carried out, approximately 240 more teachers and classrooms would be needed immediately.

— The BC Teacher, March 1955

30 years ago

For the past two years we have given our elementary pupils an unforgettable learning experience in the outdoors by taking them on a four-day voyage and camping trip in the Kootenay Lake and Kootenay River country. Naturally they enjoyed the trips, but did they learn anything? One of our secondary school student assistants summed it up this way: "Everything that this sterile, paranoid school system misses this trip gave to me."

— The BC Teacher March/April 1975

10 years ago

Personal pride and professional training may instill in our minds and hearts that we are ideal teachers, able and obligated to teach a certain number of materials and skills to all students under all circumstances, and that, if we fail to do so, we should subject ourselves to self-hate, self-torture, and even self-destructive actions. The profile of a teacher suffering from Ideal Teacher Syndrome is fairly clear:

1. Perfect attendance until the first signs of breakdown.
2. Unwavering standards.
3. Discontent from students and administrators and colleagues.
4. Suddenly failing health and depression.

— Teacher, March 1995

Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich.

Protect our Primary Program

Literacy—The way it was meant to be

by Sheila Stokes

Increasingly, primary teachers in our province are being pressured to turn away from developmentally appropriate literacy instruction and assessment in order to box children into categories. The most disturbing of these categories is the “at risk” label we are being asked to apply to four- to eight-year-olds in terms of their intellectual development, specifically, the acquisition of literacy.

Literacy assessment and evaluation of our youngest learners is intended not to lump children into an at-risk category but to provide the youngest learners with a variety of experiences in a print-rich, active environment, where there is a healthy balance of instruction and play.

It is vital that we remind ourselves that the Primary Program is still the mandated document that provides the foundation for instruction, assessment, and evaluation in our classrooms. There are still five goal areas on which to focus, only one of which is intellectual development. One branch of intellectual development is the acquisition of literacy skills.

One way we can assess the growth and development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills over time, is to use the B.C. Performance Standards: “The B.C. Performance Standards have been developed for voluntary use in B.C. schools... [they] are intended as a resource to support ongoing instruction and assessment.” These performance standards were written to provide an example of behaviours that may have developed in most learners by March or April of the school year.

Unfortunately, the four categories of the performance standards—exceeds expectations, fully meets, meets expectations, and not yet within—are beginning to drive the categorization of the youngest learners and are the unsubstantiated basis of a 4-3-2-1 numeric equivalent. These

numeric equivalents are now being collected electronically by school districts and the Ministry of Education and used to reflect student achievement in literacy. The quantification, collection, and misuse of this data is causing many teachers concern.

How do we defend the rights of young learners to have the time they need to develop literacy and a love of learning? First of all, we remind ourselves that the Primary Program is our document and that we have the responsibility to continue to practise using it. We need to remind ourselves that there are three basic principles of learning:

- Learning requires the active participation of the student.
- People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.
- Learning is both an individual and a group process.

What does a rich language arts program look like, when built upon these three basic principles? It takes many forms in many classrooms and is delivered by a variety of talented primary teachers.

In 27 years of teaching, I have developed a variety of ways of working with children, learned from observing master teachers, team teaching, reading, and attending workshops. I am responsible for being familiar with the curriculum and intimately familiar with the Primary Program. I constantly assess and change my methods of instruction according to the needs of my learners, but my main goal is to deliver a program that moves each child along the continuum of her or his own learning. Language arts occurs in my multi-aged, Grade 1 and 2 classroom, with abilities ranging from gifted to developmentally delayed but integrated for 90% of the school day.

We usually begin the day with a whole-group literacy focus. It may take the form of a cloze message whereby I systematically deliver phonics instruction. We may have a guided writing session where I share the pen and have children write on a particular topic on chart paper. It may be theme related or take the form of special person’s news. Again, systematic phonics, grammar, and punctuation instruction take

place at this time.

Each day, we interact with books as often as possible. For at least 20 minutes a day, each child reads individually. Some children choose their own books, and some require my guidance. Each child is aware of her or his own instructional reading level and is encouraged to read within a range of two or three levels. After each child has practised a passage, the children read aloud during reading circle where we break into three or four multi-ability groups, each facilitated by one child who is responsible for inviting each individual to read and then later thanking them for reading. Reading materials are sent home for home-reading practice.

Children also borrow books from our class library and visit the school library once a week for sign-out and every two weeks for a story with the teacher-librarian.

Individual writing often occurs in journals and is either on a topic of choice or is assigned by me reflecting a current science or social studies theme. Spelling in the first draft is phonetic, and each child practices one or two words I have chosen from her or his writing to create an individual spelling program. Some children write and publish their own stories, using standard spelling and literary form.

My children have 45 minutes of activity time daily. Our class has a sandbox and a painting easel, literacy centres, a home centre, and a variety of other centres and activities from which they freely choose. Children have the right to play.

To protect the rights of the child to learn actively, socially, individually, and in a variety of ways, we need to remember that we are professionals who believe in and deliver a first-rate primary program. We must protest reporting on the rich and varied growth and development of our youngest learners by boxing them into 4-3-2-1 slots.

Sheila Stokes teaches at Kay Bingham Elementary School, Kamloops, and is president of the Kamloops-Thompson Primary Teachers’ Association.



Three Cs for quality assessment

by Glen Gough

“Children are the most reasonable people I know. Their days are spent trying to make sense of the world, searching for meaning, figuring things out. Their perception is magical and their questions are intelligent quests for understanding.”

— Raffi

It would challenge anyone who has spent one day with a young child to deny the truth behind what Raffi is saying. Primary teachers need to tap into this reality so that they can meaningfully assess, evaluate, and report what children are learning in their classrooms.

Assessment is the gathering of evidence of student learning. Evaluation is the making of judgments based on that evidence. Our own Primary Program (2000) states, “Evaluation is only as good as the assessment on which it is based.” Teachers need to ensure that the information gathered about student learning is of the highest quality, so that an accurate picture of each student’s learning can be reported to student, parents, and administration.

Young children are complex individuals. The current trend toward simple worksheets that are one-dimensional, or tests or screens that are laborious, time-consuming, and stressful for the student, provide at best, only a snapshot of what a child can do under pressure. To get true, meaningful information from assessment, teachers need to delve deeper into the complex nature of each learner.

Planning for assessment, just as one plans lessons, is essential. Assessment of learning is only a beginning. Teachers need to ensure transition to assessment for learning. Assessment for learning leads the teacher to determine “where to go next” with each student.

How can this be done? Ensuring that these three Cs are followed is a great start for any teacher: context, collaboration, and conversation.

Context

The most meaningful assessment emerges when students engage “in familiar and comfortable experiences” (Primary Program, p. 162). Raffi’s words ring true. Children naturally spend their days “trying to make sense of the world, searching for meaning, figuring things out.” The best option for teachers is to observe students in their natural course of play to see whether they have acquired the learning expected, or to develop fun and meaningful learning activities, which are opportunities for the teacher to look for a desired outcome. Once a teacher isolates a student to perform an obscure task such as a worksheet or a skill on demand,

To get true, meaningful information from assessment, teachers need to delve deeper into the complex nature of each learner.

stress will be a factor. A worksheet or skill test provides no information that cannot be simply observed in the course of a child’s natural play if adequate time, materials, and motivation are provided. By observing, teachers can gather information from a wide array of activities, which can only make the evaluation and reporting much more accurate and meaningful. It is all about letting the child remain a child and not exposing her or him to needless stress. Make the assessment in the context of a child’s chosen activity whenever possible.

Collaboration

In the best kind of assessment, all the stakeholders are part of the process. Just as teachers strive to assess using a variety of activities, they also need to gather a variety of perspectives about a child’s learning. “Encouraging students to reflect on their own actions, ideas, and creations enables them to foster their own learning...fosters their awareness and understanding of their own learning processes.”



We are professionals who believe in and deliver a first-rate Primary Program

(Primary Program, p. 163). Student self-assessment is essential to the process. If teachers hope to have assessment promote learning as opposed to just measure it, the assessment must hold value for the student. It is then students will be best able to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and participate in setting their own goals for improvement. Parents also need to be a part of assessment. Observing their child in the classroom will give parents the opportunity to offer insights possibly never considered by the teacher. A team approach is crucial if teachers want quality assessment to translate into meaningful evaluation.

Conversation

With this, the most important C, it all comes together. Without adequate time for teachers to have conversations with their students, teachers can never have the full picture. Observations of processes and products provide valuable assessment information, far more valuable than any test. Conversations “help the child clarify, extend, and enhance thinking and learning. Discussions during the process of learning activities and afterwards, as debriefing, provide important insights into children’s understanding of content and concepts and also their learning processes.” (Primary Program, p.166) What teachers think they are observing can have new meaning once children tell them, in their words, their thinking. Conversations also lead to the most meaningful form of evaluation and reporting. Given adequate time in conversation, teachers can transform their multifaceted assessment into extremely clear evaluation and reporting, a true portrait of a child’s learning and abilities. “It is interesting that while the usual meaning of assessment has to do with the collection of data, the term is a derivative of *assidere*, a Latin word meaning to sit beside someone.” (Routman, p. 557) Only when teachers are up close and personal with a student, observing and conversing, can they get the true picture of their learning. As in the opening comment by Raffi, “their questions are intelligent quests for understanding.” If teachers don’t stop to listen, they can’t hear the questions.

My mind keeps coming back to “evaluation is only as good as the assessment on which it is based,” as well as to another quote by Regie Routman, “Assessment without evaluation is pointless.” (p. 558)

The many pressures on primary teachers from many directions are making it impossible for teachers to stay focussed on quality assessment. Endless tests, data collection, and prescribed programs do not ensure quality for our children. “Weighing the pig, doesn’t make it any fatter,” is true for the pig and for the children in our schools. These three Cs are the beginning of quality assessment.

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

The PR in primary

by Lori Robinson

Public relations (PR) is the most effective way of dealing with the alarming issues facing primary teachers. It isn’t difficult to become a PR strategist. It happens when you take your passions and knowledge about teaching to the audience outside your classroom.

Your best support when taking on an educational issue comes from the BCTF, the provincial specialist associations (PSAs), your local teachers’ association/union, and, where available, the local specialist associations (LSAs). Primary LSAs operate in 50 locals. Surrey Primary Teachers’ Association has 200 members. Smaller groups maintain a strong voice in their districts and locals. LSAs meet/communicate on a regular or semi-regular basis for professional development and advocacy.

Some of the issues facing Primary LSAs this year:

- data collection pressure from administration (product, not process).
- district- or school-mandated report-card templates that do not support the Ministry of Education’s protocol for reporting to parents, curriculum, or goals of the Primary Program.
- increased demands for evidence of reaching targets in school-growth plans, requiring collecting quantitative data that is not supported by the Primary Program.
- larger class sizes: 22 in Kindergarten and 24 in Grades 1–3, with no caps or compensatory class compositions based on the number of low-incidence students with special needs.
- less physical space for computers, toys, and play

centres because more bodies are in the classrooms.

- new programs, sometimes mandated by the district, despite professional autonomy in contract language.
- new programs, supported by teachers, but requiring extensive work and networking to learn and implement.
- pushing of curriculum into lower grades—making Kindergarten resemble Grade 1.
- Ready, Set, Learn—how to make it a good experience for the four-year-olds visiting the school for the first time and setting up an effective liaison with parents and the community.
- reduced funding and support for materials needed for primary classrooms (toys, equipment, art supplies, manipulatives, library resources).
- reduced funding for support staff (library, learning assistance, special education, and counselling teachers).
- support for teachers who are not primary-trained, but have been assigned, or reassigned, to primary teaching because of cutbacks, layoffs, and school closures.
- the reduction/elimination of primary specialist training programs at universities and colleges, thereby putting the pressure on sponsor teachers working with student teachers who have not necessarily had training in early childhood education theory and practice.

Some steps to building a public relations campaign

1. Stand up. At your next local general meeting, stand up. Two-thirds of the teachers in your district are not primary teachers; they are probably unaware of the battles you are fighting to maintain your classroom and the integrity of the Primary Program. Talk for a few minutes about the issues. I know

you will have the support and encouragement of your local president. Ask for a few minutes on the agenda. Your colleagues in the older grades will bear the fallout from the issues that affect student learning in the primary years. They care.

2. Always consult with your local teachers’ association president when corresponding with or lobbying your district administration or school board. This crucial step serves two purposes. It will give you the important support of your local executive and it is part of the protocol of the BCTF that its members will not make outside representation that is contrary to any existing Federation positions/plans of action. The local presidents are in contact with the BCTF daily to confirm information, research issues, and develop responses. What starts in one local may be of concern to others. This is how

You could be the spark that lights the flame of empowerment, change, and excellence within your school, district, and province.

issues grow from small to large, with the support to match.

3. Contact your LSA. The LSA presidents routinely contact the PSA presidents on issues relevant to the PSA. PSA presidents (there are 33 provincial specialist associations) work as a PSA Council with the BCTF. Most locals have chapters for many of the PSAs—special education, intermediate, music educators, learning assistance—and more. Ask your local president for names of contacts or of teachers who may share your concerns. The PSAs can help you research your issue.

4. Once you have the go-ahead from your local president, be very specific and certain about whom you are representing. If you are writing/presenting as an individual, you should not sign your school name or your association name. It implies that you are speaking for the group. If you are writing on behalf of a group, it is essential that the group/school/association has been part of the process of writing and knows the content of your letter or presentation, at both the local and the provincial level. Always ask your local teachers’ association president to approve your correspondence. She or he may need BCTF approval and will handle this for you.

5. Start small. Lobby your principal first. She or he is an important ally in trying to change the system. Many principals who are very well-informed about the best practices in primary and are willing to help maintain those practices in our classrooms. Be sure of your facts.

6. Share information and research. Talk to your school colleagues and parents about what you are interested in and concerned about. Put articles up on the wall behind the photocopier (captive audience). Put them on the staffroom table. Circulate articles at a staff meet-

ing, and offer to make copies for those who are interested.

7. Engage district administration in conversations when they visit your school. Capture them and captivate them. Send them copies of important articles with a personal note attached (and highlight a few of the most important parts). Invite them to discuss issues with you over coffee. If they are the people making the big decisions, it is essential that they understand the research and the best practices for those students. People with titles are obligated to have more knowledge, not less.

8. Join your local primary teachers’ association. If you don’t have a local chapter, start one. Your first meeting can be of two people, then four, and so on. Some local teachers’ associations may offer financial support for starting up.

9. Join the BCPTA. Our newsletters and web site give our members up-to-date information. Our association often has representation on Ministry of Education committees for curriculum development. The BCPTA takes concerns and issues from members to the PSA Council, the Professional and Social Issues Division of the Federation, the Executive Committee, and the AGM. The strength of the Federation’s united front is an awesome and powerful thing. We are fortunate to have so many leaders within the BCTF who understand what is important to primary teachers. Many local associations will fund PSA memberships with Pro-D money.

