

We need full, free, local bargaining

A history of local bargaining: On the right is a copy of the original Working & Learning Conditions contract from 1969 obtained by Vancouver teachers.

Our history presents a clear lesson on the importance of collective bargaining rights. What separates our current working and learning conditions from those of our predecessors is due to the collective efforts and participatory democracy of those teachers years ago who organized themselves to achieve full collective-bargaining rights.

Prior to the formation of the BCTF in the early 1900s and early forms of VESTA in the late 1800s, the Public School Act of British Columbia of 1872 organized teachers into teacher institutes dominated by government officials. In a far-flung province of Canada, collective rights were not recognized, and while labour organization were present in mining towns, unions were seen as a conspiracy against trade. BC teachers had common-law contracts, worked under what we would see as intolerable conditions, and came and went at the behest of local school authorities.

At the time, teacher salaries were determined by school board policy. In many districts, the teacher who wanted a salary increase had to appear before what was called an annual school meeting or an assembly of district ratepayers. There was no equality of pay between men and women, or between secondary teachers and elementary teachers. The logic of forming an organization with objectives of dealing with the economic, professional, and social concerns of teachers seemed pretty compelling for those in attendance at the original BCTF and VESTA meetings.

Fast-forward to December 1968, when mass actions by Vancouver teachers led to the first Learning and Working Conditions contract in the province by August of 1969. Conditions covered in agreements such as this one often were not enforceable, and school boards were not required to negotiate with teachers. But it was significant step down the road to full collective bargaining for teachers.

Full collective-bargaining rights for teachers were ultimately achieved in 1987 teacher-bargaining legislation. During the negotiations that followed, teachers negotiated a full set of terms including: class size, duty-free lunch in most places, fair personnel practice, professional development rights, and a healthy salary increase. In the years that followed, hundreds of negotiations were concluded without reference to strikes or lockouts. Where necessary, teachers did undertake job action in the face of school boards acting unfairly in the negotiating process. VESTA and VSTA fought for, and won, some of the best learning conditions language for students with special needs, and ratios for teacher-librarians and other specialist teachers. In an city with high numbers of ESL students and students requiring additional support, Vancouver teachers often opted for improved learning conditions for their diverse classrooms over higher salary increases.

These gains were possible, in part, because Vancouver teachers were able to bargain directly with their employer: the Vancouver School Board.

Unfortunately, two significant events changed all of that:

1) In March 1994, the NDP provincial government introduced the Public Education Labour Relations Act, imposing provincial bargaining on teachers. Where previously VESTA and VSTA had bargained directly with the VSB, the BCTF now become the bargaining agent for all public school teachers in BC and a new structure. And at the same time, the BC Public Schools Employers' Association (BCPSEA), was created to bargain for school boards. All matters that had a cost to them were to be negotiated provincially while non-cost matters could be negotiated locally. Because of our history of success with local bargaining, VESTA opposed the legislation but it's the structure we're still stuck with today.

2) In January 2002, the new Liberal government introduced Bill 28, the Public Education Flexibility

and Choice Act, which stripped away any and all provisions concerning non-enrolling teachers in our Collective Agreement, as well as language concerning class size and composition (including the language governing the inclusion of students with special needs). These were items that had been bargained in good faith, fought for, and for which teachers in Vancouver had forgone salary increases and other potential gains. The government and BCPSEA still refuse to restore these items, despite rulings from the ILO.

Both of these decisions have seriously affected how we address the working conditions of teachers and learning conditions for our students.

Despite the small step that was last year's Bill 33, the provisions in that act cannot compare to the nuanced and detailed language that was stripped from our Collective Agreement in 2002. That language was admired across North America, and guaranteed appropriate support for our most vulnerable students in ways that Bill 33 has not.

At the same time, we continue to be stuck with a provincial bargaining structure which makes it almost impossible to deal with any items of mutual concern that are relevant at the local level.

Presently, we are at the local table with the VSB, with a moderate list of objectives approved last year by the combined memberships of VESTA and VSTA (who bargain together as the VTF - the Vancouver Teachers' Federation). What is frustrating is that that there are many, many items of mutual concern at the local level that need to be dealt with and should be dealt with.

Many of these concerns have been dragging on for years, and have been the source of grievances and difficulties that simply do not need to happen. The provincial table, by nature, is a middle-of-the-road process - having to encompass the legitimate needs and wishes of large and small locals around the province, all of whom have differing needs and differing priorities. And, until last year's negotiated deal which brought

some small gains, provincial bargaining is a system that just has not worked - despite the monumental efforts of our provincial bargaining teams and our elected provincial federation officers. (Hats off to Van Home's Suzie Mah who was there!)

Being able to solve the problems directly with our employer at the local bargaining table - without interference from BCPSEA, and with the full scope of items available to us - would be infinitely better not only for Vancouver teachers and Vancouver students, but also for our employer. Our issues in Vancouver are not the same as those in other jurisdictions, and will not be addressed properly unless we can do so locally.

