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Teacher

Teachers will not be silenced



by Jinny Sims

We are at a critical juncture for the future of public schools in this province. We want to work with parents, trustees, and government to improve the services we can offer our students and ensure that we can meet their needs. The unity and determination expressed by our 88.4% strike vote undermines the government claim that the BCTF is somehow different or separate from teachers.

The Supreme Court of Canada upheld our right to grieve these violations.

Together we have faced a consistent and concerted effort by this government to undermine our students' learning conditions, our working conditions, and to isolate and silence teachers. Our determined and resolute effort to minimize the damage to our schools and students has attracted support from parents, trustees, the courts, and the general public. The government itself has been forced to focus on the issue of class size and composition, the loss of specialist teachers, and the need for support for students with special needs.

Parents and members of the public are aware of our efforts and have been very supportive. In June 2004, and again in June of 2005, 88% of British Columbians said they thought it important for teachers to speak out on public education issues like funding cuts, larger classes,

and reduced support for children with special needs. In all of the polling we do, teachers are always viewed as the most dependable source of information about public schools. The public understands both the need for improvements for students' learning conditions and the need for a salary increase.

It was only three years ago that the government stripped the protections for students' services from our collective agreement. As a result, students have experienced larger classes, fewer services from specialist teachers, and less support for students with special needs. We have seen more than 120 neighbourhood schools closed. In bargaining, the government through its bargaining agent, has taken the position that teachers can not discuss students' learning conditions and that there is no money for any improvements for students or teachers.

This government treats the teaching profession with contempt. It ignores teachers when making education-related decisions. We find out about changes to programs through

The employer has now announced that it is going to the Supreme Court in another attempt to silence teachers.

the media. Teachers, who are parents, are not allowed to sit on the school planning council of their child's school. The government fired the elected college councillors and seized

control of the BC College of Teachers. It took a year and a half of united action to have our college returned to democratic self-governance.

After the government stripped learning conditions like class size from the collective agreement and passed legislation with limits for K-3 and averages for Grades 4-12, the employer took the position that teachers could not grieve any breach of those legislated limits. The Supreme Court of Canada upheld our right to grieve these violations.

When the government stripped our collective agreement and designated education an essential service, we appealed to the International Labour Organization, a United Nations body made up of representatives of government, business, and labour. The ILO ruled that education is not an essential service, the government should repeal that legislation, open talks with the BCTF, and refrain from legislating contracts. Premier Campbell said he felt no pressure whatsoever to bring B.C. into compliance with the ILO. It is an odd position for a government to adopt as it calls on the U.S. government to follow the rules on softwood lumber sales.

Some teachers were told by their employer that they were not allowed to discuss class size and learning conditions with parents during parent-teacher interviews. We grieved and won that fight as well. The employer went to court to have the arbitrator's decision overturned. They lost and we were awarded costs. The employer has now announced that it is going to the Supreme Court in another

attempt to silence teachers. Gordon Campbell stated on CKNW Radio on September 27, 2005, that any problems with class size and composition are the responsibility of school boards. On September 28, 2005, Shirley Bond, minister of education, announced that the ministry would begin collecting class-size data from school boards for the first time. Bond went on to say that school planning councils, made up of an administrator, parents, and a teacher representative, were the proper body to decide on issues of class size and composition. Ironically, this was the same day the employer announced that it was going to the Supreme Court of Canada to silence teachers.

We need a different approach—one that respects students, parents, and teachers.

This government downloads costs on school boards, doesn't provide adequate funding, suggests that any problems are the fault of school boards or SPCs, and attempts to silence the voice of teachers. We need a different approach—one that respects students, parents, and teachers. Teachers believe that these problems can only be solved through respectful dialogue. Teachers can be proud of the stand we have taken on behalf of our students learning conditions and our profession.

Jinny Sims is president of the the B.C. Teachers' Federation.

President’s message



Jinny Sims

As I write this, members in their locals are voting on the BCTF Executive Committee recommendations on how we should respond to government legislation imposing our conditions of employment once again. Whatever the outcome of that vote, I am proud of the stand teachers have taken to protect students, schools, and the profession. It has always been difficult for teachers to make improvements for our students. However, we have a long and proud history of being prepared to take a principled stand, regardless of its popularity. It is very important that we help elect trustees in our communities that will stand up to protect education services and speak out on behalf of students. Our experience is quite different in communities that have education-friendly trustees. Where we haven’t, teachers have faced the threat of discipline for discussing class sizes with parents. Where we have education-friendly trustees, teachers are joined by administrators when they lobby for adequate funding. What a difference that can make. So far, we have won that battle in the courts, but it really is a battle we shouldn’t have to fight. According to Madam Justice Huddart of the B.C. Court of Appeal, “...it is difficult to see how discussion about class size and composition in relation to the needs of a particular child by an informed and articulate teacher could do anything but enhance confidence in the school system.” Supportive trustees will speak up for the children of the community and advocate for them. They will work co-operatively with teachers and other workers in the schools. They will treat their employees with respect. November 19 is coming soon, so I would encourage you to contact your local office and find out what you can do to ensure that supportive trustees are elected to represent your community.

Jinny

In memory of our dear friend David McClean

Dave was not only a wonderful friend but also a unique human being—a realist, perceptive and perspicacious, one who saw issues clearly and acted on them. He was a voracious reader, an articulate speaker, a seeker of knowledge whose love of learning endured. Possessed of a remarkable sense of humour and fast wit, he loved good conversation and argument. Dave stood out in any group. Teacher, traveller, fisher, forager, collector, knowledge-seeker, photographer, techie, activist, sailor, reader, humorist, and conversationalist; his many enthusiasms over the decades received his characteristic single-minded focus. Being a union activist was an important part of his life. He made a significant contribution to the political-action task force and also, as a BCTF rep., to the provincial committee on computer technology in education. His abilities served him well on the floor of numerous AGMs. As president of the Langley Teachers’ Association, he provided unequivocal leadership and support for teachers at a time when it was much needed. Dave was born in Claudy, Northern Ireland, on March 10, 1941. He died on May 17, 2005. He is greatly missed by Margaret, Ken and Olga McClean, his mother Jean and sister Anne in Ireland, and many friends here.

Jan and Terry Eastman
Langley

Respect international law

Kenneth Abramson’s letter in the September *Teacher* states that “It doesn’t seem to matter if ‘the wall’ built by Israel as a defense against suicide bombers has been shown to be very effective for this purpose.” It doesn’t *seem* to matter precisely because it doesn’t matter, at least in respect to the wall’s legality. If it is illegal for me to have a nuclear bomb in my house, my perception of its efficacy in deterring burglars is irrelevant. The wall has been built in violation of international law—and international law must be respected, because if it goes, only the law of the jungle remains.

Greg DePaco
Burnaby

Yours for the asking

Forest education resources and web site

A number of teaching kits, lesson plans, and hands-on materials linked to the curriculum are available at www.learnforestry.com. Teaching kits and lesson plans include:

- Community Development—The History of Logging (Grade 3)
- Our Living Resource—The Forest (Grade 5)
- Wood Technology, A Grade 8 Science Unit
- The Force of Fire (a set of teaching binders at the primary, intermediate, and secondary levels)

Lesson plans are also available on careers, beetles, forest health, forest management, and caring for you and our forests.

Science World and Ministry of Education “PAL” up to inspire students

To support K–7 teachers and inspire scientific curiosity and creativity in their students, Science World has partnered with the Ministry of Education for a program entitled the *British Columbia Program for the Awareness and Learning of Science (BC PALS)*. Starting September 2005, through BC PALS, K–7 classes in B.C. are offered an exciting opportunity to experience Science World’s unique approach to science. It includes either a free class field trip admission to the Science World facility, in Vancouver, or a complimentary outreach program outside the Lower Mainland. Outreach experiences may take the form of a classroom scientist’s visit through the Scientists & Innovators in the Schools program or a multi-school assembly science show. Science World programs support the new K–7 science

curriculum and assist teachers in educating and inspiring young, developing minds with informative and unforgettable science-based experiences. For more information, visit Science World’s web site, www.scienceworld.ca, and download a BC PALS field trip reservation form, or call 604-443-7500 to speak to the bookings department. Outside the Lower Mainland, call 1-800-363-1611 to find out when Science World Outreach programs are coming to your area.

Green Street...helping the planet...one classroom at a time

Discover opportunities to enhance your classroom by challenging your students to think critically about the environment, society, and sustainability, and by supporting them in making the leap from ideas to action! All programs are curriculum-aligned, action-oriented, require minimal teacher preparation, and are free or low-cost! “The programs are very relevant. Students are learning about issues in the context of their own community, and they also get a sense of what other kids are thinking about in other communities—it’s very meaningful.” (*Grade 5 teacher*) “An energetic, highly educational, empowering, unbiased program. Exceptional!” (*Grade 5/6 teacher*) Green Street delivers credible, accessible, and affordable programs that are relevant to students’ concerns, encouraging a sense of personal responsibility for the environment, fostering a commitment to sustainable living, and promoting an enduring dedication to environmental stewardship. Green Street links schools in Canada to reputable environmental-education organizations

that offer a range of programs: discovering how to reduce your ecological footprint, learning how to build a wind turbine, letter writing with eco-penpals, and understanding climate change, etc. To browse the new and returning programs available for classrooms in B.C. this year, visit www.green-street.ca. Registration for all programs can be completed online by logging on to Green Street, and scrolling through the various options to find the best programs to suit your classroom. As a teacher, you are welcome to register for more than one program. You can also contact the Green Street co-ordinator, Allison Freeman, at afreeman@green-street.ca or call toll-free 1-877-250-8201.

Be a part of something big

Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver has a new volunteer option: Kids First. Men and women mentor boys and girls in one-to-one and/or group relationships. Volunteers get together with their buddies, during school time, after school, in the evenings, or on the weekends, through a variety of options involving at least three children per mentor. Together Big & Little Buddies play card and board games, play sports, do arts and crafts, and a variety of other friendship-based activities. Big Brothers also has one-to-one volunteer options for men and women, some of which involve a time commitment of as little as one hour a week. If you are interested in being a friend and role model to a child, please call Matt at Big Brothers 604-876-2447, ext. 250, or visit www.bigbrothersvancouver.com.

Rethink child and youth employment standards

A recent survey of public school students raises concerns that B.C.’s employment regulations have left children and youth with inadequate protections in the workplace. For many young people, paid work is a positive experience, says Stephen McBride, lead author of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study and a professor of political science at Simon Fraser University. But the survey responses indicate that the regulations employers and parents are supposed to follow are being ignored. The findings related to children aged 12 to 14 are of particular concern, says McBride. Of the surveyed 12- to 14-year-olds who have jobs:

- 70% reported they work without supervision some or all of the time

- 48% reported that their parents did not evaluate the health and safety of the workplace
- 58% reported that their employer did not receive written approval from their parents.

Yet current employment regulations, introduced by the provincial government in 2003, require that children aged 12 to 14 be directly supervised by an adult at all times and that employers have the written consent of one parent or guardian. According to the Ministry of Labour and Citizens’ Services, the parent is responsible for ensuring safe and appropriate working conditions for the child. The province’s rationale for changing B.C.’s child labour rules, which used to require a permit from the Employment Standards Branch for a child to be hired, was that the system wasn’t effective, says McBride.

But the study tells us that the new rules aren’t being followed and that a significant number of children are being left vulnerable to harm. The study also finds that B.C. provides significantly less protection to child workers than do other jurisdictions in Canada, the United States, and the European Union. In particular, allowing children as young as 12 to work with the permission of only one parent is contrary to the International Labour Organization’s Convention on the Minimum Age. In addition to questions about work age and conditions, the survey asked respondents about the \$6/hour first job/entry level wage, commonly referred to as the training wage.

- Nearly half the employed youth were paid less than the standard \$8/hour minimum wage.

- Of those, 31% reported that they had not received any training while on the job-entry wage, and a further 29% reported they had been trained only at the start. If training were necessary, it might provide some justification for paying a reduced wage, says McBride. But in practice, there is little need for training in most jobs students obtain. It goes against the spirit of equal pay for work of equal value and discriminates against youth. Child and Youth Employment Standards: “The Experience of Young Workers Under B.C.’s New Policy Regime” is part of the Economic Security Project, a joint research initiative of the CCPA and Simon Fraser University, funded primarily by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Download at www.policyalternatives.ca.

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CALM Canadian Association of Labour Media

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A joint project of:

BCTF Research, Special Education Association

Learning Assistance Teachers' Association

ESL Provincial Specialist Association

The three words Individual Education Plan (IEP) strike fear in the lives of support teachers and classroom teachers. The program needs of students on IEPs are unique; they take time to develop, thus requiring collaboration (meetings) and adapted or modified materials or teaching strategies. The resource inventory on the Teaching to Diversity web site has a variety of places to assist you. Is the term *IEP* new to you? Check the resource inventory documentation section for more information on what they are and for sample templates. Are you the person who writes the IEPs? Check the resource inventory under the *documentation* heading or under *resources—collaboration/teamwork*. Are you the classroom teacher who has to implement what the IEP suggests? Refer to the resources section under *adaptations, modifications*, and *strategies* sections.

Here's a lighthearted look at IEPs from the LD Online web site www.ldonline.org:

Dr. Seuss on IEPs

I do not like these IEPs
I do not like them, Jeeze Louise!
We test, we check,
We plan, we meet,
But nothing ever seems complete.
Would you, could you like the form?

