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# Teacher

## *The accountability scheme*



# Penalizing poor children

The most recent statistics (2004) state that one in four BC children live in poverty, equal to 23.5% or 196,000 children. BC's rate of child poverty is still the highest in Canada and well above the 17.7% average for the country. This is almost the same number of children as the population of Burnaby or the combined populations of Nanaimo, Kelowna, and Williams Lake.

### *The FSA tests do not accurately assess the learning ability of students living in poverty.*

We have no reason to believe that the latest statistics are different. Poor children are twice as likely to be judged "poor students" by their teachers and twice as likely to drop out. Poor children are also more likely to be hyperactive, suffer from emotional disorders, exhibit disorderly conduct, get into trouble with the law, be in the care of child welfare services, engage in riskier behavior, and be unemployed as adults. This affects us daily in our classrooms. Many of our students are coming to school with little or no food and then are expected to learn. We can only imagine how difficult this can be.

How does the accountability scheme and standardized testing, such as the FSAs and other district-driven wide-scale assessments, affect the students we have in our classrooms that are living in poverty? Alfie Kohn has extensively discussed the affects of these assessments on children and how standardized

assessments are a remarkably accurate methods for gauging the size of the houses near the school where the tests were administered. He states that ignorance is the most charitable explanation for why charts are published that rank schools by these scores, such as the Fraser Institute's yearly publication. How does such a measurement ineffectively evaluate the learning experience? An excellent example of this is Roosevelt Park Elementary School in Prince Rupert, which has a high poverty rate and is consistently ranked as the lowest academic school in BC, yet has numerous examples of quality programs as reported by a recent CBC television program.

While standardized testing negatively impacts many educational environments, the impact on children living in poverty is more severe than it is on many other students. Across the province, school districts are under intense pressure to show better test results. This has a direct impact on classroom teachers as they are now asked to be part of the accountability contracts and have to participate in the accountability scheme whether they agree with what is happening or not. The pressure on teachers and students is increasing every year and when you have students in poverty in your classroom it is likely that they will not score as well as other students, therefore making it difficult to meet the demands of the contracts. We need to remember that we teach children and they should be first on our priority list, not the accountability scheme. Children living in poverty learn differently than other children.

Ruby Payne, a leading anti-poverty author and activist,

identifies three primary areas affected by poverty where students tend to learn differently. These are writing skills, planning and predicting, and organizational skills. These are all important areas when looking at standardized testing and results. We can't expect these children to do well on these assessments without first looking at how they learn and where their deficits may lie. Then we can provide alternative assessments to better gauge their understanding. The FSA tests do not accurately assess the learning ability of students living in poverty. The results of the FSA tests simply sort out the most vulnerable students who will more likely be judged as failures based on the test results.

The BC School Trustees Association states on their web site that: "...in modern democracies, public education is the great equalizer. It is the means by which people of diverse languages, cultures, and socio-

### *We need to advocate for strategies to eliminate poverty and stop the accountability scheme...*

economic circumstances come together as a society. In Canada, our commitment to public education—open and available to all—is a key element in shaping the way our society has evolved and will continue to evolve."

This is contrary to what is happening in BC schools with the accountability scheme and privatization. Our students living in poverty are at a definite disadvantage and the education

system is not a great equalizer for them. The accountability scheme can inaccurately identify problems for students living in poverty. The current solutions offered to this problem are initiatives such as e-learning and an increase in private education choices. Private education is out of reach for these students. E-learning has poor success rates because of inappropriate pedagogy. Therefore, this option further impedes student success and exacerbates the poverty issue.

Alfie Kohn says, "...teachers should do what is necessary to prepare students for the tests—and then get back to the real learning. Never forget the difference between these two objectives. Be clear about it in your own mind, and whenever possible, help others to understand the distinction."

Until there are great improvements toward the elimination of child poverty in Canada, the current test-driven system will continue to further disadvantage some of our neediest students. We need to advocate for strategies to eliminate poverty and stop the accountability scheme, so all students can get back to learning and teachers can get back to teaching.

"Making students accountable for test scores works well on a bumper sticker and it allows many politicians to look good by saying that they will not tolerate failure. But it represents a hollow promise. Far from improving education, high-stakes testing marks a major retreat from fairness, from accuracy, from quality, and from equity." Senator Paul Wellstone (1944-2002)

— BCTF AntiPoverty Action Group

## President's message



Jinny Sims

Every March we hold our Annual General Meeting. Over 600 delegates (elected by members in locals) will give up four to five days of their well-deserved Spring break to participate in our annual meeting to debate issues, set policy, and adopt priorities for the coming year.

Every worksite has copies of the resolutions and recommendations going to the meeting so I encourage you to give your input to your locally elected delegates. We face major challenges, and we have to be strategic as we tackle issues confronting us.

There is a concerted attack on public education and our profession; we live the impact of chronic underfunding. We have to resist the creeping privatization agenda of our public education and other public services.

As professionals, we know that data-driven standardized tests like the FSA are damaging to teaching and learning. Your Executive Committee and the Representative Assembly are bringing an action plan to take on this data-driven phony accountability scheme.

Our students live in communities impacted by provincial and federal government actions that are shaking the very fabric of Canadian society. We have to engage in and focus our work to build a socially just civil society. We have to engage in the public and political debate to impact public policy—including our learning conditions. We cannot and must not remain silent.

Our AGM will also be electing a new BCTF Executive Committee for 2007–08. I want to thank you for the privilege of serving as your president for the last three years. You are my heroes.

Jinny

## Good article on self censorship

I commend Murray Corren for his timely argument against a parent's right to remove her child from parts of the curriculum ("A censor? Who, me?" Jan./Feb. 2007 *Teacher*). Last year I had a child removed from my class production of *A Christmas Carol* because the parents objected to the Christmas (not Christian) overtones. The child clearly wanted to participate in the play and, in my view, would have benefitted from doing so.

If it can be shown that parts of the provincial curriculum are harmful to the development of a child, reason would dictate that the curriculum be changed. The governmentally sanctioned policy of pulling one child out of the classroom seems wrong, not only because of what the child will miss, but because the other children would suffer—if indeed the curriculum was harmful. Of course no parent(s) has convinced the provincial government that its curriculum is deleterious in any way.

Also in your Jan./Feb. issue of *Teacher*, is a letter from Richard Peachey who maintains that a parent should, and does, possess the right to remove her child from parts of the curriculum for "genuine conscientious reasons." What Peachey finds objectionable is homosexuality. Yet the position of our courts and governments, as made plain in *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, is that homosexuality is acceptable in our society. As Corren rhetorically asks, how can a parent be allowed to restrict learning stimuli from her child that the society has affirmed to be worthwhile and in a child's best interest to learn?

For "genuine conscientious reasons" our provincial government has included instruction on same sex families. I think it is timorous for the same government and school boards to permit some parents to dispense with parts of the curriculum, particularly instruction that promotes sensitivity toward people with a different sexual orientation. Peachey's putative right to deny his child this instruction is not defensible in a society expressly opposed to bigotry and hate.

Jim McMurtry  
Surrey

## Vancity ballots out in March

Not all teachers wind up like Judith Wilson, building a 75-million-pound property empire in the English countryside, but by and large the banking world sees us as good for business. This realization was part of the reason Vancity took over the Teacher's Credit Union. Vancity got the branches, the staff and most importantly, the business of many BC teachers.

Each year three Vancity members are elected to the Board of Directors for a three-year term. If you are a Vancity member you should have received your election mail out from Vancity by February 23. When reading the information and contemplating your choice, please consider a voice for BC teachers. Ballots can be mailed to Vancity head office using the enclosed self addressed envelope or dropped off in branch. If you prefer to vote in branch, balloting will be conducted from March 16 to March 24. Regardless of how you vote, the important thing is to vote. Voting is the only way the voice of BC teachers will be heard.

Karen Harbick  
New Westminster

## Teachers right to question authority

In a recent letter to the editor (January 23, 2007, *Chilliwack Progress*), Heather Maahs attacks the BCTF, and teachers in general, for refusing to fill out the government satisfaction surveys. She argues that failure to fill out these forms "thwarts the government's attempts to give parents an overall perspective of satisfaction." She then argues that teachers are "demonstrating utter contempt for authority," and that they are therefore not being proper "mentors" or "partners in learning." I would like to take exception to Ms. Maahs' position.

In the first place, Ms. Maahs does not bother to indicate what the BCTF's arguments are. She presents only one side of the argument, and expects the rest of us to accept her analysis. But when I spoke to a BCTF member, I was informed that the reason for the refusal to fill out the forms has to do with the fact that the forms do not address the real issues that still confront the education system. There are no questions on the satisfaction survey that ask about class sizes, resources, or help for students with special needs. These problems still exist within the school system, where class sizes of 31 and more remain common, and as we have seen in Vancouver, there is not enough money for special needs teachers. By not asking about these issues, the government is engaging in a kind of propaganda campaign aimed at creating a false impression that all is well within our schools, when in reality it is not. Quite rightly, teachers refuse to become complicit in this deception.

More disturbingly, Ms. Maahs seems to feel that the purpose of education is to make students into pliable citizens who do as they are told, and seems to feel that teachers ought to obey orders simply because those in authority have said so. But the purpose of education, in a democratic society, Ms. Maahs,

is entirely different from that. What the best teachers hope to establish is respect for legitimate authority tempered by a healthy critical attitude, an attitude lacking in Ms. Maahs' comments. Let's not forget the example of Rosa Parks, who in refusing to obey "those in authority" kept faith with her own conscience, and so awoke the conscience of an entire nation. Sometimes the highest good is served by those who can think for themselves, not by those who are servile to authority. From that perspective, BC teachers are acting entirely appropriately, and you ought to be thanking them for their courage, not complaining that they are not acquiescent and servile enough for your liking.

Dr. R.J. McKellar  
Simon Fraser University

## National Child Day

Monday [November 20] was National Child Day, a day that marks the adoption by the United Nations of the convention of the rights of the child. The convention details the basic human rights that children, anyone under the age of 18, are entitled to. It is a wonderful document. I would urge all members to read it because it details what our obligations as a society are to our children, including keeping them from abuse and exploitation and providing them with the protection of the state if needed. It also requires that there be assistance to parents and caregivers to make sure that children have adequate food, clothing, and housing.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we in BC could hold our heads high and say that—as Canada, a signatory to the convention—in BC our children were getting the best possible start in life? Sadly, that's not the case. Not in a province where one in four children lives below the poverty level and where elementary schools are becoming community dining rooms, serving breakfast and lunch programs, with food donated or coming from food banks. This is not just in

## We are failing our kids by letting them go hungry.

big cities. These are our small towns and small cities: Port Hardy, where one youngster wished every day was a school day so she would never be hungry; Prince George, where kids eat at the soup kitchen.

We are failing our kids by letting them go hungry. We're failing our kids when daycare workers admit they supply the clothes for their charges that their parents cannot afford. We're failing our kids when they are forced to live in over-

Mark your calendars!

## March 8 International Women's Day

### New video resources

BCTF members can borrow video resources for classroom or professional use from Information Services. The new videos page on the BCTF web site lists the titles acquired since the video database was last updated. Check out these excellent resources and search the video resources database for more titles by going to [www.bctf.ca/NewVideos.aspx](http://www.bctf.ca/NewVideos.aspx).

crowded or unsafe homes or have no homes at all.

How many teenagers are falling through the cracks, staying at friends, couch surfing, sleeping rough because there is no assistance for them? Because

## We're failing our kids when they are forced to live in overcrowded or unsafe homes or have no homes at all.

this is what's happening in BC. These kids don't see a golden decade. They don't benefit from five great goals. But I hope that soon we will have a National Child Day where we can be proud because we have invested in our children, in our future—proud that none of them in our rich province is going without shoes in the rain, without a bed of their own, and without fear of another day of hunger. Only then should we celebrate National Child Day.

— C. Trevena, *Hansard*  
November 22, 2006



# Teacher

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## Nutrition and learning

by Yvonne Eamor

**T**he *Cost of Eating in BC* is the annual report of Dietitians of Canada and this year's data takes a discouraging look at the plight of many BC families whose meals often come down to choosing between putting food on the table or providing a basic necessity such as shelter or clothing. "Food insecure" is the polite term to describe those who lack the basic food intake to provide them with the nutrients most of us take for granted.

### *Dietitians of Canada has launched a call to action to provide safe and healthy food for all Canadians.*

In 2005, children comprised one-third of the 75,000 British Columbians who used food banks to help supplement their food intake. For a province with a record surplus, says Dietitians of Canada, BC is also the province with the highest childhood poverty rate in Canada.

Food insecurity can have devastating and life-long developmental impacts on children and some of those play out in the classroom. "The link between nutrition and learning is well established," says Andrea Ottem, Registered Dietitians and contributor to *The Cost of Eating in BC*. "Inadequate income is a major barrier to eating well. If there's not enough money, the quantity and the quality of food in the home suffer."

The report breaks down the monthly costs for a family of four on welfare and shows it will spend 41% of its income on food and will have \$14 left over at the end of the month after food and shelter costs. Compare that to a family of four with an average income that will spend just 15% of its income for food and have \$2,425 left over after food and shelter costs. Single-parent families fall somewhere in-between.

For school-age children, the fallout of food insecurity is considerable. Ottem says, "Children and youth who eat a healthy diet do better on many fronts, academically, emotionally, and behaviourally."

Kids from low-income families often start school with the type of health issues that teachers know only too well. A Canadian study on child hunger (CMA, Vol. 163, Issue 8) shows hungry children will learn more slowly, will likely have behaviour problems, and have health problems that will contribute to the country's ballooning healthcare costs.

Vancouver Coastal Health Nutritionist Barbara Crocker says when kids are hungry, "they can't tend to the teachers, and they can't listen because they're focussed on their tummies. On a simple level, reaction to hunger is poor concentration. It's been shown that well-nourished children do better academically."

An American study on malnutrition, poverty, and intellectual development published in 1996 (*Scientific American*, 1996) showed poor diet influences mental development. It also sounded the alarm of a staggering prevalence of childhood that "triggers an array of health problems in children, many of which can become chronic."

The Public Health Agency of Canada says Canadians who don't get enough to eat are far more likely to have failing health or report that the state of their health falls in a fair-to-poor category. They also tend to have multiple chronic conditions and often they report psychological issues such as social exclusion, distress, and depression.

Of course, it's never too early to try to make certain that every child receives the proper nutrition. "There are a whole bunch of things that happen in the early years," says Crocker. "What are the assets in our community to launch our kids? How about food programs in daycare, and adequate funding? There needs to be a change in funding for low-income families, and while we're naïve to put all our energy there, we also need to look at local programs that can help support families."

She says parents shouldn't be left with the entire responsibility for ensuring all of our children receive the proper nutrition. "We all need to work together. We need school champions, and we need to engage everyone. Food is for all of us."

Dietitians of Canada has launched a call to action to provide safe and healthy food for all Canadians. It's suggesting a call for higher welfare rates, a higher minimum wage, and affordable housing. It invites the public to read its annual report in its entirety ([www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)) and to get involved to make change.

### *...if the Liberal government in BC is serious about the province being the most literate jurisdiction by 2010, it needs to address food insecurity and commit to a healthy eating and food security strategy.*

The organization says that if the Liberal government in BC is serious about the province being the most literate jurisdiction by 2010, it needs to address food insecurity and commit to a healthy eating and food security strategy. While the government has committed funds to support some initiatives, the Dietitians of Canada says it really needs to address the issue of poverty.

Yvonne Eamor is the BCTF's media relations officer.

### **Some recommendations from *The Cost of Eating in BC, 2006:***

1. Governments, at all levels, establish poverty reduction as an important policy goal.
2. Income assistance rates be increased to bring families on assistance out of poverty.
3. The minimum wage be increased.
4. Funding and support for adequate social housing be immediately put in place.
5. Government, at all levels, adequately fund sustainable initiatives that support food security for low income families.
6. Health Canada update the food costing toll based on what Canadians are eating.

## When member-to-member conflict hits! Where to turn? BCTF services

by Nancy Hinds

**I**n my role as BCTF staff coordinator for the Internal Mediation Service (IMS) and as the Code of Ethics administrator, few days pass without a call from some troubled teacher in conflict with a colleague. Too often, it seems that the call for help comes long after the problem first surfaced. Too often, neither party is speaking to one another by the time they call. Frequently, the member was not aware that the BC Teachers' Federation provides a range of dispute resolution options for members both locally and provincially. This article outlines how a member may access these services when she or he finds herself in conflict with another member.

### *Respectful, constructive relationships among teachers are important in our profession.*

Respectful, constructive relationships among teachers are important in our profession. The BCTF Code of Ethics outlines principles for responsible conduct between teachers and the public (students and parents), teachers and colleagues, and teachers and their union of professionals. But, positive relationships can break down and conflict is the result.

When this happens, it is always advisable to approach the other party first with the concern or issue. This is in keeping with general ethical practice (and the BCTF Code of Ethics, Clause 5). The first option is to handle the issue through assertiveness or if necessary, through negotiation with the other person. In reality, this may not happen because of concern for safety, repercussion, a tendency to avoid such issues, or a hope that the conflict will just go away.

If it seems improbable that the issues between the members

will be resolved through a direct problem-solving or negotiation method, members may request the assistance of a third party. They may turn to their school staff representative and/or their local president for advice and assistance with the matter. Depending on the nature of the conflict and the willingness of each member, the local may set up a meeting to resolve the dispute, with the staff representative or local president acting as facilitator or mediator. A few locals have their own internal mediation services, led by trained local teachers. It is worth checking.

Alternatively, the members in conflict may request third-party help from the BCTF Internal Mediation Service (IMS). The IMS mediates disputes that threaten good relationships and workplace climate among active members and others. Trained BCTF members act as mediators in this service. Co-mediation teams of two, mediate in neutral settings; all information is confidential to the members directly involved. No notes are maintained. This service is at no cost to the members. Applications may be made by completing pre-mediation forms that can be found in all local offices or on the BCTF web site. Numerous member-to-member disputes have been resolved through the Federation's IMS service since its inception.

Sometimes, the member conflict relates to a breach of the BCTF's Code of Ethics under Clause 5, which states: "The teacher directs any criticism of the teaching performance and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private, and only then, after informing the colleague in writing of the intent to do so, may direct the criticism, in confidence, to appropriate individuals who are able to offer advice and assistance. It shall not be considered a breach of the Code of Ethics for a member to follow legal requirements or official protocols in

reporting child protection issues." When a member believes that a breach has been committed, she or he may file a complaint of such breach against another member by completing and submitting a complaint form, available from the local president or on the BCTF web site. It is incumbent on any member filing a complaint to submit documentation to substantiate their claim. The member so charged will be given the opportunity to respond in writing to the allegation. All information will be placed before a screening panel of Judicial Council members, duly elected by the Representative Assembly to serve in this capacity.

Depending on the nature of the conflict, additional options may be to file a harassment complaint with the superintendent against the other member, or to file a grievance against the employer for failure to maintain a harassment-free working

### *...the BC Teachers' Federation provides a range of dispute resolution options for members both locally and provincially.*

environment. The detailed processes for doing so are contained in the collective agreement. Advice on the availability of these options is available from local offices and from BCTF field-service representatives.

Each of the above options is available to members as a conflict resolution service supported by the member's union—the BCTF. The options provide due process in times of personal crisis—a safety net when the one time in one's career such a service may be needed.

Nancy Hinds is an assistant director, Professional and Social Issues Division.

## Looking back

### 70 years ago

Tucked away quietly on page seven of the new Junior High School course of studies are the following words, which may easily be missed by the harassed teacher bent on gulping the other 600 odd pages: "The provision of study periods should reduce greatly the amount of homework required of pupils. Written exercises and the solution of mathematical problems should not be exacted as homework. Work done out of school should represent joyous and creative activity." Some students need to be kept from doing excessive homework, and thereby ruining their already somewhat feeble health.

— March 1937, *The BC Teacher*

### 50 years ago

Staff meetings, the mention of which usually brings a frown to the brows of most teachers, can be made much more pleasant and interesting to all if certain

steps are taken in a constructive, co-operative, and friendly manner. The principal proposed what we, the staff, thought a highly progressive idea. He suggested that the staff representative include in his duties that of being chairman at all staff meetings. The staff representative, as chairman, is in an excellent position to build up and maintain among the staff an enthusiastic and personal interest in their local association, which is the backbone of the Federation.

— March 1957, *The BC Teacher*

### 30 years ago

Within two hours of my call to the school board, I found myself facing 20 Grade 11 and 12 Graphic Communications students. Everything went well until one of the students asked me to explain how to make rubber stamps and my only possible answer was, "I wish I knew; let's look at the manual." I left the manual with the student and a few days later he

was explaining the process of rubber stamp-making to the other students. This was the beginning of student produced learning activity packages.

— March-April 1977, *The BC Teacher*

### 10 years ago

A preschooler surprises her family by expressing fear and hostility toward "black people" after seeing *Roots* on TV. A frightening scene of a slave's whipping has caused her to conclude that the character must be a very bad person to be so severely punished, a belief supported by his dark skin and pain-contorted face, which appear to her to be both evil and scary. Like a darkening mirror, television violence extinguishes the hope that lights childhood, reflecting what is dark within ourselves and our society.

— March 1997, *Teacher*

Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

## Historical perspectives

# 90 years of BCTF programs and services

by Ken Novakowski

The BCTF today, after 90 years of representing the public school teachers of the province, has become a significant public-sector union in the labour community, an effective advocate for public education with government and the media, and an organization that continues to represent all of the interests of its members—economic, professional, and social. From its inception, the BCTF developed a commitment and culture that has made it a very democratic union, a diverse and all-encompassing service organization, and a public voice for teachers that has served the profession well on a wide range of issues. This article is intended to give some historical perspective to how the BCTF and its many programs and services came into existence and grew into the BCTF we know today.