VESTA will continue to advocate for its members at the local bargaining table, where we have been since last June, within the scope of issues qualifying as local matters (though we always try to expand that definition!). We will also pursue the objectives you approved last spring through the grievance process, through political action, and through the mid-contract modification process. VESTA is pleased that the VSB is willing to address at least some issues at the local table.

We call on the provincial government to restore full, unfettered local bargaining rights so that Vancouver teachers and their employer can address the full range of issues face-to-face in a manner that addresses the real needs, complexities, and diversities of Vancouver school culture.

Glen Hansman
President (Acting)
VESTA

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TOC call-out, and the need for objectivity

There exists in Vancouver and some other districts a common practice of contract teachers calling out, selecting, or expressing a preference for particular TOCs to fill a teacher absence.† This practice, based upon informal evaluations of teachers by their own colleagues, results in inequities among our members ñ and has been of great concern to TOCs across the province for a number of years.

In truth, it is time for TOCs hired for assignments in the same manner as contract teachers. It's about equal treatment, transparency and respect.

In December, after deliberations at worksites, the Staff Rep Assembly voted in favour of the following new policy:

That VESTA eliminate the practice of contract teachers calling out, selecting, or expressing a preference for particular TOCs to fill a teacher absence.

The primary rationale for this is simple: *the need for objectivity*. This need is derived from several considerations:

Professionalism

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

BCTF Code of Ethics

Provision #5 of the BCTF Code of Ethics declares it inappropriate for members to openly critique the teaching performance and related work of a colleague.† Contract teachers rightly expect not to have their teaching performance openly ranked or evaluated by their peers. The selection of one TOC over another implies that a contract teacher has evaluated the performance of the TOC.† This† may be contrary to the BCTF Code of Ethics.

Solidarity

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

Workplace Rights

Contract teachers have fought for, and rightly demand, due process.† In appointments to teaching positions, contract teachers rightly expect a clear objectivity based on seniority. This removes favoritism and nepotism in a process where the teacher's livelihood is at stake. This transparency, due process, and accountability are great assurances for contract teachers.† When a contract teacher calls out, selects, or expresses a preference for a TOC there is no transparency, no accountability, and no due process available to the TOC.

Social Justice

† In a 'preferential' system those TOCs that have the time, money and assertiveness to market themselves receive the most callouts.† This puts those who are less aggressive, without transportation or able to bear additional child care costs at a distinct disadvantage and runs counter to the BCTF and VESTA principle of Social Justice.

Consistency

TOCs now accumulate seniority under the new language ratified by last year by teachers and the employer.† A longstanding VESTA and BCTF bargaining objective has been a seniority based callout along with seniority credit for days worked.† What we have not yet achieved, but continue to demand from our employer we should practice ourselves.† Seniority based callout will assist TOCs whose goal is to become contract teachers.

Implementation

Three different models have been suggested, based on fairness.†

- **Rotation:**† In this model the Board assigns TOCs on a rotational basis within their areas of qualification.† The first person on the list is offered employment and this continues until everyone has been contacted with a job offer and the cycle begins again.
- **Seniority by Number of Days:**† In this model the Board assigns TOCs on the basis of frequency of callout.† At the beginning of each September it is determined the number of days previously worked by each TOC.† The first offer of employment is given to the TOC with the most number of days with the necessary qualifications and continues in descending order until everyone has been contacted and the cycle begins anew.
- **Seniority by Date of Hire:**† In this model TOCs are assigned on the basis of seniority.† The first offer of employment is given to the teacher with the most years/months and with the necessary qualifications and continues in that manner until everyone has been contacted before repeating the cycle.

We will be investigating pursuing these changes with the employer.

Glen Hansman
President (Acting)
VESTA

TocTalk

TOCs! Join our Yahoo list-serv for Vancouver TOCs. See www.vesta.org for the link.

Upcoming Events:

Come out and meet your fellow teachers on call and attend the next TOC meeting on Wednesday, February 28th, 2007 at 4:00 p.m in meeting room B. Bring your questions, concerns, and ideas. Snacks will be provided! Also, consider attending the New Teachers' and Student Teachers' Conference at the Radisson Hotel and Suites in Richmond. It is being held March 2-3, 2007. Go to the BCTF website to register.

Idea of the month:

Challenge the class with a puzzler. Here are some examples, taken from *Lateral Thinking Puzzlers* by Paul Sloane, New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 1991. Don't give away the answer until the end of the day!

(Easy) There were two Americans waiting at the entrance to the British Museum. One of them was the father of the other one's son. How could this be so?

(Moderate) A woman had two sons who were born in the same hour of the same day in the same year, but they were not twins. How could this be so?

(Moderate) Mrs. Jones has two children. What are the chances that both are boys? Answers:

1. They were husband and wife.
2. They were two of a set of triplets.
3. One in four -
first born a boy: boy/boy, boy/girl
first born a girl: girl/boy, girl/girl.