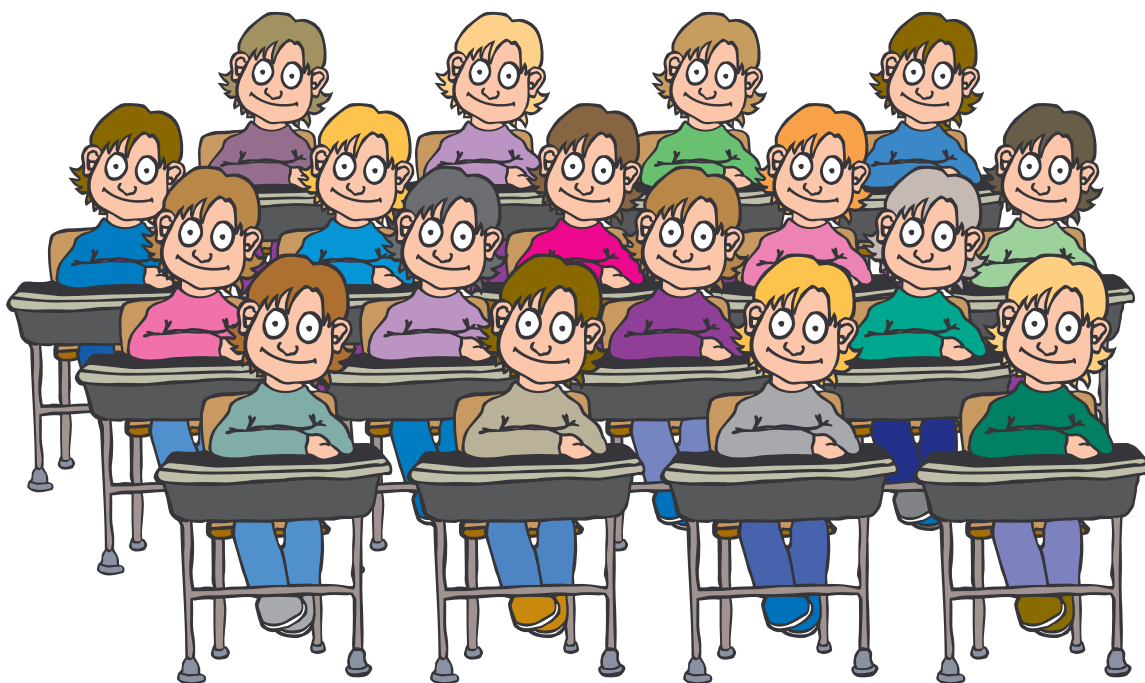
I do not like the form I see,
Not page 1, not 2 not 3
another change,
A brand new box,
I think we all

Have lost our rocks,
Could we all meet here or there?
We cannot all fit anywhere.
Not in a room, not in a hall,
there seems to be no space at all.
Could you, could you meet again?
I cannot meet again next week.
No lunch, no prop,
Please hear me speak.
No, not at dusk. No, not at dawn.
At 4:00 p.m., I should be gone.
Could you hear while all speak out?

Would you write the words they spout?
I could not hear, I would not write,
This does not need to be a fight.
Sign here, date there,
Mark this, check that,
Beware the students ad-vo-cat(e)
You do not like them,
So you say
Try again! Try again!
And you may
If you will let me be,
I will try again, You will see
Say! I almost like these IEPs
I think I'll write 6,003
And I will practice day and night
until they say
You got it right.

— Author unknown

BC Projects is a new section of the Teaching to Diversity web site. It features projects that involve B.C. teachers who are looking to support inclusion in various ways. The section currently features collaborations involving the BCTF, local teacher associations, and the school districts of Coquitlam, Nanaimo, and Prince George.



Making sense of the class-size debate

A recently released *Lesson in Learning* bulletin from the Canadian Council on Learning confirms what teachers already know: smaller class sizes are better for student learning. The council summarizes the work of Biddle and Berliner (2002), which shows that:

- long-term exposure to small classes in the early grades generates substantial advantages.
- the longer the exposure to smaller classes, the greater the gains.
- extra gains from small classes in the early grades are larger when class size is reduced to less than 20 students.
- gains are retained at upper grades and in the middle- and high-school years.
- gains are made by all types of students and are greater for those traditionally educationally disadvantaged.

After a vague discussion of class size as a mechanism for informing cost-effectiveness of class-size reduction, the document outlines class-size policies

in three Canadian jurisdictions: the Yukon, Ontario, and Alberta.

The main lesson in the research, according to the CCL, is that smaller is better in the primary grades.

...there is a vast difference between the actual number of students in an individual teacher's class and a ratio based on a district or province average.

Also worth noting are the lessons learned in California, which “pursued an aggressive class-size reduction policy, ignoring the fact that the system could not provide a sufficient number of qualified teachers. The gains anticipated from smaller classes did not materialize as expected because the classes were often staffed by inexperienced teachers who would not meet the more rigorous standard of certification in Canada.”

Using information in the *British Columbia Public School Act* as an example, the bulletin concludes with a tidy discussion of the difference between student/educator ratios and class size, pointing out that there is a vast difference between the actual number of students in an individual teacher's class and a ratio based on a district or province average.

The document does not address the issue of class size in conjunction with class composition. A recent study of 14,000 teachers in B.C. shows that not acknowledging the diversity of students within classes ignores a large part of the conversation. Yes, Canada needs more research on class size—on class composition as well.

“Making Sense of the Class Size Debate” is available at www.ccl-cca.ca/english/bulletin/default.asp.

An overview of results from the BCTF Teaching and Learning Conditions Study 2005 is available at www.bctf.ca/bargain/wlc/.

— Colleen Hawkey
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SET-BC

Special Education Technology—British Columbia and the Online Learning Centre

SET-BC is a B.C. Ministry of Education Provincial Resource Program established to assist school districts in educating students whose access to the curriculum is restricted primarily because of autism, physical disability, or visual impairment. Through partnerships with the school districts, SET-BC lends assistive technologies—reading, writing, access, and communication tools—to enable students' participation in educational activities. SET-BC also provides the training for students and their teams in the use of those technologies.

SET-BC's goal is to create student opportunities through the use of assistive technology. Assistive technology (AT) can provide personalized, personal productivity tools for students with AT solutions ranging from access to word processing for a student with fine motor control, to screen readers for students who are blind or visually impaired, to switch access for a student who has limited or no use of their hands, to content enhanced with picture symbols for students' with emerging literacy and/or communication skills.

In 2003, SET-BC developed the online Learning and Conference Centre to expand training, professional development, and resource collections for educators of students with special needs. Training modules feature streaming audio-video

web casts, technology-specific narrated demonstrations, and user tutorials.

The SET-BC web site, at www.setbc.org, houses resources to support the educational activities of students with special needs. Be sure to visit the learning centre for a bounty of resources, tutorials, and presentations, and to learn about SET-BC services and student stories.

Check out the *accessible books collection* in the main library.

Don't miss *pictureSet*—a valuable resource for educators. School teams, families, and community programs benefit from the opportunity to search the *pictureSET* database to download ready-made resources for picture-symbol-based visual schedule, behaviour, and communication supports. The collection is growing; it includes over 1,000 files. *pictureSET* topic areas include community, health, holidays, home, mall, and school activities.

Find out more about the Provincial Software Acquisition Program (PSAP). Many schools have taken advantage of the program to acquire software to address the reading and writing, numeracy, and communication needs of all students. More than 5,000 titles are now in B.C. schools!

For further information, contact Constance McAvoy, SET-BC resources and projects coordinator, cmcavoy@setbc.org, or e-mail SET-BC info@setbc.org.

Looking back

70 years ago

In the face of scandalous instances of low pay for teachers, Canadian Federation of Teachers' President J. R. MacKay, is justified in asking “The burden of training the future citizens of this nation should not be placed on individual teachers but upon the adult population of provinces and the Dominion. Are our people and governments shirking their responsibilities because they know that they will be met anyway by conscientious parents and altruistic teachers?”

— *The BC Teacher*, October 1935

50 years ago

A tidal wave of instructional materials—free for the asking or even without the asking—is a major headache for teachers and administrators today. Donors or “sponsors” of these materials include civic, patriotic and political organizations, business, industry, government, labour, and agriculture. The

American Association of School Administrators attributes the rising flood of free materials in recent years to the fact that 30 million youngsters—a captive audience—represent a potential market. Principle objections to gratis offerings on the part of school people can be grouped under two general headings: they may contain obvious advertising or biased information.

— *The BC Teacher*, Sept./Oct. 1955

30 years ago

Integrating staffrooms in secondary school buildings seems, to many, a very trivial and inconsequential issue. The practice of segregated staffrooms reflects an attitude based on the assumption that women don't belong in areas of management, politics, or administration. Out of Vancouver's 18 secondary schools, 12 have segregated staffrooms, four have mixed and separate, and only two have totally integrated rooms. These data usually shock teachers outside the Vancouver area. It seems that this phenomenon is not widespread enough to justify

any explanations based on departmental regulations in planning facilities.

— *The BC Teacher*, Sept./Oct. 1975

10 years ago

Nothing speaks more clearly to the idea that teachers in British Columbia have been successful in combining professionalism with unionism than the following poll results: 60% of the public believe that our collective agreements are responsible for reducing or defending class size, compared with 14% for the ministry, and 12% for local boards. We are bargaining our first provincial contract. To turn 75 collective agreements rooted in a myriad of unique local situations and histories into a single provincial contract that is true to those roots is a monumental challenge. We were successful in the past because we stood together. Success at the provincial table will require no less.

— *Teacher*, October 1995

Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

Shirley Bond playing with political dynamite

by Susan Fonseca

After an LRB arbitrator ruled that teachers have a constitutional right to criticize educational policies during parent-teacher interviews and on school bulletin boards, BCPSEA appealed the ruling to the B.C. Court of Appeal. The court subsequently upheld the arbitrator’s favourable ruling.

Minister Bond would be wise to reflect on the history of using the “notwithstanding clause” before lighting such political dynamite.

According to *Vancouver Sun* reporter, Janet Steffenhagen, B.C.’s new minister of education, Shirley Bond, said she, “won’t allow that to stand” (September 6, 2005). If the B.C. Public School Employers’ Association does not appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, she said she “will introduce legislation to keep partisan politics out of schools.” History shows, however, that governments rarely enact such threats of constitutional sabotage.

Under Canada’s constitution, the only way that the minister could override teachers’ constitutional rights, is to invoke the controversial “notwithstanding clause” of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Before she proceeds down that politically mined path, Bond should call Ralph Klein and Stephen Harper. Both have learned the hard way that threatening to override Canadians’ fundamental freedoms and constitutional rights is political dynamite.

The “notwithstanding” or “override” clause of the charter has been invoked rarely in Canada since it was introduced as part of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982.

The first time the clause became controversial on the national stage was in 1988 when the Parti Quebecois government introduced the Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101, which overrode the freedom of the minority English speakers of the province to read public signs in English. This use of the override clause to enforce a key political objective of the Quebec nationalists was eventually revoked by the Bourassa Liberal government in 1993.

The second time the clause was used was in Saskatchewan when the Conservatives under Premier Grant Devine introduced the *Saskatchewan Government Employee’s Union Dispute Settlement Act* to establish firefighters as essential services. This was later seen as “unnecessary” by the courts as a routine application of the charter’s Section 1 limitations clause would have served the purpose of showing that the designation was “demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.”

Since then, Alberta’s Ralph Klein has threatened to use the clause several times, but has never ultimately invoked it in legislation. In March 1998, the

Alberta government of Ralph Klein introduced Bill 26, the proposed Institutional Confinement and Sterilization Act, which would limit compensation to victims of forced sterilization to \$150,000 per claim and protect the government from legal challenges under the charter by invoking the notwithstanding clause. The announced legislation was met with an overwhelming outburst of protest from the media, civil-rights groups, and the general public. Within 24 hours, Bill 26 was dead.

The next case involved gay minority rights. Delwin Vriend was fired from his teaching job at an Edmonton Christian college in 1991 after his employer learned he was in a same-sex relationship. He tried to take the issue to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, but was told they couldn’t take the case because discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation wasn’t included in the province’s *Human Rights, Citizenship, and Multiculturalism Act*.

The court ruled in the Vriend case that the Klein government could no longer prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation from being included in the province’s human-rights legislation. The Supreme Court of Canada unanimously supported his claim that *Alberta’s Individual’s Rights Protection Act* violated the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* by failing to protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The Supreme Court’s decision had sweeping implications. From then on, the court directed, Alberta’s human rights laws would be interpreted as protecting gays and lesbians, even if the province did not amend them. After the Supreme

If she attacks teachers’ fundamental freedom of expression, what would stop the government from attacking doctors’ and nurses’ freedom to discuss underfunding of healthcare with patients?

Court of Canada judgment, Premier Klein threatened to use the “notwithstanding” clause to block the ruling from taking effect. However, at the last

minute, the province backed down.

In the last federal election, Conservative candidate Randy White was exposed on video referring to the Supreme Court of Canada as “a joke” and Conservative leader Stephen Harper spoke cryptically about circumventing the Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling on same-sex marriage. Liberal support surged in the final days of the federal election with Paul Martin campaigning passionately as the protector of Canadians’ charter rights and freedoms.

Minister Bond would be wise to reflect on the history of using the “notwithstanding clause” before lighting such political dynamite. No Liberal government has ever used the notwithstanding clause. If she attacks teachers’ fundamental freedom of expression, what would stop the government from attacking doctors’ and nurses’ freedom to discuss underfunding of health-care with patients? Or lawyers

Whose fundamental freedoms of expression would be next on the legislative hit list?

from discussing the underfunded legal-aid system with clients? Where would it end? Whose fundamental freedoms of expression would be next on the legislative hit list? The Civil Liberties Associations across the country would be only a few of the organizations requesting intervenor status in a potential high-profile constitutional case against the B.C. government.

The Court of Appeal stated that, “Through the various materials the BCTF asked its members to distribute, teachers voiced their concerns about government policies on issues of particular importance to them. This is, of course, political expression of the kind deserving of a high level of constitutional protection.”

Teachers’ objections to being stripped of such fundamental protection through partisan legislation would be amplified amongst the general population. Bond would be playing with proverbial political dynamite.

For the full text of the Court of Appeal decision, go to www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/ca/05/03/2005bccca0393.htm

Reprinted from *The Link*, the Langley Teachers’ Association bulletin. Susan Fonseca, a teacher in Langley, is editor of *The Link* and a member of the *Teacher Newsmagazine* Advisory Board.

B.C. teachers are falling behind

To keep pace with rising inflation teachers would have needed a 2% salary increase last year, 2% this year and an estimated 2.9% for 2006.

In terms of current dollars, a teacher starting out in Vancouver this September will earn approximately \$5,600 less than a teacher starting out in Edmonton. For a teacher with more than a decade of teaching experience the gap between

Vancouver and Edmonton grows to over \$11,200.

If teachers receive the cost-of-living and market adjustments proposed (15% over three years), the gap will be substantially reduced but not eliminated except for the first year of teaching—new teachers would earn \$93 more than their counterparts in Edmonton for their first year. However, experienced teachers will still be \$2,700 behind.

Vancouver teachers’ salaries compared to Edmonton teachers’ salaries

If B.C. teachers receive a zero increase:

	Starting salary	12 years experience
Vancouver (2005)	\$ 42,707	\$ 63,737
Edmonton (2005)	48,374	75,014
Difference	–5,667	–11,277
Vancouver (2006)	\$ 42,707	\$ 63,737
Edmonton (2006)	49,341	76,514
Difference	–6,634	–12,777

If B.C. teachers receive a cost-of-living and market adjustment:

	Starting salary	12 years experience
Vancouver (2006)	\$ 49,434	\$ 73,777
Edmonton (2006)	49,341	76,514
Difference	93	–2,737

– Colleen Hawkey, BCTF Research

Bridging the poverty gap

by Roz Johns

September 10, 2005, was International Day of Action to Help Make Poverty History. Dressed in white, the colour of the Make Poverty History wristband, and carrying Make Poverty History banners, campaign supporters from the community and representatives from many organizations, including BCTF members and student teachers, marched from the Seaforth Peace Flame Park across the Burrard Street Bridge to the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery to symbolize Bridging the Poverty Gap. Marchers raised attention and showed their commitment to the Make Poverty History Campaign objectives: deliver more and better aid, make trade fair, cancel the debt, and end child poverty.