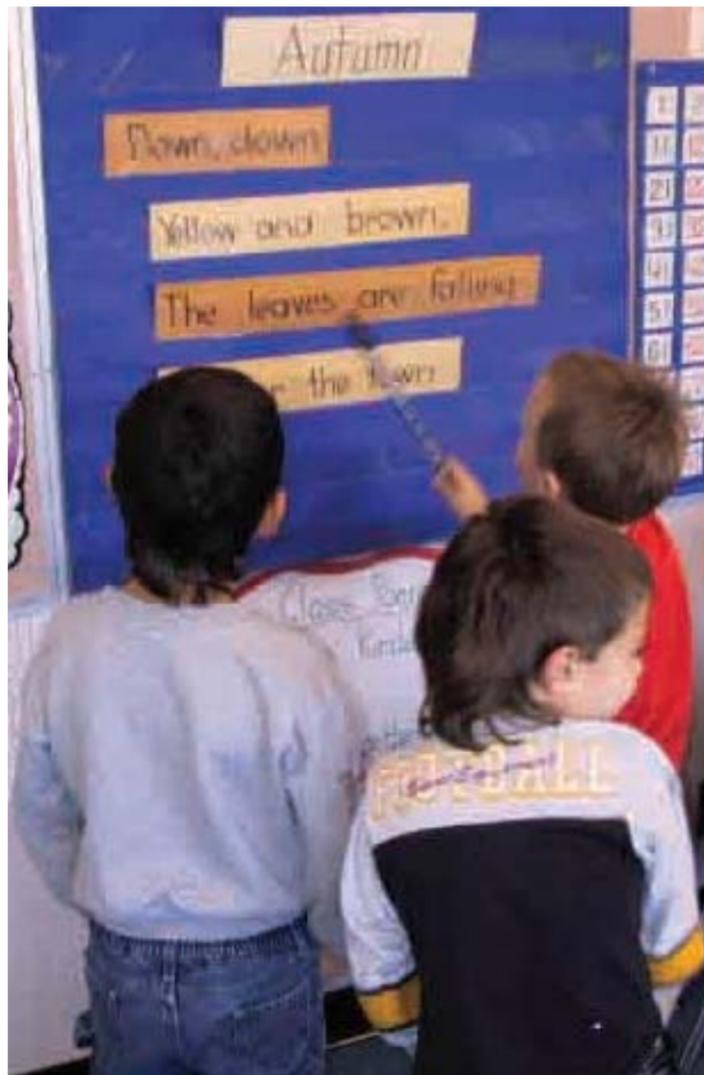
10. As always, together we are better. Lobby colleagues, parents, principals, and district administration on pedagogical practices. Use research, position statements, and well-respected provincial, national, and international organizations and authors. Use what you know about the science of teaching. Keep emotions and personalities out of the argument. Build your response using quotes and positions from today’s leading educators. Check the BCPTA web site, for links to articles, research, and organizations for supporting statements. Read articles, books, and web pages. Consult the Primary Program, full of research and reason, to remind your colleagues and administrators about the best practice in primary.

This is essential: Any representations to outside agencies must have prior authorization by the local president and the BCTF president. This isn’t a scary or time-consuming task, but it ensures that any lobbying done is consistent with BCTF and local association policies. It also gives you a network of supports, contacts, and knowledge.

Don’t hide your intelligence and knowledge about teaching practices; share them. You could be the spark that lights the flame of empowerment, change, and excellence within your school, district, and province.

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

Primary resources and links can be found on page 6.



GLEN GOUGH PHOTOS

New Teachers' Conference

Why did you choose to be a teacher?



Stacey Galigan
Okanagan Similkameen TOC

As a child, I loved school. My experiences and memories will stay with me forever. The teachers I had not only taught me the curriculum but also taught me about life. I want to be a part of my students' learning.



Kim Riddick
Delta

I chose to be a teacher because I love being around kids and giving them what I have to offer. I love seeing kids learn, understand, and speak French because it displays their immense potential.

My primary teacher, reading Gabrielle Roy's *les enfants de ma vie*, my relationship with my aikido instructor, and a love for languages were also great influences in my choosing to become a teacher.

I'm glad I'm a teacher because it will give me opportunities in activism, graduate work, administrative work, and mentorship.



Shay Iverson
Abbotsford TOC

Learning a variety of topics daily with children of all ages is definitely not a boring career! Facilitating an environment of discovery is often challenging; however, when you witness a struggling child light up with enthusiasm, eager to learn more, the reward is worth the effort.



Mark Plimley
Coquitlam TOC

I enjoy working with and helping people. I believe education is extremely important. I feel I can make a difference in young people's lives.



Rhonda Leduc
Victoria/Sooke TOC

I realized after being active in my children's school and school life that I really enjoyed being a part of a school community. I enjoy the challenge of creating exciting lessons, of motivating students, and seeing their progress. Teaching allows me to be a creative person.

Primary resources

- Bodrova, E. & Leong, D. (2003). "Chopsticks and Counting Chips." Beyond the Journal Young Children on the Web at www.naeyc.org/resources/journal.
- Dockett, S. (2002). "Teachers Don't Play: Children's Views At School." *Play and Folklore* (42) at www.museum.vic.gov.au/playfolklore/
- Ministry of Education. (2000). *The Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching*. Victoria, B.C. www.bced.gov.bc.ca/primary_program/toc.htm
- Oliver, S., & Klugman, E. (2004). "Speaking Out For Play Based Learning." *Child Care Information Exchange*, January/ February 2004.
- Routman, Regie. 2000. *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Canadian Association for Young Children has a strong position statement on play, and offers conferences, workshops, and resources. www.cayc.ca/index2.html
- B. C. Primary Teachers' Association regularly posts new links to web sites that support teachers and practices in keeping with the Primary Program. www.bctf.ca/psas/BCPTA/
- UBC is pioneering an interdisciplinary research partnership

that involves both government ministries and educators at all levels. Directed by Dr. Clyde Hertzman, HELP (Human Early Learning Partnership) is working with schools and communities to research early learning. One major project that has been in most districts is the EDI (Early Development Instrument)—collecting data on what supports are in place and future directions for community development. www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/

- The National Association for the Education of Young Children maintains an extensive website with journal articles, links, and research-supported positions statements. www.naeyc.org/
- The NAEYC has come out strongly opposed to some of the accountability and assessment practices being forced upon primary students and teachers. Position statements can be downloaded in pdf format. www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/readiness.asp
- The International Reading Association, which publishes *Reading Today* and *The Reading Teacher*, provides short, concise position statements, which you can print and use to start discussions or support your position statements. www.reading.org/resources/issues/positions_multiple_methods.html

LGBT issues in schools

by Glen Hansman

Coquitlam teacher Murray Corren and his husband, Peter Corren, have launched a complaint at the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal against the Ministry of Education regarding lack of curriculum in our schools addressing the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-identified (LGBT) students. Their complaint will be heard in July 2005 in Vancouver.

A stigmatizing lens is placed upon students of difference, especially those perceived to be deviating from expected gender or sexual norms.

As public institutions, schools touch nearly every child and provide powerful sanction for certain knowledge. Teachers have the capacity to help children learn how to share public space with people similar to, and different from, themselves. We have a responsibility to address issues around gender identity and sexual orientation appropriately and respectfully—whether in response to bigoted comments or harassment, or in response to perfectly legitimate questions about same-sex families or students' own needs and experiences.

Even at the elementary level, students throw around words like *faggot* and *queer*, and use *gay* as an epithet ("That's so gay!"). A stigmatizing lens is placed upon students of difference, especially those perceived to be deviating from expected gender or sexual norms. Providing children at all levels with age-appropriate concepts, vocabulary, and strategies for handling the issues is crucial in helping them in resisting bigotry, avoiding unsafe practices, and treating themselves and others respectfully.

The Ministry of Education and school districts across the province need to face these issues head on. Unfortunately, the ministry and most school districts have been slow to introduce adequate discussion of LGBT issues in school curricula and policy.

The 2003 Safe Schools Task Force, which travelled around B.C. on behalf of the provincial government, called attention to the challenges faced by B.C.'s LGBT youth. Its report stated, "In nearly every community visited..., no matter how large or small, individuals made presentations about the issue of harassment and intimidation based on sexual orientation. Presenters talked about their experience in the school system and the ways that homophobic discrimination had led to harassment and intimidation that made their schooling difficult. Many gay and lesbian youth told us that they dreaded coming to school."

Furthermore, the task force

found that "even the perception of being homosexual or of being tolerant of homosexuality is enough to result in harassment and intimidation, including both emotional and physical abuse from those who choose to bully."

Despite these findings and others, the provincial government has yet to mandate any specific action addressing the safety and equity of LGBT youth in B.C. schools. The full Safe Schools Task Force report, *Facing Our Fears*, and the ensuing guidelines, *Safe, Caring, and Orderly Schools*, are available on the ministry's web site. The former neglects to make any specific recommendations around homophobia, despite detailing numerous examples in the body of the report; the latter encourages school boards to include references to homophobia in Codes of Conduct, but doesn't mandate such inclusion.

Earlier this year, Minister of Education Tom Christensen said in the Legislative Assembly that "discrimination within our schools on any grounds is wholly unacceptable. That certainly includes any elements of homophobia." Unfortunately, rather than take a leadership role by ensuring that schools across the province deal with homophobia in their codes of conduct, Christensen would rather that schools themselves determine "acceptable and unacceptable behaviours within schools, regardless of the motivation for the behaviour."

Unfortunately, this approach depends upon individual schools and school districts to identify homophobia and the needs of their LGBT students as valid concerns.

Most regions in B.C. are reticent to do anything positive in this area. Only a small number of districts, including Vancouver and Victoria, have taken the initiative to create antidiscrimination policies addressing homophobia. As Prince George's district administrator Bonnie Chappell puts it in a recent article in *XtraWest*: If the government tells the district

Only a small number of districts, including Vancouver and Victoria, have taken the initiative to create antidiscrimination policies addressing homophobia.

to do it, they will; but in the meantime, it's not something her district is about to do on its own. Not in an election year, according to Bill Gook, assistant superintendent for the Southeast Kootenay School District. Without policies like those of Victoria and Vancouver, a climate of fear and discomfort exists for educators in addressing these issues.

Other Canadian jurisdictions are leaving B.C. behind in addressing school safety and curriculum for queer youth.

Manitoba has several municipal and provincially funded initiatives in place to support queer youth in schools. Ontario's Premier Dalton McGuinty recently appeared on television addressing Muslim parents who wished to pull their children out of school during lessons about same-sex families and homophobia, publicly stating that "it's important that all our children have the opportunity to learn about those things that distinguish one of us from the other, and that they learn to respect those differences." (CBC, 2004) Ontario's Education Minister Gerard Kennedy echoed the premier's remarks, saying, "[O]ur public schools are there to engender respect, respect for people of different faiths and different sexual orientations... [I don't think] there's any harm done to parents who find their children exposed to ideas that are different than the ones they teach at home."

Little has changed in public schools since I graduated a dozen years ago, and I worry about LGBT youth in schools across our province, particularly outside of urban areas, where their needs are not being recognized. Rather than simple

...we need leadership from the province and specific action in this area to protect and affirm all students in our public schools.

encouragement for school districts to begin a dialogue around codes of conduct and only the hope that the needs and rights of transgender, two-spirit, lesbian, and gay youth will be respected, as the minister of education proffers, we need leadership from the province and specific action in this area to protect and affirm all students in our public schools.

Glen Hansman teaches at Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith Elementary School, Vancouver.

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- CBC (November 17, 2004) "Muslim parents encouraged to keep kids in anti-homophobia classes." Retrieved from www.cbc.ca/
- Perelle, R. (September 2, 2004) "A patchwork of bigotry-Back to school special report: How safe will queer students be in BC this fall?" *XtraWest*
- Safe Schools Task Force. (2003) "Facing our fears: Accepting responsibility." Victoria: British Columbia Ministry of Education.



Scaffolding, hoardings, and wrappings envelop False Creek Elementary School.

Leaky schools in B.C. Who is responsible?

by Noel Herron

At the end of March 2005, my neighborhood school, False Creek Elementary, in Vancouver, will slowly emerge from the wrappings of the past six months. It is one of more than 500 schools across B.C. that the provincial government has investigated for water leaks. Contractors and architects face claims of up to \$60 million to have them repaired. The province will pick up the tab for False Creek while seeking compensation from the builders and or architects it deems responsible for the mess.

Sadly, this is not the first time our neighbourhood school has faced large reconstruction since it was first built in 1977 because of the apparent combination of government policy changes, contractor ineptitude, and buck-passing by key players involved, and woefully deficient building codes for our climate. There appears to be no shortage of

blame to go around, as exemplified by the Barrett report on the leaky condo syndrome.

The initial cost of False Creek Elementary was estimated at \$3.5 million, and 17 years later, in the summer of 1994, a half-million-dollar repair job was called for, due to water seepage, bringing the cost to over \$4 million.

What will guarantee that we will not have a repeat of the False Creek problem across the province?

Since September 2004, False Creek students, teachers, support staff, parents, and community organizations (despite careful planning by VSB staff) have endured the inconvenience. Scaffolding, hoardings, and wrappings were erected and under that

protection, masons, structural workers, and other craftsmen repair the latest ravages of seeping water. The cost of this second repair job is now estimated at a cool \$1,438,300 increasing the total cost of the school from the original \$3.5 million to close to \$5.5 million.

Who is responsible for the province-wide mess? Should the provincial government, the architects, and the contractors share in the cost recovery involved? Are architects being made the sole scapegoats for this situation? Why are schools that were built prior to 1985 not leaking? What kind of provincial building code permits this disaster? What will guarantee that we will not have a repeat of the False Creek problem across the province?

Are the repairs being co-ordinated with the ongoing seismic program to avoid additional costs? Why should some of our schools, as in the case of Walter Moberly Elementary

School, in Vancouver, be faced with two separate upgrades—one for seismic and another for refurbishing with all the attendant inconvenience?

The Campbell government may wish to claim that it initiated the current 18-month cost recovery program by sending out notices to architects and builders. The previous NDP government may wish to claim that it built more schools than any previous provincial government (both claims are true). However, their combined failure to stop the rot once it became apparent is stunning.

The root of the problem can be traced to the Bennett government of the mid-1980s, which decided to implement the penny wise, pound foolish—some would say asinine—policy of squeezing the most amount of classroom space using the least amount of money. This apparently led to a decrease in the quality of construction, with cheaper materials such as face-sealed stucco on wood-frame buildings rather than the brick cavity walls previously in use. A face-seal system relies on sealants applied to the outside surface of wall joints.

Critics also point out that regardless of whether it is a wood or a concrete building, unless proper moisture-management measures are taken during the design and construction phases, moisture will be trapped behind cladding, and rot will inevitably set in. It seems to have escaped the bureaucrats in the Bennett government and succeeding provincial governments that we, on the West Coast, have the highest rainfall in Canada. And lowest-bid contracting, forced on school boards by Victoria, seems to have developed a system that allows contractors and subcontractors to walk away or hide behind the anonymity of numbered companies with impunity.

The results of this ill-advised policy switch and the construction methods used at the time are painfully evident in our schools today. A school district like Coquitlam has a whopping 30% of its 72 schools under

investigation for upgrading. The gym roof of Surrey's L.A. Matheson Junior Secondary School collapsed, and on Saltspring Island, the Saltspring Island Middle School's roof leaked badly. Unanswered questions about the impact of unseen mould on the health of students and staff abound. (The services of the mould-sniffing dog Coco have been called into use by at least two school districts.) The disruption of school schedules and the

...the independent investigative powers of the province's Office of the Auditor General should be used to avoid a repeat of this province-wide debacle.

teaching/learning environment because of noise and classroom displacements is also unacceptable.

Given the complexity of the issues, ranging from the health and safety of our students and staffs to the charges and counter-charges of the key players that may lead to litigation, the independent investigative powers of the province's Office of the Auditor General should be used to avoid a repeat of this province-wide debacle. And equally important, the auditor general should examine the potentially shocking use or misuse of our taxes.

But don't hold your breath. The Campbell government has starved the auditor general's office of the necessary funding to initiate a broadly based investigation that would enable it to get to the bottom of this scandal.

Are we now so immune to scandals in this province that this issue barely makes it above the public-awareness radar?

Noel Herron is a Vancouver trustee and is the liaison trustee for False Creek Elementary School.

La folie du testage standardisé

par Ghislaine Varin

Tests, tests, tests... et de plus en plus de tests. C'est devenu une folie en éducation qui prend une ampleur très inquiétante, presque une obsession, appuyée par les politiciens et acceptée par un public mal informé. Quels sont les agents qui motivent cette poussée de testage standardisé à grands enjeux qui envahit nos salles de classe lorsque nous, les experts en éducation, reconnaissons facilement les effets négatifs de ces tests sur nos élèves, notre système d'enseignement public et notre profession.