Did you know?

If SEMS calls you for a half day (ex. 8:40 ñ 12:05), make sure you check that it's not the school's modified day. If it is, you are entitled to get paid for a full day. If this is the case, ask the secretary to change it in SEMS. Make sure you check your pay stub to ensure you were paid for it.

Jane-Ann Kay
TOC committee co-chair

VESTA news

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The heavy burden of homework is heaping stress on parents and kids

When I see in elementary school kids didn't even finish a book of homework. That's because they were told over assigned any extra work (usually school in the 1970s). These days kids in Grade 1 are getting homework, and just want to go to bed and take a nap.

I have friends who say that the regularity has the burden of homework placed on their backs. He gets home from school, then it's time to read, then the parents are helping read. That's not what it's like. At the beginning of the school year, the kids are given a list of homework assignments. The parents are supposed to get their kids to do the homework. The parents who are not doing this are the ones who are complaining about the homework. The kids who are doing the homework are the ones who are not complaining.

Christy Clark

Look who's in *The Province!* It's Christy Clark, who says

While there's little data linking homework to better grades, there isn't a shred that proves any link between homework and better work habits.

Christy said that? Yes, it's true. So out of character! You remember her, right? The Minister of Education that got rid of our detailed and nuanced class size and class composition language in 2002? That Christy.

She then goes on to say:

It's ironic that schools often cite parent pressure as the reason they assign so much more homework. If those parents exist, I've never met one.

That's more like her. Yes, it's all teachers' fault. Zzzzzzzzz . . .

Christy welcomes you to share your thoughts on homework at:

christyclark@shaw.ca

Pregnant?
In your 2nd or 3rd trimester?
Ever wondered how babies are affected by their environment?

We are looking for pregnant women, with/ without depression, to participate in a voluntary & confidential 2-visit study at BC Children's & Women's Health Centre.

Visit our web site: www.bccchildrens.ca/Research/CentreforCommunityChildHealthResearch/NewbornBehaviourStudy

Do you want to know more?
Call Sylvia 604-875-2000 local 6992
sowensl@cw.bc.ca




No New Year's hangover for top CEOs

By 12:13 pm on New Year's Day, while many Canadians were still nursing a hangover, Canada's 100 highest paid CEOs had already pocketed what will take minimum wage workers the rest of 2007 to earn.

The clock keeps ticking. By 9:46 am Jan. 2, as most Canadians begin another year of labour, Canada's 100 highest paid CEOs reaped, on average, \$38,010 in pay. That equals the average annual earnings of workers in Canada, says Hugh Mackenzie, research associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). And it will take them all of 2007 to earn it.

By the time Canadians tuned into the 6:00 news Jan. 2, Canada's 100 highest paid CEOs will have pocketed nearly \$70,000. The highest paid CEO will have pocketed more than \$570,000.

If time is money, are Canada's 100 highest paid CEOs really worth more in a day than most Canadian workers are in a year? asks Mackenzie.

Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Want to be more involved?

VESTA has 10 committees and 3 sections focused around professional, social justice and contractual areas.

Committee membership is an excellent way to participate in your union, work with colleagues, and make a difference in the lives of teachers! If you are interested, please contact the chair for information or for schedules. Contact information can be found at www.vesta.ca under committees.

Aboriginal Education / Status of Women / Pride / Technology / Anti-Racism / Anti-Poverty / Pro-D / WLC/B / Gifted Education / ESL / TOC / Health and Safety / Sustainability

A MESSAGE FROM MARY

Hello everyone. I am really appreciative of all of your cards and letters. I read them all every day in the morning to give me the courage to keep working hard. My work day consists of a 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. tight schedule of physio-therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language therapy! It's a lot of work.

The cards and letters also have helped keep me up to date with what's going on with people in their schools.

I'm very happy to hear that Patricia will be running for the BCTF Executive Committee. Give her your support!



Family illness & bereavement leave

Here are the details on how to access these two important leaves, and a short discussion on the abuse of sick leave. If you have any additional questions about these leaves, please email barb@vesta.ca or barbara@vesta.ca.

Family Illness and Bereavement Leave

Leave for the illness of an immediate family member (Article 10.P.) provides up to five (5) days **per year** with no deduction of pay, but with a deduction from the employee's sick leave bank. This leave is available when you need to care for an ill member of your family. Immediate family includes spouse (including common law and same sex), child, sibling, parent, guardian, parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, brother and sister-in-law, and son and daughter-in-law, plus any other relative who resides in the employee's household.

In the case of a serious, protracted illness, it is not uncommon that the stress and anxiety of caring for a member of one's immediate family can result in the member's own illness. It is appropriate under such circumstances to attach any necessary personal sick leave to the leave for illness of the family member.