Two teacher strikes, Victoria in 1919 and New Westminster in 1921, and dramatic action by Langley teachers in 1939 helped to put in place a system of **teacher bargaining** that would ultimately lead to improvements in the economic welfare of teachers. This system of bargaining, which ultimately led to compulsory arbitration to resolve disputes, was in place until full-scope local bargaining was legislated in 1987. And for the first 30 years of our existence we had to sign up all members and collect fees every

year, before legislation in 1947 gave us **statutory compulsory membership** and recognized the **Code of Ethics** we instituted in 1943.

And the BCTF started early (1919) to advocate for a teacher pension policy resulting finally in a *Teachers' Pension Act* in 1929, establishing the basis of pensions as years of service and contribution level. Indeed, our first province-wide job action in March of 1971, was a one-day provincial strike over pensions. We continued to work on pensions until we achieved the fine pensions we have today under our joint-trusted **BC Teachers' Pension Plan**.

In 1939, the BCTF started its own Sick Benefit Fund to assist teachers who were ill and had run out of sick leave. This, of course, was the genesis of our **Salary Indemnity Plan** of today. And from the organization's beginnings, we strove to improve the tenure and professional rights of teachers, highlighting an early demand for teachers to make their own decisions about the work in their classrooms and about instructional materials and curriculum.

The *BC Teacher*, although it has changed over the years in form and format, has been our official publication since 1919, starting first as *The Educator* and becoming *The Teacher* in 1921. And in 1940, we established a service that remains to this day unique amongst teacher

organizations—**BCTF Lesson Aids Service**. Teachers develop their own teaching materials that the Federation makes available to other teachers at cost.

In 1957, the BCTF began to actively promote the creation of **Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs)**. Prior to that time there were loosely organized sessions at AGMs of "specialist groupings." PSAs grew and expanded forming PSA Council and today consist of 33 PSAs that play an active role in the professional lives of teachers.

In 1961, we launched our **international program** beginning with an initial allocation of \$1 per member, moving in 1983 to allocate 1.86% of our active membership fee each year to solidarity work with teacher unions in South and Central America and in Southern Africa, spawning one of the most successful union international programs in the country.

In the 1960s, we launched major **working and learning conditions** initiatives giving rise to the WLC program, later integrating into our bargaining work. The fight for smaller class sizes and improved classroom conditions for our students has been a hallmark of our public advocacy for over half a century. And, of course, it continues today.

In 1970, the BCTF launched a **Status of Women program** and several years later the **Program Against Racism**. Both these

programs helped spawn a generation of social activists in the union—work that continues today as part of the Federation's Social Justice program, established by the 1998 AGM.

In 1978, the BCTF established the first of its **BCTF Associates' program**, which put in place the concept of "teachers teaching teachers," an initiative that eventually gave rise to the **Staff Representative Training Program** (now School Union Representative Training Program) seven years later. And in the early 1980s we began our **Internal Mediation Service** providing skilled, trained members to help mediate conflicts in schools—another service unique to the BCTF. In 1986, we began our **Program Quality Teach**, a program that thrives to this day based on promoting teacher inquiry and reflection into their teaching practice.

The demands of full-scope bargaining, begun in 1987, gave rise to grievance support to locals, assistance in arbitrations, strike support, and a whole range of bargaining-related activities undertaken by the Federation to support first local bargaining and then when it was imposed in 1994—provincial bargaining. Also in the early 1990s, we began expanding our Salary Indemnity Program to include a significant teacher **rehabilitation component**. This program today serves teachers in practically every school district in the province.

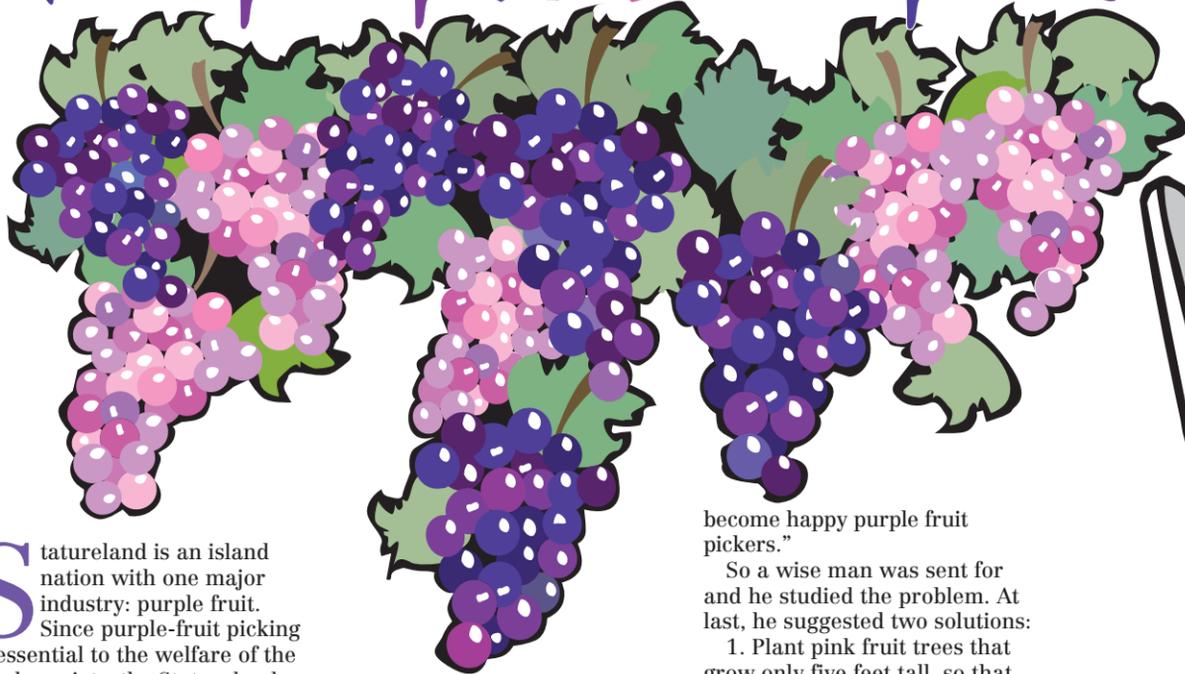
In 1991, we established a **Research Department** and in 1994, a program to provide support and services to our **Francophone members**. In 2000, we established a **Peer Support program** and in that same year began our **Aboriginal Education program**, providing support to Aboriginal teachers and working to increase the success of Aboriginal students in public schools.

In 1997, we launched a full-fledged **health and safety program** in the Federation with a focus on prevention, and it later expanded to include extensive work with members on WCB cases and appeals.

This historical emergence of Federation programs and services over many generations must be seen alongside all that we essentially do that is central to our organization—defend public education, advocate for improved classroom conditions for teachers and students, struggle for improved bargaining and professional rights for members, and fight for a just and progressive society. History shows that we have never eliminated any significant Federation program or service. Hence our uniqueness as a member-driven organization that successfully continues to represent the best collective interests of all of our individual members and has done so since 1917.

Ken Novakowski is the BCTF's executive director.

## The purple-fruit-picking parable



Statureland is an island nation with one major industry: purple fruit. Since purple-fruit picking is essential to the welfare of the whole society, the Statureland schools' basic curriculum is intended to train effective purple fruit pickers.

Because purple fruit grows only at the top of eight-foot trees, the most important and critical course within the curriculum has been Growing. All children are required to take Growing, and they are expected to complete six feet of growth—the minimum criterion for graduation as purple-fruit pickers and the average height of Staturelandians, based upon standardized growing tests.

The course content of Growing includes stretching, reaching, jumping, tiptoeing, and thinking tall.

Each year, each child's skill and abilities in growing are assessed, and each child

assigned a grade. Those children who achieve average scores on the standardized growing test are assigned B and C grades. Students, who, through their commitment to growing, exceed expected levels, receive As.

Slow growing students receive Fs and are regularly and publicly admonished for their lack of effort and inattention to the primary task. These latter children often develop poor self-images and antisocial behaviour that disrupts the school program and interferes with children who really want to grow.

"This will never do!" said the people. "We must call a wise man to consider our problem and tell us how to help the children grow better and faster and

become happy purple fruit pickers."

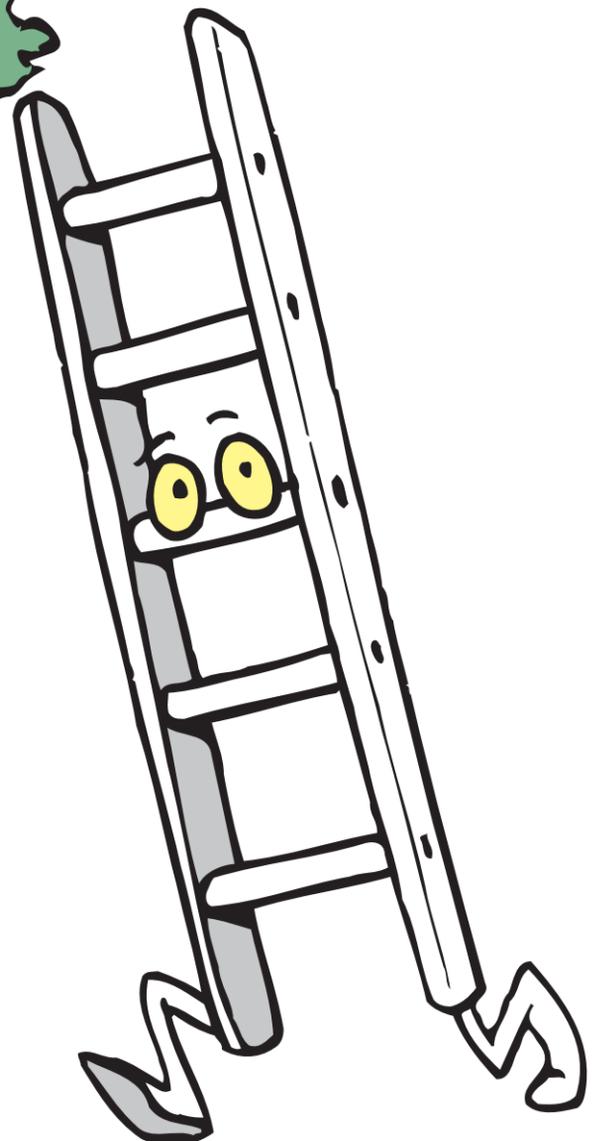
So a wise man was sent for and he studied the problem. At last, he suggested two solutions:

1. Plant pink fruit trees that grow only five feet tall, so that even four-foot students may be successful pickers.
2. Provide ladders so that all students who wish to pick purple fruit can reach the tops of the trees.

"No, no, no!" said the people. "This will never work. How can we then give grades if eight-foot trees are goals for some students and five-foot trees are goals for other students? How can it be fair to the naturally tall students if children on ladders can also stand six feet tall and reach the purple fruit! However shall we give grades?"

"Ah," said the wise man, "you can't. You must decide whether you want to grade children or have fruit picked."

Reprinted from *CCPA Education Monitor*, Fall 1998.



## The grad requirement formerly known as portfolio

Although three pieces from the old grad portfolio remain as graduation requirements, the grad portfolio itself is gone.

On February 1, 2007, Education Minister Shirley Bond announced her decision with respect to the grad portfolio. After announcing last July that the grad portfolio would not be mandatory for students graduating in the 2006–07 school year, Bond initiated a review. In response to the feedback received in that review, Minister Bond decided that the portfolio would no longer be mandatory.

*The minister made it clear that there will be no additional funding so districts may be reluctant to make this more complicated than is absolutely necessary.*

Three items in the former portfolio remain as graduation requirements but schools are no longer required to have students do a portfolio to demonstrate that they have met the requirements.

The three graduation requirements that remain are:

- 80 hours of physical activity, in addition to the mandatory PE 10 course.
- a graduation transition plan that will help students set goals for post-secondary education or career pursuits.
- 30 hours of work experience or community service, a grad requirement that existed before the introduction of the grad portfolio.

Students must complete these three requirements in Grades 10–12. Students who meet the standards will receive four credits that count toward graduation.

These three grad requirements do not collectively have a name. The term “portfolio” is not an accurate description but the ministry has not given them a label. Someone on the ministry’s graduation listserv has called these requirements the “new three thingy thing.” That may have to do for now.

There are some reasons, besides accuracy, for not continuing to call the three requirements “grad portfolio.” The new ministry policy opens the door for schools and districts to require a portfolio as a way for students to demonstrate that they have met the three remaining graduation requirements.

“The Graduation Portfolio is no longer the mandatory delivery method for schools to use to meet standards. Instead, the Ministry is working to strengthen existing standards for physical activity, education and career planning and work experience and/or community service... School boards determine the appropriate delivery methods to help students meet these graduation transition standards. One way might be the development of a Graduation Portfolio.” –

Deputy Minister Emery Dosdall, Feb. 1, 2007

“Starting in 2007–08, students will be required to meet three standards to graduate, and we will leave it up to school boards to decide how students meet those standards... Boards may still choose to have students develop a portfolio to demonstrate they have met the standards or boards may use other ways to ensure students have met the standards.”

– Education Minister Shirley Bond, news release, Feb. 1, 2007

The minister made it clear that there will be no additional funding so districts may be reluctant to make this more complicated than is absolutely necessary. Boards will likely be wary of putting resources into maintaining or resurrecting the portfolio in the face of school closures and difficulties complying with Bill 33. On the other hand, we have already heard that one district plans to maintain something fairly close to the requirements of the existing portfolio. It is therefore important that there be broad-based teacher input into local decisions about how to document student completion of the three remaining requirements.

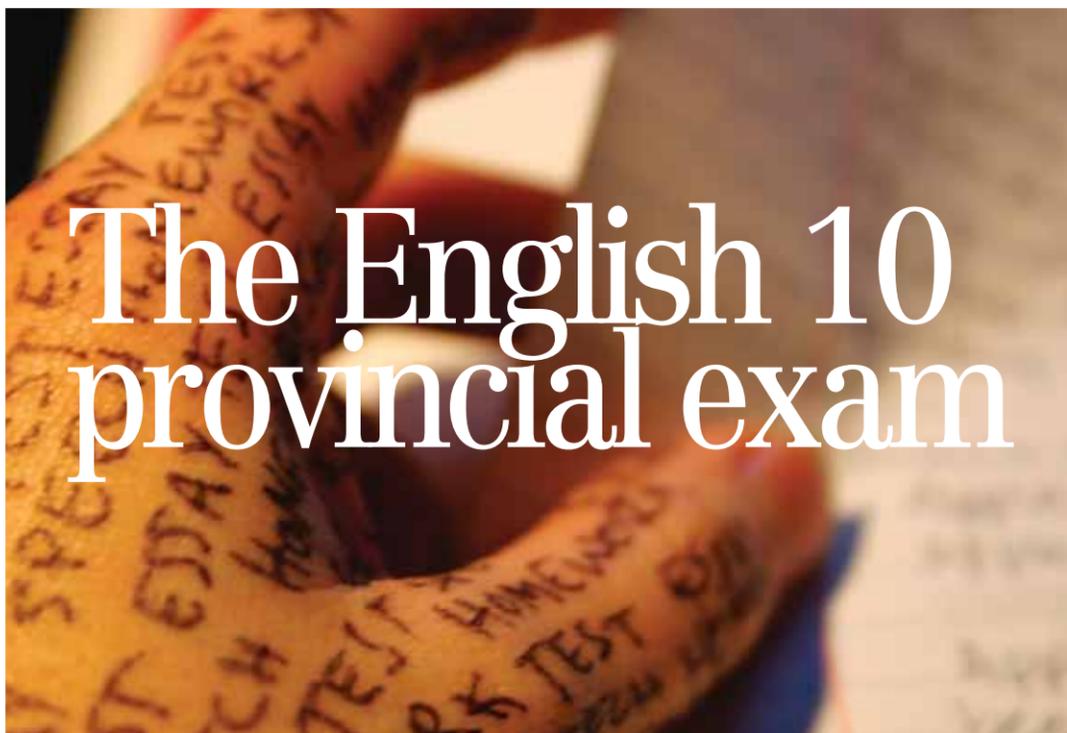
There was considerable disagreement in the review between people who thought the grad portfolio should remain mandatory and those who

*Dozens of questions by teacher, school counselors, and administrators on the ministry’s graduation listserv remain unanswered.*

thought it should be scrapped, but everyone agreed that implementation had been a fiasco. This seems to be the one message the ministry simply did not hear. All the earlier implementation errors are being replicated. As for the grad portfolio earlier, there is no additional funding for implementation. Under the guise of “flexibility and choice,” the ministry is leaving all the difficult ways and means questions to schools and districts. The ministry will release a new program guide for the three remaining grad requirements but it will be ready in September 2007, rather than this spring when it is needed for planning purposes. Dozens of questions by teachers, school counsellors, and administrators on the ministry’s graduation listserv remain unanswered.

The BCTF will try to get members questions answered and have current information on the BCTF web site: [bctf.ca](http://bctf.ca).

– Anita Chapman



by Susan and Bill Stenson

What can one say about the emergence of compulsory government English 10 exams? There are two answers to this question: (1) lots and (2) not much that will have any impact on the present status quo.

To be fair, the perception may have been that students passing through some BC schools do not experience end-of-course exams, and that they ought to. To what extent this is true, I’m not sure. The school where we work, Claremont Secondary School, has always had end-of-course exams for English 9, English 10, and English 11, and to our way of thinking, the exams are superior to the current English 12 exam. All of our homegrown exams reflect sight passages in both short-story and poetry genres, and half the total value of the exam is a choice of essay questions that reflect the works studied during the year. This latter section gives an overall purpose and focus for the course and provides useful feedback to teachers on the units of study chosen. All three sections of the exam mirror the state of writing skills of our students—there are no objective sections to be found. How un-American.

Exams do funny things to pedagogy. We have heard of individual teachers and, in some cases, whole schools spending as much as 50% of their English 12 time to “school” their students on the vagaries of the exam they will eventually face. It is, after all, worth 40% of their final mark. The balance of the time, so I’ve been told, is concerned with the study of *Hamlet* and one novel (read orally to the students), proving once and for all there is more than one way to send students into the world after what, for many, is their last formal study of English. There are plenty of sound reasons to accept the notion of a formal exam of some sort at the end of 13 years of public school. The ramifications of what many perceive as a necessity is consequential enough at the Grade 12 level. The introduction of a government exam at the English 10 level is an additional hurdle that must now be dealt with and the context is out of tune.

The English 12 exam is a provincial exam in a context we are accustomed to. The English 10 exam is not. Marking procedures have varied

tremendously, if the grapevine has any credence. Initially, in Saanich, marking was done on a Saturday with teachers who were paid. Now, Grade 10 teachers must mark the exam. At our school, this means an English teacher may have four exams to mark at the end of a given semester. English 10 exams are kept under lock and key and are group-marked. This exercise takes an entire day, not counting the time to collect examples and photocopy, etc. The creation, administration, and marking of a government exam requires adequate funding, and to this point the funding of the English 10 exam has not come close. This is information that needs to be shared with the general public. We cannot call these examinations provincial! The teachers are not given clear guidelines or exemplars. The exams are scooped up and sold to a Kelowna company and resold to districts across the province.

One of the most innocuous aspects of having a government

*We have heard of individual teachers and, in some cases, whole schools spending as much as 50% of their English 12 time to “school” their students on the vagaries of the exam they will eventually face.*

exam at the English 10 level is the timing of the exam. All students must take English 9 and English 10. After that there are options and students who struggle do not have to follow the academic focus of English 11 and English 12. It has been routine for years at our school to peruse closely the results of students for whom success in English 11 and English 12 is not a given—in order that the best decision for their future can be made. Because of timetabling complexities at the secondary level, particularly on the semester system, teachers no longer have control over offering to such “at risk” students and their families useful, professional advice. The exams are shipped off for accounting purposes and a month or more into the next semester the “truth” the government has been desperately seeking is made

available. For many, this information comes too late. The timing of the exam also impacts some students in the process of attaining “designated” status because of inherent learning difficulties. Such designation is often obtained by Grade 10, but for many students this is the year when such distinction becomes official. Accommodations that would be forthcoming during the English 12 exam—things like more time, a scribe, a computer—are not in place for the English 10 exercise. Another point that is often missed when marking under such conditions, particularly with the reading section, is that teachers look for two or three mundane points established through an exemplar or established through a particularly dominant personality at the table. Experienced teachers versus non-experienced, full contract teachers versus received-a-pink-slip teachers. This is not a comfortable position.

In Saanich, the year we attempted district-wide marking, it was impossible to agree on exemplars. The teachers simply could not agree and the government provided no assistance. A number of exam marks returned to the school with extremely low grades. Upon investigation, we noticed they’d all been marked by the same person (based on the use of pencil, not pen). Two teachers and an administrator re-marked these exams and in every case the marks improved by one or two on the scale of six.

Student evaluation is important. A process of consultation including strong representation from the professional teachers of English would be encouraging and then the timing and form of evaluation can best be tailored to meet the needs of our students in the context of the overall educational experience. The distance between current policymaking in the province of BC and effective delivery of that service to the clientele it is intended for makes headlines when it is discovered in the health field or when a decision to build fast ferries is made. It is a process that has proven to get us nowhere. Nowhere fast.

Bill and Susan Stenson teach at Claremont Secondary School, Victoria and co-founded the Claremont Review.

Reprinted from *Update*, the journal of the BC Teachers of English Language Arts, vol. 48, #2, October 2006.

## The great debate on school measurement

by Janet Amsden

Peter Cowley, director of School Performance Studies at the Fraser Institute and Dr. Paul Shaker, dean of education at Simon Fraser University argued on the topic of school measurement at the Newlands Golf Club in Langley on January 18. Organized by the BC Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the event was classic debate with each speaker giving timed statements and rebuttals.

*“Rankings crystallize focus on schools and energize them.”*

— Peter Cowley

Peter Cowley opened saying that schooling is a service and taxpayers need access to standardized results so that they can compare schools. Paul Shaker countered with “Real science is not present in the Fraser Institute testing process” and suggested alternatives to the Fraser Institute’s BC School Report Card. Shaker’s alternatives, which involved external evaluations, do not meet Cowley’s criteria for school measurement; data collection that includes all schools, is easily reportable, and allows parents to compare schools.