Ceux qui appuient le testage standardisé croient que l'administration régulière de tests est bénéfique parce qu'elle pousse les élèves à travailler plus fort et force le personnel enseignant et les administrateurs à prendre l'éducation plus sérieusement. Un point de vue qui démontre clairement le manque de respect pour notre profession et pour le travail acharné que les enseignantes et enseignants font dans leurs salles de classe. De plus, les parents veulent savoir où leur enfant se situe dans la compétition malade pour une place

dans la société. Le résultat d'un test standardisé répond à ce besoin pour ces parents qui ne reconnaissent pas toute autre évaluation authentique et valable créée par les éducateurs et les éducatrices. D'autres appuient le point de vue que tous les élèves devraient tous apprendre exactement toutes les mêmes choses, tous en même temps, en utilisant tous le même matériel et en écrivant tous les mêmes tests. C'est une position qui valorise un programme d'études standardisé réduit afin de pouvoir attacher une valeur numérique à tout ce qui est relié au programme d'études. Après tout, moins il y a de diversité plus le système est facile à mesurer, à diriger et à contrôler. La compétition, l'individualisme et la conformité remplacent la coopération, la diversité et la créativité.

Ceux et celles qui s'opposent au testage standardisé le font pour des raisons qualifiées et justifiables - la promotion et la valorisation de l'éducation globale de l'enfant et son bien-être qui nous sont confiés dans notre système public. Le testage standardisé néglige des domaines importants tels que les arts, la musique, l'écriture créative, l'éducation physique,

l'habileté d'analyser des données, d'évaluer l'information et de faire des connexions, la motivation, l'initiative, le jugement, la prise de décision, la pensée critique, l'attitude, l'humour, les valeurs et le civisme. De plus, le testage standardisé crée des effets négatifs sur les élèves tels que la perte de confiance, la démotivation et le décrochage surtout pour ceux qui sont déjà vulnérables, la perte de l'estime de soi, l'anxiété sachant qu'ils seront classifiés, étiquetés ainsi que leurs écoles - un classement encouragé par l'institut Fraser. Le personnel enseignant ressent de plus en plus de pression de la part des administrateurs et des parents à préparer les élèves pour ces tests imposés sachant que des heures précieuses d'enseignement de qualité sont sacrifiées pour la préparation à ces tests. Les enseignantes et enseignants comprennent que le testage standardisé est basé sur UN test administré UN jour et que les résultats seront utilisés pour évaluer notre système d'enseignement public et ses éducateurs et éducatrices, ainsi que pour justifier l'imposition de nouvelles directions en éducation. Ces tests ne tiennent pas compte de facteurs importants

tels que l'indifférence de l'élève face au test, la nervosité, la fatigue, la santé et surtout le milieu socio-économique, familial et culturel de l'enfant.

Alors pourquoi ce mouvement agressif vers le testage standardisé à grands enjeux ? Serait-ce dans le but d'évaluer les enseignantes et les enseignants et de leur enlever leur statut et leur autonomie professionnels ? Pour produire des « standards plus élevés » déterminés par un gouvernement motivé par l'économie et les besoins des gens d'affaires ? Serait-ce un indicateur important de la mondialisation, de la privatisation ? Une réponse à des demandes de données par les multinationales pour former une main d'oeuvre qui saura mieux servir leurs besoins dans un marché compétitif ? Une méthode pour sélectionner les élèves, pour prédire l'avenir des jeunes au détriment des groupes non dominants ? Un contrôle social ? Est-ce que les coupures budgétaires et la privatisation des services dans notre système d'enseignement public feraient partie de ce mouvement ? Nous observons déjà la présence croissante des multinationales dans nos écoles, une situation justifiable et inévitable aux yeux

de certains à cause du manque de financement en éducation.

Il devient donc de plus en plus urgent que nous discutions avec nos collègues des effets nocifs du testage standardisé à grands enjeux utilisé par le gouvernement et l'institut Fraser, que nous communiquions aux parents les raisons de ces tests et nos inquiétudes basées sur une différente perspective, et que nous protestions l'imposition de ces tests afin de protéger l'avenir de notre système d'enseignement public, et ce, pour le bien-être de nos élèves, de nos enfants et de notre société démocratique. Nous ne devons plus rester silencieux.

Références : BCTF Research, Moll, ed. (2004), Agrey (2004), Larkin et Staton (2001)

Synopsis

The increased emphasis on standardized testing in our classrooms has negative effects on students, teachers, and our democratic society. Would globalization, privatization, and social control be part of this governmental test imposition?

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

Teachers online 24/7?

by Larry Kuehn

Is it a good idea to keep track of everything a kid needs and does on a central computer database? Do teachers want to have all aspects of classroom information in a central database, including their lesson plans, daily marks, report cards, IEPs, and most anything that can be quantified?

Unfortunately, those questions were not asked of teachers before the provincial government and some school districts created *BCeSIS*. Yes, it does rhyme with CSIS, and it stands for B.C. electronic Student Information System. The aim of the project is to have a common system on demographics and outcome information to ensure that what happens in every classroom is aligned and compliant with the government's education objectives and the district accountability contracts.

BCeSIS may have already come to your school district. Forty-three districts, with about two-thirds of the students in the province, have already signed up. A handful of districts are already training staff to implement the system.

The ministry claims that signing on to the system is voluntary. How much of the system is actually used—for example, whether all lesson plans must be entered and revised continually—will be a local decision. Any district that tries to go it alone in creating an alternative system that will meet the demands of the ministry for particular information will find it costly.

Consistent with the “loose/tight” style of management the government has adopted from the corporate world, tight control is centralized in government around what must be done, but responsibility for carrying it out is decentralized. This is done by a combination of privatization and downloading of costs.

The privatization has two aspects. One is the creation of *BCeSIS* as an organization. School districts join *BCeSIS*, but it operates like a private organization, with a meeting of delegates who make decisions, much like B.C. Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA). Although its membership is made up of public bodies, its organizational meeting was closed to anyone other than the ministry and a representative of one of the districts that has signed on. Such arrangements, like School District Business Companies, allow publicly owned organizations to operate outside the Freedom of Information rules that cover public bodies.

The other aspect of privatization is that *BCeSIS* contracts with an Ontario company, Administrative Assistants, Ltd. (AAL), to provide the software and maintain the data. The costs have been downloaded onto boards. Each school district will pay \$10 a year per student (about \$6 million a year, if all are in). That, of course, does not include the cost of the computer that will have to be on every teacher's desk with an Internet

connection, so that the teacher can enter throughout the day the attendance, marks, changes in lesson plans and assignments, and so on. It does not include the cost of the computer and Internet connection the teacher will have to have at home—this is a 24/7 system with “real time” availability. It does not include the cost of the training or other costs of maintaining the system. Nor does it take into account the amount of instructional time used in maintaining all the information that is eventually to be on the system.

The company, AAL, that is providing the software and will be storing the data is Canadian. Presumably the data won't be accessible to U.S. intelligence agencies, as required by the *U.S. Patriot Act* of all data held in the U.S. However, most of the company's clients are U.S. school districts, and corporate ownership often changes hands, without regard to borders.

Sociologist, Langdon Winner who studies information technology, points out that “a technology is not only a symbol of a social order. It embodies it.” The social order built into *BCeSIS* is the most troubling aspect of the project.

“...a technology is not only a symbol of a social order. It embodies it.”

It implies that data-based decision-making is all that counts—that quantitative data, not authentic qualitative data, is what's valued. It moves many decisions outside the classroom relationship between teacher and students, with a focus on compliance and congruence with central government objectives. It is individualist, in focussing only on data on each student, rather than on the social aspects of a classroom, which are collective and not easily broken down to individual data. And it is almost Orwellian in the degree to which it makes possible surveillance by those with access to the data.

The social order implicit in an information system is also defined by what information is not collected or considered important. After 2001, the ministry stopped collecting information on class sizes, while insisting on more and more data on students. Despite a school district's having to gather information on class sizes in order to certify that it is meeting the legislated class-size averages, the ministry did not want the information.

BCeSIS has been created by stealth. Work has been going on for an extended time, with little consultation at any level. It was viewed as a technology project rather than a social-educational issue about what information is important. Most teachers in the 43 districts that have signed on may not have heard of *BCeSIS*, despite technological-change clauses in many contracts that require a board to give notice of changes like this and to enter into discussion with the local on the conditions of undertaking the project.

It is time for teachers to ask questions of their school boards. Will this technology support teachers' making professional judgments based on the needs of the child and the curriculum? Or is this another element of a program to deprofessionalize teaching?

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

Letter to minister from VSB

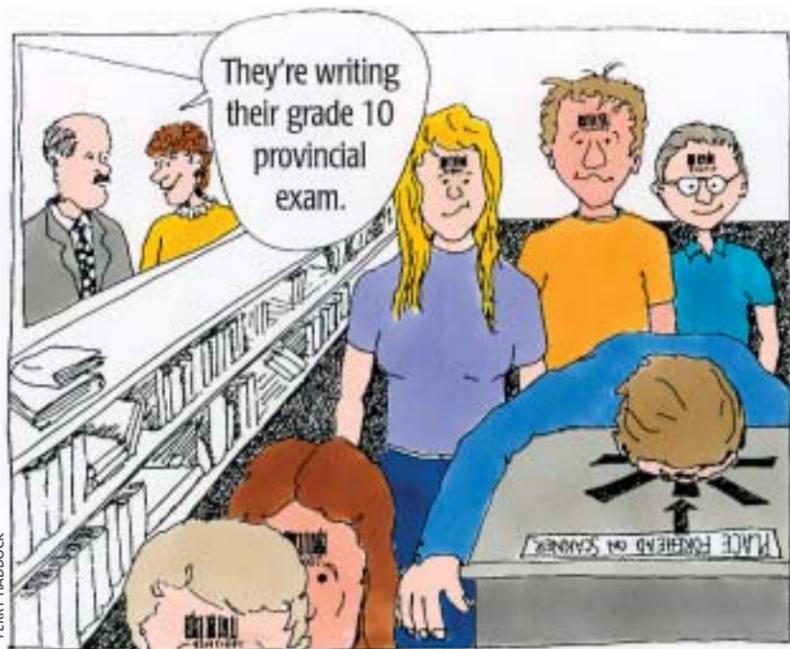
Dear Mr. Christensen: On behalf of the Vancouver School Board, I am writing to express our concerns about the ministry's new Grade 10 provincial exams to be imposed this year. Let me say at the outset that we understand the importance of assessment for, and of, learning. We believe that good assessment practices contribute to good teaching and student success. Ideally, we think that ongoing assessment should acknowledge a broad range of accomplishments and provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. Tracking the progress of student achievement is important for all involved: the students whose needs can thus be identified, the teachers who can learn more about their students and plan effectively for their teaching, and the parents to whom reports can be directed so they can follow and support their child's progress.

That having been said, the proposal for Grade 10 provincial exams raises several issues for the board. Our concerns are in three major areas: the educational value of the tests, the potential negative effects of the tests on teaching and learning, and the cost of the tests. I will outline our concerns in each of these areas.

...what is the research that indicates that this kind of testing has educational value?

First, we are skeptical of the educational value of the provincial tests. Large scale high stakes testing such as the Grade 10 exams are, indeed, valuable for collecting centralized data that can be used to rank and compare students and schools. Such testing has not, to our knowledge, proven through research to be useful for improving individual student learning. Nor do we recall from consultations about changes to the graduation requirements, any expression of interest from stakeholders to implement provincial testing at Grade 10.

There are already clear course objectives in place for each of the subjects the Ministry of Education proposes to test. Schools are already accountable for learning outcomes. Teachers have many assessment activities in place for the content they have covered. They use a wide range of assessment instruments and incorporate authentic tools and measures. Results of teachers' assessments of student learning are communicated to parents and students through graded assignments and report cards. These school-based assessments provide students, teachers, and parents with the information they need for learning and teaching. We do not understand how provincial testing can positively add to this complement of school and classroom assessments. We would be interested to know if the Ministry of Education based the decision to implement Grade 10 exams on research. If this is



PERRY HADDOCK

In deciding to implement these exams at Grade 10, were these concerns about potential negative impact on teaching and learning taken into consideration?

the case, what is the research that indicates that this kind of testing has educational value?

Second, we are concerned about the potential negative impact the testing may have on learning and teaching. We believe, and the new graduation program anticipates, that Grade 10 should be a time for exploration. Students at this age are still quite vulnerable, distracted by growth and development issues, identity formation/exploration, and peer pressure. We fear that the exams may heighten the risk of school failure or, at least the perception of failure. This is especially the case for particular groups of students: ESL, those with learning differences and difficulties and other special needs, low achievers, adult students working toward secondary school completion, for some examples. Equity of opportunity and outcome for all students could be undermined. Negative examples of increasing student stress, anxiety, and failure as a result of too many high-stakes exams are readily available in other countries like the United States and England, and in the province of Ontario. We fear the same results in British Columbia.

Furthermore, research and experience show that high-stakes tests lead, over time, to teaching to the test, as teachers feel pressure to ensure that their students pass the exams. This has the effect of narrowing curriculum and modes of instruction. Tests capture a very narrow picture of achievement or mastery of both subject content and related skills. Highly valued learning outcomes, such as critical and creative thinking, or social competence and social responsibility, are not easily measured by tests with right and wrong answers. We would not like to see our Grade 10 classrooms reduced to a focus on what can be measured on a provincial test. In deciding to implement these exams at Grade 10, were these concerns about potential negative impact on teaching and learning taken into consideration? If so, could you tell us what you have determined will mitigate these concerns?

We do understand that the exams count for only 20% of the mark of a student and have heard Ministry of Education staff say that consequently the results should not be the determining factor for a student's passing or failing. However, we hold that pressure will be placed on students and teachers to achieve in these tests, and that this pressure will be sufficient to cause the potential negative impacts we have outlined here.

Our third set of concerns is about the expense for resources used to create, administer, and mark these exams. This concern is, of course, related to their educational benefit, as the case has not been made that there is educational value. In a school system where resources are so limited, we believe the costs of the tests would be better directed to the enhancement of instruction or the learning environment. Perhaps the decision to have teachers mark exams in their own schools was a decision to reduce costs, but we believe that this is an unacceptable downloading of additional work at a very busy time of year when teachers are already experiencing workload pressures. Could you provide us with an estimate of the costs of this exam program?

We believe our concerns are shared by many and would ask that you consider carefully the questions posed in this letter. In short, is there sufficient educational benefit of the Grade 10 exam program to warrant the

We urge the ministry to eliminate these Grade 10 examinations from the graduation program effective this school year.

cost and potential negative effect on teaching and learning? We note that in Finland, where high-stakes tests are not used in the school system, the students perform extremely well on international and local measures of achievement. If student success is what we are all focussing our resources and attention on, then perhaps we could learn a lesson from them. We urge the ministry to eliminate these Grade 10 examinations from the graduation program effective this school year. Your response to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Adrienne Montani, Chairperson, Vancouver School District.

Health and safety

Enforce your rights

by Mark Keelan

As the provincial election draws near, it is appropriate to evaluate the impact of various government decisions on working conditions for members and learning conditions for students. Certainly members are familiar with the government's decision to eliminate the collective agreements of some locals and to strip many hard-fought provisions from the remaining collective agreements.

Perhaps less is known about government's decisions concerning the health and safety of teachers and other workers. For example, legislation changed WCB wage-loss benefits from 75% of gross salary to 90% of net salary. For many members, that means a reduction of several hundred dollars per year. Compensation for psychological injuries has been all but eliminated. First aid, lunchroom, and washroom regulations have been watered-down significantly. Lifetime disability pensions are no longer awarded. Now pensions for full or partial disability end at age 65.

Despite the bad news, many

protections remain. Just as important clauses remain in collective agreements, many provisions that help ensure safe working conditions for members and safe learning conditions for students remain in the *Workers Compensation Act* and its Regulation and the *School Act*. Also, as with collective agreements, WCA protections must be enforced in order to do any good.

The first step in enforcement is knowing your rights. Consider the following examples:

Workers Compensation Act

- Section 53 requires that workers report all injuries or disabling occupational diseases to the employer as soon as possible. Section 54 requires that employers report those injuries to the Workers Compensation Board.
- Section 115 states that employers must ensure the health and safety of all workers.
- Sections 125–140 require that employers establish and maintain joint health and safety committees. At least half the members of the committee must be workers, and there must be joint chairs. Committees have

the right to participate in inspections and investigations. They can make recommendations to the employer, to which the employer must respond. Each member of a joint committee has the right to eight hours of annual educational leave attending occupational health and safety training, for which the employer must pay.

- Sections 150–153 prohibit discrimination or discipline of workers who exercise their rights.