Bereavement/Compassionate Leave (Article 10.D.) provides up to three (3) days, with two (2) additional days for travel or other extraordinary circumstances, with no deduction of pay in the event of the death or **serious illness where recovery is in doubt** of an immediate family member. Up to five (5) additional days with the deduction at the pay rate of a TOC may be granted upon written request to Donna Melville (dmelville@vsb.bc.ca) in Human Resources. Any member who needs to take the additional two (2) or five (5) should do so only after approval from Human Resources.

Additional Compassionate Care leave is also now available after changes to the Employment Insurance Act. EI provides for up to 6 weeks of benefits to care for a family member who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death within 26 weeks (6 months). Benefits are limited to a maximum of about \$400 per week, but can be used to provide psychological or emotional support; to arrange care by a third party provider or to directly care for a child, spouse, parent or parent-in-law.

As part of our local bargaining, the VTF has tabled improved language that would include aunt and uncle to the definition of immediate family and would extend the initial provision to five (5) days with an additional seven (7) upon written request. The Board has refused to bargain this because it is a provincial, not local issue.

Use and Abuse of Sick Leave

The close proximity to hundreds of children and adults and the daily stress of our jobs makes teaching one of the occupations most prone to employee illness. That is why we have our sick leave benefit and why teachers should never shy away from using their sick leaves and never come to work when they are not well.

The misuse of sick leave, however, is considered a serious offence in the eyes of the Board. Teachers who take personal time off and claim it as an illness can expect to be disciplined with a deduction of pay for the day(s) off and **an additional suspension without pay equal to or greater than the time claimed as ill.**

Such a discipline is also reported to the B. C. College of Teachers which can mete out further discipline. Teachers wishing to take a personal leave of absence must apply in writing to Donna Melville. Such leave is without pay and limited to ten (10) days per year (at least five (5) of which must be taken sequentially). Such leaves will not normally be granted if attached to a school break, except under unusual circumstances.

Thank you to VSTA for permission to reprint this article.

WHAT IS "INTENSIVE FRENCH"?

Over the past couple of years, the VSB has been looking at long-term planning for French language learning in Vancouver schools. Parents, teachers, and other members of the public have had opportunities to give feedback through public meetings and survey questions.

At this time, Vancouver offers three options for students to learn Canada's second language: core French, and early-/late-French Immersion. In

September, the board is considering piloting another program called Intensive French. This is an innovative approach to teaching core French that has produced excellent results in the Maritimes, and has been successfully implemented in Surrey.

Intensive French provides instruction to develop language and communication skills in French during the first five months of the grade 6 year. The rest of the curriculum is compacted into the second half of the school year. Math instruction takes place all year. During the second part of the

grade 6 year, and through grade 7, Intensive French students have one hour of French per day.

Intensive French would be piloted in one or two Vancouver schools where staffs, parents, and students indicate an interest. Space would have to be available, and no current grade 6 teacher would be bumped to accommodate the program.

As a long-time French teacher myself who has participated as the union rep on the French Language Review and the Modern Languages Committees for the VSB, I feel that this program offers a new and exciting alternative for students.

If you would like to check out research or receive additional information on Intensive French, follow the website www.mmecarr.ca/ICF/ICF.html. As schools consider becoming a pilot site, it is important to note that the district will receive funding and that resources and professional development will be available to support the successful implementation of the program.

Nancy Hawkins
Gr. 7 late French Immersion teacher (Secord) and VESTA Rep to the VSB Modern Languages Advisory Committee

Thinking About Self-Directed PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Self-directed professional development provides a teacher with the opportunity to design professional activities that meet his/her professional needs. It calls on a teacher to exercise professional autonomy while being professionally responsible. If you are thinking about self-directed PD for your next school professional development day, keep in mind the following guidelines and suggestions:

1. Using your professional judgment, decide what your needs are at this time. An activity that you might want to consider is a classroom visit to meet and discuss ideas with a teacher in your grade or subject area. Many teachers have indicated that visiting another teacher and classroom is a highly informative and meaningful activity.

2. You are responsible, not the PD Committee, for putting your plans in place by making phone calls, sending emails etc. If you're interested in meeting with a colleague in his/her classroom, for a self-directed activity, book the date with your teacher colleague at the school you wish to visit.

3. The next step is to provide your PD Committee, on which your administrator sits, with written information about your self-directed plan for the forthcoming PD day. Do this about two weeks in advance of the PD date so the PD Committee has a clear understanding of the scope of their planning for the rest of the staff on the PD day. Indicate where you will be, and the date.

4. Keep your PD Committee informed of any changes to your plan since the principal/vice principal is responsible for knowing where staff is on PD days. There are many possibilities other than classroom visits for self-directed PD. For further information and suggestions about self-directed PD, see the article on the Professional Development Committee website, at www.vesta.ca, under the heading of VESTA Committees and Sections.

Lorna MacDonald
VESTA PD Chairperson

Holden Award

Irene Holden ruled on Elementary Prep Time, Sick Leave Portability, Seniority Portability, and Signing Incentive issues related to the new provincial language. These were all items being interpreted differently by the BCTF and BCPSEA.