They clashed on the topic of low scores for schools. Shaker called the practice demoralizing; Cowley saw a zero score as a catalyst for improvement. He told the audience he has been on the receiving end of tears, anger, and frustration from some “very good people.”

“It’s hard,” he admitted.

That the two men viewed the question from different beliefs was apparent in their language throughout the discussion. Shaker used the language of the research facility and Cowley that of the marketplace.

*“Reducing school scores to a single indicator is the ‘Enronization’ of education... It demoralizes people. It is wrong, it is corrupt!”*

— Paul Shaker

Shaker said the Fraser Institute reports fail to meet scholarly standards because no hypothesis is tested, no peers review the process, no experts are consulted, and tests are used for purposes for which they were not intended. He criticized Cowley for not including factors such as parent education, numbers of ESL, and students with special needs in the calculation of school scores. (Those data are presented but are not part of the score computation.)

Cowley rebutted, “We could do that...but I have an issue about whether we should modify the data because parents’ education, etc. will not factor into a prospective employer’s decision to hire a student, or a university’s decision to admit a student.”

When asked what he would do if he were minister of education Cowley mused, “I would like to open things up a bit, to organizations and people who would try things differently.” In this context he made a distinction between the

term ‘public education’ and ‘education of the public.’

In response to a request to include a confidence interval for the school rankings, one that

*“The Province issue that compares schools is in its second highest seller every year.”*

— Peter Cowley

would show how far apart scores need be to have any meaning, Cowley replied that they decided not to include estimates of error. Instead, they chose to report results over a five-year period so that parents can see the results over time.

“Cherry picking,” was Paul Shaker’s response. “That’s why we have peer review.”

Shaker was also critical of *The Vancouver Sun* for ‘distorting the value of the data to the public by devoting 29 pages to the report card. He argued that

*“The question is whether or not we should rank school rather than whether or not we should measure them. We agree to disagree on the benefit to students of whether we should rank schools.”*

— Peter Cowley

the Fraser Institute encourages ‘phenomenological primitives’—that people attach themselves to primitive notions about schools generated from fragmented knowledge (see *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2005) and that the press has responsibility to prevent this. He commended *The Sun* for responsible journalism in its recent unmasking of the RCMP’s ‘scientific criticism’ of Vancouver’s safe injection site as opinion.

Although the audience, mainly teachers, administrators, and trustees appeared more supportive of Shaker’s arguments, Cowley summed up the outcome, saying, “We agree to disagree on the benefits to ranking to students.” It was clear that their disagreement was deep.

*“The medium is the message. Measuring or ranking is not a cure-all, but if you are going to do ranking, at least do it with scientific accuracy.”*

— Paul Shaker

Janet Amsden teaches at Fairview Elementary School, Maple Ridge.

“Just as Enron’s focus on stock price corrupted the company by encouraging every employee to do everything possible to keep the stock price climbing, school administrators were pressured to use ‘any means necessary’ to pump up test scores. Everything from replacing good curriculum with test practice drills to dumping weak students likely to be a liability to the school’s ratings.”

— Linda McNeil  
Rice University, author of  
*Contradictions of School Reform*

## Opening our parachutes to diversity

by Patrik Parkes

“Minds are like parachutes; they work best when opened.” This saying was chosen as the theme for the 2006 BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages (BCATML) annual conference, which I attended October 20. As I subscribe whole-heartedly to the notion of opening minds, I was happy with this choice for a theme. Yet I have often thought that, as teachers, we can open

*Teachers can be at the forefront of opening minds, but we first need to check that we have opened our own.*

our students’ minds only as wide as we have opened our own—a notion that was reinforced through my participation in the BCATML conference.

On occasion I have been told that I don’t look like a Japanese language teacher, and I have heard the comment that Caucasian students have less ability than Asian students at learning Japanese. Such comments have come from both the general public and teachers, and I heard a few such remarks at the BCATML conference. This is, of course, purely anecdotal, and is no indication of a general trend in thinking. Indeed, I believe it reflects the views of a small minority. Nevertheless, I can’t help but think that, if language learning and Canadian multiculturalism is understood as a project to open minds and create connections (rather than tribalize), we still have some distance to travel in terms of correcting misconceptions.

Comments about my not looking like a Japanese teacher are mostly innocuous. Nevertheless, in 21st Century Canada, it should come as no surprise that I, a third generation Canadian of mixed Germanic and Slavonic European cultural heritage, can

speak Japanese. Nor should it surprise anyone that my French teacher is the daughter of Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong immigrants.

Note that I didn’t refer to myself as Caucasian, which is a term commonly perceived to be a more polite substitute for white, which, as we know, is a code word for Anglophone of European ancestry. As well, it is a term that conveys misconceptions or generalizations about the attitudes and values of Anglophones of European ancestry. Labelling students as white, black, Asian, etc., does little to assist teachers in understanding the needs of individual learners. And this brings me to comments regarding the ability of Caucasians to learn Japanese, and why, in order to combat stereotypes, we need to be vigilantly precise about descriptive terminology.

Comments regarding the comparative abilities of Caucasian and Asian students at learning the Japanese language are, at the very least, begging the question. Such comments might also reveal misconceptions regarding race. However, I don’t believe the people who make such comments really mean what they say. That is, I don’t believe they mean that people of the Caucasoid race (whose ancestry can be traced to Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia) are genetically less predisposed to learning Japanese than people of the Mongoloid race (whose ancestry can be traced to Central Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and North America). Nor am I aware of any research that points to race having any bearing on an individual’s ability to learn one language over another. Rather, what I think is meant is that, when learning Japanese, students whose first language is English lack some advantages when compared with students who speak an Altaic mother tongue (for example, Korean, Mongolian, or Turkish, which are grammatically closer to Japanese), or students who are literate in

Chinese (which shares an alphabet with Japanese). Making these distinctions is far more useful. As language teachers, if we acknowledge the language backgrounds of our students, and dispense with inaccurate labels, we are better able to assess students’ needs as language learners.

This principle of accuracy applies not just to language teachers, but teachers in general, and Canadians at large. I know that misconceptions and stereotypes exist in Canada because I often hear Canadians make statements about what Caucasian people are like, or what Asian people are like. I hear such statements from Canadians of many different backgrounds, immigrant and non-immigrant alike.

To be fair, Canadians are usually quite good at ignoring superficial differences between themselves. I know this because I lived for a number of years in a country that finds it difficult to accept outsiders. I was relieved to arrive back in Canada, primarily because here I feel I am more likely to be judged as an individual, and

*If not—and if minds truly are like parachutes—we’ll be in for unpleasant, frustrated landings.*

less likely to encounter exclusivity based on things that don’t matter.

Nevertheless, despite Canada’s virtues, work still needs to be done in order to open minds and create deeper understandings within our multicultural, multiracial society. Teachers can be at the forefront of opening minds, but we first need to check that we have opened our own. If not—and if minds truly are like parachutes—we’ll be in for unpleasant, frustrated landings.

Patrik Parkes is a teacher on call for the Burnaby and Coquitlam School Districts.



# Our students' future? Worth voting for

by Sylvia Bishop

Teachers care deeply about their students. Helping fulfill the promise each student holds is at the centre of teachers' commitment to the profession. We work hard to provide the best and richest learning experiences possible under the increasing pressure of limited resources, cuts to programs, and loss of teaching colleagues.

Teachers know district and provincial funding challenges affect them and their students every day they are in school. But have federal policies and directions also been measured?

Consider the number of students living in poverty. Over 167,000 children in BC are living in poverty. The "working poor" now describes two-income households raising children in neighbourhoods with unaffordable housing and rising living costs. Teachers know the effects on student learning when children come to school tired and hungry. No learning can take place with hunger pains and fatigue present.

Consider what a difference an equitable and accessible national childcare program would make to working families.

Child and youth advocates have worked hard for over 25 years to see the establishment of a national childcare program, only to see it reduced to a \$100 a month cheque. Teachers know how a secure, regulated, and funded childcare program can assist in a child's early childhood development. The guidance and monitoring after-school student care also supports a student's learning.

Consider the affects of climate change and the environment we live in. Severe weather patterns and increased threats to ecological systems impact sustainability. What kind of world will our students live in 5, 10, or 20 years from now? Scientists indicate that climate change as a result of global warming can be reversed. It requires policies to initiate and enforce the changes we need.

There is an opportunity likely coming this year, to bring about the changes our students and their families need. In all likelihood, a federal election will be called either in the spring or fall of this year.

Now more than ever, every single vote—your vote—matters. Pundits predict Canada may face years of minority governments. This comes during a time of decreasing voter turnout in

federal elections. The only way to change this is for every single eligible voter to cast their vote come election day.

The BC Federation of Labour will once again conduct its *Count Me In* campaign. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) will be distributing information on issues that affect working families through its *Better Choices* campaign. These two web sites are a rich resource of information: [www.count-me-in.net](http://www.count-me-in.net) and [www.betterchoice.ca](http://www.betterchoice.ca).

The Federation will provide members with information on the issues. Look for upcoming articles in the *Teacher* newsmagazine and visit [bctf.ca](http://bctf.ca).

Here's what you can do. Make sure you are on the voters' list. In the period leading up to election day, get involved in the process by reading up on the issues and attending all candidates' meetings. Consider working for the candidate who best represents the interests of your students and their families. On election day, make your vote count.

Your students' future? It's your choice.

*Sylvia Bishop is an assistant director, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division.*



## The privatization boondoggle

The World Bank now admits that private water schemes are generally no more efficient than public schemes. Private pension systems are far less efficient than public schemes. As for healthcare, we have only to compare the heavily privatized and less-efficient US system with the healthcare system in virtually all other industrialized countries to see that public systems deliver better results at far lower costs.

The affordability argument is clearly nonsense. The cost of capital is a major part of the cost of any infrastructure investment. Any private group pays a significantly higher price for capital. The interest rates on

government bonds are much lower than rates paid by even blue-chip private corporations. Publicly financed projects start out with a huge cost advantage. The demands of private investors plus the huge fees that the lawyers and fixers take, leave private projects typically costing 30% to 40% more than public investments. No market-driven efficiencies like squeezing workers' wages are going to cover those extra costs, so we end up paying a lot more or get poorer services, or both.

So, if they are such bad deals, why are governments still pushing them? Partly because they can hide them. The price only becomes clear down the road, when the politicians are usually gone. The details of contracts are rarely made public, and when they are, it is usually too late to change them.

Privatization initiatives must come under scrutiny, where they can be exposed as the boondoggles they are. Health care, education, infrastructure, public utilities, even our public pension system, are all under persistent assault by the corporate privatizers. The deals are too rich for them to give up easily. It will be a long struggle—a struggle not only for ourselves, but for our children and grandchildren.

—Louis Erlichman  
IAMAW Canada

# Teacher associations call for action on FSL teaching and learning conditions

Have you read the recent report on French-as-a-second-language (FSL) teaching and learning in Canada?

The report presents the results of a national survey of the challenges faced by FSL teachers, a project jointly undertaken by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT), and funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

**The quantity and quality of library resources, computer software and community resources were considered as "poor" by the majority of respondents.**

A total of 1,305 FSL teachers, representing all provinces and territories, completed a web-based questionnaire on their perceptions and opinions regarding teaching resources, other resources (e.g., classrooms, consultants, French-speaking support staff), support from key stakeholders, teaching conditions, and professional development opportunities. All four FSL program types currently available in Canada were represented in the sample: Core French (CF), French Immersion (FI), Extended French, and Intensive French.

The questionnaire also asked

about themselves, their schools, their teaching experience, and their educational background. Responding FSL teachers were: predominantly female, distributed across FSL program types, geographically representative (except in the case of Quebec and BC), representative of a range of size of board and school, generally very experienced teachers, generally Anglophone, quite confident about their own abilities in French, and mostly from CF backgrounds.

### Findings

This report presents the survey findings under the five main categories of questions: teaching resources, other resources, support from stakeholders, teaching conditions, and professional development.

Overall, the majority of respondents considered commercial materials to be "poor" or "adequate" although CF teachers were more satisfied with these materials than FI teachers for whom few such materials exist, particularly materials representing Franco-phone culture. The quantity and quality of library resources, computer software and, community resources were considered as "poor" by the majority of respondents.

With regard to other resources, more than 40% of the teachers report that a classroom dedicated to FSL and an FSL consultant to help them with their teaching are not available to them. Funding for activities, lack of French-speaking supply teachers, consultants for students with special needs, French-speaking non-teaching staff also concern the majority

of teachers. However, the majority of the teachers report easy access to computers, the Internet, space for lesson preparation, and storage space. Most teachers perceived the community in which they teach to be the least supportive of their work, while school administration was perceived to be very supportive. CF teachers also report less support from parents and students.

The majority of FSL teachers reported that teaching conditions (e.g., class size, special needs students, administrative duties) were slightly, or somewhat, manageable. It seems, however, that teachers found it difficult to interpret the differences between conditions that were "slightly," "somewhat," or "very" manageable, since "class diversity" was the challenge most often mentioned by teachers in answer to the open-ended questions.

Most FSL teachers report participation in PD through discussions with colleagues, reading professional literature, and attendance at one workshop each year. It appears that some

**Almost 40% of respondents have considered leaving FSL teaching.**

provinces, instead of providing routine workshops and conferences, have moved into electronic delivery of PD. Teachers suggest that funding, relevant topics, PD during school hours, and French-speaking supply teachers will make PD more accessible to them.

### Future directions

Almost 40% of respondents have considered leaving FSL teaching. This obviously signals the need for a follow-up study to discover their reasons and the role sponsoring associations could play to reduce this number.

**... "class diversity" was the challenge most often mentioned by teachers in answer to the open-ended questions.**

Only 31.6% of respondents hold FSL specialist certificates. To what extent does this play a role in their ability to meet the challenges of FSL teaching and their future as FSL teachers? Sponsoring associations, in partnership with faculties of education, may be able to answer this question and ensure that faculty curricula reflect the resulting findings.

Survey respondents were mainly experienced teachers. As a result, we know relatively little about recent graduates from faculties of education and whether they are better equipped to deal with the challenges awaiting them. A study of teachers during their first years of teaching (graduates of a representative sample of faculties of education in several provinces/territories) could answer this question. Again, the sponsoring associations could undertake such a study.

Teachers expressed a need for PD to upgrade their language

skills and learn about new FSL methodologies. The sponsoring associations could provide this PD.

Teachers expressed the need for resources reflecting Franco-phone culture as well as library resources, computer software. In this case, too, the findings point to a clear role for the sponsoring associations.

Negative attitudes toward French have been well documented in the literature and substantiated in our survey. The sponsoring associations could partner with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and Canadian Parents for French to improve the situation of the FSL teacher.

**Teachers expressed the need for resources reflecting Franco-phone culture as well as library resources, computer software.**

The full report is available in English and French at: The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), [www.caslt.org](http://www.caslt.org), The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), [www.ctf-fce.ca](http://www.ctf-fce.ca), The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT), [www.acpi-cait.ca](http://www.acpi-cait.ca).

Excerpted from the report's executive summary. The researchers involved in the report are: Sharon Lapkin, University of Toronto; Alina MacFarlane, CASLT research officer; Larry Vandergrift, University of Ottawa.

# Lifelong learner

## A chat with Mary-Wynne Ashford

by Kirk Longpré

Originally a secondary school chemistry teacher, Dr. Mary-Wynne Ashford returned to University of Calgary to study medicine at 38 with three children in school. She practiced as a family physician for 11 years and specialized in palliative care. Ashford is past president of the International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, which won the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. She received her PhD from Simon Fraser University in 1997 where she studied the roots of violence. In the past, Ashford has received the prestigious Gandhi Award from Simon Fraser University, the Governor General of Canada's medal twice, YWCA Women of Distinction Award, the YMCA Peace Medal, and the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility Distinguished Physician Award.

**Longpré:** It seems that you are still an educator at heart.  
**Ashford:** I have always loved teaching and have incorporated it in everything I do, from playing with children to practicing medicine. I studied medicine because I was fascinated by the field of psycho-neuro-biology. I wrote a column in the *Calgary Herald* about the funny things that happened behind the scenes at the zoo. As a result, I found myself intrigued to know more about what is hard-wired into human behaviour, and what is the result of socialization. In particular, I wanted to know more about why people make choices that don't seem to be in

*I think that as educators we are most effective when we make our students responsible for their own learning, and we support their interests and directions.*

their best interests. I found that being a family doctor gave me the deepest contact with people and the issues they were facing.

**Longpré:** You have been described as the epitome of a lifelong learner. From your perspective how might we, as educators, affect the quest to continually learn in our students.

**Ashford:** I am afraid that lifelong learning is something I can't stop. I don't set out to do it, I just find myself curious about many things. I think that as educators we are most effective when we make our students responsible for their own learning, and we support their interests and directions. I am a strong supporter of the alternative school programs that are student-directed. They support the student's own creative initiatives and the teachers are willing to wait for the student to assume autonomy. The students usually

respond by rising to new levels of competence. My own learning was transformed when I studied medicine at the University of Calgary because it is a non-competitive pass/fail school. That means that students receive a grade and if it is above the "minimal pass level" they

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get the grade of "pass." If they are below the mpl, they repeat the exam a month or so later, but they are given a mentor to help them in the meantime. In the beginning, I was a very competitive student and found it difficult not to know where I stood in relation to the rest of my class. Finally I got the point—if you don't feel secure about your knowledge, study the subject more! In other words, study for mastery, not to compete against others. This insight changed my life as I discovered the joy of learning in co-operative groups.

**Longpré:** What do you see as the most pressing issues facing students today?

**Ashford:** We are at a time of many planetary crises. Not only must students understand the challenges we face, but they have to engage in the work to save the planet. We have to be in there with them. Our role is to show them the positive directions that can be taken, not to overwhelm them with the magnitude of the problems. We can show them the difference each person makes in reducing fossil fuel consumption or building co-operative communities. We must continue to draw them into human relationships, help them find their spiritual direction, and connect them to the earth.

**Longpré:** What would you like to see happening in classrooms that is not happening now?

**Ashford:** There are outstanding schools and classrooms already, but they are not available to everyone. Here is a short list of what would be in my ideal school: Small schools, looser

*We have much to learn from Aboriginal cultures about how to support children in learning.*

definition of grades so that students can advance in one area and move more slowly in another, more involvement with the whole community, especially parents. I would like to see a more compassionate response to kids living in poverty, i.e., second-hand clothes exchanges, showers and laundry facilities available, breakfast and lunch programs. Show kids they matter. Include service to others as a source of meaning in life

incorporated into all grades. I would like to see all staff trained in building community, and then active leadership to support respectful processes in all relationships in the school. I would also like to see opportunities for students to care for animals. We have much to learn from Aboriginal cultures about how to support children in learning.

**Longpré:** How might educators, and, in particular, schools do a better job of addressing those issues?

**Ashford:** We need to teach young people skills to participate in a world that is facing unprecedented challenges. Perhaps our task might be defined as teaching children how to survive in an uncertain future. We need to build their physical strength and agility, their ability to appreciate the natural world and relationships with others. We need to help them recognize the real sources of meaning in their lives—relationships to others, meaningful life work, belonging to a group that needs them, rootedness in place, service to others, joy in beauty, response to hardship, recognition of a spiritual base to life.

*The UN tells us that 70% of the workers for peace and social justice in the world are women.*

When young people complain of boredom, they are telling us they are not able to tap into a source of meaning in life. The best response to their boredom is not to provide adult solutions and stimulation, but to support them in connectedness to themselves, to others, and to the earth.

**Longpré:** In your book, *Enough Blood Shed: 101 Solutions to Violence, Terror and War* you encourage people to take risks and apply their own creative energy to finding new ways to manage and resolve conflicts. Within a narrowly prescribed curriculum how do you envision that happening in a school setting?

**Ashford:** I think that the IRPs actually give plenty of room for creative exploration. As teachers, we can imprison ourselves in a textbook and teach in ways most teachers have long since outgrown—by photocopied handouts, rote examinations, and limited boundaries on the subject matter. But if we take the subject matter and engage the students in exploring it for themselves, we quickly find ourselves supporting exciting new questions. Critical thinking can be applied to any subject and can take a whole class into a worthwhile study of a subject instead of a stale repetition of lists of facts.

**Longpré:** In your book you also talk about the importance of stories. I wonder if you could

elaborate on the role of storytelling to achieve social change?

**Ashford:** When we tell stories, we engage the listener in an emotional experience that may offer insights or alternative ways of thinking that help her or him understand the human experience. Through stories we can inspire and thrill young people with possibilities for their own future. Stories get past our resistance to learning something that is good for us.

**Longpré:** Your book also reveals a recurrent theme of ordinary people taking very courageous, enormously creative steps, with humour and total determination. Could you talk about the role of fun and humour in creating social change?

**Ashford:** Many of the challenges we face frighten us adults. Students do not want to hear more of how terrible the world is and how helpless they are. When we use fun and humour as we look at issues, we are able to bypass the fear and pessimism that is common in media, and instead we can enjoy taking steps toward change. It is important that projects taken up by youth should have a strong likelihood of success. By this I don't mean that the outcome will necessarily be a global revolution, the elimination of nuclear weapons, or the end of global climate change, but rather that the student project will succeed in its own objectives. It may raise money for a school in Africa, or it may lead to production of a video, or a meeting with city council. The project itself must be doable by students. In taking our own small steps toward the greater goal, we tend to lose our sense of helplessness and regain our joy in engaging in life.

**Longpré:** When you were working on the 2001 [www.BombsAway.org](http://www.BombsAway.org) campaign, what did

*Social change involves all dimensions of culture, not just the intellectual.*

you discover about the power of web-driven strategy for engaging youth in social activism? Are there lessons for educators here?