Saturday, September 10, marked the eve of the U.N. World Summit 2005 intended to address the Year 2000 Millennium Goals meant to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development by the year 2015. The 190-nation signatories to the millennium goals met for the first time since the year 2000 and heard the demand from people around the world, for justice for the developing world and for the need to fulfill commitments to

eradicate poverty. Every day, 50,000 people die from poverty-related causes, more than 800 million people go to bed hungry, and one billion people live in abject poverty. Every three seconds, a child dies as a result of poverty; one in six children in Canada still lives in poverty. Make Poverty History is part of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, the world’s largest antipoverty coalition, made up of national campaigns in 70 countries.

The seven members of the Capilano College Global Stewardship Program are to be congratulated for orchestrating the march, providing motivating and informative speeches and live music from several local bands, and energizing participants to continue to pressure governments to meet the Millennium 2000 goals to Make Poverty History.

Sadly, the commitments made at the Summit 2005 do not go far enough to achieve the Millennium Goals by 2015. Your voice is needed! The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation signed on to the Make Poverty History campaign. Your signature strengthens the call to world leaders for the urgently required accomplishment of that goal. makepovertyhistory.ca

The BCTF Social Justice Action Group Antipoverty provides workshops, information, web sites, and teacher and classroom resources. bctf.ca/social/poverty

Roz Johns teaches at R.M. Grauer Elementary School, in Richmond, and is a member of the SJAC/Antipoverty Action Group.



Free collective bargaining vs essential-service legislation

by Sandra Davie

In the next year, we will hear a great deal both profound and inane rhetoric about whether teachers should have the right to free collective bargaining or teachers perform an essential service that must continue no matter what.

Most teachers believe they are entitled to free collective bargaining and all that process entails. It does entail ability to negotiate salary and working conditions and to take action, up to and including strike action.

The process developed over the last 200 years as people realized they had the right to a livable wage and decent working conditions. Unfortunately, most employers disagreed with such revolutionary ideas, and unions grew out of the employers' intransigence.

Our working conditions are our children's learning conditions.

At first, the courts sided with the employers, but they ultimately accepted the argument that people are not slaves subject to employer whims. Hence, the birth and growth of unions.

Once a union collective is formed, the workers speak as one in their relationship with the employer. Unity allows them to enter into negotiations and withdraw some or all of their service to illustrate to the employer that without the workers, there is no production and therefore no profit. The employer also has the right to lockout the employees, to show them that no work means no

wages. Within that balance is an incentive to reach an agreement that works for both sides.

Teachers believe that in a democratic society they have the right, like others, to negotiate salary and working conditions. We acknowledge the vital importance of education but disagree that withdrawal of our service is a *life or death* matter, the traditional definition of essential service.

No child's life would be endangered by a withdrawal of teacher service for a short period of time. Therefore, many teachers and others in the community see the *essential service* designation extended to the work done by teachers as a political act wrongly legislated by the Liberal government. If an essential-service designation doesn't mean endangerment of life, the question becomes, How far would the government go in deeming workers essential? More significantly, what happens to the work of the last 200 years allowing workers to have a say in both salary and working conditions? If a right is taken away from one group, that right is taken from all. That idea is fundamental to our democracy and our society. That illegitimate loss of our right to full collective bargaining is a loss for all, and

By having those working/learning conditions in contract, teachers can address the needs of children...

that is one reason teachers are upset regarding essential-service legislation. We think all citizens should be upset.

Another reason teachers are upset is that bargaining both salary and working conditions benefits the children in our care. Our working conditions are our children's learning conditions. Specifically, I refer to class-size limits and ratios for non-

Ask any teacher if her or his class sizes have improved since 2001.

enrolling teachers, such as teacher-librarians, counsellors, and special ed teachers. Taking those learning conditions out of the bargaining process places our children at the whim of the government, who can withdraw or withhold money from the public education system as it sees fit.

To a person not deeply involved in the education system, four students with special needs and three ESL students in a Grade 4/5 split of 34 students are just words on paper. They do not know the classroom reality those words describe. It is easy to say, "Well, adding one more child can't make that much difference, and I can balance the books that way."

By having those working/learning conditions in contract, teachers can address the needs of children; once the agreement is reached, the money for class sizes and support is guaranteed. It is not subject to whim. Surely, that is advantageous to children!

Just think about what happened in 2001. Government eliminated individual class sizes from the collective agreements, and as soon as it had done that, appropriate funding disappeared. Ask any teacher if her or his class sizes have improved

since 2001. Also, by eliminating non-enrolling ratios, appropriate funding disappeared. Ask any teacher if support services for special ed support, ESL support, library, or counsellor support have improved since 2001. Teachers are upset because those benefits for children were negotiated, implemented, and protected through free collective bargaining. Now they are gone.

In the past, through collective bargaining, employers and employees reached agreements beneficial to all. What we have now is an employee group that can negotiate only salary. Our working conditions and the learning conditions of our children are off limits. And, trust me, they are not improv-

Ask any teacher if support services for special ed support, ESL support, library, or counsellor support have improved since 2001.

ing. We hear politicians like Gordon Campbell state in an outraged voice that teachers put themselves before students when they demand the right to free collective bargaining. Sometimes other voices join his demanding that a child's right to an education is absolute and

teachers have no right to jeopardize it. Such rhetoric speaks to the surface of the debate and not to the depth. In our society every child does have the right to the best education possible. Who would disagree with that statement? But how do we get to that "best education possible"? Surely not by placing decisions in the hands of people who do not understand the system and therefore allowing the government to withdraw funding as it chooses. Does this promote best education for everyone? Teachers, the people who live in the system every day and know what is needed, do not believe so, and the last four years confirm that belief.

Maintaining full-collective-bargaining rights is what our democracy is about. By denying certain groups those rights, we jeopardize the fundamental values of our society. How can the denial of basic rights fit into the best education scenario we all desire? We demean the very nature of education by distorting the concept of essential services, as the Liberal government has done.

Teachers want to teach. They do not want to strike, but they feel the necessity to speak out as they see the learning conditions of our children continually deteriorate. Would you want your child to be taught by a teacher who does nothing to protect your child? Would you want your child to be taught by a teacher who allows our society to be undermined and chooses never to speak out? I know I would not.

Returning free-collective-bargaining rights to teachers may mean at some time that they will strike to improve their working conditions and your child's learning conditions. Deeming them an essential service gives the government the final say over how money will be spent in the schools. There is no guarantee that those learning conditions will be the best they

Children will benefit when teachers can negotiate working conditions.

can be. The government can make other choices with the money if it is not committed to the agreement.

Children will benefit when teachers can negotiate working conditions. Children will lose when the government has no obligation to maintain appropriate funding in the school system. The loss of services in the schools in the last four years effectively illustrates this point. A healthy democracy models its values. Allowing its citizens to negotiate working conditions and ensuring that its educational system is appropriately funded to ensure equal opportunity for all are values worth supporting. Those two reasons motivate teachers on this issue. We are not "putting our interests above the children" as some say. We see the issues as fundamental to our democracy and our educational system.

Sandra Davie is a retired teacher, Prince George.



Focus on our goals

not the length of a strike

by Larry Kuehn

Would a strike that lasted three months be harmful to public education?

Of course it would. It would be terrible for students, for teachers, and for parents. No one, not even kids who at first might appreciate a few days off, would see it as anything but harmful.

How, then, did a BCTF lawyer get quoted as arguing otherwise in a hearing before the Labour Relations Board? It comes down to legalistic arguments about how the LRB should define “essential.” And that is part of the problem with the provincial government’s “essential services” legislation.

B.C. is the only province in Canada that has designated education as an “essential service,” and many people question whether it’s necessary since teachers so rarely go on strike. The last teacher strike in B.C. took place in 1993.

Nonetheless, the B.C. Liberals brought in “essential services” legislation for teachers in the summer of 2001, right after they were first elected. At the time, they gave British Columbians the impression they were completely eliminating the right to strike for teachers, but that isn’t the case.

Under international labour law, “essential services” designation is reserved for services of a life-and-death nature, such as healthcare, police, and firefighting. But even workers in those fields have a right to strike as long as it does not endanger anyone.

To ensure public safety is maintained, “essential services” sets up a bureaucratic way of defining what job actions are allowed and disallowed, and gives the LRB authority to delineate the extent of a strike. Obviously, essential-service designation reduces the impact of any strike, but workers in services that are truly essential—those that are required 24-7—understand that.

The B.C. Liberals’ “essential services” law calls on the LRB to define a strike so as to avoid “serious disruption to the education program.”

Lawyers for both the employer and the union then had to argue about what would be a “serious disruption” under the Labour Code. Reasoning that the LRB would likely come down somewhere between the positions put forward by the two parties, both sides put forward their most extreme cases.

The B.C. Public School Employers’ Association said only one day of strike a week would be okay, but no more than 20% of instructional time.

Certainly BCPSEA would be hard-pressed to argue that missing one school day a week would constitute a “serious disruption,” since the Ministry of Education has allowed several school districts to cut costs by cutting classes to only four days a week. Last year alone, B.C. students, mostly in rural districts, lost almost 1.68 million school days so that cash-strapped school boards could balance their budgets.

By contrast to the employer’s narrow definition, the BCTF argued in the other direction,

seeking the broadest possible definition of what job action could be allowed. That’s where the three months comment came in, contending that even when strikes or lockouts have been lengthy, students’ education has not suffered any long-term consequences regarding test results, graduation rates, or attendance in post-secondary institutions.

It was a lengthy legal argument that got reduced to one sentence in headlines and editorials. But many people—teachers, parents, students—felt upset by the notion that the BCTF could just dismiss three months of school. And rightly so.

For teachers who try every day to spark young minds, it was hurtful that their Federation would say such a thing. Parents couldn’t imagine how their kids could miss such a big chunk of the school year and still succeed. Students, especially those graduating this year, were concerned.

For the record

We are not saying that losing three months of school wouldn’t be a problem, as the message came over in media reports.

We are saying that the greatest threat of “serious disruption” comes from a long-term decline in learning conditions, from larger classes, and inadequate staffing and services to meet students’ diverse needs. The impact of that erosion over a youngster’s 13-year school career can be much more significant than a temporary disruption that results in improved learning conditions.

This controversy is a good example of what is wrong with “essential services” legislation for education. It takes a concept that deals with the protection of life and limb, and applies it to a totally different situation.

Of course public education is essential, but the quality of education is determined not just by the number of days students are sitting in class, but by the conditions in their classrooms. Some days of strike may be necessary to get the learning conditions that are essential for the longer term.

The B.C. Liberals’ “essential services” legislation leads both union and management to focus their attention on defining the rules before the Labour Board, rather than on finding negotiated solutions to the problems that have led teachers to vote an overwhelming “Yes” on the strike vote.

We have to keep our eyes on our goals, and the goal is not a strike. It is improved learning conditions, and a fair and reasonable salary increase. Teachers voted more than 88% because we have a professional responsibility to advocate for our students, and we have the collective right to seek fair wages for our work.

A democratic strike vote and, if necessary, strike action can get attention to the issues and to put pressure on government to stop ignoring the really essential needs of both students and teachers.

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

Voices in the

MLA’s excerpts from *Hansard*

A parent speaks out

“Education is a critical issue in my community. Through my many years involved in my daughter’s school PAC, I know the challenges that we faced and that parents continue to face today. Regardless of the rhetoric of the Education Minister, the reality is there are not enough resources in our school system to meet the needs of our kids. While parent fundraising may work in the constituencies of the Premier or the Finance Minister or the Economic Development Minister, they don’t work very well in my community, where people are struggling to pay the rent or put food on the table.

“I was talking to my daughter last night, who’s in grade nine, and classes in her school are overcrowded to the point where in at least one of her classes there aren’t enough desks in that class for all the kids that are enrolled in the class. Some are sitting on the tables on the side. Is that what the government meant to accomplish with its great goal on education?”

These schools play a critical role in the lives of the children who attend them.

“I was speaking to a secondary school shop teacher the other day, who told me over the past four years the funding he has for supplies has reduced from \$40 to \$14 per student. He asked me how he was supposed to motivate students to get engaged in these career options when he can’t afford enough materials to let them do their projects. Of course, we all know this is exacerbated by the increased costs of materials. But for this government. It thinks nothing of adding tens of millions of dollars to cover cost overruns on a RAV line or a trade and convention centre, but it can’t find new money for the kid who wants to learn to be a welder.

“In my community we have more inner-city schools than any other constituency in the province. These schools play a critical role in the lives of the children who attend them. Often they are the one place where these kids find some real stability and support to give them a better chance to break

out of a cycle of poverty that many of them are caught up in. But this government doesn’t have a sense, I believe, of the fragility of the infrastructure and the demands on the teachers and the counsellors who work in those schools.”

– Shane Simpson, MLA
Vancouver–Hastings,

A trustee speaks out

“I’m here as a school trustee, here for public education. As a trustee, I have watched the policies of this government, of downloading costs, play themselves out in the stripping of the services from our most vulnerable children. Class sizes have soared. Class composition destroys the learning conditions that our children have to endure. This must stop.”

– Doug Routley, MLA
Cowichan–Ladysmith

A principal speaks out

“As a teacher I taught classes, and this reminds me of a Friday afternoon social studies 9 as people are ready to go. But I thought about the traditions of parliamentary democracy, and it’s a tremendous honour to be here and to see it in person and to be part of it.

The reason I came here is I want to be faithful to the people that sent me, and one of the things that they asked me to do is to make sure that I would give voice to their experiences, and I have to say that the experiences that I heard during the election process were very different from what I’ve heard from some members.

“I was a principal of a small rural school. Because of your underfunding, my school was cleaned for six hours instead of eight, my library services were cut, my special education cut. When school districts are forced to four days of school a week, as they have been in the Kootenays, instead of five, it is an act of desperation. We have been able to afford five days of schooling for a long time in B.C. How can we not afford it now? How does that help to make B.C. the best educated?

“Starting as a principal some years back, a fellow principal with years of success in admin-

istration, Ian Robinson, gave me one piece of advice. He said: ‘Look after your teachers. They have the tough job in a school. They are the key.’ It was good advice. When this government chooses to diminish them, to me it makes no sense. These are the people you should celebrate if you are in any way serious about education.

“I’m proud to be a teacher. I have felt privileged to work with teachers as a principal. I trusted teachers with my children. How do attacks on educators help make B.C. the best educated?