- Sections 172–177 require that accidents and incidents be reported and investigated. Joint committees have the right to participate.

Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

- Sections 3.1–3.2 require that employers initiate and maintain a health and safety program. Section 3.3 outlines the expected content of the program.

- Section 3.5 requires that employers ensure that regular inspections are made of workplaces as well as work methods and practices. Section 3.8 states that, where feasible, members of joint committees must participate in the inspections.

- Section 3.10 requires that a person who observes an unsafe or harmful condition report it to the employer and

that the employer investigate and take corrective action.

- Section 3.12 states that a person must not carry out any work process if the person has reason to believe that to do so would cause an undue hazard to the health and safety of any person. This is referred to as Refusal of Unsafe Work. Section 3.12 provides a clear, step-by-step protocol for refusing unsafe work.

- Section 4.21 requires that employers develop and implement a written procedure for people who work alone.

- Sections 4.27–4.31 outline the process for dealing with violence in the workplace.

- Sections 4.46–4.53 contain provisions about ergonomics that are meant to eliminate, or at least to minimize, the risk of musculoskeletal injury to workers.

- Sections 4.71–4.80 deal with indoor air quality and, among other things, require an employer to investigate when there are complaints.

School Act

- Section 91(5) gives members, among others, the right to exclude from school a student who is suspected of "...suffering from a communicable disease or other physical, mental or emotional condition that would endanger the health or welfare of the other students..."

The next step in enforcement—working to ensure that employers comply with the acts and the regulations—takes some time and effort. Members who are dealing with class-size and class composition issues, supervision by principals, attacks on professional autonomy, and lack of resources have little time to spare. However, everyone—workers and students—has the right to return home at the end of the day free from injury and disease. As the old saying goes, many hands make light work. Local presidents, local health and safety reps, BCTF Field Service staff, members of the BCTF Health and Safety Advisory Committee, and BCTF health and safety officers are all available to help.

The final step in enforcement is electing a worker-friendly government. Get involved in the political process, ask candidates tough questions, attempt to secure promises that will positively change the acts and the regulations, volunteer to work for labour-friendly and teacher-friendly candidates. And, when May 17 rolls around, get out and vote!

Mark Keelan is the BCTF's health and safety officer.

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

School closure hurts community

by Doug Smith

We have lost our school. One-hundred thirteen schools have been closed in the last three years in response to policies initiated by the provincial government. Many B.C. communities have withered as families with children have been forced to move. Our school was closed without justification and in a heavy-handed manner by School District 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin).

Forest Grove is a small tight-knit rural community centred on the school, several stores, a community hall, recreational facilities, a church, a fire hall, and a library. Several subdivisions of modest but well-kept homes reflect the residents' pride in their community. It is a community that has existed since the turn of the last century and one that continues to grow in population. A school has existed in Forest Grove for over 80 years and its loss will seriously damage the coherence of the community.

Today our school stands shrouded in silence. Windows covered with plywood and furnaces removed, it has been abandoned to the elements.

The school is in an ideal location: set back from a low-traffic road, adjacent to the community hall, library, and fire hall. The playing fields were well groomed, and the bus parking area large and safe. Both water and sewage disposal systems are good. Many of the 80 or more children who attended the school live within walking distance, others are

driven short distances by their parents, and some arrive by bus. The school enjoyed strong community support. The school was enriched by the "Reading Grannies," hot lunches prepared by a local chef, and presentations by local elders. A piano, computers, and playground equipment were donated through the school PAC.

Today our school stands shrouded in silence. Windows covered with plywood and furnaces removed, it has been abandoned to the elements. Our children are prohibited from venturing onto its playfields under threat of being charged with trespassing.

In the spring of 2004, the board of trustees for SD 27 decided to close Forest Grove Elementary School and to bus all students, some as young as five, to a school near the larger community of 100 Mile House. The receiving school is similar in size, age, and condition to Forest Grove School but exists in no defined community, is located along a rather busy highway, and has also been threatened with closure.

For the most part, the citizens of Forest Grove have been excluded from the process and simply presented with a *fait accompli*. The reasoning behind the decision is obscure and unsupported by the facts. Using the board's own criteria it appears that Forest Grove School should not have been considered for closing. The trustees were divided on the decision (a two to four split with one member abstaining).

Subsequently the chair of the board has resigned because she was disturbed by the direction the board was moving. It also appears that the board violated the *School Act* by passing the by-law to close Forest Grove Elementary School at a single sitting of the board, even though two members voted against the

motion. When this grievous error was called to the board's attention, Mr. Leckie (CEO of SD 27) suggested that it was a trivial oversight simply rectified by another reading of the by-law. Although one member of the board questioned the legality of the process, the by-law was again placed before the board. The by-law to close Forest Grove Elementary School

Even when informed of the board's violation of the School Act, the ministry has failed to take action or even to acknowledge our concerns.

was passed on September 9, 2004; one month after SD 27 staff, accompanied by 13 RCMP officers, had officially "deactivated" the school. The board insists that no other decision was possible but refuses to provide clear and objective reasons for closing the school.

A committee of parents and other members of the community organized to keep a school in Forest Grove have met with no success in getting answers to the serious questions addressed to the board. The

board and administrators of SD 27 have refused to meet with the committee to discuss conditions under which the school might be reopened. Their position appears to be that Forest Grove does not warrant a school and we should simply accept their decision and get on with our lives. This we cannot do. The citizens of Forest Grove and surrounding region are prepared to resist what we see as a completely unjustified assault on our community for however long it takes to get our school reopened.

A number of requests to Minister of Education Tom Christensen, for an independent evaluation of the board's decision have been rejected. Even when informed of the board's violation of the *School Act*, the ministry has failed to take action or even to acknowledge our concerns. It appears that the board's actions are acceptable and consistent with the policies of the provincial government and may indeed be endorsed by the Ministry of Education.

Because of the potentially enormous cost, we have not yet been able to seek justice through the judicial system. We are, however, seeking legal advice.

Some members of the board and administration have, we believe, consciously or unconsciously attempted to demonize our community. The unnecessary use of the RCMP and the somewhat excessive language in reporting events, appear to be tactics to undermine the legitimacy of our position. A flattened tire on a school bus was reported to the local press with comments suggesting that it might have been an act of sabotage related to our dispute with the board. To imply that we undertook or condoned an act that could have harmed the children we are

desperately trying to protect is absurd. Some members of our community have been portrayed as irresponsible malcontents whose protests only serve to increase the cost to the taxpayer. When the Crown declined to proceed with charges against the lone protester who, in an act of civil disobedience, attempted to block a school district vehicle, the board chose to instruct its lawyers to demand that he be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. We also are taxpayers and as such stand appalled by this unconscionable waste of tax dollars by a board that claims to be fiscally responsible.

If the rights of our community can be so callously disregarded by the administrators of SD 27 and the Ministry of Education, to whom can we appeal? We are simply ordinary people who, like you, wish to be treated with fairness and dignity. We love our

Any cost savings to SD 27 cannot offset the harm done to our children and our community. Please stand with us.

children and cannot accept that a province as prosperous as British Columbia can no longer afford that which all of us believe is our right: To attend a neighbourhood school, close to home and family. Any cost savings to SD 27 cannot offset the harm done to our children and our community. Please stand with us.

For more information, and if you wish to help, you can contact us. Visit our web site: forestgrove.southcariboo.org, Ph/f: 250-397-2376.

Doug Smith is a member of the Forest Grove Defence Committee.





PETER OWENS PHOTO

January 28, 2005, was the third anniversary of the day the B.C. Liberals stripped learning conditions from our collective agreement. BCTF President Jinny Sims shows a binder of the stripped language to reporters.

The walls are covered with examples of the stripped language. Sims later presented a letter to the president of the B.C. Public School Employers' Association asking for their co-operation in getting the language restored.

On being well

The changing classroom

by Julia Johnson

At the Northern zone meeting in October 2004, participants wrote scenarios of their teaching experiences as a result of the B.C. Liberal education policy. Increased class sizes; inaccessible libraries; dirty classrooms; insufficient teaching resources; decreased support from counsellors; student support workers; speech and language pathologists; reduced time for teachers of ESL, music, and special education; and increased expectation for accountability through student assessment had all contributed to their frustrations.

Their significance as stressors in the workplace and their impact on our health become minimized by their repetition—until one hears someone say, “I am not able to meet the needs of the children in my classroom.” To openly admit to others that one is not able to meet the needs of one’s students regardless of the working and learning conditions is not something a teacher is willing to do.

This is not a teacher who is without teaching and classroom-management skills, lacks experience, or is uncreative. This is a teacher who has the courage to admit that what she is being asked to do is unrealistic. In this classroom are six children who come to school hungry and need to be fed before they can be taught; seven children require the services of a counsellor because they have anxiety disorders, self-esteem issues, bullying behaviours, suffer from emotional trauma, or lack social skills; five children are on adapted programs and need the support of a student-support worker for core subjects; one student has special needs and requires an IEP with a full-time support worker; three students are medically diagnosed with ADHD; five children require an Aboriginal curriculum; and two children have religious beliefs that require the preparation of alternate learning material. Classrooms of today are not the same as classrooms of yester-

year and nothing says this more clearly than this teacher’s story.

This teacher’s story is not unique, and this teacher is not alone in the work she is being asked to do. If the expectation is that the individual needs of these diverse students are to be met within one classroom by one teacher, teachers must acknowledge that they can no longer be the super heroes who continue to do more with less. Today’s teachers are being pulled in all directions, are experiencing untold anxiety, and are vulnerable to ill health because of the demands of changing classrooms.

The World Health Organization, after conducting several surveys on stress and illness has concluded that stress is a global epidemic. “Research now indicates that between 70 and 80% of all disease and illness is stress-related, most notably coronary heart disease, cancer, the common cold, migraine headaches, warts, some cases of female infertility, ulcers, insomnia, and hypertension.” “Stress is the inability to cope with perceived or real (or imagined) threat to one’s mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing which results in a series of physiological responses and adaptation.” It is evident, “that stress is a very complex phenomenon that affects the whole person and not just the physical body” (Seward 1999).

If teaching is to be more than the daily-survival ritual it now is, teachers must take a stand and collectively challenge those who underfund education and undermine the work teachers do. Not to do so threatens our health and the future of our children.

Most of us chose teaching because we wanted to make a difference. As the May provincial election draws near, make a difference by taking action. Be a spokesperson for education and support those who support education.

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

B.C. to give \$150 million more to schools

It’s hard to know whether to laugh or cry at the latest education news out of Victoria. The Liberals promise to give \$150 million more next school year to improve library and special needs services in our schools. Well, da!

These same Liberals stripped provisions from the teachers’ contract that provided those very services. Now the Liberals want school boards to come up with a plan on how to spend this “new” money.

That is what you just stripped from the teachers’ contract, Gordon Campbell! Does anyone in our provincial government know just how foolish they look to those in the education community?

Didn’t the premier say his stripping of the teachers’ contract would improve the system? It is clear the Liberals now realize their actions did not improve education. Funny, they realized it just in time for the May election.

Source: *The Vancouver Sun*, February 1, 2005, Mavis Lowry, Vancouver.



One teacher’s wish list

by Jennie Boulanger

Each September brings new students and new challenges. That’s part of what keeps me in teaching and loving it. I’m learning more each day and that’s good for everyone: my students and me.

But, I wish for some things.

- I wish my school had a teacher aide to help me with the clerical jobs I now must do. Our district cut our teacher aide to save money.

- I wish my school had a photocopier that didn’t break down on a regular basis. It’s old and would prefer to be handled by only a few, trained people, like a teacher aide and a secretary, not a myriad of staff rushing off to their classes. Our district can’t afford new copiers

for all of the schools that need them.

- I wish I had more time to plan and prepare better lessons, rather than be rushed out of the school because the building is being locked up earlier than ever before. Our district can’t afford to have custodians for as many hours as before.

- I wish I had maps and atlases that don’t have U.S.S.R. still on them, and DO have Nunavut and Iqualuit on them. Our district can’t afford to update all our resources in a timely fashion any more.

- I wish that my students had adequate access to educational assistants, a counsellor, ESL teachers, learning assistance teachers, a teacher-librarian, and a gifted-program teacher. Our district can no longer afford to provide those services to students.

- I wish that my school had more new library books. Our district can’t afford to allocate as much money toward purchasing library books any more.

My wish list grows longer, but wishing is not enough for my students right now. The parents, the (remaining) staff, and I fill in as best we can.

My biggest wish is that I could get rid of the underlying sadness that it’s just not enough. Our kids deserve better.

Jennie Boulanger teaches at Rosser Elementary School, Burnaby.

For the record Liberal policies imposed since 2000

Labour laws and human rights

- Children 12 and 13 can be hired to work 20 hours a week when school is in session
- Up to 35 hours a week during non-school periods
- No longer need government or school consent (only one parent)

Other protections lost

- Minimum hours for call out reduced from four to two
- Wage statement need only be sent electronically
- No display of working hours at worksite (employers can change work schedules without notice)
- Employment standards need not be posted
- Violations are treated through “self-help” kits
- Employee records are only retained for two years (reduced from seven)
- Pregnancy leave must be taken in 17 consecutive weeks

Loss of income

- Training wage (\$6/hr.)
- Averaging hours of work over four weeks (160 hours of work before overtime pay—up to 12 hrs/day)
- Many part-time workers lost all statutory holiday pay

Social services

- Legal aid
 - Cuts of about 40%
 - Most to family & poverty legal aid
 - Full-time staff cut from 460 to 155
 - B.C.’s legal aid offices reduced from 42 to 7
 - Poverty law legal aid eliminated
 - Family law legal aid only in life-threatening emergencies
 - Referrals for family law legal aid down 53%

Other issues affecting women

- Ministry of Women’s Equality eliminated
- Funding for women’s centres eliminated
- BC Human Rights Commission eliminated
- Funding cuts of over \$1.5 million to victim’s assistance and sexual assault programs

Cuts to social assistance

- 30% cut to ministry budget (\$581 million over three years)
- Ministry staff cut by 459 full-time positions
- 6 welfare offices closed
- Cuts to benefits & tighter eligibility rules
- Two-year time limit rule
- Two-year independence test
- Elimination of earnings exemptions
- Elimination of child support exemptions (for all but those with disabilities)
- Three-week “wait period”
- More restrictive definition of disability

Other changes

- Cut \$24 million in childcare subsidies
- Revoked legislation that capped parents’ costs for before and after school programs to \$7/day
- Tuition freeze ended. Between 2001 and 2004, average undergraduate tuition in B.C. up 87%
- Funding for education frozen
- 2,558 fewer teachers
- 113 neighbourhood schools closed
- 14,000 students displaced
- Shift to four-day school week in many places
- Cuts to special education
- Rise of private school funding

- Industry Training & Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) eliminated
- Increased costs for seniors’ drugs

Privatization

- BC Hydro/Electricity
 - one-third of BC Hydro privatized to Accenture
 - all new electricity to come from the private sector
 - BC Transmission Corporation now private
 - Promotion of “Grid West” (U.S. control of transmission system)
- BC Rail
- BC Ferries
- Healthcare
 - Privatized health support services
 - Privatized administration of B.C.’s Medical Services Plan and PharmaCare (to U.S. company, Maximum Inc.)
 - 9,000 jobs lost (21% of HEU membership, which was 85% female)
 - Wages drop from \$18/hr. to \$10 or less/hr.
 - Pay equity achievements lost
 - 33,000 health care support workers who remain employed had wages cut 15%

What should we do with the budget surplus?

- Public poll of B.C. in October 2004:
 - 62%—spend on education and healthcare
 - 25%—reduce the debt
 - 12%—reduce taxes

Marjorie Griffin Cohen, a professor in the Political Science Faculty, SFU, outlined these policy changes in B.C. since 2000, in her address to the BCTF Fall Representative Assembly.

The Code of Ethics is your guide

by Evan Orloff

As a group, we teachers are very dedicated, caring people who seek to do the best for our students. The efforts, selflessness, and care are second nature for us, and we seek no reward for this. Our satisfaction is the reward.

Because we are so focussed on our charges, we sometimes forget about our colleagues and peers. The incidences of ethics and protocol concerns are apparent in many schools and staffrooms on a regular basis. It's not that they are intentionally done, but they happen because many of our colleagues don't know or forget to be proactive in their concerns regarding their peers.