**Ashford:** The Bombsaway campaign brought medical students into the anti-nuclear movement and used billboards and signs on the transit system to direct other young people to the web site. The web site gave information in small bites and encouraged the young people to take action against Canada's involvement in the proposed US ballistic missile defence program. We learned that great billboards attracted enormous attention to the web site. We learned that we were weak in following up with continued excitement on the web site and that we needed more youth to take on the site.

**Longpré:** I wonder if you could comment on the role of women in helping create another world.  
**Ashford:** The UN tells us that 70% of the workers for peace

and social justice in the world are women. They also tell us that in conflict situations women are frequently going back and forth between groups in conflict and building relationships between the enemy groups. If the negotiating teams for a peace accord include women, the accord is more likely to hold. Cambodia is one example cited often. There is research now that shows a correlation between the status of women and the likelihood that a nation

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will resort to civil war. The more women elected to office, the longer women have had the vote, the more women in the work force and the smaller the average number of children, the less likely it is that the country will use armed violence in its internal conflicts. Women bring insights to conflict resolution and peace building that are different from the insights of men. When both genders are represented, the context of the negotiations shift and a nonviolent solution is more likely.

**Longpré:** Could you talk about the power of the arts to engage individuals and groups in social change?

**Ashford:** Social change involves all dimensions of culture, not just the intellectual. When we watch a movie or play, when we sing or dance together, we are moved in a different way than when we attend a lecture. I remember watching women in Africa singing, dancing, and laughing as they told us horrifying stories about apartheid in South Africa.

We must take the issues seriously, but not ourselves.

**Longpré:** How do you respond to an individual who says, "But what can I do?"

**Ashford:** Above all, I try not to tell them what to do. Sometimes I have to bite my tongue, but it is important to draw out from them what they like doing. Tell them that no one can tell them what to do, but perhaps they can think of some way to use the passion they have in a way that will make a better world. They will come up with their own idea and they are far more likely to do it because they own it.

**Longpré:** To conclude, do you have any final thoughts you would like to pass on to educators?

**Ashford:** I think teaching is the most important thing we do in life, whether we are in the school system or outside it. Our most important teaching is how we live our own life.

**Longpré:** Thank you for your time.

*Kirk Longpré is a teacher-librarian at Mount Douglas Secondary School in Victoria.*

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# A gift from music

by Robert Stelmach

When I was young, I hated and feared books. I have a short-term memory problem, perhaps as a result of falling out of a two-story window at 18 months. My short-term memory has been tested at a 50 percentile; not very conducive to learning how to read, since reading depends so much on memorization. Both the spelling and the meaning of words too often escaped me. The image I now have of my early experience as a reader is of a tiger jumping out at me from the jungle. I was so frightened of books, I crossed my eyes when reading, making the task impossible.

Although I was not told stories or read to as a child, I loved singing. And luckily for me, I had a reasonably good voice, so my choir teacher invited me,

*I was able to write it because I had loved to sing and because my school choir teacher had encouraged me.*

periodically, to lead the school choir in a song. If it were not for my love of singing and the support and appreciation of my choir teacher, I might never have learned to read, and ultimately would not have become a writer. But since I loved singing and most other kids (especially boys) did not, I ended up on a more level playing field. The task was also made easier because I only had to concentrate on a few words at a time and did far more listening than reading. Rhyme, rhythm, and the fact that others, particularly my choir teacher, liked my singing, also made the learning process easier. So much

so that at choir practice, my fear of reading never raised its ugly head.

I was in Grade 8 when the importance of reading suddenly hit me like a baseball bat across the back of the head. The principal at my school, Mr. H. D. Veres, called me into his office. He warned me against taking Liberal Arts in secondary school, and said that Industrial Arts was best for me. "Robert," he concluded rather sadly, "you'll never graduate from high school, let alone university."

I was shocked, but I also knew the facts—I was a lousy reader. At the time, I didn't know what Liberal Arts was and had nothing against Industrial Arts,

*There are many young people today, young adults included, who are very much like I was when I was young.*

but knew the latter was not for me. So I decided to change my ways and learn how to read. But how? By that time, I was so far behind it seemed impossible.

The strange thing was; the answer came from a grade school drop-out.

At age 16, I had a summer job with a tile company. One day, we were short of work, so I was loaned out to another contractor to level gravel in the basement of a new house. A truckload of gravel had been dumped through a basement window. I was given a rake and shovel and told to get to work, levelling the gravel. I didn't mind the work; I enjoyed physical labour. But there was a problem. Back in the mid-1960s, at least in Ontario, where I lived, there was no such thing as portable toilets; and it was the custom of construction workers, at that time, to use the mounds of gravel in unfinished basements to do their business. I soon found proof of this and almost lost my breakfast.

To get the job done, I had to concentrate on something else.

Much to my surprise, I started writing a poem in my head. It wasn't a long poem, so I worked it and reworked it. Whenever I thought I had finished and remembered my nose, I dug back into my poem, rewriting, until all of the gravel was raked flat. Then I ran upstairs for a breath of fresh air.

I was soon heading home in the company van with the foreman of the tile company driving. It was a long drive home. Part way, I remembered my poem, found an old envelope on the floor of the van, and brushed off the dry mud. I found a broken pencil in the ashtray, bit it sharp, and scribbled down my poem. The foreman was silent until I finished. I even forgot he was there. Then he asked what I had written. I was embarrassed.

I stuffed the envelope into my pocket, then leaned my head against the right-front window of the van, pretending, as any self-respecting teenager would have done, that I was deaf. Undeterred, the foreman pulled to the side of the road and said, "We aren't going anywhere unless you tell me what you wrote." After much kaffuffle on my part, I admitted that I had written a poem. Still determined, he cajoled me into reading it out loud.

"Wonderful!" he said. I was shocked. "How many poems have you written?"

"Just one," I said.

The foreman said, "I quit school when I was in Grade 2, but I think you're a poet."

I'd never heard anything like it before in my life. Someone had told me I was something—not that I couldn't read and was stupid, but that *I was a poet*. What a gift, a gift I would never forget. He turned my life around, for he saw in me something no one, not even I, had ever seen before. He saw potential. He empowered me. It took years of reading—yes reading—and a lot of it, before I was able to write as good a poem as I did that first day. And

it took even longer, until long after I had graduated from university, to figure out how I was able to write that *first* poem.

I was able to write it because I had loved to sing and because my school choir teacher had encouraged me. Without her, I would never have been able to write that first poem. Without her, I may never have learned the basics of reading, and ultimately the fascination for reading. And without her, I probably would never have become a writer. So, my choir teacher was a gift giver too, the first of many.

There are many young people today, young adults included, who are very much like I was when I was young. Reading for them is either a chore, something foreign, something frightening, or all three. They are second-language students,

*I feel it my duty and joy to pass my love of both reading and music on to as many of these young people as possible.*

some of them refugees, children of First Nations, children from broken homes, or children whose parents have never been readers themselves so never read to their children. I feel it my duty and joy to pass my love of both reading and music on to as many of these young people as possible. As one of my songs says:

*"I'm six or sixty, I'm not sure.  
But in my words there lies a cure  
For tummy sadness and older tears;  
A little gift to last for years.  
For when these children all grow up,  
They'll tell their children after sup'  
These stories, songs and poems—  
mine—  
Then in their eyes my star will shine."*

They are gifts that can last forever.

Robert Stelmach is a professional writer, storyteller, and educator. For more information, go to [www.maxtell.ca](http://www.maxtell.ca).

# At the heart of art

by Joy Silver

Do any of you, as I have, feel inadequately trained and experienced to teach good art lessons that meet the goals of the primary visual arts curriculum? Perhaps my efforts to change this situation for myself can help you to feel just fine teaching about the heart of art.

I had the privilege one summer of participating in a week-long elementary art education institute in my school district. The mini-workshops were presented by colleagues who are artists in their own right, and who knew the challenges generalist teachers were having in meeting the new visual arts learning outcomes. Many of us didn't know art vocabulary, could not identify the elements of art and didn't know how to engage students in

looking at, describing, and appreciating works of art. In that one week, I was on my way to feeling comfortable doing my own art exploration. I got a good sense of how I could make art education more authentic for my students. At the summer institute, we worked with the theme *Earth, Air, Fire, and Water*, and looked at traditional, impressionistic, and contemporary works of art to discover the art elements. We explored with salt and ice to make clouds, we did fabric art and we talked a lot about the fire that stirred in the spirit of artists to make images of their environments, their emotions, and their visions with their own unique visual expression.

One particular mini-workshop focussed on some of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists of the late 19th and early 20th Century. The history of this artistic ground-breaking style

was absorbing. The invitations to paint or create in the style of one of these artists helped me begin a serious exploration of art technique and of understanding how to look at and appreciate an artists image. The experience liberated me to start looking at art with young children. Over the ensuing years, I became comfortable taking other visual art workshops that included the use of literature for artistic expression, the symbolism of masks, and the creation of simple theatrical props. Finding supporting resources became a passion with me. Funnily enough, it was at this time that the most prolific and available resources started showing up in book stores and school libraries, especially books on famous Impressionist artists for the elementary-age students. It is likely that you will find them in your school library. If you don't

find them, ask to have them to be put on your school wish list. I found the books treasure troves of fun, information, and inspiration to launch into a study of an artist's work. And, they are great tools to get the students thinking about their own art ideas and exploring specific colour and brushstroke techniques. In the case of Henri Matisse, your students can be inspired to create colourful cut-out collages. You will find a resource list following this journal article of useful lesson strategies that explore the world of visual art in general and specifically the work of Impressionist masters Emily Carr and Henri Matisse.

Joy Silver is a retired Coquitlam primary teacher.

For information about lesson ideas, visit the BC Primary Teachers' Association web site at [bcjf.ca/psas/BCPTA](http://bcjf.ca/psas/BCPTA).

## Everyone's gifted

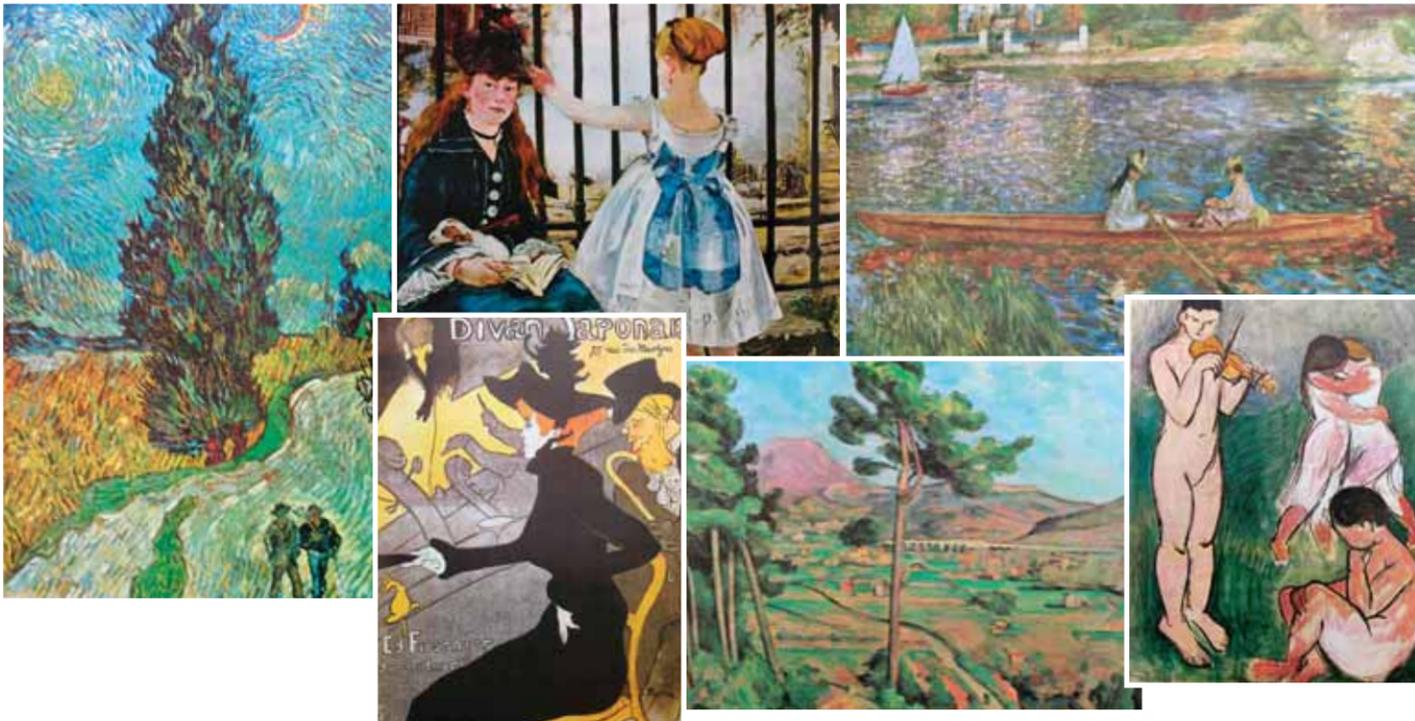
by Rowan Laird

What is it like being a gifted student in a classroom? When this question was posed to me, I had to think about it. I mean, I knew I was in *WriteStretch*, and I knew I did well on writing assignments. And sometimes I was asked to write stuff, like this article. But the difference really isn't in the classroom. Just like there are people who are good at math. People who are good at art. I'm no more gifted than anybody else. Not really.

So then I thought maybe the question was more about the program I'm in, called *WriteStretch*. About every month, my friend Carlie and I miss two to three hours of school to go to the Resource Centre near Langley. There, many other kids from around the Delta School District meet and we all write, with the instruction of our *WriteStretch* teacher, Ms. Nabata. I feel lucky to have gotten into this program. But what is the meaning of the question? That "gifted" meant I was in the *WriteStretch* program? I think that's what the person posing the question meant. But the thing is, there are other people who are gifted too. There's *ArtStretch* and *MathStretch*. There's kids all over the world who are gifted, too. So I guess my answer to the question is that when you have a talent for something, it's expected of you to get a high mark. When graded writing assignments are handed back, nobody except Carlie asks me what I got because the other students expect us to get a high mark. And like I said, I'm asked to do special stuff.

Rowan A. Laird is a 12-year-old Grade 7 student.

From the Winter 2006 issue of *The Vital Link*, the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association publication.



On being well

# Building community in the workplace

by Julia Johnson

In the world of business, with labour shortage and the demand for skilled workers in every sector throughout the province, the crucial question is how to attract and keep qualified employees. The December 2006 issue of the *BC Business* magazine attempts to address this concern with a feature on the best companies to work for in BC. Generally, the employers of these "best companies" demonstrated that they were as serious about people as they were about profit when they created workplace wellness programs, which resulted in contented workers who were loyal, motivated, and enthusiastic. The employees, however, found their worksite desirable because of the friendly working atmosphere and the positive way in which people related to each other at work.

In the field of education, the issue of a healthy workplace is paramount particularly with the many layers of stress that confront teachers daily as they interact with a diverse student population. As a BCTF Pro-D associate responsible for

facilitating wellness workshops in schools throughout the province, my observation is that teachers desire a workplace where a sense of community prevails. This becomes evident to all when stories are shared revealing behaviours that create a toxic workplace as expressed by one participant at

**"Now more than ever, keeping staff happy is a crucial part of doing business."**

a secondary school; "I just want someone to respond when I walk down the hall and say, Hi!"

Each day we enter our workplace burdened not only by the demands of our teaching assignment (new curriculum, insufficient resources, accountability expectations, integration issues, coping with students with emotional and drug issues, etc.) but burdened also by the demands of our personal and family life. No one is exempt from these stressors. For many of us the workplace becomes a place to survive. "If I can just get through today, I will

be all right!" "I'm fine as long as I can shut my door and just concentrate on teaching" are statements I have frequently heard.

All of us want to do our work to the best of our ability and we want to be happy doing it; otherwise work becomes drudgery and stressful. The world of business acknowledges this in their belief that "a happy worker is a productive worker" and in the direction they take in implementing business practices, "Now more than ever, keeping staff happy is a crucial part of doing business." (p. 59)

Not to implement strategies for community building in the workplace produces a toxic work environment that is easy to recognize—people are frequently absent, there is little or no school wide socializing, small or exclusive circles of friendships are prevalent, new staff members find it hard to fit in, there is an established seating pattern in the staff room at recess and lunch, change is met with resistance, laughter is scarce, little effort is made to connect with others during the day, and people work long hours in isolation.

Today, the concept of building community in the workplace has its roots in the world of business, but historically community building occurred in the neighbourhood, community hall, and church. In our pluralistic,

**When the workplace is where we spend 60% of our waking hours, we would be wise to create an atmosphere of workplace wellness that supports community building so we can all survive with a little more ease, grace, and workplace health.**

diverse, technologically advanced, and global society people no longer gather at these places for the purpose of community building. As a result, the opportunity to feel connected in a way that nurtures our sense of belonging is in short supply.

Scott Peck in *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* defines community "as a

group that has learned to transcend its individual differences." (p. 62) A school workplace abounds in individual differences, which can become fodder for conversations regarding our colleagues if not checked—conversations where judgments and criticisms are made and unfavourable opinions are expressed. Peck suggests, "...in genuine community there are no sides. It is not always easy but by the time [a group reaches] community the members have learned how to give up cliques and factions. They have learned how to listen to each other and how not to reject each other." (p. 71) When the workplace is where we spend 60% of our waking hours, we would be wise to create an atmosphere of workplace wellness that supports community building so we can all survive with a little more ease, grace, and workplace health.

Julia Johnson, a retired learning resource teacher in Quesnel, is a BCTF PD wellness associate and a member of the *Teacher Newsmagazine* Advisory Board. [livingjewels@shaw.ca](mailto:livingjewels@shaw.ca) (250-747-3650)

Health and safety



## TEACHERS AT RISK

# Employers are failing

by Mark Keelan

The most significant of employer responsibilities under the *Workers Compensation Act* is the duty to ensure the health and safety of all workers. This includes the obligation to make workers aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable health and safety hazards, to remedy workplace conditions that are hazardous to workers, and to provide workers with the information, instruction, training, and supervision necessary to ensure their health and safety. Many school district employers fail to take these responsibilities seriously. A startling example is revealed in a Review Decision by WorkSafeBC review officer Anand Banerjee who states that a school district manager reached "...the threshold of recklessness, which unnecessarily put workers at risk."

In April 2005, during part of the renovation of New Westminster Secondary School, a group of CUPE members was sent in to remove the flooring in a classroom. Classrooms around the project were in full use. The CUPE members were not informed that an asbestos assessment outlined the high probability that there was asbestos in the linoleum. Consequently, no appropriate precautions were taken. At least one worker claims that a district manager told him that there was no asbestos in the room. The manager, who was in possession of the asbestos assessment, blamed the workers for the resulting disaster.

Review Officer Banerjee summarizes events that gave rise to concerns by teachers, CUPE members, and students: "On the morning of April 26, 2005, a number of workers broke the floor of Room 138 up into pieces and disposed of these pieces out the window. The floor was broken up by hammering with sledgehammers and scraping with chisels. Nails in the floor were removed by grinding. This activity raised a large plume of dust, which wafted down the corridors of the school and into various classrooms (which were in session). A number of teachers and other persons have provided the [Workers' Compensation] Board with written statements about the extent and character of that cloud of dust. In addition, the Board has obtained video evidence which shows the thickness of that dust cloud. It appears that this dust cloud was significant enough that some of the teaching staff complained about the possibility of toxic material contained therein, and the Board was notified."

As a result of the complaints, WorkSafeBC visited the work site. The responding officers shut down the construction project and sent samples of the linoleum to a lab for testing. Test results confirmed the high concentration, between 25% and

100%, of asbestos in the flooring. The officers wrote several orders requiring the school district to comply with regulations related to asbestos. Subsequently WorkSafeBC imposed an administrative penalty of \$52,500 on the district.

WorkSafeBC inspection reports dated May 1, 2006, May 18, 2006, July 20, 2006, and October 5, 2006 all indicate that the district had not fully complied with the 2005 orders. Meanwhile, the district appealed the administrative penalty. That appeal was decided by Banerjee who, in addition to making the comments referred to above, increased the administrative penalty to \$75,000. As of the end of January 2007, the district is not in full compliance.

Asbestos-related diseases generally have a latency period of between 10 and 30 years. Workers who encounter a single exposure are far less likely to develop asbestos-related diseases than are workers who have long-term exposures. Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence that many workers who have had a single exposure to asbestos have developed related diseases. Workers and students at New Westminster Secondary School were put in an extremely dangerous situation and will not know for many years how they may have been affected.

The situation in New Westminster is an extreme example of a school district employer failing to comply with the *Workers Compensation Act* obligation to ensure the health and safety of all workers. However, examples of other school district employers who have failed in their obligations are too numerous to count. When teachers and other school workers are bruised and beaten as a result of violence, when indoor air quality problems make workers sick, when workers develop musculo-skeletal injuries because no attention is paid to ergonomics, their employers have failed them and have broken the law. And, as teachers have been pointing out for years, our working conditions are our students' learning conditions so school districts are failing students as well.

We must make it our collective responsibility to correct our employers' failures. Under the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, workers in this province have extensive health and safety rights. Employers have corresponding responsibilities. The New Westminster example, among others, makes it clear that employers are not living up to their responsibilities. By vigorously enforcing our health and safety rights, BCTF members can force employers to change. We owe as much to ourselves and to our students.

Mark Keelan is the BCTF health and safety officer for prevention.

# Will an aging population bring BC's healthcare system to its knees?

by Marc Lee

One argument you are likely to hear in BC's new "conversation on health" is that public health care is unsustainable because our population is aging and seniors use a disproportionate amount of health care services.

But before we hit the collective panic button, let's take a look at the facts.

While population aging has put upward pressure on healthcare costs, its impact is relatively small. Over the past decade, it has accounted for annual cost increases of just under 1%, and projections indicate that it will be only slightly higher in the future.

If we take other cost pressures, such as inflation and population growth, into account, BC needs to increase healthcare spending by just under 5% each year to maintain current service levels for an aging population.