Read the full text in .pdf at www.bctf.ca

Enrichment Education Workshop



For info contact Lois Parmar,
DRT/Gifted Ed 604-713-5795
lparmar@vsb.bc.ca

Tuesday, 2007 Mar

4 pm—5:30 pm

VESTA office

2915 Commercial Drive (at E

Have you ever wondered how to enrichment opportunities for gifted highly able students in a pull-out p

This workshop will provide strate activities and resources in order their unique needs.

Topics will include:

- extensions in the curriculum
- development of critical/creative t
- techniques to run a successfu

NEW VESTA RESOURCE TEAM POLICIES & RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE VSB

The Resource Task Force was struck by the Staff Rep Assembly in the fall of 2005 to discuss on-going issues relating to resource service at schools. The Task Force met in the spring of 2006, and delivered a set of recommendations to the VESTA Executive. These recommendations were given as discussion items for Staff Reps to take back to their schools for input in the fall of 2006. At the October and December Staff Rep Assemblies, the following new VESTA policies and set of recommendations to the VSB were adopted.

Thank you to the Resource Team Task Force for all your work last spring, and to Staff Reps for getting thorough discussion at the school level. It was a major undertaking to get so much input and participatory decision-making on such a large number of items.

We will now be bringing these new policies and recommendations to the VSB for consideration.

New VESTA Resource Team Policies Adopted at 2006 October 17 & 2006 December 14 Staff Rep Assemblies

Qualifications, In Service and Further Education

THAT VESTA recommend to the VSB that it:

1. adopt a policy that a minimum of three (3) years' classroom teaching experience be a prerequisite for teachers new to Resource, LAC, or ESL positions.
2. provide release time for mentoring and orientation of teachers new to their specialist roles and for classroom teachers who are receiving students identified as having special needs, if requested by the teacher.
3. ensure elementary resource teachers (ESL, LAC, Special Ed) have specialist training, or that teachers are provided with comprehensive training by VSB, in at least one of these fields when assuming role of a resource teacher.
4. establish policy that all schools receive an additional 20% staffing allotment for school base teacher-to-teacher coaching to develop collaborative teaching teams.
5. provide and pay for six (6) full-day, relevant in-service with coverage for LAC, ESL, Resource, Special Education, Classroom teachers, Administrators, and SSSWs as school-based teams, while respecting teachers' professional autonomy whether or not to participate in this in-service.
6. encourage the development of an urban cohort program with a focus on a Special Education ESL Education Diploma that would be available to all teachers.

District Organization

THAT VESTA recommend to the VSB that it:

1. establish a District Goal that targets the education of diverse learners (e.g. LAC, ESL, Special Needs students, Gifted students, with resource models to be determined by Staff Committees that respect teachers' autonomy.
2. establish a policy that there be immediate EOC coverage for the absence of all Resource teachers and that Resource teachers are not asked to provide coverage for colleagues when EOCs are not available.

3. establish a task force to explore ways to reduce the amount of documentation presently being demanded of teachers and to conduct a review of the case loads of its ESL, LAC, Resource and Social Education staff and that the VSB continue to advocate for increased funding for these programs.
4. increase funding to improve student access to counseling, occupational therapy, play therapy, Teacher-Psychologists, Gifted services and Speech-Language Pathologists.
5. establish policy that directs district personnel responsible for the placement and support of students with special needs to spend at least 80% of their time in schools collaborating with teachers.
6. establish policy that all other district personnel with teaching certificates contribute at least 10% of their time to provide on-site teaching support for integrated students with special needs.

School Organization

THAT VESTA recommend to the VSB that it:

1. define limits to the composition and size of all enrolling classes in contract language.
2. establish caps for caseloads for non enrolling teachers and that these caps be consistent with BCTF policy.
3. establish a policy that all schools have non-enrolling teachers qualified in ESL, LAC and Special Education.
4. provide all full-time (pro-rated for part-time) resource teachers with two (2) scheduled periods per week to collaborate with classroom teachers; that coverage for these periods be provided by qualified teachers and that staffing allocations are increased so that this can be achieved.
5. reinstate school based intermediate ESL reception level classes on a part-time basis with clearly defined criteria for entry and exit.
6. extend ESL beyond 5 year cap with clearly defined criteria for exit.
7. ensure that all district classes receive school-based resource team support and itinerant staff support, and that opportunities for collaboration are provided.
8. establish district classes with strict class-size limit consistent with BCTF policy.
9. change staffing allocations from incremental staffing back to staffing specifically for LAC, ESL, Special Education and Teacher Librarian.

Additional School Organization Policies

1. That Resource teachers present at School Based Team be limited to those working on a regular basis with the child being discussed, unless individual teachers present are either chairing the School Based Team meeting and/or providing additional information specifically about that particular child.
2. That direct resource service to students be available every day that school is in session (which includes one to one assessment and I.E. plans), and that direct service take precedence over paper work.