Some of the more common issues concern being critical of a colleague or peer in a public forum (staffroom, office, etc.), sending a colleague a letter of concern/criticism and copying it to the administration, going to an administrator with a concern/complaint about a colleague, getting coverage for more than one hour and denying a TOC a chance for at least a half-day, and so on.

We get caught up in our dedication to our profession and sometimes forget our responsibilities to one another. Some surefire ways to reduce incidents is to have a staff meeting among the teachers to discuss the Code of Ethics. Invite a Judicial Council person (where available) to speak to staff about ethics. Offer a workshop on a professional development day to inform and reinforce ethical practices. Book a staff rep workshop on the Code of Ethics or boundary issues between teachers and students.

We're all in it to help the children, but we must also be cognizant of ourselves, our colleagues, and our protocols. Please read the Code of Ethics, in your *Members' Guide to the BCTF*.

Evan Orloff teaches at Glenrosa Middle School, Westbank and is a member of the BCTF Judicial Council.

Were you harassed?

by Don Briard

At the worksite, few labels are more emotionally charged than *harasser*. Both the BCTF and BCPSEA are trying to eliminate harassment, and progress is being made. Members are becoming more sensitive in their treatment of one another. However, harassment still occurs. When it does occur, what should you do?

Gather your facts. While single incidents can certainly be sufficient to result in a finding that harassment has taken place, those are usually blatantly obvious, often public. What more commonly leads to an allegation of harassment is an ongoing pattern of behaviours that have the cumulative impact of demeaning, belittling, intimidating or humiliating the victim.

If you believe such a pattern is developing, keep a journal. Note what happened, who was present, and when and where the events occurred. Write down what was said or done in as much detail as you can, and be sure you record how you felt. Those records may be crucial if an investigation occurs, particularly if the names of witnesses are noted.

While harassment involves personal perceptions—what one individual laughs off, another finds harassing—your belief in and of itself does not constitute proof that harassment took place. Investigators use the “reasonable person” test. They ask themselves how such a person would view the events. Rudeness, crudeness, or bullying may occur without the test for harassment having been met.

Investigators also look very closely at how events have affected the alleged victim. How was the ability to do the job affected? Was sick leave used? How did the events alter the complainant's behaviour at the worksite? The investigator tries to get as complete an assessment of those aspects as possible.

Investigators will also attempt to assess intent. Is there evidence of malicious intent on the part of the respondent? Did the complainant make the respondent aware of the impact that the behaviours were having? Are the behaviours directed

generally, or is the complainant a specific target? Those are just some of the investigator's considerations.

Having considered all of those factors, a member who decides to take action enters the process in the collective agreement. You should be sure you clearly understand that process and what it involves.

Get union advice. Your local can help you to assess your situation and provide support in dealing with the events and understanding the process.

Confidentiality. Harassment complaints often have the effect of polarizing staffs. Apart from the contractual requirement that the situation be kept confidential, it is in everyone's interest to ensure that the staff doesn't pick sides. The impact of that behaviour can become far-reaching.

Weigh the situation carefully and dispassionately. If the answer is yes, your union will be there to aid and advise you.

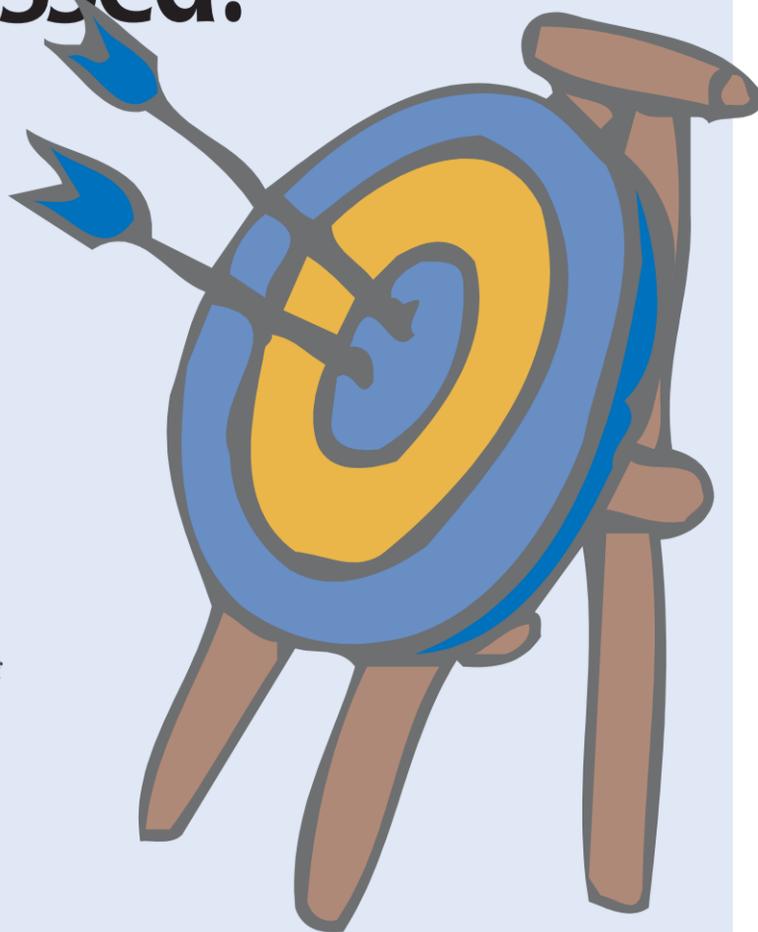
Consider mediation. It is not uncommon that the root of the behaviours is the failure of the respondent to understand the impact of her or his behaviour. Mediation, by someone at the local or the BCTF level, can bring a speedy resolution.

Write the complaint. Get assistance from the local regarding what should be in the letter of complaint. Be sure that you get advice on how to set it up in the most effective form.

Investigation. The investigator will interview you, the respondent, witnesses, and other staff. You have the right to union representation during the interview(s), as does the union member alleged to have engaged in harassing behaviour. Be prepared. Be clear and focussed. Much may turn on your credibility.

Report. Once the investigator's report is released, you and the local will have to examine its findings and assess the options for grievance if the outcome is unacceptable.

Your expectations regarding the outcome are important. To



date, no public floggings or terminations have flowed from personal harassment incidents. The harassment language is intended to be a shield, not a sword. Its focus is on correcting behaviour, not on meting out punishment or exacting revenge. Times when significant punishments are warranted are relatively rare. Be sure you know what you want from the process, and be sure that what you want is reasonable.

The harassment situation becomes doubly complicated when the respondent is an administrator. First, it will undoubtedly bring in representatives from BCPVPA, which aggressively protects its members, as is their right. Second, there are legitimate supervisory administrative responsibilities administrators must carry out. Heavy-handed or inept performance of those responsibilities, while insulting and annoying, may not meet the investigator's test.

Investigators do look closely at the manner in which administrative powers are exercised. The imbalance in power is always subject to scrutiny in a harassment investigation. Examine your evidence care-

fully, with support from the local, before deciding to lay a complaint. Such complaints do succeed, but the vast majority are found to be legitimate exercise of authority. The administrator may have been

You have a right to work in an environment free from harassment.

insensitive and rude, but as was said earlier, such behaviours may not attract the label of harassment.

You have a right to work in an environment free from harassment. It is important that those rights be understood and exercised. A complaint under the harassment language, like a complaint under the Code of Ethics, is a serious step. The process for either must be used deliberately, cautiously.

Were you harassed? Weigh the situation carefully and dispassionately. If the answer is yes, your union will be there to aid and advise you.

Don Briard is an assistant director in the BCTF's Field Services Division.



CLC Winter School

by Susan Fonseca

The CLC Winter School was a great experience for teachers. It allowed us to share our experiences with our brothers and sisters in the Labour Movement and discuss common strategies to defend our rights as workers. The campaign organizing class was a natural fit for teachers, and other participants welcomed the skills that we brought to each group.

Campaign organizing class (The Singing Larkins) who won the annual winter school choir contest with a catchy tune called "The Writ."

Our class had some lectures and presentations, but the class was interactive, and we came away feeling confident that we had learned some new skills from one another. We developed appreciation for one another's work and made many new friends and campaign contacts.

Just as teachers are the natural defenders of education, the nurses, corrections officers, and others have their services to defend from the Liberals' cuts. Workers from all sectors gladly wore the black ribbons we distributed on January 28, and we all left with a renewed energy and sense of common purpose.

Susan Fonseca teaches at Langley Education Centre and is a member of the newsmagazine advisory board.

AGM 2005 Agenda

March 19–22, 2005

FIRST SESSION*March 19, Saturday evening***7:00 p.m.**

- Welcome
First Nations recognition
Preliminaries:
a. Adoption of chairpersons, scrutineers, tellers, resolutions committee
b. Adoption of agenda
c. Adoption of 2004 AGM Minutes
d. Stewardship Report on 2004 AGM

President's report
Jinny Sims

B.C. Federation of Labour
Jim Sinclair, president
Report
Labour affairs
Recommendation 20–21

Canadian Teachers' Federation
Terry Price, president
Report
Resolutions 109–110

B.C. School Trustees Association
Speaker

9:30 p.m.

Election statements from candidates for table officer positions

Call for nominations

10:00 p.m.

Adjourn

SECOND SESSION*March 20, Sunday Morning***9:00 a.m.**

- Leadership Report
– Presentation
– Recommendation 1

12:30 p.m.—Lunch**THIRD SESSION***March 20, Sunday Afternoon***2:00 p.m.**

- Political Action
– Report and presentation
– Resolutions 144–146

Education Policy
– Recommendation 6–7
– Resolutions 116–122

Professional Development
– Recommendations 48–50
– Resolutions 147–148

Social Justice
– Resolutions 156–157

4:15 p.m.

Report of the Executive Director,
Ken Novakowski

4:30 p.m.

Election statements from candidates for members-at-large positions

Call for Nominations

5:00 p.m.

Adjourn

FOURTH SESSION*March 21, Monday morning***9:00 a.m.**

- Guest speaker
Task Force on Privatization report
– Recommendations 26–47

11:00 a.m.

- Bargaining
– Report
– Recommendations 4–5
– Resolutions 103–108

Strikes and Job Action
– Resolution 158

Affirmative Action
– Resolutions 101–102

Teachers on Call
– Resolutions 159–160

12:30 p.m. Lunch**FIFTH SESSION***March 21, Monday afternoon***2:00 p.m.**

- Pensions
– Report
– Resolutions 135–143

Health, Welfare, and Safety of Teachers
– Report
– Recommendations 16–19
– Resolutions 123–128

Public Affairs
Resolutions 149–155

4:30 p.m.

- College of Teachers
– Report
– Resolutions 111–115

5:25 p.m.
Final call for nominations

5:30 p.m.

Adjourn

SIXTH SESSION*March 22, Tuesday morning***8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.**

- BALLOT DISTRIBUTION**
For one hour, the election tellers will distribute ballots, one pad for each voting card, in the Colwood Room (Victoria Conference Centre). Each delegation is asked to assist by appointing one of its members to present all the delegation's cards, (including the LR cards) and to receive all its ballots individually.

No ballots will be distributed after the session has begun.

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

9:00 a.m.

Elections

Constitution and By-laws
– Recommendations 2–3

Organization of the BCTF
– Recommendations 22–24
– Resolutions 129–134

Ombudservice
– Recommendation 25

11:15 a.m.

Finance
– Presentation on financial statements
– Recommendations 8–15

12:15 p.m.
Committee Reports—Questions

12:30 p.m.

Lunch

SEVENTH SESSION*March 22, Tuesday afternoon***2:00 p.m.**

- Presentations
Unfinished Business
Late Resolutions
New Resolutions
New Business

5:15 p.m.

Closing Courtesy Motion

5:30 p.m.

Adjourn

Please note: Evening sessions may be scheduled if required.

CANDIDATES' STATEMENTS

For President



Jinny Sims

We have a proud history of taking collective actions to advocate for our bargaining rights, our professional rights, and for public education. We will defend and assert our professional autonomy, advocate for authentic assessment measures, and resist any attempt to deprofessionalize teaching. Our bargaining rights are intrinsically linked to our teaching conditions and students' learning conditions. We will continue to fight for our right to bargain all of our working conditions, including a fair salary and benefits package. Together, we made education

a central issue in the political arena. We are committed to resist the agenda to underfund, destabilize and privatize public education.

We will work with our allies to address social issues that affect children in our classrooms, and help rebuild healthy communities. We have to prepare for strong collective actions. Society cannot afford four more years of this agenda.

I will draw on my experience and strong background to advocate for our members and students. I will continue strong leadership, based on membership involvement and

co-ordinated strategic action. I look forward to next year as we continue to build allies, work with labour, with parents, students, and others who care about a strong and stable public education system and a just society.

EXPERIENCE: Provincial: BCTF President (1 yr.), BCTF 1st Vice-president (2), BCTF 2nd Vice-president (2), BCTF Executive member-at-large (1), CTF alternate (2), CTF delegate (3), CTF director (3), BCFed Education Committee (2), Ministry for Children & Families (3), Coalition for Public Education (3), Social Justice (3), PSA/PSAC (4), Health

& Safety (3), Income Security (3), Finance Cttee., Pensions, Summer conference workshop presenter/facilitator, Advisory council of local presidents, pension plan training, Bargaining training; AGM delegate (12), LR (5). *Local:* Nanaimo President (3), 1st VP (2);, Bargaining ctte. & neg. team (7), Grievance ctte. (6); S/W member & chair (3), ProD ctte. (2), Program Against Racism (2), Malaspina College partnership ctte. (2), EAC advisory board (5), Co-ordinator for multicultural curriculum (3), Facilitator for conflict resolution. *Teaching:* 25 yrs., English, social studies, counsellor. *Education:* B.Ed, UVic & Manchester, UK.

For First Vice-President



Irene Lanzinger

It is difficult to remember a time when the leaders of the BCTF did not begin every speech and statement with a long list of challenges and obstacles in our path.

The stripping of our collective agreement, the increase in workload of our members, the restriction of bargaining rights and the repeated attacks on teachers' professional rights and autonomy have had a profound negative impact on the climate in schools, the morale of teachers and the strength and stability of public education.

Where do we find hope to

overcome the obstacles and strength to fight for our students and our colleagues? We find it in the members of the BCTF. I have the privilege of travelling the province and speaking with members. I hear their courage, their commitment to children, and their belief in public education as a pillar of a democratic society. I hear their unity and their resolve to fight for our rights.

The BCTF has a proud history of leadership in social justice, in professional rights and in bargaining and political action. I would be honoured to be a part of the leadership that will

win back our rights and protect public education.

EXPERIENCE: Provincial: BCTF 1st Vice-president (1 yr.), BCTF 2nd Vice-president (2 yrs.), Co-chief Negotiator Bargaining Team (2000–02), Advisory council of local presidents (3 yrs.), AGM delegate (8 yrs.), Summer conference (6 yrs.), Job action planning committee, LR (1 yr.), (alternate) (5 yrs.). *Local:* President (3 yrs.), Vice-president (2 yrs.), Member-at-large (2 yrs.), Staff rep (2 yrs.), Bargaining Committee (2 yrs.), Status of Women Committee (2 yrs.).

Teaching: Secondary (9 yrs.), Elementary (4 yrs.). *Education:* B.Sc. (UBC), Teacher Training (UBC), M.Sc (SFU)

For Second Vice-President



Susan Lambert

Over the last year, as 2nd vice-president I was privileged to visit locals across the province. My most poignant moments were when colleagues shared their stories. In Kamloops I spoke to a young French Immersion teacher who had 18 children with IEPs. In Port Alberni a Math teacher shared his frustration with the new Grade 10 exams. Teachers talked about their struggles meeting the needs of every student in ever-increasing classes. They talked of the workload of gathering data related to school and district accountability goals. A Burnaby

colleague confided she wept on her way home from a school visit where teachers, completing the BCTF WLC survey, unanimously agreed they could no longer recommend the profession to young people.

As a union our challenge is clear. We must regain for our members our autonomy, our ability to tailor instructional strategies for all the children we teach; we must once again have the ability to bargain teaching and learning conditions. We must assert the value of teaching.