– Norm MacDonald, MLA
Columbia River–Revelstoke

Private-public partnerships

We are seeing a shocking trend towards privatization schemes in our province. Railway, medical records, B.C. Hydro, B.C. Ferries, medical services such as food and cleaning—many of them are fraught with mismanagement and end up costing us more. Fines, derailments, broken ferries, broken promises, dirty hospitals; all a product of the bottom line. The 3Ps *private-public partnerships*. I see them more as *pilfering the public purse*. To profit from doing public services means just one more hand in the purse, and the analogy that the private sector can do it better is now showing that this is untrue.

Now the government is contracting out social agencies that are non-profit. How does this work? I guess the profit will come from reducing the services they used to provide. Simple economics. I’ve seen this happen in my city when we tried to contract out the electrical utility service. Of the three bidders, two were higher than what we were doing it for in-house and paying decent jobs and decent benefits and money that was being spent in the community. One was slightly lower, but at the end of the contract it would have cost us more to bring it back in-house if we weren’t satisfied. Also, we were warned that we could be prohibited to do so under the rules of NAFTA.

– Chuck Puchmayr, MLA,
New Westminster



legislature

Going to Victoria: Teachers talk to MLAs

Charlene Watts, Smithers

I journeyed to Victoria with the preconceived notion that I would be accorded five minutes of the MLA's time. I prepared my lobby based on the needs of gifted, talented, and creative children in B.C. This was the thrust of my message to him.

During the last two school years identification of students

The students who need help have not disappeared but the funding and resources to service our students has disappeared.

with gifted ability has dropped by approximately 3,000. I do not believe that there are 3,000 fewer gifted students. The students who need help have not disappeared but the funding and resources to service our students has disappeared.

With much of special education funding arriving in school districts now as block funding with no target line for specific service for gifted and with school districts struggling with sparse budgets, the gifted have lost services. In many areas what is important has given way to what is urgent.

The Ministry of Education used to have a special education division person assigned to some responsibility for students with gifted abilities and available to provide help to school districts, albeit of late just over the phone. It seems that that help is no longer available either.

The message I gave to my MLA was the same one all of our provincial specialist association executive members give and is also the one we hear everywhere: Help is needed!

I was able to give specific examples and also reinforce the message, as I was pleasantly surprised to spend at least 25 minutes in conversation with my Liberal MLA, Dennis MacKay

(Bulkley Valley-Stikine), about the issues of adequate funding, targetted funding, ample resources and services for students with gifted abilities in the public schools. He asked many questions about how the public school system works—how the services are delivered to special needs students in the public school setting. Using my local as an example, I explained as much as the time permitted.

As a result of connecting with my MLA through his local constituency office, I will now be involved in a committee examining the special needs services required for people in his riding.

The introduction in Question Period later in the afternoon was a first for me, and I was delighted and proud to represent my PSA in this very important time for public education in B.C.

Charlene Watts, President, Association for Educators of Gifted, Talented, and Creative Children in B.C.

Michael Schratter, Vancouver

On Tuesday, September 21, I had the privilege to join several teachers from various parts of the province in a united lobbying effort. By attending the legislature, we were hoping to make a teacher presence very visible and our issues very apparent to all MLAs. We wanted the MLAs to understand our concerns and hear about our earnest attempts to resolve them.

My message to the BCTF is keep up the good work and the creative lobbying tactics...

Part of the lobbying plan was for me to get in touch with my MLA, have him introduce me at the beginning of Question Period, and if possible, to have my MLA sit down with me for a short meeting. Though I tried with at least a dozen phone calls to my MLA's Vancouver and Victoria offices, none of the above came to fruition. Gordon Campbell is a very busy man, unfortunately too busy for a short visit or to introduce me in the House or to grant me a pass

to the legislature. Try as I might, it did not happen. In the end, I was introduced by the MLA for Vancouver–Kensington, David Chudnovsky.

I attended Question Period by finding a seat in the public seating gallery. The proceedings proved to be both educational and fascinating, especially the questioning of the Honorable Stan Hagen (Minster of Children and Family Development) and Honorable Wally Oppal (Attorney General) by Carole James and Jenny Kwan.

My message to the BCTF is keep up the good work and the creative lobbying tactics, and don't hesitate to let me know if I can be of further help.

Michael Schratter, member of the Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee

Nancy Arends, Burnaby

I cannot begin to thank the Federation for this opportunity. I consider it a career highlight. It was wonderful to sit with other English teachers in the province and hear their stories. I was very interested in how we were "welcomed" by the various MLAs. Some were "not available," others wanted to hear us. I do believe we had an impact. Every little bit helps. It was so empowering to hear all the teachers introduced; it did send a strong message. I had to leave the meeting with MLA Diane Thorne early to catch a plane, but I managed to share a few stories from my teaching experience, and my colleagues were fully engaged with her when I left.

Nancy Arends teaches at Moscrop Secondary School, Burnaby

Geoff Peters, Coquitlam

The MLA lobbying at the legislature went well today. I attended as part of a group of teachers representing the Professional Issues Advisory Committee and the Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee. We met with the labour critic, Chuck Puchmayr, and MLAs David Cubberly (Saanich South), Norm McDonald (Columbia River-Revelstoke), and Colin Hansen (Vancouver Quilchena). All sessions were very useful in educating NDP MLA'S who either showed interest in the issues or asked questions and listened politely.

I would like to suggest that the Federation continue this lobby until every MLA has been visited at least once. I don't think it

would hurt for different teachers to revisit MLA's already visited, because the messages will come from different perspectives. I think it is best to have teachers lobby their own MLAs, but it also works well to do so in pairs. It's important for teachers to be introduced in the House because it shows that teachers are serious and want to speak to MLAs on both sides of the House.

Geoff Peters, member of the Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee

Rick Ferguson, Nicola Valley

Yesterday, a colleague, Delores Birney, and I had the pleasure of meeting with Chuck Puchmayr (NDP labour critic). We talked about the need for a bargaining process that would allow teachers to bargain the full scope of bargaining issues. We also told him of the inability at the local level to bargain anything at all. We explained how local collective agreements around the province had not been improved in any meaningful way in over a decade. Local agreements across the province in many ways differ from one another and many of them are deficient. Teachers across the province are treated differently with regard to posting, filling, evaluation, and many seniority issues. We have no mechanism to rectify this.

We also told him of the inability at the local level to bargain anything at all.

We talked about the *Teaching and Learning Conditions Declaration* and the work of the WLC/Bargaining Committee, and explained that class size and composition were fundamental issues for teachers to allow them to do the work they do in the best way possible. A union of professionals must have the ability to discuss and negotiate these issues.

In addition to the actual lobby, I would also like to say that an added benefit comes from this effort. Many who engage in the lobby process are empowered and return to their local as energized advocates. We are building added capacity and strength across the province with every teacher who meets with her or his MLA to inform and educate her or him on the issues.

Rick Fergusson, member of the Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee

Robert Taylor, Williams Lake

I participated in the Legislature on September 20 and 21. On Tuesday afternoon, I visited with Charlie Wyse, the Cariboo South MLA. We discussed the issues facing the BCTF, not that it was news to Charlie, a retired teacher, but I reiterated the position that teachers were looking for a negotiated settlement, that we wanted to return to full collective bargaining, and that a reasonable salary increase was not untoward based on the rise in the cost of living, comparable jobs in other provinces, and the fact that the province was pleased to announce their 1.4 billion dollar surplus.

On Wednesday morning, I happened to meet David Chudnovsky, MLA for Vancouver Kensington and spent 20 minutes with him talking about the current issues in education. David emphasized the importance of lobbying and making sure that MLAs have the information.

Later on Wednesday, I attended question period, was introduced by Bob Simpson from Cariboo North and then met with David Cubberly, MLA for Saanich South. Anne-Louise MacFarland from the Professional Issues Advisory Committee and the PSA Council was also at that meeting. Again we stressed our position, beginning with what the changes to class size and composition meant in the field, not on paper. Cubberly asked pertinent questions about declining enrolment and was surprised that the number of teachers laid off was far greater than the decline would have dictated. We also discussed the need for a salary increase for teachers and the bargaining process overall. MacFarland and I reiterated the need for the class size and composition to be returned to the collective agreement and explained the impact of the contract stripping.

All in all, this was a great experience. We made our presence felt in the House, have put some faces to names for our MLA's, and raised issues that can be discussed in Question Period.

Robert Taylor is a intermediate teacher, Williams Lake and a member of the Professional Issues Advisory Committee





A note from your teachers

These “notes” are being mailed on a continuous basis to MLAs informing them of the issues teachers are facing. Teachers may find the information helpful when speaking to parents and the public.

bctf.ca/NoteFromTeachers.

1 Teachers are looking for a negotiated agreement

The teacher contract, which was imposed by legislation in January 2002, expired on June 30, 2004. The BCTF has been at the bargaining table over the last year trying to achieve a negotiated agreement. In addition to a narrow number of improvements, the 2005 BCTF Annual General Meeting established three overall goals for us to achieve:

1. A return of free collective bargaining rights (the right to bargain all terms and conditions of employment and the full right to strike).
2. A return of the teaching and learning conditions that existed in 2002 prior to the contract's being stripped of those provisions by legislation.
3. A fair and reasonable salary increase.

Learning and working conditions lost

In 2002, the provincial government legislated a major strip of our collective agreement, removing significant provisions that set limits for class sizes and established staffing ratios for the provision of specialist teachers. The legislation also completely eliminated a number of agreements of locals in amalgamated districts, imposing the agreement of the other local in the district. As well, it was made illegal for teachers to bargain class size, class composition, or staffing formula in the future. One of the results of that contract stripping was the loss of over 2,500 FTE teaching positions in the province over three years.

We are not able to achieve either a return of conditions or rights at the bargaining table with our employer, the B.C. Public School Employers' Association. Thus, we have been seeking a venue with government to discuss classroom teaching conditions and bargaining rights. So far, we have not been successful in obtaining that venue. Teachers are very worried about the decline in services for students. They cannot do what's best for their students without the resources to do the job.

Teacher salaries fall further behind

On the salary issue, the employer has not moved off a zero net position for three years, in spite of the fact the B.C. budget now boasts a healthy surplus. Salaries of B.C. teachers are behind those of teachers elsewhere. Teachers in other provinces have already reached agreements that provide for increases. For example, B.C. salaries are already behind those in Alberta and Ontario. This difference will grow significantly if there is no salary increase for B.C. teachers.

An example, for comparison, is the salary gap between two teachers with Category 5 qualifications and at the experience maximum. One is a teacher in Vancouver; the other, in Ottawa. The Vancouver teacher is already making \$9,013 less than

the Ottawa colleague. If B.C. teachers get no salary increase, the gap will grow, with the Vancouver teacher making \$12,560 less than the Ottawa teacher in 2007. More details at bctf.ca/ResearchReports/2005ts01.

Teachers are asking government to change the mandate so negotiations can take place

Teachers are determined to achieve improvements for their students and a fair and reasonable salary increase for themselves. We have a provincial strike vote scheduled for September 20-22, with the results being available on September 23.

Teachers want a negotiated settlement. Teachers are calling on the government to meet with the BCTF to develop a mutually agreed upon process that will lead to a negotiated settlement.

The government needs to change the mandate given to BCPSEA so that a settlement at the table is possible. Teachers have consistently and overwhelmingly identified learning conditions guarantees and a reasonable salary settlement as their top priorities.

This is the time for government to problem-solve with teachers, rather than impose decisions that will exacerbate the situation and lead to long-term problems in public education.

For more information, see bctf.ca/Bargain/negotiations2004/TeachersTakeAStand/WhyStrikeVote.html

2 What is inclusion?

Inclusion is the philosophy that nearly every student should participate in all academic and social aspects of the school and, whenever possible, should be integrated into a regular classroom. Inclusion is based on a belief that students with special needs and the other students in the class will gain from all the students' being integrated into that class.

Inclusion of students with special needs has been a government policy in B.C. for some 16 years.

Teachers have supported inclusion

It is a lot more work to teach a class that includes students with special needs, but most teachers have supported the policy, if adequate resources are provided to do a good job for the students with special needs and the other students.

A designated student with special needs requires an IEP (Individual Education Plan). The IEP is developed by a committee, and then the teacher is expected to provide the special support prescribed. In many cases, that involves an adaptation or a modification of the curriculum. The idea is to have the student with special needs participate in the class as a whole, but with different materials or assignments, or with special teaching approaches that respond to her or his learning needs.

The support the teacher needs in order to make inclusion effective for everyone may be an educational assistant, special

resources, and/or help from a specialist teacher.

Class size and composition make a difference

With all the extra work required to serve one student with special needs, it is no wonder teachers consistently say class size and composition make a difference. The total number of students in a class, as well as the number of students with special needs, and the nature of the special need all make a big difference. More students with special needs means more modification, adaptation, and special teaching approaches. Some special needs-severe behavior problems, for example-add more to the load than do others.

Because class composition makes such a difference, it was one of the areas negotiated into collective agreements. A contractual limit on the number of students with special needs was aimed at making the job of the teacher possible, and also at providing a positive learning experience for all the students in a class.

Removing those provisions by legislation created an untenable teaching and learning situation in many classes. Some teachers now report having as many as 10 students with special needs in a classroom that also has more students in total than were allowed in the past.

Special needs support services have declined

The cuts in teaching positions that school boards had to make dramatically reduced the number of professionals available to provide support services for inclusion. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of special education professional support positions declined by 740, making up 28% of the total reductions in teachers.

In addition, the work of the specialists changed. Because of cuts to English as a second language specialists and learning assistance teachers, the roles have been blended into one staffperson in many schools. Each area requires different specialist knowledge. This means there are now fewer specialists, and the specialists left have to provide support in areas different from their area of expertise. The impact of this is described in a research report on the BCTF web site at bctf.ca/education/InclusiveEd/challenge. Teachers with blended specialist roles cannot provide adequate support. Nor can classroom assistants make up for the losses.

Inclusion can work with adequate resources

Inclusion can be made to work, but only with adequate and appropriate supports and limits on class sizes and class composition. To provide less than adequate support for students with special needs also harms the quality of education for the other students in the inclusive classrooms. That's why class size, class composition, and access to professional support are high on the list of issues of importance to teachers.

3

Teacher-librarians are needed more than ever

The B.C. government has said it wants to “make B.C. the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.” Teacher-librarians have a key role to play in our schools if we are to achieve a more literate population.

International research has shown a consistent correlation between school libraries, subject learning, and information literacy. If we really want to improve literacy, we have to ensure that we have teacher-librarians with budgets that allow for an adequate collection of books. With the many new technologies available, budgets must also provide for quality resources in new media.

Google cannot replace the teacher-librarian

Yes, there is a lot of information available through the computer on the web. Tools like Google can help to find information. However, googling can also lead to misinformation or to so much information that a student is baffled. One role of the teacher-librarian is to help students develop information literacy, which has been defined as “the ability to access, evaluate, and make effective use of information.” The teacher-librarian can work with students to learn about the multitude of different resources and to develop skills in evaluating what they find for relevance and accuracy.