Keeping our eyes on Bill 33

Class-size limits under Bill 33

Individual classes cannot exceed these limits:

Kindergarten: 22 (not altered by Bill 33, previously in the *School Act*)

Grades 1ñ3: 24 (not altered by Bill 33, previously in the *School Act*)

Grades 4ñ7: 30 (cannot be exceeded unless the superintendent and principal agree that the organization of the class is appropriate for student learning and the **teacher consents** within 15 school days after school opening day)

Grades 8ñ12: 30 (cannot be exceeded unless the superintendent and principal agree that the organization of the class is appropriate for student learning and the principal has **consulted the teacher** within 15 school days after school opening day)

What is the class-composition provision in Bill 33?

There can be no more than three students for whom IEPs must be designed in any class, Kñ12, unless the superintendent and the principal agree that the organization of the class is appropriate for student learning and the principal has consulted the teacher within 15 school days after school opening day.

What does it mean to give consent or to be consulted?

Consent is straightforward. It requires the actual, unforced agreement of the individual Grade 4ñ7 teacher faced with a request by a principal to put more than 30 students in her or his class. If the teacher does not consent, the principal may not add the 31st student. As the Minister of Labour stated during the debate on Bill 33, "Consent implies that it could be withheld and, in that circumstance, there would be, obviously, financial implications that flow from having to reconfigure classes."

The right to be consulted is more than being given mere notice. It includes an exchange of information between the parties in which each has an active role to discuss, express opinions, make their views known, and have a say. It means teachers must be provided with all relevant information regarding the class and students involved. The principal must remain open to suggestions and input before the final decision is made.

Talk to your staff rep or email Jack MacDermot at VESTA (jack@vesta.ca) if you are approached to exceed the limit.

Keeping our eyes on Bill 33—One year later

Teachers and parents are working hard to ensure that students have the best learning opportunities available to them in their schools.

The provisions for class size and class composition in *Bill 33 Education (Learning Enhancement) Statutes Amendment Act*, were welcomed as a small step to improving students' learning conditions in schools. However, teachers and parents are concerned that, to date, no new funding has been announced ensuring these provisions do not come at the expense of reduced services, programs, or jobs. BC's public education system has already had too many cuts in recent years.

When the bill was passed in May 2006, the government promised it would conduct a review of its success in a year. Although the review date has not yet been set, now is a good time to talk to other teachers at your school, your administrator, your associate superintendent, your parents and PAC, and other school staff to find out what's been happening.

Teachers are still optimistic that the provisions in Bill 33 are only the beginning in addressing our students' needs. We are adamant that no cuts to services, programs, or jobs should come as a result of Bill 33 and its implementation should not negatively impact the education students deserve.

We invite you to join with us in assessing the effects of Bill 33. If concerns arise please let your school principal, school trustees, and MLA know and press them to honour the intent of Bill 33.

Bill 33 Where Are You?

It will surprise few VESTA members that there continue to be problems in the application of the class size and composition rules dictated by Bill 33.

In Vancouver there are now about 70 regular program elementary classes with four or more Ministry-designated Special Needs students. This is up from 45 two months ago, and about 30 in September.

There are no specified resolutions for these situations. Consultations with the involved teacher must be meaningful but are too often simply exercises in justifying why little or no help can be offered.

Other than the one-time staffing discussed below, Bill 33 resolutions at schools have often involved minor or no significant help to students. Where additional help has been given it has sometimes been at the expense of other classes.

There are some positive developments, however.

The VSB has re-established the Class Size and Class Composition Committee to deal primarily with Bill 33 and related issues. There seems to be willingness from committee members representing trustees, management, principals, teachers and parents to try to improve conditions for Special Needs students.

It was heartening to have 25.6 FTE staffing sent to schools to try to help the classes with four or more identified students. It must be noted that this teaching support is later in the year than desirable, and in some cases the support is less than what is really necessary for these students. Nonetheless, it does show that the Board recognizes the need to provide more teaching resources to these classes.

Trustees have also shown interest in VESTA's data from last spring showing the large number of students on waitlists for Psycho-Educational and/or Speech and Language assessments.

Ultimately, the greatest weakness of Bill 33 for Vancouver's schools is that its provisions are far worse than those negotiated by the VTF and the VSB before that Collective Agreement was stripped by the provincial government in 2002. Under that agreement a class with a *third* Special Needs student was given a 0.5 FTE teacher or SEA, as they were then. There were both lower numbers *and* a clear and significant remedy for the exceptional circumstances of the students in those classes. Classes with 8 or 9 Special Needs students such as exist now in Vancouver would have been simply unthinkable under the rules in place five years ago.

VESTA's Working and Learning Conditions Committee is trying to define acceptable and unacceptable resolutions for Bill 33 violations. Examples of acceptable resolutions start with the provisions in the pre-stripped Collective Agreement, especially additional teaching staff. Unacceptable resolutions would be those offering no significant help, or those focusing on anything other than direct service for the students in the class.