The next few months will be critical for our union and our

profession. I commit to working to build the unity and resolve we will need to face and overcome these challenges.

EXPERIENCE: Provincial: BCTF 2nd Vice-president (1 yr.), BCTF Executive member-at-large (1 yr.); AGM delegate (21 yrs.), Task Force on the Code of Ethics, Trainer/facilitator in Namibia (8 sessions) and South Africa (1 session), Staff Rep Trainer (5 yrs.), WOW facilitator, Summer Conference Participant and workshop presenter, BCTF OSD/PA Administrative Staff (4 yrs.), Federation Appeals Board (2 yrs.). **Local:** (Prince Rupert):

Staff Rep (4 yrs.), S/W Committee (1 yr.), Program Against Racism Chair (2 yrs.), Bargaining Committee (1 yr.); Communications Officer (2 yrs.), Labour Liaison Officer (3 yrs.). (Burnaby): Vice President (2 yrs.), LR (4 yrs), Leave of Absence Committee (2 yrs.), Grade 7 Girls' Conference (1 yr.), BTA Scholarship Committee (2 yr.), Job Action Committee (1 yr.). **Teaching:** 23 years—intermediate, teacher-librarian, learning assistance, gifted education, special needs resource. **Education:** Honors English BA (SFU), PDP (SFU), Teacher-Librarian Diploma (UBC).

For Member-at-Large



Milan Boljuncic

Today's teachers continue to take pride in educating children. Teachers have continually faced attacks by provincial governments and have shown amazing resolve. Unfortunately, we still have much to do.

I believe that for the BCTF to remain relevant to all of its teachers we must continue to find ways for each and every teacher to have a voice. The Federation must become more credible to our non-activist members as much as it is for teacher activists. Our Federation must examine the ways in which we provide service to our members as well as actively

engage beginning and experienced teachers in advocating for public education.

We must continue to advocate for a fully funded public education system. Cutbacks and underfunding have seriously impacted our classrooms. Our larger class sizes and class composition issues are the leading issues for teachers. We need to continue to build and strengthen our ties with parents, labour, our communities, and most importantly, our own teachers. We need a variety of voices to support our students and our teachers.

As a candidate for Member-

at-Large I look forward to bringing new perspectives to our leadership that strengthen and unite the multiple interests of our membership.

EXPERIENCE: North Vancouver Teachers' Association Executive: Local Representative (2 yrs.), Member-at-Large (2 yrs.), Alternate Local Representative (2 yrs.); Delegate to the BCTF AGM (6 yrs.); School Staff Representative (4 yrs.); School Staff Chair (3 yrs.); School Planning Council Representative (2 yrs.); Vancouver and District Labour Council Representative (1 yr.); District Committees:

Local Bargaining, Counselling Review, Graduation Review, Timetable Review, Professional Development, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism; School Health and Safety Representative.

Teaching: 8 years Secondary Social Studies, Physical Education, Career and Personal Planning
Education: M.Sc. (U of O), B.Ed. (UBC), B.A. (SFU), Diploma of Liberal Arts (Zagreb, Croatia)



Rick Ferguson

Teachers and their union are under attack by the Liberal government as well as by privatization initiatives from neo-conservative forces. Teachers as defenders of public education fight these forces individually and collectively. BCTF PSAs and committees encourage teachers to be the best teachers possible. Professional teachers attend to the needs of all students. Private schools care for only some students.

Our professionalism is our greatest strength. At zone meetings and summer conferences (as Social Justice

Representative or as Professional Development Representative) I have seen the care and concern of teachers transformed into actions that make a difference in classrooms and communities each and every day. The quiet work of teachers involved in PSAs often goes unnoticed yet their efforts make a daily contribution to the quality of our schools. As your Member-At-Large I will strengthen these structures.

As BCTF Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee chairperson I have proudly worked with eight teachers from across the

province to restore the *Teaching and Learning Conditions Declaration*, a blueprint for what schools can be. Further we have provided the Executive and the Bargaining Team with sound advice to help shape the bargaining goals and strategy.

Thank you for your support.

EXPERIENCE: 20 years service on the Nicola Valley Teachers' Union Executive including bargaining team member, WLC Chair, Bargaining Chair, Pro-D Chair, Vice-President, President and currently Local Representative. Chairperson for BCTF Working and Learning

Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee. Attended 20 AGMs as either a delegate or LR. Attended numerous Summer Conferences and Zone Meetings as Social Justice Representative, Professional Development Representative or Bargaining Representative.



Al Klassen

An effective and successful "Union of Professionals" representing teachers across the province requires strong and united voices that provide a balanced perspective at its Executive table. As a four-term President in a mid-sized local, I am running for BCTF Member-at-Large. I offer my experience as a president, classroom teacher, and union tradesperson to bring forward a practical, knowledgeable and reflective approach that supports and represents the typical teacher.

Once again we are facing a critical juncture for teachers in public education. BCTF

members have had success in demonstrating their resolve, and must now use a strategic approach with that resolve to make their issues concerning public education known and supported by more than just teacher activists. In order for the expertise of teachers to be acknowledged, valued and acted upon by people who control and shape public education in this province, our Federation must rebuild a successful working relationship with our public education stakeholders.

The BCTF Executive must have a balance of perspectives, styles and ideas in order to meet

the challenges facing us in the years ahead. I believe I can, and will, bring those qualities to the BCTF Executive and I ask for your support as BCTF Member-at-Large.

EXPERIENCE: Provincial: ACLP (3 yrs.), Local Representative (4 yrs). BCTF AGM delegate (6 yrs.) **Local:** President (4 yrs.), Vice-President (2 yrs.), Local Bargaining Chair (2 yrs.), Health & Safety Representative (2 yrs.), Member-at-Large (2 yrs.), Staff Representative (2 yrs.).

Teaching: Secondary Technology Education (11 years)

Education: B. Ed UBC, trades—BCIT (PVI). Other: 17 years Journeyman Ironworker/Welder, General Foreman



Elizabeth MacKenzie

When I returned to my teaching assignment after four years I was prepared for some changes, but nothing could have prepared me to what has become the reality in many schools. Lack of support services for students, lack of basic supplies and textbooks, and colleagues who still loved their profession but were profoundly tired.

I have always believed that one of the benefits of belonging to a union is that together we work to support our members, provide salary and benefit rights and fight for working conditions that are effective to the positions

we hold. The BCTF needs to continue to support teachers' rights. But we also need to develop effective methods in dealing with our concerns.

Teachers' bargaining rights have been torn up, professional relationships have been soured and many members do not see the BCTF as their professional voice. In the coming year we need to work together to provide services that build strong support systems for teachers, create Social Justice initiatives that reflect the needs of the classroom and work with members to deliver a fiscally responsible and credible union.

I believe our union must stand behind its principles and be the professional face for teachers.

EXPERIENCE: Provincial: BCTF Staff, Teacher Rehabilitation Coordinator (4 yrs.), LR (8 yrs.), Agenda Committee (4 yrs.), AGM Delegate (12 yrs.), chair of the CTF AGM Task Force, BCTF Income Security Committee (3 yrs.), BCTF Pension Committee (1 yr.), Summer Conference delegate (10 yrs.); Women in Negotiations delegate.

Local: President, Chilliwack Teachers' Association (2 yrs.), Vice President (4 yrs.), Bargaining Committee (9 yrs.),

Grievance Committee (8 yrs.), Native Education Advisory Committee (2 yrs.), Wellness Committee (3 yrs.), Student Services Committee (4 yrs.).

Teaching: 17 yrs. Elementary: Alert Bay 4 yrs., TOC Victoria/Sooke 1 yr. Surrey 1 yr., Chilliwack 11 yrs.

For Member-at-Large



Jill McCaffery

Everyday we experience the consequences of the Liberal's education policies. Public school teachers struggle with increased workloads, ballooning class sizes, and reductions in support services. Calendar changes and questionable accountability practices restrict teachers' professional autonomy and inhibit our ability to meet the needs of students.

Yet, in the face of such adversity, teachers have made significant progress. Externally, the BCTF's strategic plan counters regressive government policies by working together through locals, networks and

coalitions. Internally, our Federation continues to support teachers through enhancements in professional development, research and social justice. As a result, teachers in B.C. are the most credible voice on educational issues. Our informed advocacy for public education is welcomed and indeed is expected.

The Provincial election offers the opportunity to support bargaining through political action. Our primary objectives: economic improvements, regaining bargaining rights and restoration of stripped provisions are supported by our

primary responsibility: advocating for students' learning. My experiences in our community coalition and on the BCTF executive teach me that to achieve our objectives we must remain steadfast and unified. Our resolve will be tested, but our voice will not be silenced.

I offer my passion, energy and continued commitment to and a strong voice for all BCTF members.

EXPERIENCE: *Provincial:* BCTF Executive member-at-large (2 yrs.), THESA Curriculum Chair (2 yrs.).

Local: President (3 yrs.), Vice President (2 yrs.), Bargaining Committee (6 yrs.), Staff Rep (3 yrs.), AGM (7 yrs.), Social Justice (1 yr.), Health and Safety (3 yrs.), Summer Conference (6 yrs.).

Teaching: UBC Summer Session Instructor (1 yr.), Middle and Secondary Home Economics and Humanities both local and international (26 yrs.).

Education: MA, UBC, Curriculum and Instruction, Home Economics; Concentration Home Economics, UBC; PDP, SFU; BA Honours, SFU.



George Popp

What is it about public school teachers that so infuriates this government and its supporters? Simply...we take pride in the work we do. We are committed to the students we teach. We are determined defenders of public education, social justice, our students welfare and our own. We refuse to apologize for wanting the best possible learning conditions for our students and the best possible working conditions for ourselves.

A strong, democratic teachers' Federation with strong locals is our best tool to achieve our goals. United, we can command respect as a profession,

provide programs to improve our professional practice, and improve our professional and personal welfare.

However these goals will be very hard won. All teachers will need to commit to the defense of our profession and public education. Our leaders must be committed to democratic principles, connected with the realities of teachers' daily lives and determined to defend and promote the welfare and work of our members. As a classroom teacher with a record of dedicated service both locally and provincially, I believe that I can continue to contribute such

leadership and look forward to serving the teachers of British Columbia.

EXPERIENCE:

Provincial: BCTF Executive Member at Large (2 yrs.), AGM delegate (12 yrs.), Summer Conference participant (7 yrs.), Professional Development Associate (2 yrs.) (Secondary School Project), LR (10 yrs.), Agenda Committee (1 yr.), BCSPAC participant (5 yrs.)

Local: President (2 yrs.), Vice-President (5 yrs.), Grievance Committee (15 yrs.), Bargaining Team (5 yrs.), Disputes Chair (2 yrs.), Liaison Committee Chair

(4 yrs.), Staff Rep (7 yrs.), Education Change Committee (4 yrs.), Technology Committee (2 yrs.), BCSPAC co-ordinator (8 yrs.).

Teaching: Teacher (Secondary Science and Math) (28 years), Department Head (Science, Math) (18 yrs.).

Education: B.Sc. (Hon) UBC, Teacher Training UBC.



Fran Robinson

"Even though the B.C. government has ripped hundreds of millions of dollars out of public education, the education ministry is anxious to provide evidence that all is well. Why worry about closing schools and cutting teaching positions and learning supports. Apparently the students are doing just fine; the tests say so." - www.cbc.ca/inSite/commentary/2005/1/14.html

This government's mandate has been to commercialize and privatize education through inadequate funding, a narrow definition of accountability (testing), and quality control (supervision), with no collabora-

tion or input from the professionals who work with students. It is a critical time for teachers to exert their right to maintain professional autonomy in the classroom and the legal right to negotiate working conditions at the bargaining table.

It is imperative that teacher's elect a strong executive that will listen to and advocate for their needs. We need to focus on and work toward actions and policies that support the central role teachers' play in implementing a strong system of public education. I am a classroom teacher who has experienced the erosion of

public education first hand. I am an activist who has been president and bargaining chair in my local. I currently sit on the BCTF executive as a member-at-large and seek your support to continue in this position.

EXPERIENCE: *Provincial:* BCTF Executive Committee member-at-large (1 yr.), CLC Winter School (bargaining training), Teacher Pension Plan Advisory Committee (5 yrs.) chair (1 yr.), BCTF Pension Committee (5 yrs.) chair (1 yr.), AGM delegate (7 yrs.), Local rep (2 yrs.)

Local: CDTA Executive (12 yrs.), CDTA president (2 yrs.), CDTA

past president (1 yr.), CDTA Bargaining chair (2 yrs.), team (5 yrs.), Staff rep (3 yrs.), Committee work—liaison, bargaining, EFAP, year-round school, new facilities, and grievance committees. Counsellors PSA and LSA.

Education: Hon. BA in Physical and Health Education (University of Western Ontario), Diploma in Education from UWO, MA in Education with major in counselling and educational leadership (San Diego State University).

Teaching: 26 years teaching at elementary, secondary and currently middle school level.



Lynda Toews

When new BCTF members-at-large take office in July, the results of the provincial election will be known. At that point our precise task will be much clearer, but some things have been clear for a while now.

Teachers want to be able to stand up and be proud of their profession. They want to have the tools they need, and they want to have some recognition. Teachers want to have a say with respect to working and learning conditions, and they want a salary increase. They want to be able to bargain for all conditions of work.

It will be the work of the

Executive Committee to ensure that the members of the Federation continue to be united and strong. Teachers need to be heard, whether they are new teachers, or teachers nearing retirement, or teachers on call, whether they are from large locals or small locals, urban or rural.

I am proud of the work that teachers do, and I am proud of the work that the Federation does, in support of teachers.

I would be proud to have your support, in taking on this task. Together, we will succeed and together, we will stand proud.

EXPERIENCE: *Provincial:* Joint Ministry Task Force on ABE (3 yrs.), Adult educators' PSA (9 yrs.), AEPSPSA President/PSA Council (5 yrs.), Adult Ed. Task Force, Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee (2 yrs.), Adult Educator's Inclusion Arbitration, LR (4 yrs.), AGM delegate (15 yrs.). *Local:* Second Vice President (3 yrs.), Executive Committee (12 yrs.), Bargaining Chair (2 yrs.), Bargaining Mobilization Co-ordinator, Member of Bargaining Committee (13 yrs. and 2 rounds), Chair of Resolutions Committee and AGM delegation

(3 yrs.), S/W Committee, Political Action/Public Relations Committee, Multiculturalism/Anti-Racism Committee, Grievance Committee, Adult Educators' Steering Committee, Staff Rep.

Teaching: Adult ESL, Adult Literacy, Adult Basic Education, Teacher-Librarian. Other: President, Serendipity Parent Participation Preschool, Secretary-Treasurer, Carleton University Graduate Students' Association, Member, More Than Just Pay.

Education: B.A. (Honours), English, M.A. English, TESL Certificate.



Val Windsor

The teaching profession and the BCTF now face the greatest challenges in our history. We continue to suffer devastating setbacks from this Liberal government. Contracts have been stripped; bargaining "Wrights" eroded; and professionalism reversed in an unrelenting onslaught. As a profession and as a union, this government has singled us out.

It is essential that we make public education a top priority by following through on the Public Education Advocacy Plan. We must rebuild the confidence of our members in the BCTF by attending to their professional

needs and by effectively representing them in bargaining a new collective agreement. Our response to government must be strategic and thoughtful, with an eye toward the long term as well as the short term.

In the last year, I approached the Executive table with an independent, critical eye, with the interests of our classroom teacher members at the forefront. As an activist, I know that I serve as well as lead, and in leading, I am a voice for classroom teachers, and a voice for a strong and united Federation.

I would be proud to continue

representing you as a Member at Large of the BCTF Executive Committee.

EXPERIENCE: *Provincial:* BCTF Executive Member-at-Large (1 yr.), Local Rep (9 yrs.), BCTF AGM delegate (13 yrs.), Judicial Council (3 yrs.), Staff Rep Trainer (2 yrs.), CTF AGM delegate (4 yrs.), Organizing Committee CTF AGM Vancouver (1 yr.), G.A. Fergusson Award Trustee (5 yrs.).