The teacher-librarian works with other teachers, as well. They provide resources to classroom teachers, helping them keep the curriculum up to date with new information and new technological tools. Teacher-librarians take extra university courses beyond that needed for their teaching certificate to gain the qualifications and skills to help students and teachers.

Teacher-librarians can do all of this—if they exist. According to a Statistics Canada survey of schools, only about 2% of B.C. schools have a full-time librarian. Many do not even have a part-time librarian, only a library technician to keep the doors open and process books. Without a teacher-librarian, the most important functions of the library-selecting the right resources for the school and working with students and teachers—are not carried out.

Where have all the books gone?

According to a Statistics Canada study of school library resources, the budget for B.C. elementary schools averaged at \$11.13 per student and secondary schools at \$13.21 per student. These days, that is hardly enough to buy even one paperback book per student, let alone the necessary, but more expensive, reference books or multimedia material. We have students who want to read and library spaces for them to sit, but many libraries lack the diverse resources that meet the full range of student interests and needs.

Where have all the teacher-librarians gone?

Many teacher-librarian positions disappeared when the

staffing provisions were cut from the teacher collective agreement in 2002. Between 2002 and 2004, teacher-librarian staffing declined by 25%, according to the Ministry of Education. Even with the increased funding to school districts this school year, much of the reported increase in library service will be provided by library technicians, not by qualified teacher-librarians.

Libraries are most important for the students without resources at home

From pre-school to graduation, students with books in their homes will generally do better in school. Increasingly, computers and access to the Internet are required for everyday learning. Libraries should serve as an equalizer-giving access to resources and technology for students who have fewer resources at home.

In the face of inadequate library budgets, some school communities have turned to fundraising to provide more resources in the school library. Unfortunately, our communities have different abilities to raise funds, based on the incomes of families attending the school. This fundraising often widens the gap between those who already have the most access and those who need it the most.

Support school libraries and teacher-librarians

Achieving improved literacy requires a commitment to school libraries that are well funded and fully staffed by professional teacher-librarians.

For further information, go to the web site of the B.C. Coalition for School Libraries at bccsl.ca.

4

What is this “class composition” all about?

You can hardly talk to teachers these days without hearing them raising “class composition.” Many think it is the most important issue they face in their teaching. What’s it all about?

It goes back to the inclusion of students with special needs.

Students with mild to severe disabilities were integrated into regular classrooms, following a government policy change 16 years ago. Almost immediately teachers noted that they had to change their teaching if classes included students with severe intellectual or physical disabilities or disruptive behaviour.

The expectation that came with inclusion was that the teacher would teach according to the individual education plan (IEP) for the student with special needs. That changed the dynamic of the teaching of the class. It became more like teaching several classes at once, but trying to keep things going in one direction at the same time.

That’s a tougher job. It means more preparation, more time spent in meetings with specialists and parents, time required to plan with a special education assistant, if you are lucky enough to get one. Beyond that, is the increased complexity of meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse group of students. The classroom can become more like the old one-

room schoolhouse-with a wide range of abilities rather than ages.

That’s why teachers talk so often about class composition as their biggest challenge. They support inclusion if they have the supports to make it work.

Place limits on the number of students with special needs in any one classroom

Class composition was such an important issue to teachers that the BCTF locals made it a priority in collective bargaining. The approaches were two-fold. One was to place an upper limit on the number of identified students with special needs in any one class. The other was to have access to supports, such as special education assistants, who could work with students with severe difficulties, and professional development about students’ areas of need.

In the extensive tearing up of teacher collective agreements in 2002, not only were upper limits on class size removed, the class-composition clauses were also eliminated. That opened the door for much more difficult situations for both teachers and students. Students with special needs had less support. At the same time, attention to the other students in the class was reduced. That’s what teachers faced when they had to deal with more special needs with less additional support. Eliminating the contract provisions had a negative impact on the teaching and learning conditions.

The number of students with identified special needs is dropping, apparently

Good news. Ministry statistics say that the number of identified students fell by 6.0% from 2000–01 to 2004–05, while overall public school enrolment fell only by 3.7%. The drop in special needs would be greater except for the huge growth in students identified as being autistic—a 48% increase, from 1,312 to 2,262 over the same years.

Does the drop in identified students reduce the pressure on teachers? Hardly.

The problem is that the students with special needs haven’t disappeared; many are just not being identified. Under the old finance system, when districts identified students, that brought funding to provide assistance. Under the new system, that is the case only for the students with the most severe disabilities.

If you identify a student as having special needs, she or he must have extra service provided in the form of an individual education plan (IEP) that describes the needs and how they will be met. If no additional money is coming for the student, the incentive for a district to identify those with needs is much less.

But the students with special needs are still there. The teacher still has to do her or his best to respond to the individual needs, often with resources, activities, and approaches different from those that engage the other students in the class.

What do teachers say about class composition?

The BCTF asked its members in the spring of 2005. More than 14,000 teachers responded to that chance to talk about their greatest needs in teaching and learning conditions.

Seventy-seven percent of teachers said they have more

students with special needs than in the past, and 87% said that students have a wider range of needs. Seventy-eight percent said that they do not receive adequate direct support from specialists to help them deal effectively with students with special needs. Here are a few of the comments about class composition teachers wrote on the survey.

“There is no learning assistance available for those children who fall behind and need some intense small-group intervention.”

– elementary teacher
20+ years experience

“It is virtually impossible to meet the wide-ranging needs with so many students. Behaviour issues begin to surface because needs are not being met.”

– middle school teacher
4 years experience

“My class composition and workload is overwhelming. I have two special needs students without enough support, one severe behaviour student, and six students with severe learning disabilities. I cannot meet everyone’s needs.”

– intermediate teacher
10+ years experience

“I have had to remove labs because of safety issues, cost issues, or equipment deficiencies.

– secondary teacher
5 years experience

“Please, please, please give me the resources—i.e., teachers’ assistants, learning assistance time—I need to meet the needs of my students. Please, please, please decrease the teacher/student ratio so that all the students in my care can get what they need.”

–intermediate teacher
5+ years of experience

5

The research is clear: Class size matters to kids

The research is clear. “The number of students in a class makes a difference in students’ behaviour and academic performance, participation in school activities, and in parental involvement in schools,” according to Dr. Charles Achilles, one of the researchers who worked on the STAR Project (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio). STAR involved more than 11,600 Tennessee children in Grades K–3 and followed their progress to the post-secondary level. It puts to rest any question of the importance of class size.

According to Achilles, not one study of class size between 1904 and the present contradicts their findings. Theirs is by far the largest and most comprehensive study. Achilles points out that a lot of confusion in the debate on class size occurs because people cite studies that mix pupil–teacher ratios (PTR) and class size. This is especially true in research reported by an American economist named Eric Hanushek, who consistently mixes pupil–teacher-ratio studies in with class-size studies. Pupil–teacher ratio is the number of students in a school divided by the number of qualified teachers. The number of students in a teacher’s class determines class size.

Achilles agrees that research is inconclusive on whether or not changing the PTR affects the quality of education, but there is no doubt that class size matters. It is interesting to note that a September 17, 2003, *National Post* article claiming that class-size reductions offer only marginal benefits, reported that according to an OECD study, “Elementary classes of upwards of 30 are considered so ridiculous that North American researchers have not even bothered to investigate their effects.” In 2002, the B.C. Liberal government removed the upper class-size limit of 30 and made 30 the average for Grades 4–12!

In the STAR Project, students and teachers were randomly assigned to various class-size conditions in Grades K–3: small classes of about 13 to 17, regular classes of about 22 to 26, and regular classes of about 22 to 26 with full-time teacher assistants. The results are clear; the students in small classes for the first four years of school performed better on nationally normed and criterion-referenced tests by the end of Grade 3. Moreover, students who had been in small classes for K–3 continued to move ahead of their grade level as they continued through to Grade 12. A greater proportion of those students wrote entrance exams for post-secondary institutions.

The study found that students in small classes did the best. Students in regular classes were next, and students in regular classes with a full-time TA were third. The only variable in the study was the size of the class. The evidence is clear that having students begin schooling in classes small enough to have their needs met more than pays off in the long run. Students do better in academics, their behaviour is better because it can be monitored, and they can be taught behaviour appropriate for school. They develop a more positive attitude toward school, and their parents become more involved. Teachers find it more rewarding to teach small classes.

The social security numbers, birth dates, and gender of the students participating in the study were used to track them. That information told researchers how they did in following grades, as well as how many applied for post-secondary institutions, were charged with criminal offenses, or applied for welfare.

Being in a small class for the first four years of school had a positive effect on all areas investigated. A greater proportion of students from small classes applied to post-secondary institutions. Beginning school in a small class cut in half the gap between whites and Afro-Americans for the proportion applying to post-secondary. A smaller proportion of students who began in small classes were charged with a criminal offense, and a smaller proportion applied for welfare benefits.

Small class size not only benefits the students in the class but also pays dividends to society as a whole. It is an investment we cannot afford to ignore. Achilles likened it to the Ministry of Health’s asking doctors to eradicate polio but refusing to provide the vaccine. He said we know the importance of small classes and we can’t afford to ignore the overwhelming evidence.



by Pat Clarke

What do you suppose precipitated the “road to Damascus”-like realization of the Liberal government, the B.C. School Trustees Association, the B.C. Principals’ and Vice Principals’ Association, the B.C. Parent Advisory Council, and Canwest Global that everything is not honky-dory in special needs education? Do you think it might have been an outcome of “data-based decision making”? How about “rich and meaningful conversations” with teachers?

We now have a crisis, mainly because all of the mechanisms that formerly assured some level of support for teachers working with special needs integration are now a matter of administrative discretion.

None of that new-age management mumbo jumbo applies here. What actually happened was these groups that have so studiously ignored the voices of teachers for so long have realized the carefully constructed public-relations enterprise that now drives education policymaking was about to hit a major pothole. They can thank teachers for providing the road warning. It has been teachers, individually and collectively, through locals and the BCTF, who have consistently raised the issue of inadequate resources for special needs integration. At some point in the minds of our education leaders, special needs crossed the line from being a classroom matter that teachers can just deal with to becoming a gathering storm that threatens to blow apart the whole accountability contraption. The special-needs crisis, and it has become that, is very likely the most important single factor affecting those carefully

constructed school and district goals. All of those good intentions quickly go into the trash file when too many teachers are trying to cope with the uncertainties brought on by a class composition that makes every day a voyage into uncharted waters. We now have a crisis, mainly because all of the mechanisms that formerly assured some level of support for teachers working with special needs integration are now a matter of administrative discretion. Isn’t it interesting and sort of morbidly fascinating that the 2002 “flexibility” mantra that the education leaders insisted was the key to a more “effective” public school system has turned around and bitten them in a sensitive spot? The provincial government and their acolytes in education leadership have just recently decided that, indeed, there is a resource issue pertaining to special needs support. Good stuff is on the way. Too bad it took three years of lost opportunities by too many students and immeasurable frustration on the part of their teachers to come to this epiphany. Too bad also that almost none of this would have happened if the resource assurances that were in the collective agreement before 2002 had been maintained. And too bad that the obvious conclusion, that contractual agreements on teaching-resource and learning-conditions issues have merit is still too tricky for the education leaders to get. The recent admission by the minister of education that special education needs more support is certainly welcome. However, the government’s insistence, along with the cheerleading they receive from education leaders, that the system is just perking along with “flexible local decision making” is making it increasingly difficult for teachers to hold back the gag reflex. Teachers have seen too many decisions that are arbitrary and ill-informed and seriously affect their teaching but are permitted by management flexibility. There is a growing crisis of confidence happening in B.C. schools. It is a crisis defined by teachers’ disenchantment with policymakers and administra-

tors who patronize them with words of hollow praise but consistently undervalue and disregard their experience, professional insights, and views as well as their rights as workers. If there were any doubt about this crisis, it should have been waylaid by a strike vote that effectively demonstrated that nine out of ten teachers in the province were prepared to walk out. A primary reason for that vote was that teachers are fed up with the arbitrariness and uncertainty that goes along with “flexibility.” The special education flip-flop is a case in point. For government and education leaders this is a good “be careful what you wish for” lesson. You got the flexibility, now you have another problem, probably worse than the one you were trying to solve. You have a fairly important group of employees who have emphatically told you that they are not with you. Good luck with the goal setting. *Too bad also that almost none of this would have happened if the resource assurances that were in the collective agreement before 2002 had been maintained.*

Reconciliation is by no means impossible. Employers and administrators could restore some of the confidence teachers have lost by acknowledging that negotiated agreements actually are an effective way of addressing teachers’ professional concerns and acknowledging the legitimacy of our positions. Contracts show commitment and that is what is needed. Lip service and promises of consultation won’t work and won’t resolve the issues simply because there can be no assurances, and at this stage we clearly need those. Pat Clarke is director of the BCTF’s Professional and Social Issues Division.

On being well In the midst of all this

by Julia Johnson

Teachers are united in their desire to negotiate a contract that will restore working and learning conditions. The media message from the teachers’ perspective is that effective learning requires limits in class size, support for students with special needs, more curriculum resources in classrooms and libraries, and respect for teachers. The encapsulating campaign motto is *Kids Matter, Teachers Care*.

Why do teachers put their personal wellness needs at the bottom of their priority list?

It is because kids—our students—become future leaders that they matter, and it is because teachers are instrumental in shaping those future leaders that they care. It is because the degree of success in the teaching and learning relationship directly depends on classroom learning conditions that a strong collective stand is paramount. Another factor that greatly affects the degree of teaching and learning success in a classroom, is the well-being of teachers and their students.