The good news is that the economy will also be growing, and what matters is the size of healthcare expenditures relative to our total income (or GDP)—not the share of the provincial budget, as Finance Minister Taylor has argued. (Her projections of future expenditures and revenues are also extremely misleading.)

As long as the economy grows faster than healthcare expenditures, our current system is sustainable. Even if BC's economic growth rate (nominal GDP) averaged 4% per year—well below historical norms—the additional cost of maintaining current services would be small: an extra penny per dollar of income by 2031.

The bulge of seniors is expected to peak around 2031, and will be declining thereafter. So we have lots of time to gradually respond to the challenges

posed by an aging population. This includes a restructuring of healthcare services, such as enhancing home care and residential care so as to take the pressure off the more expensive acute-care system. We should also emphasize prevention and population health initiatives to reduce the overall incidence of ill health.

A final element related to healthcare spending is that the suite of services we call health care has expanded over time. A typical British Columbian today receives about one-and-a-half times the amount of healthcare services as her or his predecessor of 30 years ago.

If future economic growth rates remain consistent with those over the past quarter-century (5.7% per year), we actually have scope to expand healthcare services. On the ground, this could mean more long-term care beds, more comprehensive drug coverage, or public dental insurance.

The expansion of healthcare services is also intertwined with the bigger issue of technology. The real financing challenge comes from advances in technological possibilities, broadly defined to include pharmaceutical drugs, new surgical techniques, new diagnostic and imaging technologies, and end-of-life care.

New technology almost always increases total costs, even when it reduces the cost per procedure.

An example of this is knee and hip replacements, where waiting lists have been a major concern. In response, the BC government has dramatically increased surgeries, at rates well beyond what population growth and aging would require.

Yet, waiting lists are still an issue because the advent of less invasive (and less risky) surgical

techniques has increased the number of people who can have such surgeries. Compared to 1990, today's 80-year-old is twice as likely to have a knee replacement.

Another example is end-of-life treatments. Dying has become very expensive: research has found that one-third to one-half of a typical person's lifetime healthcare costs come in the final year of life. This raises ethical dilemmas, particularly when technology can prolong life by days or weeks, but with little or no improvement in health status or quality of life.

These technological challenges can be addressed most efficiently and equitably in the context of a public system. A thorough process of health technology assessment is required to ensure that new technologies provide benefits in accordance with their costs. Public policy initiatives could also be implemented to better control drug costs, through greater generic production, bulk purchasing, and an expansion of BC's successful reference drug program.

That's the "conversation" we really need to have. The good news is that the challenges facing public health care are not demographic time bombs beyond our control, but technological issues that, while profound, are suitable to a public process that is well within our control. It is not the number of seniors that is the problem, but finding a rational framework to ensure we spend our healthcare dollars as effectively as possible.

Marc Lee is senior economist, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' BC office, and the author of "Is BC's Health Care System Sustainable? A Closer Look at the Costs of Aging and Technology," available at [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).

## Teachers' tips Different, not more

by Charlene Watts

Gifted students are gifted 24 hours a day. Consequently, classroom teachers have the responsibility to ensure that gifted students are involved in appropriate learning experiences as much as possible. This is an easily accomplished goal as teachers come to recognize that "more" work is not the same as "appropriate" work.

In BC classrooms, teachers assess what their students already know. After the assessment, a list of students who have demonstrated mastery of the objectives can be compiled. The free time for students that is generated from having learned the desired outcomes needs to be co-operatively planned with the students. Time, could be provided to explore self-selected topics on a conceptual rather than a factual basis. Students could be encouraged to set some of their own learning goals and evaluate their work. To assist students in wisely using their time, they may be involved in an independent study, a learning contract, a co-operative learning situation or have the curriculum compacted. All will provide for the necessary adaptations to

pace, breadth, and depth of curriculum.

All curriculum and instruction ought to be based on the needs of the students as indicated by their characteristics, attitudes, and behaviours. Not only do schools strive to meet intellectual demands but affective needs must be addressed. It is essential that gifted students be given opportunities to work alone and in small ability or interest group situations to explore passion areas. The classroom environment needs to be one that invites risk-taking and making mistakes. Assignments ought to be open-ended providing a focus on complex and abstract thinking. As creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving are essential, it may be necessary to allow for a flexible timeline so that gifted students may have longer time blocks for in-depth studies. A variety of products ought to be encouraged and shared with appropriate audiences.

Research shows that 40% to 50% of the content might be eliminated for gifted students. As educators, the biggest contribution that we can make to meet the needs of gifted learners is to:

1. Find out what they already know.

2. Give them "credit" for the concepts they have mastered.
3. Refrain from having them repeat grade level work just because it's there.
4. Provide alternative challenging activities for them to do *instead* of grade level work.
5. Discover what their interests are and build projects around those interests.
6. Allow them some flexibility in the way they use the time they "buy back."
7. Trust them to learn in non-traditional ways.
8. Thrill them with choices, choices, and more choices.
9. Give them lots of experience with setting their own goals and evaluating their own work.
10. Enjoy the results.

Adapted from Susan Winebrenner, renowned gifted education author, previously published and taken from AEGTCC BC publications: Brochure series "What educators of gifted learners need to know about..." , *The Leading Edge* newsletter.

Charlene Watts is president of the Bulkley Valley Teacher's Union.

# Victim of the new Bill 33

When asked to facilitate a workshop at the Public Education Conference in October 2006, this teacher declined with the following explanation:

This semester I am a “victim” of the new Bill 33 and other ongoing management policies of the current provincial, board, and local administrations.

I am a senior math and biology teacher with eight years of full-time university and bags of post-grad course work in my field (Biological Oceanography/Forestry). This semester, I have been assigned to teach four courses—three maths and a science. I have three Grade 9 classes and a Grade 11 Applied Math (nearly half the class are repeaters). This batch of Grade 9s has caused massive ripples throughout the system as they have moved through grade school, middle school, and now have arrived in secondary school. The number of kids with severe learning disabilities is in the uppermost tail of the normal distribution; ditto the number of kids needing moderate to severe behaviour support. They left a wake of stress leaves and exhaustion at their last school. We are trying to cope.

My Science 9 class has 30 kids; five or six are designated special needs and no teacher aide. These special needs range from Tourette's + OCD + ADHD + LD (one kid!), moderate/severe behaviour with LD, and other interesting combinations of learning difficulties, medical conditions, and behaviour quirks. I cannot take them into the lab. Over half did not pass the safety quiz, after three days of class work and a big, multi-faceted safety assignment! They don't know enough math to do  $W = F \times d$  problems, and not one can rearrange the formula to  $F = W/d$ . We are squashed into 51.5 square meters, with 12 two-student tables, 6 single desks, chairs, computer desk, other equipment, and a teacher table. No room for my desk. I cannot walk around the room without moving kids out of the way every few seconds. If we have an emergency, I have informed the “powers that be” that there will be injuries and delay getting kids out of there. I am constantly tripping over

books, bags, feet, and chair legs. If they are out of their seats, each person has about 0.5 sq. meter of space. There is none left for walkways or anything else. The labs are even worse. They seat 24, but there is no way to walk between benches when the kids are seated, and they are working back to back (definitely a no no in a lab). Our Science 9 and 10 programs have dwindled down to an absolute minimum of lab work, so kids learn *about* science, but don't *do* very much science at all. We are so far over the fire occupancy regulations it isn't funny. But school children are no longer protected by the fire occupancy regulations, since schools were excepted by the Campbell government three or four years ago.

My “consultation” consisted of the VP telling me I have five kids with special needs in that class. I signed the form, objected, and attached comments. Bill 33 gave the system permission to “integrate” any number of kids into the general class framework with NO additional support. Keep reading.

My Essentials of Math 9 class has 12 students with profound, officially-designated special needs and another 8 who *do* have special needs but haven't been designated officially. There is a TA assigned to an autistic child, and when she can leave him for a few minutes she helps the other kids. I found myself a peer tutor who can be in the class for one or two blocks a week. The students are very rude to the TA, and barely cooperative, no matter what the consequences. There have been two fights already. Nearly every day I must escort someone to the office or to the behaviour room (where there is often no one to hand the student over to). I have been using two self-paced programs in tandem to help the kids master fraction operations, and several students have made good progress. It is a struggle and a nightmare every day. The quieter kids who want to learn are working in a terrible learning environment, with minimal support from me. I spend most of my time putting out half a dozen ‘fires’ at a time. My class constantly disturbs the classes either side of my room. This situation is

educationally indefensible. I have registered my objections by form and by letter. No one has had the courtesy to answer my letters.

As I write, it is the end of September and the administration seems to think this is all just okey dokey.

I have conferred with the district numeracy co-ordinator, who is very helpful and has some money for resources. I am using one of the downloadable resources she suggested, and have researched several others. This takes a lot of time, and the resources will be weeks in transit, even if we order them right away. We require manipulatives and other supplies, too. I don't know where they will come from. I have done quite a bit of testing and evaluation with the EMath9s—these students are *all* functioning below Grade 5 in mathematics. They hate and fear math. They hate school. They have nothing to lose and quite a few are chronically angry, obsessive, foul-mouthed, motor-mouthed, disrespectful, passive-aggressive, hyperactive, uncooperative. Several of them absolutely refuse to do any work unless someone supervises them one-on-one, putting up with significant abuse into the bargain. Their former teachers tell me that this is consistent with their experience. I cannot imagine what my principal was thinking as he created this class and handed them to me, but I have my suspicions.

Our school seems to have abandoned the inclusion principle. There is hardly any integration support, anyway.

Did I mention that there is NO prep time in my schedule? Or that on Wednesdays I have this class for two 52-minute blocks, back to back? Wednesdays are just brutal. By the way, come January, I will not have had any prep time at all for a year.

We were told that the superintendent and some other board office people were going to visit “soon,” to observe the “situation” at our school. They haven't shown up and I feel confident they will see just exactly what they want to see and/or what the principal wants them to see. One can always blame the teachers and suggest more “supervisory evaluations” to make us accountable. I am not the only teacher at our school struggling with the terrible effects of Bill 33.

So thanks for the invite, but I deeply regret that I won't have either the time or the energy to facilitate any workshops this semester. After January, I will have some relatively “ordinary” math classes, three of them, and a prep block every day. What management genius thought up that arrangement? We've known for years that students learn and perform better on a linear schedule. But are these policy decisions ever really about good education?

Katie Pirquet teaches at Edward Milne Community School, Sooke.



## Putting “pizza party” math to rest

Using social justice issues to teach math engages, stimulates students.

by David Stocker

A snail is climbing a tree 10m high. Every day, the snail climbs 3m. Each night, it slides back 2m. How many days will it take the snail to reach the top of the tree?

That's one committed snail. The only problem is, nobody in my Grade 7 and 8 math classes cares one bit how fast that snail makes it to the top of the tree. I don't blame them.

Open any of the math textbooks or glance through the professional magazines and you'll find that middle school is a wasteland of “pizza party” math. Objects in students' lives (pizzas, coins, bikes, and yes, even snails) are used to “do math upon.” This is misleadingly called “real-life math” and the reason it's so common is that real-life material is concrete and relevant and so supposedly makes learning easier.

Surely, however, there is more to real life than rummaging around in kitchen closet to find the volume of the *Twinkies* box or the can of ravioli. A distinction must be made between using things in the world around us to do math upon, and using math to understand the world around us. One is deceitfully artificial; the other is dangerous, for it encourages people to think, and perhaps to intervene, in their reality.

Is youth crime on the rise? Why do some of the wealthiest countries of the world have infant mortality rates similar to developing countries? Will privatization make our hospitals work better? What do marketing claims actually mean? Do IMF and World Bank policies create poverty? Why is buying something cheap at the local super store problematic? Are minimum-wage McJobs a natural rite of passage into the working world? What do people mean when they say “peace is everyone's business, war is just business?” These are all questions that will not be adequately answered without the ability to do statistical

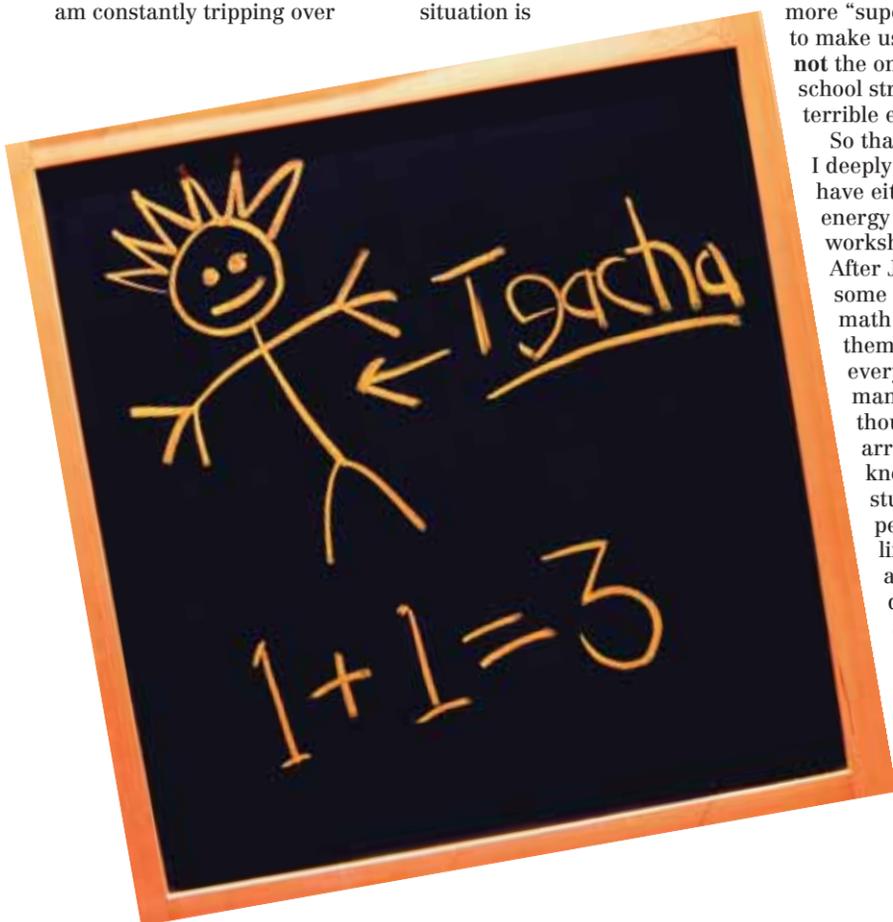
analysis, to use very large numbers confidently, to identify patterns and relationships and distinguish between correlation and causation, to point out where ideology and measurement converge, and to convey complicated ideas in comprehensible ways. In other words, these are all mathematical questions.

Outside of the classroom, the idea of using social justice content to teach math is usually met with bemused that's-kind-of-a-stretch smiles and polite small talk. It's no wonder, though, that the crucial connections between justice issues and math are invisible—they have not been taught. Local community issues having to do with everything from race to class, sexuality to immigration, and employment to social services are divorced from a global political and economic context. Author and educator Alfie Kohn is fond of asking the questions “: Cui bono?”: who benefits?

Inside the classroom, the discussion crackles. What do you mean that famines can be human-made? How many times greater is corporate welfare in Canada than social assistance spending? The workers in China who made my shoes earn what percentage of the price I paid for them? Who gets the remainder? Disbelief. Outrage. Further questions. Where can I learn more? What can be done? How will we change this?

Although it's not usually a popular idea, what you do in the classroom is always political. There's no avoiding the selection of some materials over others, and what you don't teach speaks just as much or more than what you do. “Pizza party” math is not a neutral use of class time, because it uses up opportunities for students to engage with their real worlds, to discuss change and possibilities. The good news is that real-life material does make learning easier, even learning about the expectations laid out carefully in the curriculum documents. The challenge is to put the pizza party math to rest, and to replace it with something worth doing.

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# AGM 2007 Agenda

## March 17–20, 2007

### FIRST SESSION

March 17, Saturday evening

7:00 p.m.

- Welcome
- First Nations recognition
- Preliminaries:
  - a. Adoption of chairpersons, scrutineers, tellers, resolutions committee
  - b. Chairpersons' orientation session
  - c. Introduction of ombudsperson
  - d. Adoption of agenda
  - e. Adoption of 2006 AGM Minutes
  - f. Stewardship Report on 2006 AGM

President's report

*Jinny Sims*

Greetings/Comments

B.C. Federation of Labour  
*Jim Sinclair*, president

Canadian Teachers' Federation  
*Winston Carter*, president

Canadian Union of Public Employees, BC Division  
*Barry O'Neill*, president

B.C. School Trustees Association  
*Penny Tees*, president

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils  
*Kim Howland*, president

BC College of Teachers  
*Richard Walker*, council chairperson

9:30 p.m.

Election statements from candidates for table officer positions

Call for nominations

10:00 p.m.

Adjourn

### SECOND SESSION

March 18, Sunday morning

9:00 a.m.

Leadership Report

- Presentation
- Recommendation 1

Constitution and By-laws

- Recommendations 2–3
- Resolution 101

Goals of the BCTF

- Resolution 135

Education Finance

- Resolutions 118–119

12:30 p.m.—Lunch

### THIRD SESSION

March 18, Sunday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Professional Ethics, Rights, and Standards

- Report
- Recommendations 10–16

Annual General Meeting

- Recommendation 4
- Resolutions 102–103

CLC/BC Federation of Labour

- Resolution 117

Public Relations

- Resolution 174

Organization of the BCTF

- Resolutions 145–152

4:15 p.m.

Report of the Executive Director

*Ken Novakowski*

4:30 p.m.

Election statements from candidates for member-at-large positions

Call for Nominations

5:00 p.m.

Adjourn

5:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m.

All candidates' meeting (main ballroom). All delegates invited.

90th Anniversary Banquet, Sunday, March 18, 6:45 p.m. Please purchase tickets in advance.

### FOURTH SESSION

March 19, Monday morning

9:00 a.m.

Guest speaker: *Linda McQuaig*  
"The Changing Face of Canada"

10:00 a.m.

Education Policy

- Report
- Recommendations 24–25 (in committee)
- Resolutions 120–129

Professional Development

- Resolutions 159–160

Board of School Trustees, School Districts, and BC School Trustees Association

- Resolution 116

Ministry of Education

- Resolutions 143–144

Teacher Education

- Resolution 176

12:30 p.m. Lunch

### FIFTH SESSION

March 19, Monday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Pensions

- Report
- Resolutions 153–156

Health, Welfare, and Safety of Teachers

- Recommendation 9
- Resolutions 138–142

Health and Welfare of Students

- Resolutions 136–137

Bargaining

- Resolutions 104–115

5:25 p.m.

Final call for nominations

5:30 p.m.

Adjourn

Adjourn

Adjourn

Adjourn

Please note: Evening sessions may be scheduled if required.

### SIXTH SESSION

March 20, Tuesday morning

8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

BALLOT DISTRIBUTION

For one hour, the election tellers will distribute ballots, one pad for each voting card, in the Prince of Wales Room (on the convention level). Each delegation is asked to assist by appointing one of its members to present all the delegation's cards, (including the LR cards) and to receive all its ballots individually.

No ballots will be distributed after the session has begun.

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

Executive Committee members should each pick up their own ballots.

9:00 a.m.

Elections

Social Justice

- Report
- Recommendation 32
- Resolution 175

Teachers on Call

- Report
- Recommendation 23

Unemployed and Underemployed Teachers

- Resolution 177

Political Action

- Resolutions 157–158

Public Affairs

- Recommendations 17–20
- Resolutions 161–173

12:15 p.m.

Committee Reports—Questions

12:30 p.m.

Lunch

Lunch

Lunch

### SEVENTH SESSION

March 20, Tuesday afternoon

2:00 p.m.

Finance

Comments from the treasurer

- Recommendations 5–8
- Resolutions 130–134

Affinity program update

4:00 p.m.

Awards, Honorary membership, Recognition of retiring activists

Unfinished Business

Late Resolutions

New Resolutions

New Business

5:15 p.m.

Closing Courtesy Motion

5:30 p.m.

Adjourn

Adjourn

Adjourn

Adjourn

## Special resolutions

### By-law 1.9

1. That by-law 1.9 be amended by substituting the word "three" for the word "six" in both sub-sections (a) and (b).

### By-law 7.2

That a "new" sentence to be added at the end of By-law 7.2 to read: "In the event that the elected Judicial Council chairperson is unable to fulfill her or his role, the Judicial Council may appoint an Acting Chairperson until the elected chairperson resumes the role or a new chairperson is elected at the Representative Assembly."

**Resolution 101**—Nicola Valley Teachers' Union  
That the BCTF change its name to the British Columbia Teachers' Union.

## Teachers speak out

Teachers are the most credible source of information about public schools. This information is consistently confirmed in national and provincial polling. In the latest provincial polling conducted in November 2006, the proportion of British Columbians rating classroom teachers "very reliable" was twice that of any other group.

### Do your students have the support they need and deserve?

Support for the teacher strike in October 2005 was sustained because teachers' voices were credible and the government was not.

The government was forced to concede that conditions in our schools were not what they had been claiming, which led to the introduction of legislation it claimed would solve the problems of class size and class composition. The legislation did not even pretend to deal with the services of specialist teachers such as teacher-librarians, ESL teachers, learning assistance, counsellors, and special education teachers.

On February 5, 2007, the government finally released the

data on class size that it had collected in October 2006. The data shows that there are 9,555 classes with four or more identified students with special needs (IEPs). There are 3,050 Grade 8–12 classes with 31 or more students. However, in Grades 4–7 where teacher consent is required, there are only 85 classes with 31 or more.

The Bill 33 legislation had a review built in and we assume the government will be reviewing the legislation this year.