Local: President (3 yrs.), 1st Vice-President (3 yrs.), 2nd Vice-President (3 yrs.), Secretary (3 yrs.), LR (8 yrs.), Bargaining Chair (3 yrs.) and member (6

yrs.), other committee membership: Health and Safety, Working and Learning.

Teaching: 35 years in the profession, Grades 3-7.

Education: BA, PBD, PDP SFU

Special resolutions to the 2005 AGM

Recommendation

That the Executive Committee recommend to the Annual General Meeting that By-law 1.1 be amended by adding the following as By-law 1.1(d):

1.1(d) Active members shall be the voting members of the Federation, and shall be entitled to hold office and to vote on all matters as provided by these by-laws.

Recommendation

That By-law 8.2 be amended, effective July 1, 2005, by adding the following:

"Notwithstanding the foregoing, locals shall be entitled to additional delegates up to the number that reduces the difference between percentage A and percentage B to 0.5% or less, after adjustments for all

locals are made, where percentage A is the percentage of the local membership compared to the total membership of the BCTF, and percentage B is the percentage of the total number of delegates and local representatives of the local compared to the total number of delegates and local representatives at the AGM."

Recommendation

That 13C 11.2 (page 92) be as follows:

Benefits shall be based on the gross annual salary of the claimant applicable on the last day of work or of sick leave. No adjustment of benefit attributable to increased salary shall be paid except when a claim is closed in one school year and subsequently reopened in the following school year. Then a salary increase, due to a salary

grid increase negotiated prior to the reapplication, will be recognized. No adjustment of benefits attributable to increases in percentage of contract will be paid until the claimant has returned to work at the new percentage of contract for 20 consecutive working days.

Recommendation

That 13C 19.4 and 13C 23.2 be replaced by a new 13C 19.4:

19.4 The benefit payable in a month shall be reduced by the sum of:

- the initial (basic) amount of monthly disability or retirement pension paid to the claimant in the month from the Canada Pension Plan, excluding all allowances for dependent children and any cost of living adjustments.
- the sum of monthly wage loss

and disability benefits paid to the claimant in the month from Workers' Compensation, which are related to the current disability claim.

- the amount of monthly disability benefits paid to the claimant in the month from any plan or program or under any law of any government, within or without Canada, excluding any cost of living adjustments to that benefit or any benefit a claimant was receiving prior to the date the claimant was first absent from work as a result of total disability.
- the amount of monthly retirement pension received from any registered pension plan.
- the amount of excess approved accommodation employment earnings earned by a claimant in the month,

equal to the amount that the gross benefit plus the net accommodation employment earnings, as described in regulation 23, exceeds the claimant's net employment income. The claimant's net employment income shall be determined by reducing the gross employment income in the month by the deductions required in that month under the *Income Tax Act*, the *Canada Pension Plan Act*, the *Employment Insurance Act* and the *Teachers' Pension Plan Act*.

Recommendation

That 13.C.24.5 (page 95) be replaced with:

Costs incurred by the medical review committee in adjudicating any claim shall be borne entirely by the plan.

Finland's education system is tops: Here's why

by Mike Lombardi

Finland, a country with a population of five million, has once again scored at the top in international tests in math, science, and reading literacy. This article summarizes policy directions that have made Finland the international academic star. Policy makers, educators, and the media can take a lesson from Finland.

Results from a comprehensive 41-country survey by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) during 2003 and released in December 2004 by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranked Finnish 15-year-olds at or near the top in reading, math, and science. The survey showed that Alberta is the leader in Canada. B.C.'s 15-year-old students were ranked third in reading, seventh in math, and eleventh in science. OECD documents suggest that compared with the previous assessment, in 2000, the performance of the 15-year-old Finnish age group has risen in math and science. In reading literacy, Finland has kept her position as the leading country.

Even with the results from Finland, Canada's media seem fixated on reporting the success of Alberta and other jurisdictions that are driven by data-madness and constant standardized testing. In those jurisdictions, evaluation and testing drive teaching and learning.

The successful performance of Finnish students is attributable to an array of interrelated factors, one of which is a comprehensive pedagogy. Prior to the OECD test, the 15-year-old Finnish students who participate in the assessment never experience any standardized testing in school.

Following are some of the factors that have led to the success of the Finnish education system. The results are summarized from a report about the 2000 OECD results:

High reading literacy

- Formal reading instruction begins at age seven, when children enter the comprehensive school.
- Parents, community, and the culture itself support reading.
- Schools have aroused student interest in reading, and students are interested in and

engaged in reading.

- Students read highly diverse materials.
- Finland has a comprehensive network of libraries, which have separate departments for children and youth.

High math and science performance

- Students are confident of their mathematical abilities.
- The math and science curriculum emphasize the use and application of knowledge and problem solving.

"Teachers focus on learning and teaching rather than preparing students for tests or exams."

- Since 1996, the Finnish education system has focussed on math and science literacy through a national program (LUMA) aimed at developing knowledge and skills in math and science at all levels of schooling.

High equality of educational outcomes

- Finland provides all students with equal educational opportunities and removes obstacles to learning especially among the least successful students.
- Finland has sought to provide all students, whatever their place of residence, with equal opportunities for high-quality education.
- Finland has an extensive network of schools and recruits highly qualified teachers in all schools.

A philosophy that works

- The comprehensive school is not only a system; it is a matter of pedagogical philosophy and practice.
- With a population of more than five million, Finland has more than 4,000 comprehensive schools, 750 upper-secondary schools, 20 universities, and a great many other educational institutions.
- The comprehensive school is for each child; hence, it has to adjust to the needs of each child.
- Teaching and pedagogy are structured to work with heterogeneous student groups.
- No student can be excluded and sent to another school.
- The interests and choices of students are taken into account when schools plan and

select the curriculum, content, textbooks, learning strategies, and methods of assessment.

- All this calls for a flexible, school-based and teacher-planned curriculum along with student-centred instruction, counselling, and remedial teaching.
- The teacher takes care of every single student and allows, in everyday school work, for a diverse student body.
- Special education is usually closely integrated into normal teaching and is highly inclusive (approximately 2% of students attend special education institutions).
- Every student has the right to student counselling, and schools provide students with guidance in study skills, options, and planning post-secondary studies. At grade levels 7 to 9, every school has a student counsellor who provides individual guidance to those in need or wanting it.
- The class sizes in Finland are among the smallest in the countries in the study. Finnish teachers are constantly worried about what they consider too-large class sizes, finding it demanding to look after the individual needs of different students.

Highly qualified teachers and pedagogical autonomy

- In Finnish culture, teaching is one of the most important professions of society, and substantial resources are invested in teacher education.
- Teachers are trusted to do their best as true professionals of education. They are entrusted with considerable pedagogical independence in the classroom, and schools have likewise enjoyed significant autonomy in organizing their work within the national curriculum.
- All Finnish teachers complete a master's degree, either in education or in a teaching subject. They are considered pedagogical experts.
- Additionally, the profession of classroom teacher is greatly valued and popular among post-secondary students. Only 10% of the applicants for teacher-education programs are admitted.
- Finnish teachers set high standards for students' literacy skills and interests.
- Regarded as educational experts, Finnish teachers are relied on when it comes to student assessment, which usually draws on students' class

work, projects, teacher-made exams, and portfolios. In Finland, teacher-based assessment is all the more important because at Finnish comprehensive schools students are not assessed by national tests or examinations during the school years or upon completing school.

Teachers are vested with considerable decision-making authority as concerns school policy and management. They have almost exclusive responsibility for the choice of textbooks and have more say than their counterparts in the OECD countries in determining course content, establishing student assessment policies, deciding which courses the school should offer, and allocating budgets within the school.

Curriculum and governance

- The comprehensive school is underpinned by an exceptionally broad cultural and political consensus about the purpose and direction for the school system. In Finnish culture, significant political conflicts and sudden changes in educational policy have been rare.
- Since 1990, the national curriculum has become flexible, decentralized, and less detailed.
- Finland has established national grading guidelines for performance that allow for student effort and activity to be taken into consideration.
- The outcomes of all Finnish nine-year comprehensive schools are followed by sample-based surveys. The results are published only on the system

"I credit Finland's top marks to the fact that teachers are given the flexibility and, more important, the respect to manage their own curriculum under a national framework."

level. Schools have a high degree of autonomy with regard to pedagogical practices.

- Governing bodies of schools and local educational authorities have less decision-making power in Finland than in the other OECD countries.
- Finland's high performance

in the OECD assessment is generally attributed to a high degree of school and teacher autonomy in decision-making.

Some educational commentators have stated that Finland's advantage on the OECD tests comes from its relatively homogeneous population. While that may have some impact on the results, it is difficult to make the link when many other countries with homogeneous populations don't do as well on international assessments.

In a recent article in *The Globe and Mail* (December 8, 2004), Pasi Sahlberg, a former official in the Finnish Ministry of Education and education professor at the University of Helsinki now employed as an education specialist by the World Bank, makes the following comments to highlight the reasons behind the success of the Finnish education system:

"Finland's success is not attributed to any revolutionary reforms but to a long-term vision of a comprehensive basic school system.

"Teachers focus on learning and teaching rather than preparing students for tests or exams.

"It doesn't matter where you go, you'll always find fairly well performing schools and high quality school in Finland.

"In Finland students stay at the same school until they reach 16 and then attend either academic secondary schools or vocational schools.

"I credit Finland's top marks to the fact that teachers are given the flexibility and, more important, the respect to manage their own curriculum under a national framework.

"Testing restricts potential and teachers in Finland are allowed to be innovative in their classrooms."

The Finnish system offers many workable and pragmatic education policy directions for creating a top-notch education system. Perhaps it is time for policy makers, educators, and the media to examine the education policy directions of Finland instead of continually duplicating the less-than-successful policy ideas that are regularly imported from the low-ranking American education system.

Mike Lombardi is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division.

Yours for the asking

Schizophrenia resource kit free

"Reaching Out" is a teen-oriented educational program to raise awareness and understanding about schizophrenia. This kit is free of charge to educators to promote early diagnosis and treatment.

The resource kit includes a video featuring insights from individuals successfully living with schizophrenia. The kit contains lesson plans, FAQs, suggested role-playing scenarios, and resources. The video portrays the isolation, confusion, and fear that grips sufferers, which is compounded by teenage immaturity and the inability of sufferers to "self-diagnose." The program does not require that educators have prior knowledge of mental illness.

Schizophrenia affects one in a 100 youth between the ages of 15 and 25. Early warning signs include sleeplessness, agitation, marked changes in personality, having a constant feeling of being watched, increasing withdrawal from social contacts, difficulty controlling one's thoughts, difficulties with language (words do not make sense), inability to turn off the imagination, experiencing auditory and visual hallucinations, sudden excesses (such as extreme religiosity), and irrational, angry, or fearful responses to loved ones. First-episode psychosis, or "first break," refers to the first time a person experiences psychotic symptoms. Symptoms are unfamiliar and frightening, leaving the person confused and distressed. If they do not know the facts and have no real understanding about mental illness, their distress may be increased by myths, stereotypes, and stigma.

For more information or to order the resource kit, go to www.schizophrenia.ca.

Green street

This program provides opportunities to engage students and teachers in environmental learning and sustainability education. The program links schools in Canada to reputable environmental education organizations across the country. We deliver credible, accessible, and affordable programs that are relevant to students' concerns, curriculum-linked, encourage a sense of personal responsibility for the environment, foster a commitment to sustainable living, and promote an enduring dedication to environmental stewardship.

For more information, go to www.green-street.ca or call Allison Freeman 1-877-250-8201.

A refugee camp in the city—on assignment

An educational kit produced by Médecins Sans Frontières Canada/Doctors without Borders Canada. This kit is designed to foster better understanding among Canadian youth of the hardships experienced by millions of displaced people in the world every day. Through understanding of the realities of displaced people, we

believe, we can mitigate racism and promote tolerance toward refugees in our own home society.

The kit includes a 60-page teacher's guide and a four-part video. Available in English and French. To order *A Refugee Camp in the City—On Assignment*, or the French version, *Un camp de réfugiés dans la ville: en reportage*, send cheque or money order (\$40 plus taxes each).

For more information, e-mail msfcan@msf.ca, www.msf.ca.

Educate to end poverty April 24–30

Education International and its members are taking an active role in *Global Action Week 2005* on the theme "Educate to End Poverty."

EI, together with its partners in the global campaign for education, will be celebrating the 6th Global Action Week (GAW) from April 24–30, 2005, to help millions of children around the world claim their right to education.

GAW aims at mobilizing public opinion to exert pressure on governments and intergovernmental agencies to provide free, quality education for all. GAW is always organized in April, to recall the commitment made by 185 governments in April 2000, at the World Education Forum, to provide "Education For All" by the year 2015.

For more information, e-mail info@ei-ie.org, www.ei-ie.org.

Entomology grants

The Entomological Society of British Columbia through the H.R. MacCarthy Memorial Education Fund is offering small grants to schools in B.C. to help fund insect-related projects.

Have you visited a pond but didn't have nets and screens to view the abundant aquatic insect life below the surface? Apply now for a grant and you soon might. These grants, usually from \$50–\$150, will provide the funding required to purchase equipment and supplies for entomological class projects. Grades K–12 are eligible, or the school can apply for supplies for general use.

When applying, please provide details of a specific project that you would like to pursue and an itemized list of equipment or materials needed. The deadline for applications is February 28, 2005. Applications will be reviewed and decisions made by mid-March.

Visit the ESBC web site, esbc.harbour.com, for an on-line application form and links to many entomological supply houses. Request an application form be faxed to you by contacting Karen Needham, 604-822-3379, needham@zoology.ubc.ca.

School nutrition resource

According to Perry Kendall, Provincial Health Officer, the school setting is one of the most promising settings for helping children and youth develop healthy ways of living.

Inspiring your school community to take action just got easier! BC Dairy Foundation, in partner-

ship with the Ministry of Health Services and the Knowledge Network, created "Making it Happen," three videos and an online how-to resource to assist you and your school support healthy eating.

Videos will air on the Knowledge Network. They will feature champions throughout the province who addressed challenges such as nutrition education, lunchtime and place, and vending machines in schools. You can also order your free copy at nutrition@bcd.ca.

Visit www.knowledgenetwork.ca/makingithappen: View the videos, assess the current policy at your school, read sample policies, and success stories from other schools on food services, health services, nutrition education, lunchtime and place, role modeling, rewards and building a commitment, and develop and implement a policy at your school and re-assess it a year after.

Income tax preparation and independent financial planning for union members

Working Enterprises Tax Services Ltd. is union owned and provides personal income tax and financial planning services for union members and their families in all regions of B.C.

Rates for income tax preparation are set at 40 to 70% off competitors' rates. Most members pay a flat fee of only \$45 to prepare and electronically file their return. This rate applies to those who have seven or fewer information slips to process. Individuals who have more than seven slips, or more complicated returns, pay a little more but still benefit from great savings.

Working Enterprises provides independent financial planning services for individuals on a *fee only* basis. They do not collect commissions or sell financial products. You will obtain financial advice tailored to your financial goals and objectives. Service fees are based on an hourly rate or a set rate for complete financial plans.

Contact: Steven Watson, 604-408-1153, toll free 1-800-845-1181, e-mail tax@wegroup.ca, web site www.wegroup.ca.

Behind the pandemic

Behind the Pandemic: Uncovering the Links Between Social Inequity and HIV/AIDS helps educators explore the pandemic and demonstrate how Canadians can take part in the global response. The kit is ideal for secondary school social studies and global-issues classes.

The kit, developed by two Canadian organizations, USC Canada and AIDS Vancouver, in partnership with the Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development, is being made available in both print and PDF formats free of charge.

To order your print copy, send an e-mail to Pandemic@usc-canada.org, or visit USC Canada's web site at www.usc-canada.org to download an electronic version.

cluster of symptoms now referred to as electrical hypersensitivity. She points out that this is a very real phenomenon and is recognized as such by the World Health Organization. She cautions that the adverse effects and possible lawsuits are not worth the price of situating them near schools.

Gerd Oberfield, a public-health officer from Salzburg, points out that three different epidemiological studies completed within the last few years all found a statistically significant relationship between

exposure to radiation and ill-health effects. Another recent European research project showed that cells exposed to cell-phone radiation exhibited chromosomal damage well below the exposure guidelines of the World Health Organization.