With the many demands and expectations of the school year start-up and the frustrations that come with eroded working and learning conditions, personal well-being is often dismissed with, “I will exercise, get in touch with a friend, read my book, etc., when I finish this.” However, at the day’s end, one discovers that the desire to engage in personal pursuits that would ensure a modicum of wellness has not been realized. Why is that? Why do teachers put their personal wellness needs at the bottom of their priority list? Why is self-sacrifice a common characteristic of teachers? There seems to be a perception in our Canadian work-ethic culture that putting one’s personal needs first is selfish. In these uncertain times, when the only constant is change, dispelling the myth that teachers’ professional lives must come before their personal lives requires a paradigm shift in how teachers view the work they do. Matthew Fox postulates in his book *The Reinvention of Work: A*

New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time that the work-ethic model of the industrial revolution is no longer appropriate for the 21st century, that “we must dismantle the war industry and redirect our economy toward sound and life-sustaining enterprises” and that “work on the human being itself” will be the key “to reinventing work for the human species.” The society that endures an overly busy lifestyle has produced a plethora of self-help books supporting the need for us to shift the way we think about work and how we do it. An example is the book written by Andrea Molley, *Stop Living Your Job, Start Living Your Life: 85 Simple Strategies to Achieve Work/Life Balance*. Teachers, as mentors, role models, and leaders have the opportunity to nurture the move toward work/life balance and facilitate the shift in thought about the work of teaching and the way it is done by making personal wellness a priority in daily life. The problems of a dysfunctional society that are manifested in classrooms can be rooted out only when teachers, by example, teach future generations that optimal health is achieved when the mind and body are in harmony. Bringing harmony to mind and body begins simply with setting boundaries and establishing goals. *Bringing harmony to mind and body begins simply with setting boundaries and establishing goals.* On the Terry Fox Run weekend we witnessed the overwhelming effect one person had on a nation and the world when a goal was expressed and boundaries were established to achieve that goal. Let this be the year you give your personal wellbeing the attention it deserves. Make wellness a priority in your life, and in so doing, you will make a difference in the lives of those you touch as you teach. Julia Johnson, a learning resource teacher at Red Bluff School, in Quesnel, is a BCTF PD wellness associate and a member of the Teacher Newsmagazine Advisory Board. johnsonj@abccom.bc.ca Source: CLC/CALM

Programmes et services français de la FECB

Solidarité et action :
Au secours de notre système d'enseignement public

Par Ghislaine Varin

Le gouvernement provincial actuel proclame protéger et financer équitablement notre système d'enseignement public. Selon le gouvernement, il n'y a pas de problème sauf avec la Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de la Colombie-Britannique (FECB) qui ne se soucie pas des enfants dans les salles de classe car le syndicat se préoccupe principalement des conditions de travail et des salaires de ses enseignants. Cependant, les enseignants de la Colombie-Britannique connaissent très bien les réalités de la salle de classe et les conséquences négatives causées par les coupures budgétaires. Le gouvernement continue à déclarer que la littératie est une priorité et répète sans cesse qu'il a augmenté le financement dans nos écoles. Ce que le gouvernement néglige d'expliquer au public est que la formule de calcul de financement a changé au détriment de tous les conseils scolaires, que les bibliothécaires ont été éliminés et que nos bibliothèques sont fermées. Les écoles sont en détresse, les enseignants le savent, et les parents le reconnaissent de plus en plus. Ce que la FECB proclame est que tout ce qui se passe présentement dans nos écoles est un symptôme d'un mouvement de privatisation de notre système d'enseignement public.

Avant de pouvoir prendre contrôle du système, les dirigeants doivent promouvoir l'idée que plus de choix en éducation créerait de la compétition ce qui en retour bénéficierait le système, basé sur le concept du marché économique. Cependant, pour convaincre leur public, le gouvernement se doit d'affaiblir le front commun de protection que forment les enseignants de la Colombie-Britannique dans les écoles publiques, car, après tout, nous sommes depuis toujours les gardiens et les protecteurs de ce précieux système public. De plus, nous n'avons pas la langue dans notre poche. Le gouvernement a essayé de forcer les enseignants à garder silence durant les élections mais la cour judiciaire a appuyé la position des enseignants. Nous avons le droit de parler des conditions d'apprentissage des enfants avec les parents et ce, partout, même à l'école. Il faut continuer à informer les parents car le média ne le fait pas. Les enseignants reconnaissent que notre système d'enseignement public leur est confié et qu'il n'est pas un commerce, que les connaissances sont un cadeau à donner et non une commodité à vendre, que nos écoles sont des communautés et non des corporations, et que nos élèves sont des citoyens et non des consommateurs. Les attentats à la privatisation de nos écoles sont bien coordonnés

car il y a plus de 6 milliards de dollars de revenu par année à s'emparer. Malheureusement, le bien-être des enfants ne fait pas partie de l'équation. Les enseignants et les parents doivent s'unir pour exposer les mensonges du gouvernement et de leurs agents qui ne se préoccupent que de leur compte en banque. Si nos enfants sont plus que des consommateurs, nous devons passer à l'action, ce qui est le but ultime de la FECB : protéger notre système d'enseignement public pour le bien-être des générations futures et pour la promotion d'une société juste, démocratique et équitable pour tous. Lorsque le gouvernement prétend que le « choix d'école » est bon pour les parents et leurs enfants, il fait la promotion de la privatisation qui ne pourrait bénéficier que les élites, au détriment d'une grande proportion de la population qui se retrouverait pieds nus dans la neige. Cet agenda substitue le gain privé pour le bien public. Non seulement un petit groupe minoritaire aurait contrôle de ce nouveau marché, il pourrait également décider du contenu de ce que la prochaine génération apprendrait dans les écoles. Plutôt que de préparer les jeunes à penser d'un œil critique et pour eux-mêmes, de voir et entendre, le contrôle des écoles par les corporations pourraient créer une génération de consommateurs dociles. Mais nous savons tous que ceci serait

non-démocratique et laisserait un héritage tragique à nos enfants. Alors les 42 000 enseignants et leurs dirigeants syndicaux élus démocratiquement s'y opposent. La FECB a toujours été à la défense du système d'enseignement public et des enfants, et ce en exigeant des conditions de travail pour les enseignants qui, en échange, bénéficient les élèves. De bonnes conditions de travail, le droit de négocier un contrat ainsi que des salaires compétitifs sont des facteurs importants qui attirent et retiennent les meilleurs candidats dans le domaine de l'enseignement public. L'Ontario est un exemple récent d'un changement de direction en éducation qui reconnaît finalement la relation entre conditions de travail et conditions d'apprentissage. Grâce aux enseignants et aux citoyens concernés, la réalité s'est fait connaître et a influencé les dirigeants. Il y aura moins d'élèves dans les salles de classe, plus de temps de préparation pour les enseignants, et d'ici 2008 les salaires seront 19 000 \$ de plus par année qu'en Colombie-Britannique. Notre système d'enseignement public est à vendre, à la meilleure offre. Sur leur passage, les affamés d'argent et de pouvoir, sans conscience sociale et sans vision humanitaire, cherchent à détruire notre syndicat qui les oppose ou qui

les ralentit dans leurs efforts de contrôle dans ce nouveau marché non exploité. Il faut se rappeler que toutes les meilleures conditions de travail que nous avons acquises depuis 30 ans ont été gagnées par le travail et les voix fortes de nos activistes syndicalisés, et c'est grâce à leur solidarité et leur courage que les enseignants et les élèves de notre province en bénéficient aujourd'hui. *Solidarité et action* décrivent le chemin que nous devons suivre ensemble, unis et prêts à défendre avec courage l'avenir de nos enfants qui ont tous droit à une éducation de haute qualité, quel que soit leur milieu et leur pouvoir d'achat. Nos enfants méritent un système d'enseignement bien financé et qui valorise les enseignants dans notre société. Lorsque nous investissons dans un système d'enseignement public, nous protégeons la démocratie et l'avenir de nos enfants, et ceux-ci n'ont pas de prix.

Synopsis
The BCTF stands in the way of those who want to privatize our education system. Through solidarity and unified action, teachers in British Columbia can oppose and stop this harmful movement. La jeunesse compte ! Les enseignants s'y dévouent ! Prenons position.

Ghislaine Varin, coordonnatrice des Programmes et services français de la FECB.

It takes a community to educate a child

by Elizabeth Wilson

Networks of collaboration—local, regional, or national learning communities—are vital to a new culture of learning in the schooling system.

— David Miliband

On a beautiful B.C. spring day, 250 educators from around the province met for the Fifth Annual Early Success Symposium, in Smithers, April 28–29, 2005.

...it was a unique opportunity to begin to learn about the significance of culture and history in the lives of their First Nations students.

The opening evening event was a feast honouring education, presented by the Wet'suwet'en Nation. For many who attended, it was a unique opportunity to begin to learn about the significance of culture and history in the lives of their First Nations students. The symposium emphasized success for Aboriginal learners and showcased successful practices for Aboriginal students. Following an exceptionally moving opening presentation by the Smithers Secondary School Band, David Rattray shared, casually but powerfully, the stories of his students and their struggles and triumphs.

His presentation, *The Worth of a Student*, focussed on the importance of having high expectations for Aboriginal students. The rest of the day's sessions centred on educating young children through developing a sense of trust and respect, strength and capability, community and belonging, responsibility and reciprocity, and relationships and partnerships. Each year, the Early Success Symposium brings together educators from around British Columbia to share effective and breakthrough practices and

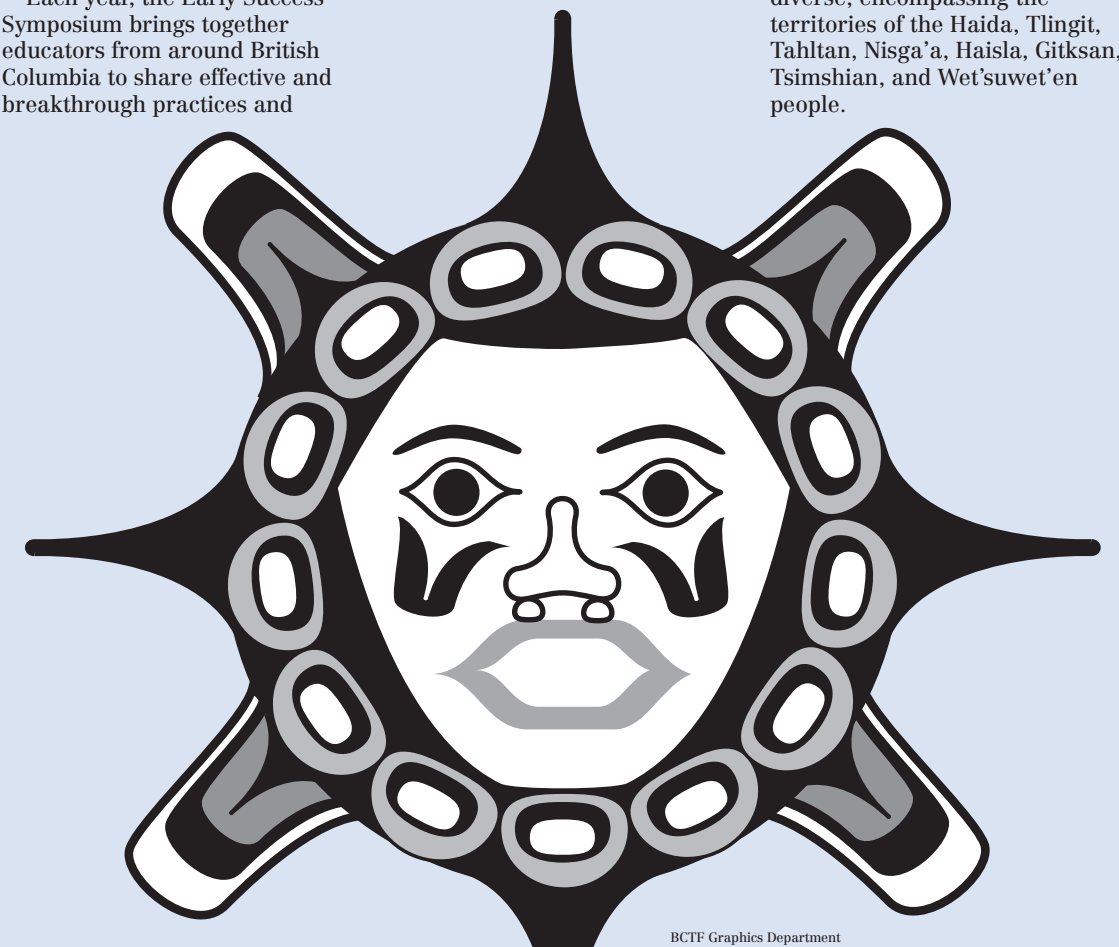
research, engage in professional dialogue, and renew connections with other educators while focussing on success for young children. The symposium in Smithers was the first to be held in northern B.C. The setting and context aptly suited the focus on enhancing the strengths of young Aboriginal students. Through their evaluation comments, participants expressed the effect

of the two days, on their lives and their practice, some indicating that attending the symposium was life-changing. The symposium was organized by the six-district Northwest Regional Education Network—Nisga'a, Stikine, Prince Rupert, Bulkley Valley, Coast Mountains, and Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlottes. The northwest region of B.C. is culturally rich and diverse, encompassing the territories of the Haida, Tlingit, Tahltan, Nisga'a, Haisla, Gitksan, Tsimshian, and Wet'suwet'en people.

The power of the Northwest Region Educational Network, and other networks elsewhere, is the synergy of a professional learning community. Educational networks are sustained through common challenges, a spirit of inquiry, trusting relationships, and relevant practices and strategies. Through the efforts of the individual districts in the Northwest region and the support of the Northwest Region Education Network, we have developed strong learning *The power of the Northwest Region Educational Network...is the synergy of a professional learning community.*

communities that contribute greatly to the increasing success of our students. The power of regional and provincial networks and learning communities was evident in the spirit of inquiry demonstrated at the 2005 Early Success Symposium. The Sixth Annual Early Success Symposium, "Keeping the Dream Alive," will be in Penticton, April 12–13, 2006, with keynote speakers Faye Brownlie and Gary Doi. For information about the Penticton symposium and for proposals for sessions, contact Elizabeth Hoole, ehoole@summer.com, or Sharon Sola, ssola@summer.com

Elizabeth Wilson, Northwest Region Education Network



BCTF Graphics Department

CBClockout

Labour flexibility just doesn't work

BC President Robert Rabinovitch has made the case that the CBC needs greater labour flexibility so it can get the right people at the right time to tell the right stories. He is sharing only part of his vision for Canada's public broadcaster.

The dispute is not only about whether the corporation can be current, innovative, and creative; it is as much about whether temporary employees will be treated as well as permanent ones, and whether the corporation will use temporary employees to undermine its current employees.

The uncertainties, extra workload, and low rates of compensation weigh heavily on their health and sense of well-being.

The CBC dispute is just one example of a larger trend in the Canadian economy toward the increased use of non-permanent employees.

Since the 1980s, many Canadian employers have responded to economic competition by shedding permanent full-time employees and replacing them with temporary employees on short-term contracts. Many companies have increased their reliance on temporary-employment agencies. Hospitals, manufacturers, and even universities have become increasingly reliant on temporary employees.

It is an open question as to whether that approach has reduced costs for employers or allowed them to produce a better product. Paying only for the labour you need and having the ability to increase or decrease labour with few constraints may appear attractive in the short run.

In the long run, it may have serious costs.

Why should employees show loyalty to an organization that treats them as a rented commodity? How will employees develop specialized skills and knowledge of an organization when their relationship with the organization is contractual, short term, and insecure? Will employers be able to attract the best and the brightest when all they offer is temporary employment?

There is a second dimension to this debate: What effect is the shift to temporary contract status having on employee health and safety?