The BCTF is encouraging teachers to speak out about conditions in their classrooms and schools this year. Do your students have the support they

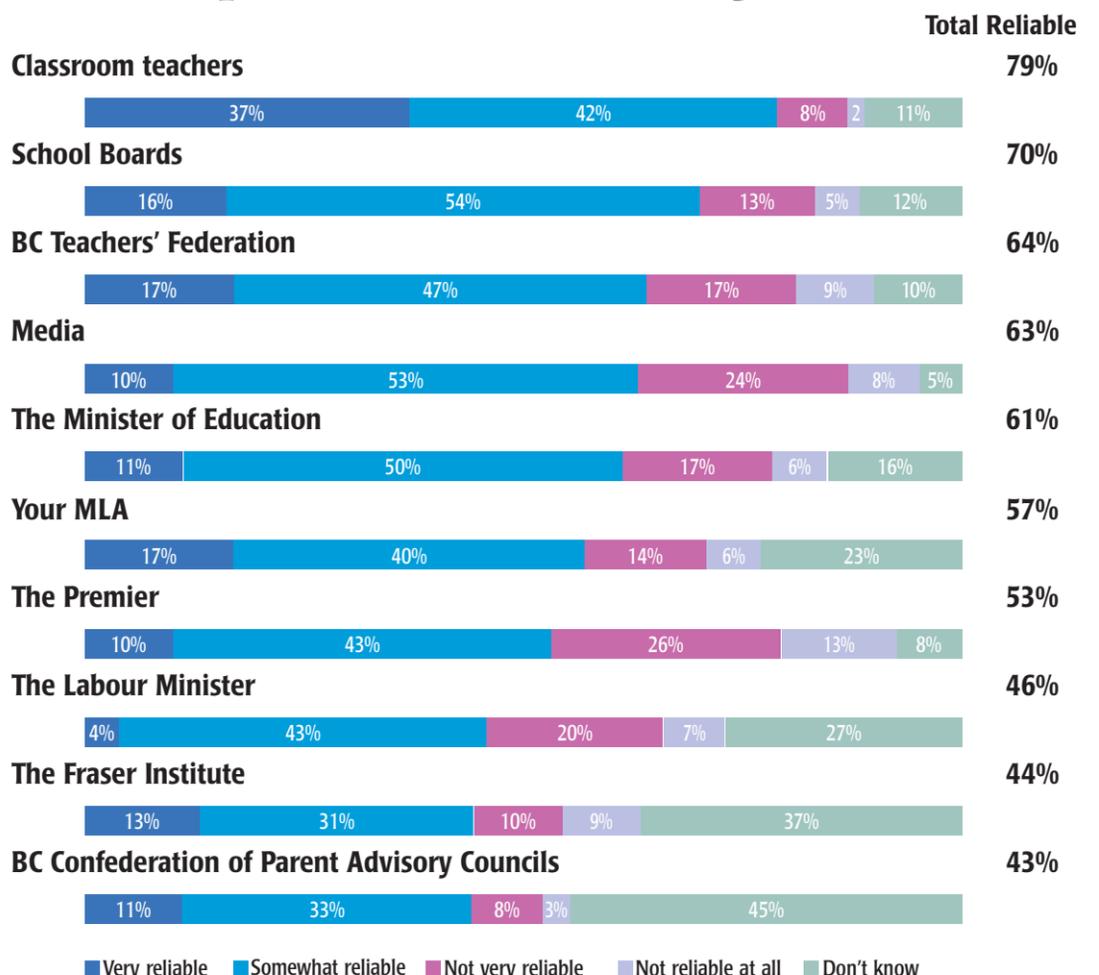
### Do your students have access to support services?

need and deserve? Is your library available to students and properly staffed and stocked? Do your students have access to support services?

Please take any opportunity available to let parents and members of the public know about what is happening in our schools. You have the knowledge and the credibility and the public wants to hear from you.

– Peter Owens

## Reliability of accurate information on the BC public education system



Base: Total (n=502) Mustel Group Market Research

## CANDIDATE'S STATEMENTS

For President



Irene Lanzinger

Over the last few years, we have been clear about our goals. We have displayed amazing solidarity and made significant progress. However, there is still a great deal to be done. We must continue to improve learning conditions for students through decreased class size, improvements in composition and increased support from specialist teachers.

We must forcefully resist the government's obsession with increased testing and false accountability measures. We must insist on meaningful,

teacher directed professional development and strong teacher input on all education policy issues.

Teachers want a better world. We work on that in our classrooms but we must also vigorously pursue that goal through our social justice work.

The BCTF plays a primary role in promoting the economic welfare of teachers through our work on salary, benefits, pensions, the salary indemnity plan and the rehabilitation program.

It has been my privilege to represent the teachers of British Columbia as a vice-president of the BCTF. What an amazing group of people! I am always impressed by their courage, professionalism, solidarity and commitment to students and public education. I would be honored to serve teachers as President.

**EXPERIENCE: Provincial:** BCTF 1st Vice-president (3 yrs.), BCTF 2nd Vice-president (3), Co-chief Negotiator Bargaining Team (2000-02), Advisory council of

local presidents (3), AGM delegate (13), Summer conference (13), Job action planning committee, LR (1), (alternate) (5).

**Local:** President (3), Vice-president (2), Member-at-large (2), Staff rep (2), Bargaining Committee (2), Status of Women Committee (2).

**Teaching:** Secondary (9 yrs.), Elementary (4 yrs.).

**Education:** B.Sc. (UBC), Teacher Training (UBC), M.Sc (SFU)

For 1st Vice-President



Susan Lambert

The main focus of the BCTF in the next four years must be the classroom. Teachers need smaller classes and caseloads, more resources and more support for all the children we teach. The underfunding of public education must end. We live in a wealthy province in a nation that enjoys unparalleled prosperity. Students in BC deserve a world class public education system and parents expect no less.

The government's "Accountability" policy is harming children. Our role in

administering this bankrupt and corrosive policy has become untenable. We can no longer be complicit in foisting this harm on the system and on children.

I believe in our strong collective voice and our right and obligation to speak up and take action when necessary. I believe that we must continue to build pathways into the union and invite the participation of all members. I believe that our union must be directed by its members and that leadership must be built on listening. I believe strongly in our definition

of ourselves as a social justice union, a union of professionals. I have worked for three years as 2nd Vice-President as part of a strong leadership team. I am running for first Vice-president dedicated to building on the strengths of that team.

**EXPERIENCE: Provincial:** BCTF 2nd Vice-president (3 yrs.), BCTF Executive member-at-large (1 yr.); AGM delegate (22), Task Force on the Code of Ethics, Trainer/facilitator in Namibia (8 sessions) and South Africa (1 session), Staff Rep Trainer (5), WOW facilitator, Summer Conference participant and workshop presenter, BCTF

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

For 1st Vice-President



Kathleen Thomson

The BCTF's purpose and strength rests in teachers. It is teachers' needs that must define our Federation's priorities over the next few years.

Right now teachers in their classrooms need the resources, specialist assistance and improved learning conditions that can only exist when public education is nurtured through sustained funding and genuine respect for teachers' professionalism. When funding is withheld and teacher autonomy is redefined as accountability, opportunities for teachers and

students wither. The BCTF's first obligation is to advocate creatively for an end to purposeful underfunding, impoverished classrooms, and testing and privatization regimes gone mad.

Teachers have other needs as well. We need far more attention paid to our evolving professional development requirements and assistance in dealing with pressing social justice issues in our classrooms. We need resources directed toward our immediate health and well being, and advocacy for better bargaining structures

so that working conditions can improve prior to the next round of negotiations.

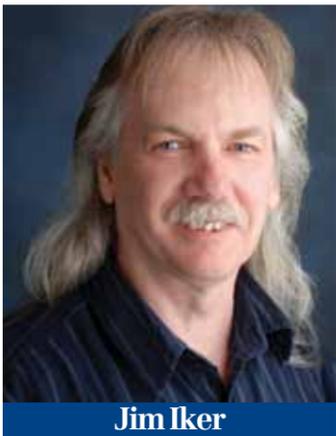
We need union leadership focussed on representing teachers' diverse needs. If elected, I promise to represent your voice and the voices of 41,000 teachers in a forceful, independent way at the BCTF Executive table.

**EXPERIENCE: Provincial:** BCTF Executive member-at-large (7 yrs.), CTF delegate (5), Staff pension plan advisory committee (2), Negotiations training, bargaining conference (2),

Summer conference delegate and workshop presenter (10), Chair Metro West zone council (1), AGM delegate (13). **Local:** President (9 yrs.), Vice-president (1), Grievance Panel (2), Staff Rep (5), Adult education provincial/local bargaining (2), Negotiations, job action, advocacy committees, etc. **Community:** Co-chair, Municipal planning/environment committees, SFU senate (2).

**Teaching:** Secondary English, German, French (11 yrs.), SFU Philosophy TA (2 yrs.). **Education:** BA, PDP (SFU), PhD courses and comprehensives.

For 2nd Vice-President



Jim Iker

Together we make a difference. Our strength and passion comes from our daily work in our classrooms, locals and Federation. Continued membership involvement, engagement of new members and support for all locals is critical for a strong BCTF.

Our unity and principled resolve enabled us to achieve a negotiated collective agreement. We now have to implement and enforce our contract, defend and exercise our professional autonomy and train future bargainiers.

It is critical that we:

- Advocate for full funding that enables success for every student and stops privatization;
- Push changes to Bill 33 that ensures firm and lower class size/composition limits for all grades and institutes non-enrolling teacher ratios;
- Assert our bargaining rights;
- Engage parents regarding the harmful effects of FSA testing and Grades 10/11 provincial exams;
- Drive back the government accountability agenda;
- Build our social justice networks and action groups that lead to systemic changes;

- Strengthen professional supports, programs and opportunities for members.

I believe in leadership that promotes democratic processes, seeks and heeds member input and provides pro-active and coordinated strategies.

I bring you my experience and energy; and value the opportunity to continue to work with the Executive on your behalf as 2nd Vice President.

**EXPERIENCE: Provincial:** Provincial Executive, Member at Large (5 yrs.), Provincial Bargaining Team 2006, Learning Roundtable 2005/06/07, Social Justice Review Cttee. 2006/07,

TF AGM Delegate (4 yrs.), Bargaining Mobilization Cttee. Chair (1), Provincial Bargaining Team member, 1st 2 rounds of Provincial Bargaining, GR/LR (12), AGM delegate (19), Local Presidents' Advisory Cttee. (2), Chair (1), BCTF Interim Bargaining Structures Cttee., Legislative Advisory Cttee/team, Staff Rep Training, Summer Conference Participant (24). **Local:** President (15), Bargaining Chair (2), Chief Negotiator, Local Bargaining (all 3 rounds), Bargaining Cttee. WLC Chair (2), Staff rep, District Health And Safety Cttee. Rep (4), EAP District Cttee. (14). **Teaching:** 29 yrs. (full and part time) K/2/3/4/ 6/7, Learning Assistance, Counseling, Special Ed. **Education:** Honours BA McMaster, B.Ed Dalhousie, Various Counselling Courses U Vic.

For Member-at-Large



Rebecca Blair

As a classroom teacher I have witnessed first hand the steady deterioration of our working conditions. Services for students throughout the province are less than adequate, while teachers struggle to be caring professionals. By ensuring that democratic structures are used to identify members' needs, we can strengthen our fight for public education.

Health and safety concerns of members are closely linked to the issues which Bill 33 fails to address adequately. Oversize

classes, as well as the loss of specialist teachers, are resulting in working environments which teachers know are not good learning environments.

Teachers are faced every day with youth who are living in poverty—social justice issues such as racism, sexism and violence are presenting daily classroom concerns for our members. In my work regarding health and safety, teachers describe their need to properly address the well being of students who represent the future of our society.

Professional autonomy is also under attack, and it is imperative to ensure that the voice of each teacher is given the respect professionals deserve. I offer my strong work ethic, high energy level, and a passionate concern for our profession. Permit me to bring your voice to the Executive Table.

**EXPERIENCE:**

**Provincial:** Health and Safety Advisory Committee (3 yrs.), Health and Safety Trainer (3), LR (4), AGM delegate (8).

**Local:** President (1), Vice President (1), Bargaining Chair (1), District Joint Health and Safety Committee Rep (9), Site Safety Rep/Co Chair of Committee (6), Staff Rep (10), Status of Women Rep (2).

**Teaching:** Alternate Education, Special Education, 8-12, Math 8, English 10-11, TOC, First Nations Education, Elementary Grades 3-7, Adult Basic Education, (32 years).

**Education:** B.Ed. (SFU), MAAS (Gonzaga)

For Member-at-Large



Cathy Lambright

Our unity and collective actions last year have earned us a fairly negotiated Collective Agreement with a reasonable salary increase. However, the classrooms of British Columbia are still suffering.

Our colleagues and students are in classrooms that do not have the necessary supports and resources to meet their learning needs. Teacher workload is a serious issue that faces all of us each day. The province's accountability agenda and under funding continues to do

harm to our public education system.

We need to continue our work with parent and other partner groups to address issues of quality education. We also need to continue our work as a social justice union. We need to focus our work to address issues of poverty, racism, and woman's issues, in addition to other social concerns that face us each day in our schools.

As a Member-at-Large I seek your support to be a member of the BCTF Executive that is

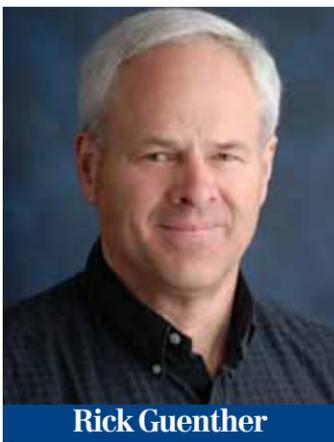
proud of its work in being the professional voice of teachers.

**EXPERIENCE: Provincial:** Local Association Representative (5 yrs.), BCTF Finance Committee (3), Chair of the BCTF College Advisory committee, BC College of Teachers' counsellor (4), and many years as a BCTF AGM delegate and BCTF Summer Conferences.

**Local:** Local President (3), Bargaining Chair, Chief negotiator and Bargaining team member, Treasurer (10+), Staff Rep (13), Health and Safety Rep

(3), Member of the Grievance Advisory, WLC, Pro-D, Status of Women, and Social Committees.

For Member-at-Large



Rick Guenther

For the first time in many years we have a negotiated contract. While we may not be completely satisfied with our new Collective Agreement—and perhaps we never should be—its settlement allows us to focus more of our attention on the various needs of teachers and the problems they face in their professional practice. The audit culture (or accountability agenda), that ideologically driven regime of surveillance and control, continues to subvert good pedagogy and continues to establish conditions

conducive to privatization. If we believe in public education as a common good, based on principles of equity, inclusion, and citizenship, then we must oppose those forces that act to reduce humanity to “human capital,” and citizens to consumers. This mission requires the help of trustees, the public at large, and especially the parents. Our job action of 2005 demonstrated that we enjoy broad public support for many of our concerns. However, that support is fragile and needs constant nourishment and

encouragement. We must build public confidence in teacher professionalism and expertise through ongoing campaigns that are sensitive to that fragility. And, we must provide the resources necessary for teachers to engage in conversations fostering better understandings of their professional rights and ethical responsibilities.

**EXPERIENCE:** *Provincial:* Judicial Council (current), Task Force on Privatization (2004-05), AGM delegate (many). *Local:* Abbotsford District Teachers’

Association (Local 34), First Vice-President, LR, Bargaining Chair (all current), Strike Co-ordinator, District Health & Safety Committee, Peace River South Teachers’ Association (Local 59), Staff Rep., Vice-President, President (1982-1984), School Budget Committee, Administrative Officer selection committees, School District Task Force on School Reorganization. *Education:* M. Ed. (Diversity in Curriculum) SFU, Teacher Training UBC, Apprenticeship: Heavy Duty Partsman, B. Sc. (Geophysics) UBC. *Teaching:* Secondary science and mathematics (27 yrs)

For Member-at-Large



Patricia Gudlaugson

Look around your school, your local, the Federation. Can’t you feel that a period of renewal is coming? A wave of newer, younger teachers is about to freshen the Federation—school by school, local by local!

This makes it the right time for someone like me, with a wide range of experiences in teaching, to seek the opportunity to fulfill a responsibility to my professional organization. That responsibility is to encourage and support in all aspects of BCTF activity, orderly

and constructive renewal processes.

To maintain the progressive nature of the BCTF, teachers like me must give back. We must share our knowledge whether it is about BCTF budgeting, education finance or organizing professional development. We must restate our commitment to professional autonomy and social justice. We must demonstrate to all members that our Federation’s decision making structures are democratic, accessible and open to scrutiny.

At the Executive Committee table, I would frame all that we do inside one over-riding question: “How will this action help members become the strong, committed voices needed to assure a vigorous, healthy, spirited union—the BCTF?”

**EXPERIENCE:** Variety of professional roles: school staff rep, school-based Pro-d Chair, staff committee, VESTA Executive Committee: Professional Development Chair, (8 yrs.), President, (3), Alternate Local Rep to the BCTF, (1), BCTF: AGM delegate (9), trustee, Fergusson

Committee, (3). Related work in teacher action research: shared CTF literacy research grant awarded to three BC teachers—“A Home Reading Program for Children for Whom English is a Second Language,” participated in UBC/VSB/VESTA literacy research resulting in presenting at AERA, Seattle, school trustee, SD#38 (Richmond) 6 yr., Board Chair 3 yr. *Education:* BA (McMaster, 1969), teacher training (Hamilton Teachers’ College), MEd (UBC), *Teaching:* wide range of teaching positions all grade levels K-8 in inner-city, small primary annexes, and large urban.

For Member-at-Large



Jill McCaffery

Together we have made significant achievements; however, we still face formidable challenges. Deliberate under funding finds teachers struggling with composition issues, less support, oversized classes, and school closures. Phony accountability data, relentless testing, and restricted autonomy inhibit our teaching and our student’s learning. This government wants to destabilize, deprofessionalize and privatize education.

We must work together to secure fair and adequate

funding for public education. We must oppose testing, ranking and data collection that reduces children to numbers, denying rich educational experiences. We must continue to build and support quality teaching through professional autonomy, enhanced professional development, bargaining, research, and mentorship initiatives. We must extend our Social Justice work beyond classrooms to the families and communities that support and nurture our students.

My experience on the BCTF executive, as local president and community activist have taught me that we can achieve these objectives if we remain steadfast and unified. Teachers as the credible voice of education cannot and will not be silenced. The public welcomes and indeed expects our informed advocacy.

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

**EXPERIENCE:** *National:* CTF Delegate (1 yr.), CTF Women’s Issues Delegate (3). *Provincial:*

BCTF Executive Member-at-Large (4), BC Federation of Labour Resolutions Committee (1), THESA Curriculum Chair (2). *Local:* President (4), Vice President (3), Bargaining Committee (7), Staff Rep (3), AGM (9), Social Justice (1), Health and Safety (3), Summer Conference (8). *Teaching:* UBC Summer Session Instructor (1), Middle and Secondary Home Economics and Humanities both local and international (28). *Education:* MA, UBC, Curriculum and Instruction, Home Economics; Concentration Home Economics, UBC; PDP, SFU; BA Honours, SFU.

For Member-at-Large



Elizabeth McKenzie

In the past two years the teachers of BC have experienced a variety of emotions and stresses and have risen to the challenge. This is not the time to relax. We need to continue to work for public education and the teachers of BC.

Cutbacks and underfunding have seriously impacted our classrooms. Class sizes and class composition issues are still the leading issues for teachers. We must continue to advocate for a fully funded public education system and to build and strengthen our profession

through professional development and mentoring opportunities for new teachers. BCTF members have had success in demonstrating their resolve, and must now use a strategic approach to make our issues concerning public education and the accountability agenda known.

In order for the expertise of teachers to be acknowledged, valued and acted upon by people who control and shape public education in this province, the BCTF must continue to build a successful

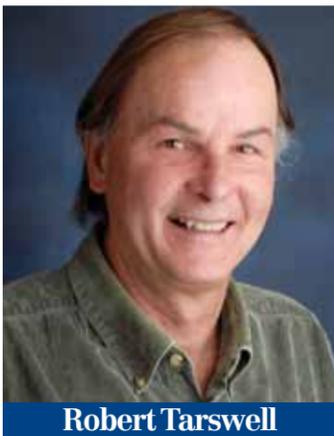
working relationship with our public education stakeholders.

The BCTF Executive must have a balance of perspectives, styles and ideas in order to meet the challenges facing us in the years ahead. I believe I can, and will, bring those qualities to the BCTF Executive and I ask for your support as BCTF Member-at-Large.

**EXPERIENCE:** *Provincial:* BCTF Staff, Teacher Rehabilitation Co-ordinator (4 yrs.), LR (10), Agenda Committee (4), AGM Delegate (12), chair of the CTF AGM Task Force, BCTF

Income Security Committee (3), BCTF Pension Committee (3), Summer Conference delegate (12); Women in Negotiations delegate. *Local:* President, Chilliwack Teachers’ Association (2), Vice President (5), Bargaining Committee (11), Grievance Committee (10), Native Education Advisory Committee (2), Wellness Committee (3), Student Services Committee (4). *Teaching:* 19 years Elementary; Alert Bay 4 years., TOC Victoria/ Sooke 1 yr. Surrey 1 year, Chilliwack 13 years Learning Assistance, Counseling and Primary.

For Member-at-Large



Robert Tarswell

My fundamental belief is that the BCTF is a democratic membership-driven union.

We need to stand together as we have in the past to defend and enhance the high standards and values of our profession, our union, and public education.

Together we must oppose and offer alternatives to this government’s privatization agenda in order to maintain an education system second to none.

Top priorities for us all:  
• Bill 33—not being funded resulting in kids being delisted,

avoiding testing of needy students, cuts to other programs, classes and services.

- BCeSIS—US style data mining, costing boards for a problem-plagued system that crashes regularly and takes time away from teaching and learning.
- Accountability—a growing bureaucracy turning teachers into test prep technicians.
- Grade 10/11 Provincial Exams—which will raise drop out rates and shut doors to many.
- School District Business Companies—\$1,000,000 less to

students in New Westminster, 4-day school for Gulf Island children while district’s international students had 5-day school.

Now is not the time to relax. Now is the time to press our issues.