In light of this compelling evidence, Oberfield suggests that cell towers should not be placed near schools.

Source: "Putting cell phone antennas near schools is too risky." *Washington Post*, Dec. 30, 2004.

Dividing the pension when a spousal relationship ends

The law considers a pension to be matrimonial property, just like a house, a car, or another asset. When a marriage or spousal relationship ends, the pension belongs to both the former spouse and the pension-plan member, and they may choose to divide the pension. Both parties should consider obtaining legal advice about dividing matrimonial property. The BCTF and the pension plan cannot provide advice about dividing pensions. The *Family Relations Act* is the provincial law that governs how family assets are divided on marital and spousal relationship breakdown.

The pension is divided according to the terms of the court order or separation agreement. If the court order does not provide specific dates for dividing the pension, it is divided using the formula set out in the regulations of the *Family Relations Act*. The formula is based in part on how long the pension-plan member and the former spouse were married or living together, and how long the pension-plan member contributed to the pension plan while the two people were spouses. The *Family Relations Act* allows the plan member and the former spouse to decide on a different proportionate division than that specified in the legislation. That must be done in accordance

with the provisions of the *Family Relations Act*.

When the pension-plan member has a court order or a separation agreement, she or he should register it with the Teachers' Pension Plan. That provides the plan with the instructions on how to divide the pension at retirement. For more detailed information, review the "Publications" on the Teachers' Pension Plan web site.

Definition of spouse

For the Teachers' Pension plan, *spouse* means:

- the person you are legally married to and, for the two-year period immediately before the relevant time, were not living separate from; or, if this does not apply,
- the person, of the same or opposite sex, who has lived with you in a marriagelike relationship for the two-year period immediately before the relevant time.

Contact the pension plan at: Teachers' Pension Plan, PO Box 9460, Victoria BC V8W 9V8 Phone: Victoria 250-953-3022, Vancouver 604-660-4088, Toll-free 1-800-665-6770, Fax: 250-356-8977, E-mail: TPP@pensionsbc.ca Web site: pensionsbc.ca, then select Teachers'

Source: Extracts from the Teachers' Pension Plan *Pensionfacts*: Dividing a pension when a spousal relationship ends.

Investigating our practices 2005

Saturday, May 7, 2005
8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Neville Scarfe (Education) Building, UBC,
2125 Main Mall

Teaching is demanding and complex work, made more difficult if we try to do it in isolation or without critical reflection. To understand and improve their teaching, many teachers engage in classroom or school-based investigations of the what, the how, and the why of their professional practice. On May 7, 2005, UBC will host the 8th annual Investigating Our Practices conference, where practising teachers, university educators, graduate students, and student teachers from different educational contexts will come together to share their investigations, understandings, and questions. The exchanges will be organized around five streams:

- the improvement of classroom practice
- the ongoing education of practitioners
- the preparation of practitioners
- the context of practice
- researching practice.

Call for proposals

Share your classroom inquires
Submission deadline:
Friday, March 11, 2005

For more information, visit www.oep.educ.ubc.ca/wcs/c_investprac.html or contact:

- David Coulter, david.coulter@ubc.ca
- Charlie Naylor, 604-871-2254. cnaylor@bctf.ca,
- Judy Paley, 604-822-2733, judy.paley@ubc.ca.

Experts believe cell-phone antennas pose danger

Two experts in the field of environmental medicine believe that placing cell-phone antennas near schools is too risky. Magda Havas, a professor at Trent University in Ontario, cites studies that show people living within 300 metres of mobile-phone base stations have a

Ten new BCTF lesson aids

1 LA 9340 Active Citizenship: Student Action Projects by Roland Case, Cliff Falk, Neil Smith, Walt Werner, 103 p. ©2004. This resource book provides a framework supported with teaching and assessment materials for elementary and secondary teachers to guide students in planning and implementing a social action project. Five student tasks comprise the problem-solving model. The "tools" to help students carry out each task are developed through learning activities. Suitable for intermediate, middle school and secondary students. \$29.95

2 LA 9322 Not So Natural Disasters: Elementary School Edition produced by Co-Development Canada, 106 p. ©2003. This global education resource book is a teaching unit on the links between natural disasters and climate change, environmental degradation and global inequality. The unit consists of five sections containing an overview, background information, and activity handouts for students. Each section has identified core activities central to the objectives of the section, as well as some optional activities. The unit is planned as a progression of activities, moving from empathy, to knowledge, to action. The activities are flexible so that teachers can adapt them to the needs of their students. Grades 5-7. \$19.95

LA 2047 Not So Natural Disasters: Secondary School Edition, 94 p. ©2002. Grades 8-12, \$20.95.

3 LA F8425A Un peu de tout – Mathématiques 3, Micheline Dupuis, 55 p., ©2003. Cahier d'activités reliées à différents concepts de mathématiques tels que la numération, les nombres (pair, impair, premier, composé, carré), résolution de problèmes, chiffres romains, les opérations, les probabilités, les mesures, la géométrie, etc. Les Éditions - À Reproduire. Niveau 3e et 4e. \$31.95. LA F425B - Un peu de tout - Mathématiques 3, Corrigé de l'enseignant, \$11.95.

4 LA 9282 Our World by Sonja E. Schild, 63 p. ©2003. The first half of the workbook teaches students the basics of world geography using maps, charts and illustrations. The second half of the workbook reinforces and tests students on the subject matter using many pictures, crossword puzzles and games. Most pages also include a section called Brainwork. It requires research and encourages creative thinking and problem solving. Grades 3-7. \$26.95.

5 LA 9928 About IEPs produced by the Learning Assistance Teachers' Assn., 100 p. and CD Rom, Fall 2003. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1, features articles on IEPs, which give students the dignity and the time to be successful in their pursuit of education. Included in this issue is a CD which contains manual templates, IEP short form, IEP long form and checklist of adaptations and modifications. K-12. \$12

6 LA3314 Exploring Aboriginal Culture: Then and Now produced by FORED BC, 73 p., 30-min. VHS videocassette, ©2004. This learning resource package includes three lesson plans Misconceptions; Exploring First Nations Treaties and Native Hip Hop. Also included are the following resources: basic guide to First Nations names; map of First Nations of Canada; recommended book and website guide; aboriginal perspectives video resources; "When Teaching about Aboriginal Peoples"; an historical look at Canada and BC's relationship with First Nations; and guest speaker information. Also included is a 30-min. VHS video titled "What's the Deal with Treaties—a Video about Treaty Making in British Columbia" produced by BC Treaty Commission and a 36 page guide. Grades 10-12. \$39

7 LA1073 A Teaching Unit on Music and Society Produced by VIDEA, 15 p. ©2003. Students study how musicians use music to address societal issues like poverty. In the final project students research a song of their choice and investigate both the song and the social context that inspired it. Includes overheads, handouts and worksheets. Suitable for English 11-12 and Communications 11-12. \$8.95. Other available units in the Global Learner series from BCTF are LA 1072 "A Teaching Unit on Consumerism and Media Literacy", LA 2031 "A Teaching Unit on Global Warming", 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 in which students learn about poverty in Canada.

8 LA1074 A Symposium on Phenomenological Research with Reference to Creative Writing by Dan Lukiv, 45 p., ©2004. This symposium of seven parts discusses: two phenomenological studies that explored lived school experiences that had encouraged two people to become creative writers, the abstract versus the concrete sides of phenomenology, bracketing out bias and bracketing in possibilities, the

implicit nature of interview data and poetry, the need for educators and researchers to use tact, and the precepts of something the writer calls Theory from Phenomenology. The writer has tried to avoid abstract language as much as possible to make the work accessible to readers unfamiliar with phenomenological inquiry. For teachers. \$5.50.

9 LA 2231 Making Decisions: Grade 9 Produced by the Alcohol-Drug Education Service, 118 p. ©2004. Designed for teachers and students of Grade 9 to provide learning activities that promote the development of skills in making major decisions, particularly to help prevent substance abuse. This classroom resource is based on current research surrounding adolescent development, what is known about the importance of decision-making, and problem solving. The modules focus on development of key skills in critical thinking, self-confidence and assertiveness, and on healthy and positive adolescent development and learning. The program reinforces and builds on the skills and information taught in "Making Decisions: Grade 6" (BCTF LA 2396), "Making Decisions: Grade 7" (BCTF LA 2397), and "Making Decisions: Grade 8" (BCTF LA 2230) Easy to use student worksheets and activities. \$45.95

10 LA 9925 Technology, Software, and Computer Assist for the LAT produced by the Learning Assistance Teachers' Assn., 128 p. Winter 2002. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2, features articles on what is current in B.C. with respect to technology education and learning assistance. K-12. \$12

More curriculum resources and information are available at www.bcmler.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

Your School, Your Future

Teachers and administrators feel stretched to the breaking point by the competing demands of students, parents, and community groups. Apply to the **MA in Conflict Analysis and Management** program in the School and Community concentration. You will learn to use systems thinking to assess your school and community context, and develop the intervention skills to involve conflicting parties in constructive, sustainable strategies.

Keep working and keep learning with our online learning model based on brief residencies and distance learning.

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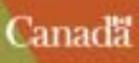
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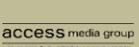
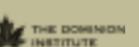
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PD CALENDAR

MARCH

1-5 Victoria. British Columbia 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' Association (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' Association) North and BCMEA (B.C. Music Educators' Association) Segue 2005 northern regional mini-conferences, offering a wide variety of workshops for all grades. Contact: Sharel Warrington, Prince George District Teachers' Association, 251-1515 Second Avenue, 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 Association (SEA) Cross-currents Conference, Westin Bayshore Hotel. Contact Madeline Pohlmann, 604-290-1282, madelinep@fnesc.bc.ca, bctf.ca/psas/SEA/.

21-22 Ottawa. Bullying: Beyond Rhetoric. Canada's Second Conference on Bullying & Victimization, Ottawa Congress Centre. Visit bullyingawarenessnetwork.ca, and check the news section for up-to-date conference information.

APRIL 2005

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 different workshops for teachers and secondary students. Great ideas for your classroom. Registration: Kamloops Thompson Teachers' Association office: 202-1157 12th Street Kamloops, BC V2B 7L2 phone: 250-554-1223, kttat@telus.net For further information 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 in educational videos, DVD and multimedia programs on a wide array of subjects: general interest, curriculum specific, business and human resource development. Early bird registration prior to February 23, 2005. www.langara.bc.ca/ffwd Contact Susan Weber 604-323-5533, or 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, 1215 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 — 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.

11-24 China. Peace & Reconciliation Study Tour to China for Canadian Teachers, helping selected teachers better understand the cultural and historical background of China during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945) by meeting survivors and historians and visiting museums and historical sites in Beijing, Nanjing, YiWu, and Hong Kong. The tour organizer covers all ground costs inside China while teachers take care of their international travel costs between Canada and China. Application deadline: February 15, 2005. Contact Thekla Lit, 604-436-3002, bcalpah@shaw.ca, alpha-canada.org/StudyTour.

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, ierg.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

From public...to private

Cuts threaten heritage school

by Sue Mackenzie and
Monica Zurowski

Because of budget restraints and declining enrolment, Aldergrove Elementary School finds itself in the same position as some other schools. School districts must look into ways of reducing costs and in some cases looking at school closures. These are difficult decisions during difficult times, yet the loss of a community's school means the loss of more than a building. It threatens to have a devastating effect on those who view their school as a stable centre of their family's life, offering them much more than reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Aldergrove is a relatively small community in the Fraser Valley. Aldergrove Elementary School is a designated historical landmark (1913) on the highway between Alder Lanes Bowling Centre and some local merchants. Although the face of the main street has changed over the years, the old school building remains the hub of a school family that has provided an education to generations of students. Aldergrove Elementary has 184 students and a private, highly respected preschool called "Small Beginnings"

The little elementary school, a bustling centre of services and activities, gives true meaning to the adage "It takes a community to raise a child."

that serves 80 families, some of whom will attend our school. The little elementary school, a bustling centre of services and activities, gives true meaning to the adage "It takes a community to raise a child." The parents and staff have been working hard for decades to provide a safe and nurturing environment. Designated an "inner city" school, it has directed financial and emotional resources to more and more services to families within the community.

Aldergrove Elementary School has very little staff turnover, and many of the staff have brought their own children to this school from other areas so that they might benefit from the exceptional level of instruction.

At a time when dollars are scarce and services to children



ROSEMARY OWENS PHOTO

are being undercut, Aldergrove Elementary has proudly managed to fund 1.84 FTE teachers for primary and intermediate learning assistance, resource programs, and behaviour support as well as 0.2 speech and language teacher and a 0.4 counsellor. The staff and families of this school community consistently recognize the need for special services to children in order to facilitate a successful learning environment for all.

Our staff works as a team to meet the needs of our families by implementing and maintaining a variety of other services. We have an incredibly successful early-intervention program, which consists of a Reading Recovery program, a Grade 1 learning assistance program, and a speech and language program that supports strong classroom instruction.

For sale



Langley

This combination has resulted in Aldergrove Elementary's achieving top Grade 1 reading results (district testing) over the past five years. All our staff support this program because we realize the importance of getting students off to a good start academically and emotionally. We have a help centre to accommodate one-on-one instruction, as well as provide recess and lunch social interaction activities in a supervised setting. The behaviour support co-ordinator has a social skills group that meets regularly for learning appropriate interactions.

The counselling centre has become an information place for families to seek additional help through community agencies and other resources. Former students frequently stop in looking for information or guidance regarding current life issues. Within the school, counselling is available for individual children, small groups, and parents.

The music program gives

This elementary school is more like a large family, where we support one another, celebrate our accomplishments, and offer assistance to those in need.

students a balance of musical opportunities including ukulele instruction. Choirs, concerts, and assembly performances are a small part of what our music teacher organizes and teaches.

This small school has a fully equipped computer lab, and an effort to maintain up-to-date technology is always apparent.

The Aboriginal Program provides direct service to many of our students with Aboriginal ancestry, and we value the

Private



North Vancouver

diversity this program brings to all our children in the form of special days and activities.

Our physical education program includes sports such as basketball, volleyball, and track and field. As well, we offer all our intermediate students an opportunity to participate in after-school tournaments with neighbouring schools. This has greatly enhanced our feeling of school pride. For the past 30

Closed



Cariboo-Chilcotin

years, Aldergrove Elementary School has had a teacher-supervised bowling league after school. Every Tuesday, many of our students head next door to Alder Lanes to be part of their school bowling team. Through these activities, our children have had the opportunity to develop good sportsmanship and team spirit.

It offers stability and security to a community that appreciates the support.

Currently, we offer a late-French-immersion program for Grade 6 and 7 students as well as a full-time Kindergarten for our ESL and Aboriginal children.

Aldergrove Elementary School has been involved with Big Brothers and Sisters in the mentor program since it started many years ago. Our partnerships between little and big

buddies have been recognized as invaluable.

For many years, children have been able to start their day with a nutritious breakfast prepared by volunteers from a local church. Some of the children continue to stop by in the morning for a bite to eat before heading to the local high school. Children can also have their recess snacks and lunch provided at school each day regardless of their ability to pay.

This elementary school is more like a large family, where we support one another, celebrate our accomplishments, and offer assistance to those in need. It offers stability and security to a community that appreciates the support.

It is not the building that we endeavour to save. It is the sense of community and family that we cannot do without.

As a community, we understand financial hardships, but clearly we recognize the value of investing in our children. It is not the building that we endeavour to save. It is the sense of community and family that we cannot do without.

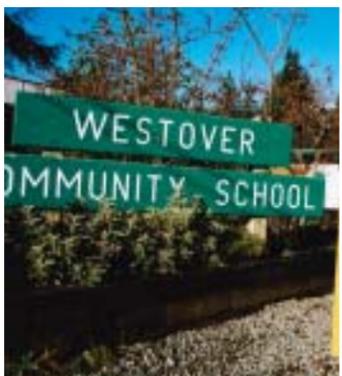
Sue Mackenzie and Monica Zurowski have submitted this on behalf of current and former staff of Aldergrove Elementary School.

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