Member input on this topic is encouraged. Please send any suggestions, comments or experiences to the email address below.

Jack MacDermot
Working and Learning Conditions / Bargaining Committee
jack@vesta.ca

If you are a teacher of a regular program class with more than three designated Special Needs students (excluding gifted students) you:

... must be consulted by your principal at a meeting within 15 days of the 4th Special Needs student being identified.

... should have your VESTA Senior Staff Rep keep notes at the meeting and send in the VESTA form detailing why the violation is taking place and what alternatives have been identified to help the students in the class.

... should not feel pressured to accept inadequate assistance. "There are no resources available" is not an acceptable response. Principals should help advocate for additional resources, not put up roadblocks.

... should understand that since this is a consultation meeting the signing of the form by the Staff Rep is simply to confirm that the meeting took place. It is NOT an indication of *consent* by anyone to solutions discussed.

... must avoid solutions that negatively affect other classes. The purpose of Bill 33 should be to provide *additional* support, not remove service or resources from other students.

... should advocate at all times for resolutions that address the needs of *all* of the students in your class.

Upcoming events

PROFILE:

VESTA ABORIGINAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

WHO:

Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal teachers interested in thinking and learning about Canadian cultural issues in the classroom

This committee is chaired by Britannia Elementary teacher Frances Carlick fcarlick@hotmail.com

WHAT:

- Σ Learning together about Aboriginal Education in the public school system
- Σ Participating in discussions about curriculum and cultural awareness
- Σ Talking about teaching and inclusion for all students
- Σ Looking at current and historical factors to help support Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students
- Σ Making connections to Social Responsibility

WHEN:

February 22nd, 4 PM ñ Maryse Schembri

WHERE:

VESTA office, 2915 Commercial Drive

WHY:

Because Aboriginal Education is essential for ALL students

February's meeting will be a workshop on *The Artist's Way* facilitated by Maryse Schembri.

This course is based on Julia Cameron's book and is designed to help individuals discover their creativity, work with their talents, and develop a stronger, more positive understanding of creative process and a more artistic life.

www.maryse.org

Questions? Email Frances Carlick ñ fcarlick@hotmail.com

Did You Know?

- Σ That at the BCTF AGM in 2006, the membership adopted a policy encouraging every member to undertake at least one aboriginal education activity annually?
- Σ That the VSB has an Aboriginal Education Curriculum Consultant?
- Σ That the *Shared Learnings* document has been updated to include recent publications?
- Σ The VESTA website has links to relevant curricular and provincial issues related to Aboriginal Education?

The (very) informal report on the activities of the Status of Women Committee

We've had great discussions throughout the year, complete with humor, tea, and snacks. There are so many things to talk about, so many issues we could attend to, that it's difficult to choose one effective action. Last year we held a well-attended dinner with Daphne Brahmam as speaker, and learned about women in the closed community of Bountiful. Maeve Moran and Jane MacEwan were among those who worked hard to put on the BCTF Remembering our Rights conference in Creston (which was concerned with the women of Bountiful as well as with diverse issues affecting women's rights.)

An annual event for the committee is to visit the memorial in Thornton Park on Dec. 6 and light a candle for each of the women killed in the Montreal Massacre. Some members also attended an excellent day of films and workshops put on by Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter at the VPL to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the massacre.

This year we have decided to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8 with a typically Vancouver event: We are hosting a Chinese banquet to raise money for Africa! We were moved by hearing Stephen Lewis speak at the UN fundraiser. IWD will be the anniversary of the formation of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Our speakers will be Carolyn Neighbor, a retired Vancouver teacher and grandma, and Barbara Clay, a retired Anglican priest and grandmother of seven. Come and feast with us and hear about the positive projects Canadian grandmas have funded to help African grandmas who are raising grandchildren orphaned by the AIDS pandemic.

Please note: both the Vangogos and the Status of Women welcome new members!

Ildi Varga
Status of Women Committee

**Celebrate
International Women's Day**

Join VESTA Status of Women Committee and the Van Gogos* for a special evening to benefit African grandmothers through the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Project launched by the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Come and learn how much grassroots women to women can accomplish!
*gogo means grandmother in Zulu

Thursday, 2007 March 8
Flamingo Restaurant
3469 Fraser Street (near E. 18th), Vancouver
• 5:30 No Host Bar • 6ish Dinner

Guest Speakers: Carolyn Neighbor, a retired Vancouver teacher and grandma and **Barbara Clay**, a retired Anglican priest and grandmother of seven. Both are members of the Van Gogos.