As a Member-At-Large candidate, I pledge my support, commitment, and passion to the teaching profession, our union and public education.

**EXPERIENCE:** *Provincial:* AGM Delegate (4 yrs), AGM Local Representative (2), BC Fed Delegate (4), Summer Conference

(6), Public Education Conference (4), Bargaining Training, Negotiation Training. *Local:* PDTU President (4), Bargaining Chair (4), Negotiation Team (5), Grievance Chair (4), Health and Safety Committee (7), Staff Representative (10), Bargaining Committee (5), Communications Officer (5), Pro-D Committee (5), Social Justice Chair (2), Social Justice Committee (4), Treasurer (1), Zone Meeting Rep (6). *Teaching:* 26 years including Special Education, 5 years; K-5, 22 years. *Education:* B.Ed (SFU), MA (SDSU)

For Member-at-Large



Francis Zeni

Look no further:  
I am the BCTF!  
You are the BCTF;  
We are ALL the BCTF!

**EXPERIENCE:**  
BCTF Member since 1994.  
BCTF Union Activist since 2002.

# Pension seminars

This year (2006–07) the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), BC Retired Teachers' Association (BCRTA), and the BC Pension Corporation have joined forces to present pension seminars to members of the Teachers' Pension Plan throughout the province.

The seminars are three hours long and cover a number of topics including:

- How to understand your annual Member's Benefit Statement.
- How your pension is calculated.
- How to use online pension information and tools.
- How to increase your pension by purchasing or transferring service, claiming credit for child-rearing time, or reinstating a refund.
- Retirement planning and the transition from work to retirement.

The presentation is designed to meet the needs of members who are nearing retirement, but the information is useful to all members.

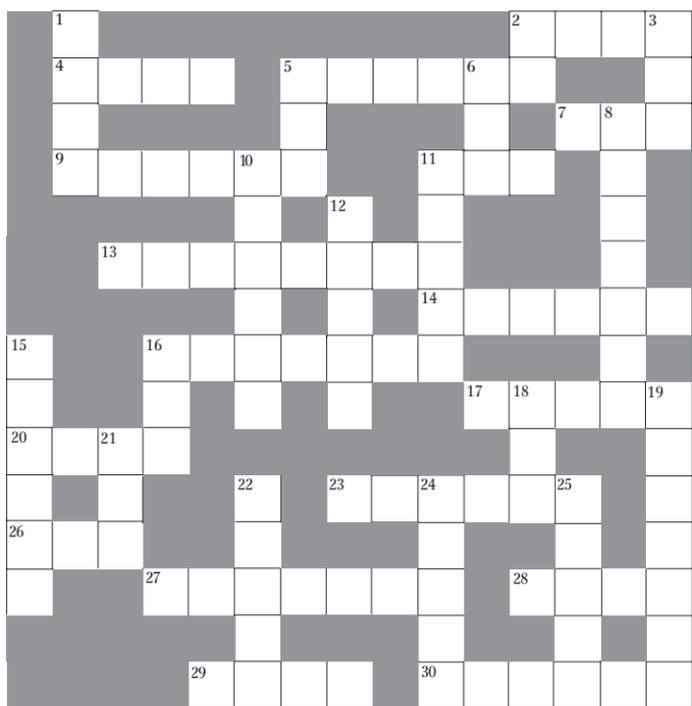
Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Members are encouraged to bring their spouse or partner. There is no charge to attend. To register, complete and return an application, which is available on the TPP website at [tpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://tpp.pensionsbc.ca).

Some venues are still to be confirmed. Members who register for a particular seminar will receive an e-mail confirming specific time and location.

Contact information for registration and more information about the TPP Member Seminars is 250-356-2466, or toll-free at 1-877-558-5574. E-mail [TPPseminars@pensionsbc.ca](mailto:TPPseminars@pensionsbc.ca).

City	Date	Time	Location
Prince George	Mar. 1	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	Days Inn
Prince George	Mar. 3	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Days Inn
Williams Lake	Mar. 10	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Overlander
Kelowna	Mar. 31	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	UBC Okanagan Conference Centre
Terrace	Apr. 14	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Best Western Terrace Inn
Campbell River	Apr. 21	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	TBA
Burnaby	Apr. 26	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	BCIT Burnaby
Burnaby	Apr. 28	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	BCIT Burnaby
Cranbrook	May 5	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	College of the Rockies
N. Vancouver	May 10	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	TBA
N. Vancouver	May 12	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	TBA

## Crossword



- ACROSS**
- recess activity
  - formal test
  - required certification for teachers
  - government tests
  - approve formally
  - national umbrella union
  - requirements
  - place for teaching and learning
  - teachers' allies
  - things known to be true
  - information
  - assemblies for discussing questions of public interest
  - employee on call
  - BCTF newsmagazine
  - aim
  - trial of knowledge
  - first BCTF president

- DOWN**
- support; colleague to colleague
  - physical education
  - affirmative vote
  - division of week
  - English-as-a-second-language program
  - what teachers received from parents in Oct 2005
  - the time to come
  - group of students
  - local funding
  - amount of money allotted
  - organization of speciality teachers
  - BCTF decision-making body
  - student
  - teacher on call
  - classroom level
  - not urban
  - extracurricular program, e.g.

Answers on page 20.

# 10 new BCTF lesson aids

**1 LA 1074—How Music Came to the World: A Curriculum for English 8** by Mary Filleul, 70 p. and three-set CD, ©2005. This interdisciplinary curriculum unit consists of a booklet of reading comprehension strategies and a CD of multicultural stories around the origin and/or importance of musical instruments to a cultural group. All 12 recorded stories are told by professional storytellers and include musical accompaniment. Each world music story is set in places as far-flung as India and Vietnam, and as close as the story of Grandmother Drum, from the Cree people and that of the French Canadian fiddle from Quebec. While this curriculum is geared to an average Grade 8 class, many of the activities will be best suited to teachers of reluctant or struggling readers. Because of the diversity of the stories, this multicultural package would be very appropriate for a culturally mixed group of learners. Grades 7–8. \$39.95

**2 LA 8057—Kinder Rhymes,** Langley School District, 250 p. and CD, ©2005. This colourful illustrated book compiled by six kindergarten teachers is a learning and activity package that includes eight nursery rhymes with lesson plans, coloured 28 cm x 43 cm sentence strips for each rhyme, and a CD. It is structured so each rhyme has a literacy, numeracy, fine arts and extra connections component. There are dozens of activities in each section, as well as blackline masters. The CD features song and instrumental versions of each nursery rhyme. Additional resources such as books, puppets and felt boards that can be ordered separately. The following nursery rhymes are featured: *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, *Eensy Weensy Spider*, *Hey Diddle Diddle*, *Hickory Dickory Dock*, *Humpty Dumpty*, *Little Miss Muffet*, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and *We Willie Winkie*. This resource is also useful for ESL teachers. \$49

**3 LA 9180—Library Information Skills Survival Guide,** Langley School District, 97 p. ©2002. This guide will assist students in efficiently finding good information and learning how to use the information effectively. The guide includes an information literacy plan based on the current IRP with K–7 sequence of skills plus many suggested activities for each learning outcome. The strategies provided are engaging and easily prepared for teaching students how to find their way around the library, how to gather and process information and how to prepare a bibliography. The guide is carefully designed and broken down into library skills according to grade levels. Grades 1–7. \$40

**4 LA 3104—A Little Bear's Vision Quest, Teacher's Resource Guide** by Ilona Weiss, 73 p. ©2006. This guide is a resource for the book LA 3104 "Little Bear's Vision Quest" (\$16.95). It focusses on teaching students about the importance of friends and how to treat friends. Little Bear is not very nice to his friends and learns about cause and effect, as well as learning to think about others and not just his needs. This resource guide includes 14 lessons. The activities meet many of the BC prescribed learning outcomes for social responsibility, language arts, and fine arts. Related learning outcomes are included with each lesson. The lessons are designed to be adapted easily, with a minimum of teacher preparation required. Grades 3–6. \$24.95

**5 LA 9774—O Canada** by Ruth Hanna and Ashley Milne, 2.33 min. CD, ©2006. This professionally produced CD was recorded by two parents from the Surrey. One version, 1.24 min. in length, is sung by a female vocalist and the other version, 1.09 min. in length, is sung by a male vocalist. The CD was requested by school administrators who wanted a clear, simple, and easy version of *O Canada* so students could sing along with the music. To receive a short sound byte demo, please e-mail [rutholsma@hotmail.com](mailto:rutholsma@hotmail.com). All grades. \$20

**6 LA 9933—ADD/ADHD, Learning Assistance Teachers' Association,** 80 p. ©2006. This issue of *The Vital Link* includes articles to assist teachers in clarifying some issues about children who require understanding of their needs, and the need to adapt and transform teaching to help meet those needs in order to assist all students in their pursuit of an education. The resource includes strategies for teachers and presents testimonials from people who work closely with children with ADD/ADHD. K–12. \$12

**7 LA 9981—IRP Preview Templates for K–7** by Matthew McCohm, 89 p. ©2006. These preview templates of the BC Ministry of Education IRPs include three terms of Kindergarten to Grade 7 outcome outlines for language arts, fine arts, mathematics, physical education, science, social studies and CAPP. Grades K–7. \$7.50

**8 LA 3048B—Calculus Manual 1: Function Definitions for Students: CD Rom** by E.E. Egstrom, 45 p. on CD Rom. The award-nominated calculus manual, now in CD Rom format, is reference material for single variable calculus. It is especially useful in the Advanced Placement Program Calculus course. The CD Rom includes three chapters

(with calculator computations). Chapter One: functions, limits and rates of change; functions; function limits; strategy to use tangent lines to parabolas as slope predictors. Chapter Two: derivatives, derivative chain rule, derivative as rates of change, trig functions, derivatives of exponential and logarithmic functions, differentials, approximations, linear/quadratic, linear approximations, applications, derivatives: graphing/curve sketching, antiderivatives. Chapter Three: integral calculus, indefinite integrals, fundamental theorem of integral calculus, integration numerical. Grades 11–12. \$18.95

**9 LA 8087A—Daily Language Review, Grade 1,** Evan Moor Educational Publishers, 130 p. ©2005. This book includes Monday to Friday lessons for each day of a 36-week school year and short daily lessons. Each of the daily lessons has five language tasks for students to complete. The following skills are addressed: sentence editing, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, word study skills and reference skills. The pages are reproducible and the book includes a skills list and answer keys. \$19.95.

Also, **LA 8087A Daily Language Review, Grade 1: Student Practice Book,** 112 p. This consumable student practice book includes many focussed practice exercises. \$4.95

**10 LA 9176—Daily Language Review, Grade 4,** Evan Moor Educational Publishers, 130 p. ©2004. This book includes Monday to Friday lessons for each day of a 36-week school year and short daily lessons. The pages are reproducible and the book includes a skills list and answer keys. \$19.95. Also, **LA 9176A Daily Language Review, Grade 4: Student Practice Book,** 114 p. This consumable student practice book includes focussed practice exercises. \$4.95

More curriculum resources and information are available at [www.bcalmer.ca](http://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: 9–5 p.m. Mon. to Fri. from Sept. to June; 9–5. Tues. to Fri. during July and Aug.; 9–12 on Sat. during Sept., Oct., Jan., and Feb. [bctf.ca/LessonAids](http://bctf.ca/LessonAids).

## An Inconvenient Truth—the movie

This documentary should be mandatory viewing for everyone from age 8 and up, especially our politicians, many of whom are currently dithering about which approach and timeline to use regarding this issue. The following information, located at [www.climatecrisis.net/aboutthe/film](http://www.climatecrisis.net/aboutthe/film) summarizes this film accurately.

"Humanity is sitting on a ticking time bomb. If the vast majority of the world's scientists are right, we have just 10 years to avert a major catastrophe that could send our entire planet into a tail-spin of epic destruction involving extreme weather, floods, droughts, epidemics, and killer heat waves beyond anything we have ever experi-

enced. If that sounds like a recipe for serious gloom and doom—think again. *An Inconvenient Truth* offers a passionate and inspirational look at one man's fervent crusade to halt global warming's deadly progress in its tracks by exposing the myths and misconceptions that surround it. Al Gore, who, in the wake of defeat in the 2000 election, re-set the course of his life to focus on a last-ditch, all-out effort to help save the planet from irrevocable change. He is funny, engaging, open, and downright on fire about getting the surprisingly stirring truth about what he calls our 'planetary emergency' out to ordinary citizens before it's too late.

"With 2005, the worst storm season ever experienced in

America just behind us, it seems we may be reaching a tipping point—and Gore pulls no punches in explaining the dire situation using bracing facts and future predictions as he underscores the key message of the film: we can no longer afford to view global warming as a political issue—rather it is the biggest moral challenge facing our global civilization."

The film web site also offers various links that educators will find useful, including the *An Inconvenient Truth Educator's Resource* featuring downloadable pdf lesson plans.

Source: *The Global Educator*, newsletter of the BC Teachers for Peace and Global Education, Winter 2006/07.

# Nonviolent compassionate communication

by Joan Gillis

**“W**ow, the missing piece!” That was my reaction when I stumbled across NVC. The piece I would love to have given the children I taught. I’ve taken workshops, courses, and attended practice groups ever since.

NVC (Nonviolent Communication or Compassionate Communication) is the work of Dr. Marshall Rosenberg. It has been evolving for 30 years and he has used it in many situations—self, interpersonal, educational, and in war-torn areas. His work has been endorsed by many, including Arun Ghandi, Deepak Chopra, the Dalai Lama, Jack Canfield, Dr. Thomas Gordon, and William Glasser.

For me, NVC is a set of tools to teach, to learn, and to use a consciousness that allows moving beyond labeling and blame to access the essence of what is going on, and from there, find strategies to resolve issues.

I currently have a Grade 4/5 class. This is my first year teaching the skills to students. We are in the early stages of learning the skills and applying the processes. I’m greatly encouraged by the response of the children when we’ve used the process with issues that have come up in the classroom. The students have expressed feeling heard and understood, and the situations where we’ve applied these skills have been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

I value NVC tools because I see them as a concrete means to address major issues of school and society—co-operation, peace, social justice, bullying, and connection within a community.

The following excerpts are from an interview with Sura Hart, co-author of *The Compassionate Classroom*, an NVC book for teachers, and co-leader of the Teach for Life Educators’ Institute. She is also the co-author of a new book, *Respectful Parents, Respectful Kids: 7 Keys to Turn Family Conflict into Co-operation*.

**Gillis:** How would you describe NVC to teachers unfamiliar with it?

**Hart:** NVC is a way of seeing the human needs people are trying to meet. It is a way of getting right to the motivation for behavior so we can address it effectively and compassionately. It is a way to help kids understand what’s going on in them and with other people, so communication happens, and effective solutions to problems are found.

**Gillis:** What are some of the underlying beliefs?

**Hart:** One of the main beliefs is that we are each trying to meet our needs in the best way we can. Kids are not out to trip you up. Like all people, kids want to learn. Kids want to get along. How can we help them do that?

Another basic belief is that people have the most fun when getting along with one another and co-operating. Kids would love to get along and co-operate with one another if they knew how to do that, if they had the understanding about themselves they would love to have, and could also understand what’s

going on with others. It’s my experience that you can’t stop kids from learning when they feel safe in the classroom, when they get the understanding and respect that all of us want, and when their developmental stage and learning style is addressed.

*...for the classroom teacher, it means that young people are able to work things out with each other more and more of the time, and the teacher spends less time with behavior problems and mediating conflicts, freeing up time to address learning needs.*

**Gillis:** What about the teacher who already sees the needs of the child, but they’re stuck at that point?

**Hart:** I work with teachers not only to help them see the needs of the students, but also to support their teaching and awareness of needs to their students.

In *The Compassionate Classroom*, we develop curriculum for educating young people about universal human needs, for developing a literacy of needs and feelings, and specific skills

for conflict reduction and resolution. These are life-skills that students can build upon throughout their years. And for the classroom teacher, it means that young people are able to work things out with each other more and more of the time, and the teacher spends less time with behavior problems and mediating conflicts, freeing up time to address learning needs.

If we’re really going to be serious in our schools about teaching peaceful conflict resolution and how to get along with each other and co-operate rather than fight and retaliate, then it seems important to teach these kinds of skills to the kids—understand what they’re needing when they act, understand what’s going on with other people, and learn how to talk together about ways to meet their needs so that they resolve issues in a way that’s a real win-win.

Results are pending from a study last year, which taught NVC skills to students, parents, and teachers in a Vancouver elementary school.

The international web site for NVC is [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org) and the BC NVC web site is [www.bcnc.org](http://www.bcnc.org).

Marshall Rosenberg will be in Vancouver, March 16-18, 2007, and in Nelson, BC, March 19-21, 2007. Sura Hart may be reached at [surahart@aol.com](mailto:surahart@aol.com).

Joan Gillis teaches at Miller Park Community School, Coquitlam, [jogillis@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:jogillis@sd43.bc.ca).

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From the Margin to the Mainstream



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## J8 JUNIOR 8 SUMMIT

**For some students, world issues won't just be a course of study this term. It will be real life.**



2006 J8 Canada team with Goodwill Ambassador Sir Roger Moore and UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman  
 A group of your students could be presenting their ideas on tackling global issues to world leaders at this year's G8 Summit in Germany.  
 Take global issues out of the classroom and into the real world by encouraging your students to enter the UNICEF/Morgan Stanley Junior 8 (J8) Competition. Teams of eight students will be judged on their understanding of and commitment to world issues.  
 The winning Canadian team will travel to the G8 Summit, June 3-9, 2007, in Heiligendamm, Germany. Along with other students from G8 countries, the team will take part in the J8 Summit to discuss and debate the items on the G8 agenda. J8 delegates will then write a joint declaration which they will present directly to G8 leaders.

Encourage your students to enter! Submissions must be prepared by teams of eight students between the ages of 13 and 17. Entry deadline is March 30, 2007.

For more information, including entry forms and conditions, teacher and student resources, visit [www.j8summit.com/canada](http://www.j8summit.com/canada) or [www.unicef.ca](http://www.unicef.ca).

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Have you ever noticed ...

- that children are not getting enough physical activity?
- that children can be more frustrated, aggressive and don't always play cooperatively on the playground?
- that children are bored and don't seem to know many games to play?

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Order resources & equipment online [www.positiveplaygrounds.com](http://www.positiveplaygrounds.com)  
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 U.S.A. Placement: Georgia  
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 Personal Goal: Learn how to surf  
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 Burnaby, BC V5C 6C6

tel 604-320-0505  
 fax 604-320-0535  
 email [peter.chipman@variety.bc.ca](mailto:peter.chipman@variety.bc.ca)  
 web [www.variety.bc.ca/legacy](http://www.variety.bc.ca/legacy)  
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**Old PUERTO VALLARTA** large 1 bd. condo, 2 blks from Los Muertos Beach, 604-879-7673, [www.vrbo.com/56182\\_casaescapa@shaw.ca](http://www.vrbo.com/56182_casaescapa@shaw.ca)

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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](mailto:carolannrea@hotmail.com)

**WHISTLER GETAWAY.** Pinecrest Estates, 4-5 bd., 1.5 bath, 1400 sq.ft. cabin, sauna, deck with BBQ, fully-equip. kitchen, DW, WD, wood stove (wood provided). Seasonal rates. [glush@shaw.ca](mailto:glush@shaw.ca) or 604-936-3346.

**BLACKCOMB** Luxury 2 bd/loft, 3 bath, sleeps 8, ski-in, ski-out, 604-940-0156.

**WHISTLER CREEK** townhouse for rent. View of Alta Lake. 2 bath., 3 bd., sleeps 6. 604-535-3447.

**WHISTLER** 1 bd. condo (Whistler Creekside) sleeps 4, F/P, hot tub, swimming pool, sauna, kitchen fully equipped, u/ground parking, close to lift and stores. Call Jan or John at 604-530-0958.

**SUN PEAKS RESORT** Stone's Throw, Unit 49, luxurious brand new condo, 2 bd/ 2 bath, sleeps 5, ski-in/ski-out, mountain views, private hot tub, F/P, bbq, 6 appliances, plasma TVs. All amenities. NS/NP. 1-800-585-8834, reservation code: Teacher

**WHISTLER** Village North, 2 bd. deluxe townhome. 604-531-6847, E-mail: [hpjanzen@shaw.ca](mailto:hpjanzen@shaw.ca). View at [www.whistlervacationhome.ca](http://www.whistlervacationhome.ca).

**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](mailto:i_roland@hotmail.com), [www.ultimateparis.com](http://www.ultimateparis.com)

**KIHEI, MAUI.** Large selection of fully equipped condos. Great beaches. Near shopping centre. Call Alf, 604-291-1751, F: 604-291-9773, [kihei@telus.net](mailto:kihei@telus.net).

**KIHEI, MAUI.** Privately owned, beautiful fully furn. 2 bd., 2 bath condo across from Kamaole beaches. Great complex, Great location. 250-598-6955, F: 250-598-6965.

**WHISTLER BLACKCOMB** Ski-in/ski-out, luxury condo, sleeps 5, pool, hot tubs, 3 night min. [www.at-blackcomb.com](http://www.at-blackcomb.com), Sheila 604-929-6589.

**FRANCE HOLIDAY RENTALS** Medieval house/studio, 16c village, Montagnac, S France. 1/2 hr. Montpellier, 15 min. Med. [sjevent@shaw.ca](mailto:sjevent@shaw.ca)

**WHISTLER** Alta Lake, waterfront, 1 bd. condo, sleeps 4, 1km to village, FP, TV/ VCR/DVD. Summer/winter rates 604-298-2070.

**WHISTLER** condo, 2 bd. Sleep 6, Quiet family area, 10 min. to Village. All amenities, fireplace, jetted tub, etc. Rates from \$100 to \$225 per night. Depending on duration and season. Ron 604-988-8231, [rhsargent@shaw.ca](mailto:rhsargent@shaw.ca)

**SUN PEAKS** new chalet, mountain views, 3 bd. +den, additional 2 bd. suite avail., fully equipped, hot tub, BBQ, ski-in, 400 m to lifts. Call 1-604-864-0139.