Studies over the past decade in many sectors of the economy have repeatedly shown increased risks of injury and illness associated with the increased use of non-permanent workers.

A review of the annual U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics census showed that self-employed workers account for about 20% of fatal injuries but represent only 8% of the employed work force. Studies comparing permanent and non-permanent workers in the building, hospitality, childcare, road transport, and garment-making sectors find health outcomes worse for non-permanent workers.

It is now recognized that when workers in full-time permanent positions face limited

control over how they work, as well as heavy workloads, they suffer stress-related health effects. But what is the health effect of losing control over whether one has a job at all?

It could be argued that the trend toward short-term contracts increases the amount of control that job seekers have because they can pick and choose where and when they want to work. That may be true for a minority of highly skilled workers. But to suggest that workers in general have more control under this new form of employment is to misunderstand the real gains many workers made after the Second World War, when work became more permanent and regulated by collective agreements.

For most employees, control is not based on being able to choose when, where, and even whether to work, but rather on being in an employment relationship that has some degree of permanence and has a system of joint determination of compensation and working conditions.

The reality for most temporary workers is that they do not know from week to week if they will be working, where they will be working, or at what rate of compensation they'll be working. For young workers, the uncertainty makes it difficult to plan a future. For workers with families, the uncertainty makes it difficult to arrange childcare, participate fully in their children's lives, or play a role in their communities. For all temporary workers, the need to remain flexible, should work become available on short notice, makes it difficult to make fixed commitments to family, friends, and society.

Our research has shown that compared with permanent employees, temporary ones spend more time searching for work. They will do extraordinary things to keep work and spend time and resources acquiring skills on the speculation that it will help them get work. They also express a sense of insecurity from not knowing if or when they will find work. The uncertainties, extra workload, and low rates of compensation weigh heavily on their health and sense of well-being.

It is an approach that harms the health of workers, undermines families, and reduces our capacity to act as a society.

Even if the CBC's president is correct that productive skilled workers can be had on a temporary basis, that is not an approach that is in the interest of Canadians as a whole. It is an approach that harms the health of workers, undermines families, and reduces our capacity to act as a society. It is not a course we should support or expect from an agency largely funded by the taxpayers.

Source: *Globe and Mail* Update, September 2, 2005. Wayne Lewchuk, Alice deWolff, Amy King, and Marlea Clarke.



Helping kids deal with online hate

by Anne Taylor

Young people are often naïve and easily brainwashed by racist propaganda because they don't have the experience or facts at hand to refute the lies and myths being fed to them.

— B'Nai Brith Canada

School authorities are usually aware when print-based hate propaganda is distributed in or near school property; and apart from the James Keegstra affair in the mid-1980s, hate propaganda has not been a huge problem for Canadian schools.

Hate-mongers can now reach millions quickly, cheaply, and in a multitude of ways through the Internet.

But things are changing. Hate-mongers can now reach millions quickly, cheaply, and in a multitude of ways through the Internet. They can bring unsuspecting kids to their web sites by tagging the sites with unrelated key words that are picked up by search engines. They can recruit new blood by infiltrating sites and chat rooms that are popular with kids. They can use the Net's interactivity to gather personal information and foster relationships. And by doing these things, they manage to create the illusion, in certain online communities, that hate is legitimate and widespread.

More worrisome for educators and parents is the underground nature of online hate. Yes, it's there on the Net for all to see, but Media Awareness Network's survey of 6,000 Canadian students in 2001 showed that of the 20% of students who had encountered a hateful web site, only 4% told an adult about it. MNet's survey also showed that 85% of 9- to 17-year-olds were online alone "all" or "most" of the time—meaning that kids can be encountering hate and absorbing its messages entirely without parental knowledge.

The spectrum of hate

Hate propaganda is, in fact, the far end of a whole spectrum of harmful online content that can engage young people and, with repeated exposure, desensitize them to virulent images and messages on the Web.



Sites like *fugly.com* or *bored.com* engage in racist satire and ethnic or gay bashing in a cool, supercilious, in-your-face manner. Such sites, and their so-called humour, are a challenge for young people, who are just figuring out their own sense of worth and sexuality. This is particularly so for those who find themselves on the margins of teen society, whose personal sense of inferiority can make them particularly receptive to disparaging or degrading messages about "the other." As educators are well aware, this climate of unkindness may also reverberate in young people's own online communication, where a sense of anonymity and disconnectedness tends to minimize apathy and up the ante for aggressive, insulting communication.

A fine line

There's a fine line between the nasty messages of these kinds of web sites and those of organized hate groups like SixthSunRising, the Ku Klux Klan, or Stormfront. Hate, in the criminal sense, is not always easy to recognize. It can pop up in all kinds of places—web sites, chat rooms, blogs, e-mail, games, and music. A number of white-supremacist groups host music sites, like Resistance Records (pro-white CDs, Love Your Race) to attract young people surfing the Net. Others encode their blogs or chat rooms with key words such as hockey, Christmas, games, and basketball, that will guarantee a daily supply of young surfers. Clearly, filters can't protect young people from this insidious activity.

Developing personal filters

What *can* help to protect them is knowledge and a sharp eye—filters in their own heads, so to speak—so that they can recognize online hate and see it for what it is, whenever and wherever they encounter it.

As their use of the Internet grows, the risk of students accidentally encountering hate material increases. So it's more important than ever for young people to understand that the Internet has no gatekeepers and that anyone and everyone can post their views. The ability to

discriminate between biased, prejudicial material, and fair and accurate information has become a basic life skill.

Curriculum connectors

Deconstructing hate messages and reading between the lines is a critical thinking exercise that fits squarely into language arts and social studies curricula. It can involve: an analysis of bias, language, logical fallacies, symbols, and the difference between fact and opinion; a scrutiny of propaganda techniques (such as the use of religious sanction and scientific authority, national pride, or fear-mongering); teaching kids practical skills for authenticating online information and an examination of our own history and the roles that propaganda, discrimination, and the scapegoating of minority groups have played.

Anne Taylor, Media Awareness Network

*Hate propaganda is, in fact, the far end of a whole spectrum of harmful online content that can engage young people and, with repeated exposure, desensitize them to virulent images and messages on the Web.***Related resources at**

www.media-awareness.ca

- For secondary lessons on propaganda, logical fallacies, and online hate, check out "Online Hate" in MNet's Lesson Library.
- For Teachers section, for background essays, go to Media Issues, Online Hate. For *Allies and Aliens*, an interactive module for Grades 7 and 8, see Games for Kids.
- For MNet's professional development workshop and self-directed PD tutorial, Deconstructing Online Hate, contact licensing@media-awareness.ca.

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Jan. 14, 2006	Victoria (Saanich)	Mary Winspear Cultural Centre
Jan. 21, 2006	North Vancouver	Centennial Theatre
Feb. 4, 2006	Richmond	Hilton Vancouver Airport
Feb. 11, 2006	Coquitlam	Executive Hotel & Resorts
Feb. 18, 2006	Vernon	Prestige Inn
March 4, 2006	Prince George	Coast Inn of the North
March 25, 2006	Kamloops	Campus Activity Centre, UCC
April 1, 2006	Delta	Delta Town & Country Inn
April 8, 2006	Nanaimo	Coast Bastion Inn
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Ten new BCTF lesson aids

1 LA 2012—Trade My Way: Getting Ahead in the Global Trade Market

by Victoria International Development Education Association, 70 p. ©2005. This resource package contains five separate guides in a folder. Each guide is easy to read and provides a brief overview of the subject with relevant factoids appearing in separate windows. Each guide concludes with a comprehensive list of web resources to encourage deeper research and action. The topics of the guides are: Teaching for Change, Treasure Islands (a brief history of the South Pacific relating to trade issues common to other developing nations), Trade Matters (an introduction to global trade), Co-operation Works (corporation vs. co-operation), Trade My Way (how to change the world for the better with consumer and career choices). Suitable for Grades 8, 9 and 12 Economics, Grades 8–11 Marketing, Grades 8–12 Language Arts; Grades 8–12 Home Economics, and Grades 9 and 11 Social Studies. \$21.95

2 LA 9345—A Day in the Life of a Child in Sierra Leone

by Natalie Charlton and Janet Sondresen, ©2004. With the assistance of Sierra Leonean teachers, the Canadian teachers developed this kit, which is user friendly for the Grade 6 teacher and incorporates the objectives of the social studies IRP, and also reflects the current Sierra Leonean culture. The kit includes one large handmade gara doth bag with one green binder which includes three units and four colour location overheads; one set of laminated historical timeline cards, one CIDA *Movers and Shakers* magazine, five sets of laminated children’s drawing cards, 24 colour photos relating to the rebel war, the effects of war on children; rights of children’s education; and rebuilding Sierra Leone; a small red gara bag with laminated food activity cards; a small blue gara bag with laminated shelter activity cards and a small green gara

bag with one CD with six power-point presentations; three sets of water proverbs, one set of scenario cards, one white postcard and one black postcard. \$415

3 LA 9772—Mooving and Grooving: A User Friendly Dance Program for Schools and Community Groups

by Nick and Mary Anne Turner, 166 p. and 8 music CDs, ©2004. This resource promotes the culture of square and round dancing, and the social, mental and physical health benefits of these dance forms. The package includes eight audio CDs of dance music and a resource binder. The resource book includes CD content lists and two dance sections on moving and grooving. Each section can be used as a stand alone program or the sections can be combined. All dances are non-sex-oriented. The moving section includes collections of traditional dances and solo dances, notes for teachers, partner dances, trio dances, mescolanzas, contra dances, traditional squares and an index for moving. The grooving section is entirely modern square dancing and includes caller biographies, 10 teaching units, index for grooving section and abbreviations explained. Grades 3–12. \$89.95

4 LA 8021—A Communication Framework for Family Literacy: Bridging Differences, Planning and Building Skills Sets

by Jean Fowler and Sydney Hook, 64 p. ©2005. This guide, written by two speech language pathologists, offers an understanding about the importance of a communication framework as an underlying process when working with families and their children within a school context. The authors discuss definitions of family literacy and the role of interaction in adult-child relationships and provide information and skill sets on how to plan and implement a communications framework in family literacy. References to current literature which guide the frame-

work are included. While the framework can be applied in any family literacy programs, it may be of particular interest to those educators working in multicultural schools and communities who wish to involve parents in supporting their children’s literacy development. K–3 \$12.95

5 LA 9928—About IEPs by Learning Assistance Teachers’ Association

, 100p. and CD Rom, Fall 2003. This issue of LATA’s *The Vital Link Journal*, v. 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 Rom containing manual templates, IEP short form, IEP long form and checklist of adaptations and modifications. K–12 \$12

6 LA 9929—Learning Assistance: Heading Into the Future by Learning Assistance Teachers’ Association

, 88 p. Summer 2004. This issue of LATA’s *The Vital Link Journal*, v. 9, no. 2, features articles and viewpoints from learning assistance teachers. K–12 \$12

7 LA 9531—Cycle of Life/Recycle: Handbook for Educators (K–7) by the Artist Response Team

, 282 p. & music CD, ©2004. This handbook is a companion guide to the accompanying Cycle of Life music CD by Holly Arntzen and the Voice of Nature singers—young school children from Vancouver, Victoria, Gatineau and Calgary. The CD features songs about endangered species and sustainability. The handbook and CD are designed to assist teachers in promoting ecological literacy. Issues around endangered species across Canada and what people can do to assist them are addressed. Each song unit is a teacher-friendly lesson, or series of lessons, with many suggested activities from simple to extensive which are linked to the prescribed learning outcomes of the new K–7 science IRP. Science information and the link to

recycling is fully explained. The text contains reproducible masters and illustrations. Activities in language arts, social studies, science and math, and other subjects are linked by song lyrics through music, information, stories and illustrations. Connections are made between protecting habitat, reducing ecological footprint, and recycling beverage containers—an action within the power of a child. Recommended by the BC Ministry of Education. Grades K–7 \$55

8 LA 9171A—Heartbreak And Heroes by Iris Tuftin

, 105 p. ©2004. In this novel, written by the same author as LA 9167A *Cowboy Up, Cole*, the Hollis family extends an invitation to another troubled teenager—a 14-year-old, rich and spoiled girl who brings the young active family trying times and heartbreak. Grades 5–9. \$12.95 Also, LA 9171B *Heartbreak and Heroes—Novel Study*, 44 p. This novel study includes a chapter by chapter teacher’s guide. Also included are reproducible student resource and activity pages related to a variety of subject areas such as language arts, math, art, drama and equine studies, as well as research activities, group projects and web site links. \$14.95

9 LA 9339—Kids Who Care/Des jeunes motivés by Foster Parents Plan

, CD Rom, ©1998. This CD ROM, which includes a multi-part study guide, available both in French and English, and a video clip on a CD Rom format suitable for PC and MAC computers, engages students with social, economic and environmental issues in West Africa. The program includes: a 23-min. video filmed in West Africa presenting issues such as deforestation, the importance of clean water for health, the Rights of the Child, community co-operation, and the ways in which environmental issues around the world are connected. Includes a Teacher’s Guide with detailed notes and lesson plans, including black-line masters, maps and graphics and

a step-by-step Student Action Guide to starting a global education or environmental club, complete with ideas for student-led projects. Group and individual activities are relevant to social studies, civics and environmental science curricula. Materials are also available online in English www.kidswhocarecanada.ca, and in French at www.desjeunesmotives.ca. Also included are four Africa colour posters. Grades 4+ \$4.95

10 LA 9342—Thirsty Planet: World Water Lessons for Elementary Students by CoDevelopment Canada

, 50 p. ©2004. This is a resource book for elementary students learning about water challenges in Canada and around the world from a social perspective. The resource kit includes a teacher’s guide to activities, 12 activities with handouts, a sampling of on-line, print and multimedia and field trip opportunities, and supplementary materials and photos contained on a CD Rom with links to prescribed learning outcomes by subject and grade plus additional resources for teachers and students. Grades 4–7. \$19.95

More curriculum resources and information are available at www.bcalmer.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; 9:00–5:00 Tues. to Fri. during July and Aug.; 9:00–12:00 on Sat. during Sept., Oct., Jan., and Feb. bctf.ca/LessonAids

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GRANADA, NICARAGUA Discover this beautiful Spanish colonial city and little known country. B & B run by retired BC teacher. For information contact carolannrea@hotmail.com

BUCERIAS MEXICO Privately owned, beautiful fully furn. new 2 bd., 2 bath house. Two blks to fantastic beach. Rooftop palapa with panoramic view, weekly & monthly rates. 250-748-4883, email cindyharvey@telus.net

PUERTO VALLARTA Beautiful, large, 2 bd. furn. condo, downtown, 3 blks from the Malecon (beach). Reasonable wkly rates, N/S, dbemc@hotmail.com, 604-608-4268.