**WHISTLER** 3 bd. chalet, sleeps 6, all amenities, call John 604-987-7619.

**SILVERSTAR** 2 bdrm. deluxe accommodation, call 250-549-1536 for best prices. [www.silverstarski.ca](http://www.silverstarski.ca)

**SAN JOSE DEL CABO** 1 bd. condo for rent. On golf course. 5 min. walk to beach. [ejones59@shaw.ca](mailto:ejones59@shaw.ca)

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**GULF ISLANDS.** Deluxe waterfront cottage, 1 bd./sleeps 4, winter and summer rates, [www.ainsliepointcottage.com](http://www.ainsliepointcottage.com), call Alma 250-629-3008.

**SOUTH OF FRANCE** Teacher-owned holiday rental. Sunny, affordable, 4 bdrm, 2 bath villa in Limoux, Languedoc. Great for sharing. Keith Digby 250-743-2439, [digbyk@shaw.ca](mailto:digbyk@shaw.ca), [www.southoffrancerental.com](http://www.southoffrancerental.com)

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**LAKE TAHOE** August 5-11, 2007. South Lake Tahoe Embassy Vacation Resort studio suite. Contact 604-464-1788 or [stan\\_wylie@telus.net](mailto:stan_wylie@telus.net)

**PENTICTON** Walk to the beach. 3 +1 bdrm. house with fenced private yard, BBQ, hot tub, available July 22-Sept 1. Weekly or monthly. Call 250-488-2214.

**HOUSTON** Vacation in Houston, Texas. 3 bdrm. 3 bath furnished house, sun room, tropical yard. Available May 1-Oct. 31. Wkly/mthly rates. Ph: 250-434-4143.

**OKANAGAN** Osoyoos lakeview cherry orchard private house rental. Weekly in summer, long term out of season. [www.lakeviewcherryorchard.com](http://www.lakeviewcherryorchard.com) or call Carol 604-209-7220.

**PENTICTON** roomy townhouse overlooking lake, 45 min. to Apex and Nickel Plate Nordic Ski Center. Adults, N/S, N/P. 1 week during Spring Break. \$450. [travels123@hotmail.com](mailto:travels123@hotmail.com)

**HORNBY ISLAND** vacation book early. "Arthurs House" sleeps 5-8, \$1200/wk. comfortable home, sunny location, close to beach, full kitchen, lawn, trees. "Arthurs Cottage" sleeps 2-5, \$600/wk. [davidcloud@hornbyisland.com](mailto:davidcloud@hornbyisland.com)

**SUNSHINE COAST.** Beach house near Powell River. Sleeps 10, 4 bd., 2 bath, sundeck, half acre waterfront property. Quiet bay, excellent for hiking, fishing, kayaking, golfing. 604-464-9925 or email [kross@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:kross@sd43.bc.ca)

**DEEP BAY** Waterfront 2 bd. cottage, Vancouver Island, overlooking Denman, Hornby Islands. Relaxing private. Sleeps 4-6 people, N/S, N/P. Avail. June to Sept. 604-939-0121 or [chuck\\_denison@telus.net](mailto:chuck_denison@telus.net)

**CULTUS LAKE.** Enjoy a holiday at beautiful Cultus Lake. Deluxe waterfront accommodation is offered at reasonable rates. Phone 604-316-1235.

**KELOWNA** lakeview executive home near Summerhill Winery. Avail. May 31 to June 30. \$2500. 2 large bedrooms plus hideabed. Large enclosed sunroom. 2 resident cata. N/S. Contact [nlongman@telus.net](mailto:nlongman@telus.net), 250-764-7856.

**ARIZONA** sunny, relaxing, fully furn. home. Lovely citrus trees, cactus landscaping. Quiet outside covered eating area. Private community, indoor/outdoor pools, golf, recreation. \$625/wk., \$2200/mo. available March. 250-539-3662, 360-584-0834, [arizonasunny@yahoo.com](mailto:arizonasunny@yahoo.com)

**FRANCE** Southwest, Medieval village house, sleeps 6, fully equipped, 45 min. Montpellier, [www.swanshouseinfrance.com](http://www.swanshouseinfrance.com)

**QUALICUM BEACH** 1200 sq.ft. townhouse, 2 bd., 1.5 bath. 1 short block from the ocean, close to stores, village,

restaurants, and more. Sleeps 4-6 people. Weekly and monthly rates for July and Aug. 250-752-7114.

**SUNSHINE COAST** Waterfront cottage, sleeps 4, F/P, W/D, accessible. View at [www.bbsunshinecoast.com/loping/?action=view&lid=163](http://www.bbsunshinecoast.com/loping/?action=view&lid=163), full kitchen, hiking, parks nearby. 604-885-0651, [fjbishop@gmail.com](mailto:fjbishop@gmail.com)

## FOR RENT/EXCHANGE

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**HOUSE SWAP** Fernie BC and Lower Mainland. Family of 4. Dates Negotiable. Contact 250-423-3577 or e-mail at [tdmlewis@telus.net](mailto:tdmlewis@telus.net)

**VANCOUVER** Lovely 1 bdrm above ground basement suite, Killarney South area. \$700/mo. incl. heat, cable, lights. Contact Dino 604-464-1046 after 11 am.

**NORTH VANCOUVER** Immaculate water-view condo available April 18-May 23. \$1500. 2 bdrm, 2 bath. [nonverity@yahoo.ca](mailto:nonverity@yahoo.ca)

**Experienced HOUSESITTER** available for Victoria or Saanich, N/S, 1 wk. at Spring Break, care for plants and pets, references. [travels123@hotmail.com](mailto:travels123@hotmail.com)

**VICTORIA.** 1 bd. apt, fully furn. avail. May 1-Aug. 31. Bright, spacious, clean, large balcony, quiet, well-maintained building. New pool and hot tub; fitness room, secured entry, parking, laundry room and storage. Cable, wireless internet, all util. included; DVD player, large TV, full kitchen, etc. Convenient location on direct bus routes to UVic and Downtown, min. to UVic and downtown. \$1100/mo. E-mail: [oldfield@uvic.ca](mailto:oldfield@uvic.ca) for more info and photos.

**VANCOUVER** near Kits beach, 1 bdrm. \$300/wk. all included. Available mid-May to mid-July. Call 604-737-7181 or e-mail: [daphnoucho@hotmail.com](mailto:daphnoucho@hotmail.com)

## MISCELLANEOUS

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**DIRECTOR REQUIRED.** The Scottish Rite Freemasons of Canada will open their fourth Canadian, non-profit, Children's Learning Centre, in Vancouver B.C. in September, 2008. The Centre will use the Orton-Gillingham approach to tutor children with dyslexia. A volunteer Director is required to oversee the operation of the Centre and the volunteer tutors. Please send a resume to The Scottish Rite, 1495 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver B.C. V6H 1C9, marked "Learning Centre" or call 604-736-3936 for further information.

# PD CALENDAR

## MARCH

**2** Whistler. Inspire Me! Howe Sound Teachers' Association presents Erin Gruwell and the story of the Freedom Writers' Diary, coming on film in January 2007. Workshops in critical thinking, literacy, social justice, media studies, science, etc. Information: [bctf.ca/hsta](mailto:bctf.ca/hsta) or contact April Lowe, [pd48@bctf.ca](mailto:pd48@bctf.ca), 604-892-3056.

**2** Prince George. Educational Spring Fling-3rd North Central Zone Conference. Keynote speaker Gordon Neufeld; PITA and BCPTA mini conferences. Workshops for all grades and subject areas. Prince George Senior Secondary. Information: [bctf.ca/local57](mailto:bctf.ca/local57) or contact Deb Vandal, [dvandal@sd57.bc.ca](mailto:dvandal@sd57.bc.ca), 250-562-7214.

**2-3** Richmond. New Teachers' and Student Teachers' Conference. Hosted by the BC Teachers' Federation and held at the Radisson President Hotel & Suites, 8181 Cambie Road. Further information and online registration [bctf.ca/NewTeachers.aspx?id=10294](http://bctf.ca/NewTeachers.aspx?id=10294). Or contact Lu Aldridge at 1-800-663-9163 local 1804 or 604-871-1804.

**8-10** Victoria. 2nd International Conference for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Research, Policy, and Practice Around the World. Fairmont Empress Hotel. The conference goal is to provide participants with the means to use research and practice to inform and shape policy regarding fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Information at [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca). Contact Joanne Nam at [ipad@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ipad@interchange.ubc.ca).

**15-16** Vancouver. The Special Education Association of BC presents its 32nd annual Crosscurrents Conference at the Westin Bayshore, featuring a line-up of top quality presenters and a wide range of sessions relevant to teachers working with students who have special learning needs. Keynote speech by Norm Bossio, "Leadership and Motivation." Information at [bctf.ca/sea](mailto:bctf.ca/sea) or contact Priscilla Fortier, [priscillaf@shaw.ca](mailto:priscillaf@shaw.ca)

## APRIL

**19-20** Saskatoon, SK. Where It's AT—Assistive Technology for Children & Youth Conference. Speakers: Susie Blackstien-Adler, M.Ed., B.Sc. O.T. (Bloorview Kids Rehab, Toronto). on supporting participation of students with high needs in the activities of the classroom; and Stacey Harpell, B.S., M.S., CCC-SLP (Saskatoon Health Region), on social communication. Contact Events of Distinction, t: 651-3118; f: 651-3119; [eofd@sasktel.net](mailto:eofd@sasktel.net).

**19-21** Toronto. Inner City: Strength in Diversity—Advocating for the Future. This national inner-city conference is calling for contributions and participation. Session categories can include: Student leadership, Teaching practice in the inner city, Teacher development for the inner city, Student well-being, Curriculum and programs, Family and community partnerships, funding and policy. Contact Jeffrey Kugler, [jkugler@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:jkugler@oise.utoronto.ca), Ph: 416-9233-6641, ext. 7859.

**19-21** Coquitlam. Encompass 2007 Conference (K-12), Celebrating Social Emotional Learning and Academic Success, with keynote speaker Alfie Kohn, featured speakers Dr. Mary Utne O'brien, Dr. Gabor Maté, Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, Roy Henry Vickers, Terry Waterhouse, Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl, Dr. Shelley Hymel, Dr. Martin Brokenleg and Renee Hodgkinson, and 80 to 90 related workshops. Registration available online February 2007. Information: [www.cta43.org/pd-encompass-07.htm](http://www.cta43.org/pd-encompass-07.htm), or contact Gerry Lush, 604-936-9971, [pd43@bctf.ca](mailto:pd43@bctf.ca)

**19-21** Coquitlam. Teaching Hearts, Minds & Bodies, speaks to the joys and challenges of teaching the whole child, while addressing the many curricular changes that educators face in these fast paced times. Registration and info. [www.myabc.bc.ca/connections/](http://www.myabc.bc.ca/connections/) Contact: Bill McGovern, [bmcgovern@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:bmcgovern@sd43.bc.ca)

**21-22** Kelowna. Manteo Resort. UBC offers a French and Spanish Immersion Weekend. \$250 includes tuition and three meals. Teachers can use their Tuition Fee Certificate toward the fee. Call 604-822-0802 or see [www.languages.ubc.ca](http://www.languages.ubc.ca)

**25-26** North Vancouver. Fast Forward Educational Media Showcase at Capilano College, organized by media users in K-12 and post-secondary education, brings together high quality educational media distributors with buyers. Registration and information: [www.langara.bc.ca/ffwd](http://www.langara.bc.ca/ffwd). Contact: Susan Weber, [sweber@langara.bc.ca](mailto:sweber@langara.bc.ca), or 604-323-5533.

**27** Chilliwack. Charlotte Diamond, children's entertainer will be presenting two-2-hour workshops: "Singing in the Spring, Singing in the Fall" (K-6) a workshop linking issues of the environment through song. "The Song is Just the Beginning" a music workshop linking K-6 curriculum with language experiences. Target audience: K-6 teachers. Registration and further information: Chilliwack Teachers' Association, Elizabeth Gillies 604-792-9233 or [pd33@bctf.ca](mailto:pd33@bctf.ca) or [egilliesis@mac.com](mailto:egilliesis@mac.com)

## MAY

**2-5** Regina. DreamCatching 2007: Professional Development Workshops in Math & Science for Teachers of Aboriginal Students, at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan. Cost: TBA. Information: [www.dream-catching.com](http://www.dream-catching.com)

**5** Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices 2007. Celebrating IOP's 10th Anniversary. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings, and questions. Call for Proposals—Share Your Classroom Inquiries. Submission deadline: March 9. Scarfe Education Building, 2125 Main Mall, UBC. Information: [www.eplt.educ.ubc.ca/workshops/](http://www.eplt.educ.ubc.ca/workshops/) or contact Judy Paley, 604-822-2733, or [judy.paley@ubc.ca](mailto:judy.paley@ubc.ca)

**11** Whistler. 2nd Annual PITA (Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association) Whistler Workshops—Supporting struggling students in the grey area. Featuring Dawn Reithaug. Online registration and information goes live in February. Fee \$95. Contact Ray Myrtle PITA President, f: 604-224-5754 [rmyrtle@canada.com](mailto:rmyrtle@canada.com)

**18** Chilliwack. Professional day activities, extend yourself beyond the classroom walls. Interested in touring the valley? Want to change jobs? How about financial security? Art? Food? Photosh? Music? Look at our springboard calendar of workshops early in April. Registration and information: Chilliwack Teachers' Association, Elizabeth Gillies 604-792-9233 or [pd33@bctf.ca](mailto:pd33@bctf.ca) or [egilliesis@mac.com](mailto:egilliesis@mac.com)

## JULY

**2-19** Quebec City. Institut de Francais, UBC a Quebec, French Bursary Program for Teachers. This French immersion program is intended for all teachers and administrators interested in learning or improving their French language skills. Information: [www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/quebec](http://www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/quebec) or toll-free 1-866-528-7485

**5-16** China. Peace and Reconciliation Study Tour to China Supported by BC Social Studies Teachers' Association (BCSSTA). The study tour facilitates a better understanding of the cultural and historical background of China during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945). Meet survivors and historians, visit museums and historical sites in Shanghai, Zhejiang and Nanjing. BC Assoc. for Learning and Preserving the History of WWII in Asia (BC ALPHA) covers all ground costs inside China. For more information contact Thekla Lit at 604-313-6000 or [bcalpha@shaw.ca](mailto:bcalpha@shaw.ca). Application details [www.alpha-canada.org/StudyTour](http://www.alpha-canada.org/StudyTour)

## AUGUST

**13-15** Parksville. Achieving excellence in writing with Susan Augustyn. This workshop is practical, offering a comprehensive writing program to take back to the classroom to use immediately. Interesting, informative and effective. Students' writing shows dramatic improvement within six months. For information contact Susan at 250-248-6434 or [saugustyn@shaw.ca](mailto:saugustyn@shaw.ca)

**13-17** Vancouver. BCTF Building, 4th Media Literacy Summer Institute. In a media-saturated world, how do we help students to manage the barrage of messages? For further details contact Dan Blake at 604-301-1247 or [deblaca@telus.net](mailto:deblaca@telus.net).

**19-21** Penticton. The 3rd Annual Summer Leadership Conference. Designed to cater to the professional learning needs of teachers, vice-principals, parents, trustees and district leaders. Sunday evening pre-conference and two days which include noted authors and leading educators. Information and registration at: [www.sd67.bc.ca](http://www.sd67.bc.ca) or contact Kathy Levesque [klevsque@summer.com](mailto:klevsque@summer.com), 250-770-7718, local 1.

**PSA PD Day: October 19, 2007**  
[bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx](http://bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx)  
Additions/changes: [elambert@bctf.ca](mailto:elambert@bctf.ca)

# Is full-time teaching hazardous?



by Anne Jardine

Is full-time teaching hazardous to one's health? Is the job just too demanding, time consuming and stressful?

Some teachers—the 1.0 FTE casualties—leave the profession, or they try unsuccessfully to adapt, sometimes by sacrificing family stability or personal health. Exhaustion disorders, depression, and addictions are a few examples of unsuccessful adaptations.

Other teachers—the 1.0 FTE survivors—adapt to these time demands within their full-time assignment by changing their teaching strategies, perhaps by lowering their standards, by simplifying their marking or planning, by using shortcuts, by not following up on all student behavioural concerns, by reducing abstract or complex learning outcomes, by teaching to the test, by dumbing down their courses, or by dropping their extracurricular activities.

Recently a Golden teacher requested a .15 FTE reduction in her assignment. Here is an excerpt from her letter to the board (used with permission).

"In my first three months of a full-time teaching assignment in BC I have struggled greatly with the demands on my time. The difference is simply this: in Ontario, New Zealand, and Australia, teachers are allotted five to six periods a week to prepare in comparison to BC's three. This is largely insufficient. I now produce lessons well below the standard of which I am capable. I am suffering professionally. My students are suffering in the classroom.

"Since I refuse to lower my standards, I have had to request a reduction in workload. I do so reluctantly, but my commitment to educate students to a high standard leaves me two choices: teach at less than full-time or leave the profession.

"I wonder how many excellent teachers in my position will choose the latter.

"I appreciate your time and effort in reconsidering the definition of full-time teaching in BC."

This teacher is unwilling to even consider any of these workload-coping strategies. She is going to buy herself a block of preparation time by reducing her FTE.

For several years now, teachers have had to resort to seeking personal relief, making personal adaptations, and personal financial sacrifices in order to accommodate their workload. This Golden teacher is not alone. Many have requested reduced assignments. The move to part-time has become a trend.

Although the board has always been supportive and sympathetic in granting requests for reduced assignments, this conscientious Golden teacher does not really want to drop to part-time. Her letter is a passionate plea for more reasonable preparation time and workload.

In the 2006-07 WTA Working and Learning Conditions Report released in November, a whole section was included that examined the trend to part-time from the David Thompson Secondary School experience. The conclusion to that section states:

"It seems each year a greater number of teachers move to part-time. There are many reasons for this trend, but it is not unreasonable to question whether the demands of a full-time teacher's workload are taking a toll on people's health."

After reading the letter of our Golden colleague, and hearing her desperate call for a broader discussion of workload, it became clear that this is not a problem particular to one school.

In the whole of Rocky Mountain District, there are 231 teachers on assignment this year; 40 of them, or 15%, have requested reduced assignments.

In approaching this trend from a broader professional perspective, as our Golden colleague has requested, there are a number of interrelated issues that deserve further consideration. Thoughtful discussion is needed in school staff rooms, amongst teachers themselves and with administrators. More analysis is needed. Why is workload so excessive?

These are just three of the most immediate ways in which teacher workload has become more complex and intense as more district and ministry expectations are added to our work:

1. Standardized testing and the associated marking, and other local assessment initiatives connected with needs for data and accountability, have put increased demands on teacher time.
2. More complex and time-consuming report card procedures have recently been imposed.
3. The increase of IEP work resulting from the mainstreaming of students with special needs, as well as the advocacy and complex nurturing required by many of these special needs students have become a major part of the average teacher's day.

New demands are added, yet none of the traditional teaching duties are subtracted. Class sizes are often very large, considering the diversity and special needs of the pupils. This intensification of workload has put enormous stress on teachers. This stress has also affected the overall operations of schools.

These are some of the negative effects on school operation resulting from the trend to part-

time as a personal workload adaptation:

- School departments are fragmented. Finding a time that works for a department meeting is very complex. Some teachers have to attend two or three different department meetings, sometimes on the same day, and have to be in two or more places at once. Some actually try to do this, and even succeed to some extent!

- Specialist teachers who still manage to devote their whole attention to one discipline are providing mentorship and support for their fragmented colleagues as much as they can, without any time in which to do so. Generalist teachers are often too fragmented to develop depth of content confidence.

- A teacher who is not on a full-time FTE will not necessarily be contributing his or her full mind and heart to the school and its community of concerns.

- Part-time teachers do not necessarily attend all staff meetings or professional development activities. Many with health or family concerns cannot always attend. They are only required to be there to the proportional FTE of their assignment.

- The loss of coaches for sports teams and teacher sponsors for other extracurricular activities has been evident for several years as teachers adapt to the intensification of their workloads. Even among those who still manage the demands of 1.0 FTE, a great many teachers do not have time to coach or run clubs anymore.

- Many teachers leave the school premises as soon as their actual assigned time is finished, so they are not available for students informally seeking extra help or colleagues informally seeking collaborative planning opportunities.

- Although working part-time may help individuals to

cope with their workloads, the trend to part-time has not always been a good solution for schools. The dilemma is that chronic- and stress-related illnesses continue to rise among teachers. More and more of them are driven to seek personal accommodations. Perfectly healthy teachers are requesting part-time assignments as a means of limiting their workload, preserving their health, and meeting the needs of their families.

Concerns and questions abound. Are the expectations of full-time teachers making people sick? Are teachers who request reduced assignments trying to protect themselves from unreasonable pressures on their personal health and family time? Are these part-time adaptations creating a retreat from professionalism? Is a daily preparation block for BC teachers an impossible dream? Can the definition of a full-time teacher be reconsidered, as our Golden colleague hopes?

Healthy, highly motivated and highly professional teachers are essential to effective schools, and healthy, successful students. It is time to take a humane look at the whole picture of teacher workload. Rebalancing is needed.

Anne Jardine is president of the Windermere Teachers' Association.

References available on request.

#### Crossword answers:

Across: 2. play, 4. exam, 5. degree, 7. FSA, 9. ratify, 11. CLC, 13. criteria, 14. school, 16. parents, 17. facts, 20. data, 23. forums, 26. EOC, 27. Teacher, 28. goal, 29. test, 30. Lister  
Down: 1. peer, 2. PE, 3. yea, 5. day, 6. ESL, 8. support, 10. future, 11. class, 12. grant, 15. budget, 16. PSA, 18. AGM, 19. scholar, 21. TOC, 22. grade, 24. rural, 25. sport