MEXICO 2 bd. suite, sleeps 4. Ten minute walk to beach. www.casaserena.net

VACATION IN MEXICO this Christmas. Combine this year’s Christmas break with the adventure of a bicycle trip and relaxation of a beach holiday. Join us for “The Manzanillo Bicycle Tour.” All abilities welcome. Options for non-riders. You’ll visit areas where few other tourists travel as well as spend some time at the beach. For full information about this unique Mexico experience, call Les or Barb at 604-536-4089 or email thelommels@shaw.ca

MEXICO. Beautiful Sayulita, 35 min. north of Puerto Vallarta airport. 3 bd. house, 2 blks from beach, 1 blk. to town center. Ideal for families, small groups. Regular rate \$450 US/wk. <http://sayulitarent.freespaces.com> or email bnapaloni@yahoo.ca

CANCUN or COZOMEL \$400/person, 5 nights all-inclusive, 4-5 star hotel & food incl. Must pay own airfare. Call Ki 604-430-4244.

MEXICO. 1 bd. unit w. kitchen at Playa del Sol in Puerto Vallarta. Great central location. Dec. 18–25, \$950. 604-540-6301.

FRANCE. Ultimate vacations, privately owned, beautiful furn. 1 bd. central Paris. Provence lovely furn. house close to Avignon. Wkly/mthly. 604-738-1876, 604-298-3904, i_roland@hotmail.com

FOR RENT

VANCOUVER Clean, bright, quiet, centrally located condos at Robson & Bute. 1 bd. \$85/ single. Daily/eeekly/monthly rates. 604-608-4268, dbemc@hotmail.com.

OCEAN PARK South Surrey. Main level of 2 bd. home with southerly garden and ocean view. Cul-de-sac street. Shared laundry, bsmt suite is rented by gardener. N/S, references required. Rent at \$1300/mo. plus utilities. Call John at 604-733-8078.

MISCELLANEOUS

MASTER OF EDUCATION (Special Education) by coursework offered by Flinders University in S. Australia is recognized by the B.C. Teacher Qualification Service. The degree is available entirely in distance mode. Applications are invited now for commencement of study in 2006. More information at: <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/northamerica> or from the program co-ordinator, Bernice.Burnip@flinders.edu.au

USE YOUR MOUSE to find your house! www.carollivingstone.com, Victoria, Sooke or Sidney. Thinking of buying or selling, click on Victoria’s top real estate web site, free reports and MLS listings with full addresses. Call Carol and discover how to save with her teacher’s discount. Carol Livingstone, B.Ed. Re/Max Camosun, carol@carollivingstone.com, toll free 1-800-663-2121 or 250-744-3301.

YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR “WILD” CLASSES Teach your children about Burns Bog. Book a tour! Buy a book! Buy a video! For rates and prices contact: Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373 or 1-888-850-6264, www.burnsbog.org

SPIRIT MEDITATION CLASSES 604-461-5511, Port Moody, www.veraciswellness.com

CANADIAN TEACHERS OVERSEAS Building bridges through education and travel. Contact: Carol Baird-Krul @ 250-247-0077, cbairdkrul@shaw.ca. Experienced overseas educator, proven placement advisor.

FIND A TUTOR web site. Designed for tutors looking for clients and parents/students looking for tutors. Free 2 month trial for tutors wishing to advertise. www.findAtutor.ca

SPANISH TEACHER wanted for McKee Senior Recreation Centre, Ladner. For info. call E. Tuton at 604-946-0945.

RESOURCES Enhance your Kindergarten, ESL, First Grade, Speech classes with *Annie Ape: The Magic Bullet to Literacy* and *Alphasongs*. Information at www.kindergarten-tips-and-skillsessions.com, 604-850-6748, dewdneydragon@shaw.ca

SEARCH ASSOCIATES International Job Fare Toronto, Feb. 6-8 where over 50 schools from around the world will be recruiting teachers for the upcoming school year. For more information contact Ray Sparks, raysparks@eastlink.ca or visit our web site www.searchassociates.com

TEACHER EXCHANGE. Secondary media/ photography teacher working in Perth, W. Australia, interested in a teaching exchange for 2007. Teachers in the BC area email me and I will forward details regarding my house and school, etc. natalie.1.clews@det.wa.edu.au

PD CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2005

1–2 Huntsville, ON. National Character Education Conference hosted by Huntsville High School at Deerhurst Resort. Contact Jane Yantha, j.yantha@tldsbc.on.ca, www.ncec.ca.

1–3 Edmonton. Online Learning Symposium, Open Mind-Open Learning: Online Learning in the 21st Century, for those who are operating online programs or considering teaching online. \$251.45 for AOC (Alberta Online Consortium) members, \$310.30 for non-members. Over 100 workshops, keynote speaker and trade fair. ataoc.ca.

2–4 Richmond. Making Connections: Systems for Success 2005. 8th Annual conference focusing on systemic, school-wide approach to creating a safe and caring school culture. Ramada Park Plaza/Vancouver Airport & Conference Resort, 10251 St. Edwards Dr. Richmond. Contact Kagthy Champion, Conference chairperson, 604-668-6063, kchampion@richmond.sd38.bc.ca, or visit the Institute for Safe Schools web site: www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca

3 Richmond. Richmond Regional Historica Heritage Fair Information Session on a nation-wide program getting kids excited about history. Richmond Cultural Centre, 3.30 to 5 p.m. Call 604-231-6427 for details.

4–5 Kelowna. Orchestrating Success Series: Orchestrating Success in Reading, Orchestrating Positive and Practical Behaviour Plans, and Orchestrating Success by Adapting and Modifying Programs, presented by Dawn Reithaug at the Best Western Inn, Kelowna. Call 604-921-8660, or e-mail learning-withoutlimits@yahoo.com.

JANUARY 2006

26–27 Vancouver. B.C. Alternate Education Association (BCAEA) conference, Challenge and Change 2006, Sheraton Wall Centre. Visit bctf.bc.ca/psas/bcae.

FEBRUARY 2006

1 B.C. Art Teachers’ Association (BCATA) 50th anniversary celebration. Actual date and details TBA.

1 Kelowna. Learning Assistance Teachers’ Association (LATA) conference, Inclusive Education. Visit bctf.ca/psas/lata. Actual date and details TBA.

2–4 Vancouver. The Early Years Conference 2006, Child Development Practices: A Decade of Change, sponsored by UBC Inter-professional Continuing Education, focussing on knowledge and progress over the past 10 years as it relates to early-childhood development. Abstracts accepted until May 31, 2005. Contact 604-822-2801, ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca, interprofessional.ubc.ca.

9 Richmond. Thinking Like a Historian Workshop and Dinner, using primary sources with your classes, Richmond Cultural Centre, 3:45 to 7:00 p.m. Call 604-231-6427 to register.

16–18 Chilliwack. Linking Literacy Through Language, Culture, and Spirituality, Joint Aboriginal Education Conference (including First Nations Education Association [FNEA]), Sardis Secondary South Campus & Skowkale Smokehouse. Registration through lrudland@vsb.bc.ca; f: 604-713-5244; also at Travel Lodge on evening. Thursday evening event at Travel Lodge: Upon registering, you can participate in the make-n-take workshop.

17 Vancouver. Adult Educators’ Provincial Specialist Association (AEPsA) Conference, Adult Educators: A Prime Location in Education, in partnership with Continuing International Education Vancouver School District Adult Educators, VSB office building. Focus on adult learning styles, adult teaching strategies, and cultural diversity in the adult classroom. Contact AEPsA President Leo Hutchinson, lhutch@shaw.ca.

17 Kelowna. Learning Assistance Teachers’ Association Regional Conference, Inclusionary Practices: Building a Community of Learners in Our Classrooms, with Dr. Vianne Timmons. Contact Sandra Bava, 250-374-0116, f: 250-374-5554, sbava@sd73.bc.ca.

MARCH 2006

2–4 Vancouver. SFU Faculty of Education Conference, Teacher Development: The Key to Education in the 21st Century, Simon Fraser University’s Faculty of Education celebrates 40 years of educating teachers to touch the future. An international conference featuring Stephen Lewis, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Kenneth Zeichner and Rob Tierney. Hyatt Regency Vancouver Contact Josh Coward at jcoward@sfu.ca or 604-291-4344.

9–10 Vancouver. Special Education Association (SEA) 31st Annual Cross-currents Conference, Western Bayshore Conference Centre. Hear entertaining, inspiring, and compassionate Anita Archer speak on the art and heart of education. Choose from 30+ sessions on meeting the challenging needs of diverse learners. For more information, contact pfortier@sd57.bc.ca, or visit bctf.bc.ca/psas/SEA.

APRIL 2006

20–22 Coquitlam. Encompass 2006 Conference, Celebrating Social Emotional Learning and Academic Success, with keynote speaker Roy Henry Vickers, featured speakers Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl, Dr. Shelley Hymel, Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Dr. Gordon Neufeld, Lesra Martin, Marc Kielburger, Bruce Wellman, Raffi, and 50 or 60 related workshops, Terry Fox Secondary School. Registration information online February 2006. Contact Gerry Lush, 604-936-9971, pd43@bctf.ca.

MAY 2006

4–6 Vancouver. Second National Biennial Conference on Late Adolescents and Adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Navigating the Rapids: Doing What Works in Practice—designing optimal environments for the social, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of individuals with FASD, The Coast Hotel and Conference Centre. Contact Leanne Fuhr, 604-822-2801, ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca, www.interprofessional.ubc.ca.

11–13 Whistler. B.C. Science Teachers’ Association Conference Catalyst 2006, with Dr. Joe Schwarcz, of McGill University and Discovery’s Daily Planet. Contact David Barnum, dbarnum@dccnet.com, or visit bcsecta.ca.

12 Whistler. Provincial Intermediate Teachers’ Association (PITA) Regional Miniconference in conjunction with the science teachers’ association conference, with presenter Dawn Reithaug. \$85. Contact Ray Myrtle, 604-224-3388, f: 604-224-5754, rmyrtle@canada.com.

JUNE 2006

1–3 Vancouver. Maternal Child Youth Conference 2006: Optimizing the Care of Mothers, Children, and Youth, sponsored by UBC Interprofessional Continuing Education. Participants will learn about evidence-based programs or services from across the country and strategies for linking hospital and community. Abstracts accepted until June 15, 2005. Contact 604-822-2801, ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca, interprofessional.ubc.ca.

25–27 Vancouver. Peace Education Forum, Educating a Generation To Create a Culture of Peace, UBC. Contact Jane Turner, jturner@bctf.ca.

PSA PD Day—October 20, 2006

PD Calendar web site
<http://pdonline.bctf.ca/conferences/PD-Calendar.html>

Additions/changes? Contact Elizabeth Lambert, elambert@bctf.ca



Occupational voice problems?

by Linda Rammage

Each September, many teachers return to their assignments after a leisurely summer only to find that their voices protest at the sudden return to a high demand for continuous speech in less-than-optimal conditions. Teachers consulting the voice-care team at the Pacific Voice Clinic in Vancouver General Hospital comment that they always assumed the “September Voice” phenomenon was normal since so many of their colleagues suffer from it.

In fact, experiencing strain, pain, fatigue, hoarseness, voice cracks, or loss of voice should

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not be an expected consequence of the return to teaching after extended voice breaks, nor should the tendency to feel your voice straining or weakening at the end of each teaching day or week throughout the year. These symptoms are a sign of an occupational voice problem.

Vocal hazards come in many forms, both external and internal. It is well documented in the literature that acoustical conditions in the majority of classrooms throughout the western world do not meet the recommended standards for healthy speaking and effective learning. For you, this means that speaking in classrooms that have poor reverberation times (echo) or high ambient noise forces you to speak at a louder level than is healthy, in particular, under the command of the “Lombard Effect.” The Lombard Effect is a psychoacoustic phenomenon that causes us to strain our voices when we do not receive adequate feedback about our voice signal as we speak. It changes speech-breathing patterns and makes us tense our vocal mechanisms. It can sometimes be countered with good voice amplification devices, but if the room reverberation characteristics are poor, amplifying the teacher’s voice may actually make the acoustic problem worse.

Classroom size, teaching specialty, age of students, and curricular issues may contribute to vocal demand profiles and background noise conditions for you in your teaching assignment.

Your general health, lifestyle and demands, coping style, personality, and vocal technique are examples of internal factors that can affect how your voice functions. Common physical conditions such as reflux,

allergies, respiratory sensitivities, and obesity can have a deleterious effect on the voice.

The most common diagnosis ascribed to teachers’ voice problems is muscle tension *dysphonia* (poor voice). The

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primary mechanism through which we cause muscle tension voice problems is the voluntary muscle system. Through motor learning, we subconsciously “train” ourselves to use the muscles of the breathing system, the larynx (voice box), the face, and the neck inappropriately. By the time we are adults, a coping style that includes holding muscles in some or all of these regions is a common sequela to a cumulation of stressors, both physical and emotional. Speaking in poor acoustic environments is a common cause of psychophysical stress. Commonly, adults encounter situations in their lives where they must act and speak in a way that is in direct contradiction to how we are feeling emotionally about an issue. (It is no longer acceptable to have temper tantrums to relieve the stress!) This leads to

the tendency to repress physical and vocal expressions by tensing the parts of the body that would otherwise be involved in the overt action or statement.

We are currently conducting a complex research study to help us clearly define the nature, prevalence, and risk factors that contribute to voice problems among teachers in B.C. The BCTF, the Vancouver Elementary and Secondary School Teachers’ Associations, the Richmond Teachers’ Association, the Vancouver School District, and Richmond School District have all endorsed the project and we thank the many teachers who have already participated by completing the 20-minute questionnaire that explores the many potential issues contributing to occupational voice problems. In order to meet stringent statistical demands and provide robust results to teachers and their employers we need to have the assistance of many more teachers. To avoid design flaws intrinsic to survey research that does not elicit high return rates, we are asking that teachers come together as teams representing a minimum of 90% of the teaching population in their school. By having the entire teaching population of each participating school complete the survey, we avoid biasing results by attracting only those teachers who are currently most concerned about their voices. To facilitate the questionnaire completion, we

are delivering questionnaires to teachers at participating schools during pre-arranged times, staying with teachers while they complete the task, and collecting the completed questionnaires immediately. We are also requesting that a representative sample of teachers allow us to make acoustic measurements in their classrooms to acquire specific information on acoustical risks to voice problems.

If you would like to participate in this important study and help shape the future of teachers’ vocal health, please contact us.

Linda Rammage is director of the Provincial Voice Care Resource Program, Vancouver General Hospital, and the survey’s principal investigator. Linda.Rammage@vch.ca.

For further information, contact Sandra Thomsen, 604-875-4111, Ext. 61725, Sandra.Thomsen@vch.ca. Web site: www.pvcrp.com.

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