Tickets \$30 (includes \$10 donation to the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign)

VESTA 

Contact Vilma at VESTA for tickets or info: 873-8378 or vilmam@vesta.ca

Kidz Ní Sports VEPAA Golf Tournament Fundraiser

Date: Sunday April 29th, 2007

Time: 9:00am Shotgun Start Time - 2:00pm Lunch

Location: Swan-E-Set Resort & Country Club
16651 Rannie Road, Pitt Meadows, 604-465-3888

Cost: **\$99.00** Package includes: Green Fees, Golf Cart, Practice Facility, Draw Prizes & Buffet, Burger Lunch

Registration Starts: Friday, January 26, 2007 (144 spots)

Competitions: Longest Drive, Straightest Drive, KP

Payment Deadline: Tuesday April 10th, 2007

Flyer for this event will be distributed in the February Staff Rep kits distributed at the SR Assembly.



Inquiries: Brian Ee
Grandview Elementary
604-713-5007.
bee@vsb.bc.ca

A TEACHER'S TIME

Each year, in September, my Class Parent asks for my e-mail address. Just once, during my first year of teaching at my current school, I shared this address with my class mom. I subsequently received that year both genuinely significant e-mails [class field trip information] and less significant messages [homework incomplete due to a late-night social occasion].

I now state to all parents I am available during school day hours with a 24 hour notice appreciated for appointments. I arrive early each morning at school [7:15 am] and remain each day till approximately 3:30 pm. That's over 8 hours on site, available to students, parents and administration. That's sufficient in my opinion; others have differing viewpoints.

More and more of teaching extends beyond the long-established school day time frame. Administrators send e-mails to staff members in the evening and on weekends, alerting staff to upcoming school discussions, giving direction for upcoming school endeavours. Parents send e-mails of self-interest 24/7, expecting immediate answers. Schools regularly schedule evening and weekend commitments, expecting staff representation [camp, fundraisers, PAC meetings].

Classroom teaching requires energy. To daily engage with 25 or more students requires immense physical and emotional presence. Energy is also required for each individual teacher's outside interests, their home life, their relationships. School demands, involving times outside of the established school day, can erode these other essential elements of life significantly.

Alongside the advancements of technology, invasive intrusion remains a problem. Turning off requires both teachers' and a school's emphasis on the acknowledged end of the school day. As long as administration and parents endorse maintaining extraordinary hours, teachers will be bombarded with demands on their time.

One part has not changed for eons - there are only twenty-four hours a day. Aren't eight fully engaged hours enough? I believe so. And my e-mail address remains private, guaranteeing this.

James Harcott
Kitchener School

School demands, involving times outside of the established school day, can erode essential elements of life significantly

EOC Q & A

Q: If I am away, will the EOC cover my athletics practice?

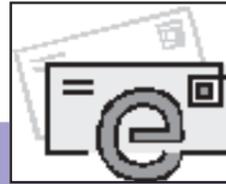
A: *Extra-curricular practices and commitments are voluntary only, and outside of the hours of the instructional day. If you are going to be away and nobody will cover your practice, notify the school to cancel or reschedule your extra-curricular events!*

The 'Special Instructions' option on SEMS is a great way to notify EOCs about things going on at your school. Please use this function if you have morning supervision duty. Our members-on-call greatly appreciate your giving them advance notice about daily events.

IN-HOUSE OFFICERS' DUTIES

Glen Hansman Acting President
VESTA news Staff Rep Weekly General Communications Policy & Procedures School visits Public Relations Political Action Executive Retreats New Teachers' Induction Staff Building Rehabilitation Program Liaise with: VSB BCTF Adult Education President Communications Ctte

Barbara Kay Grievance Officer
Contract Implementation Grievances Staff Rep Support Personnel Issues Liaise with: Health & Safety Committee WLC/Bargaining Chair
Karin Bernauer - 20%
Health & Safety Rehabilitation



E-mail us:

PRESIDENT (Acting)
Glen Hansman glen@vesta.ca

1st VICE-PRESIDENT
Barb Parrott barb@vesta.ca

2nd VICE-PRESIDENT
Barbara Kay barbara@vesta.ca

3rd VICE-PRESIDENT
Jody Polukoshko jody@vesta.ca

WLC/B Chair: Jack MacDermot,
jack@vesta.ca

Pro-D Chair: Lorna MacDonald
lorna@vesta.ca

Rehabilitation / Health & Safety: Karin Bernauer
karin@vesta.ca

Adult Educators Sublocal President:
Janek Kuchmistrz
janek@vesta.ca

Barb Parrott First Vice-President
Executive Committee Agenda Correspondence Staff Rep Assemblies General Meetings Retirement Dinner Liaise with: Professional Development Chair VESTA Reps on VSB Committees Universities TQS Delegates to: BCTF BCFL VDLC BCCT

Jody Polukoshko Third Vice-President
Contract Implementation Grievances School Visits Liaise with: District PAC Aboriginal Chair Pride Chair Status of Women Chair Teachers on Call Chair VESTA Sections Anti-Poverty Chair Anti-Racism Chair

Good luck, Pat!

Patricia Gudlaugson (Fleming) is running for a Member-at-Large position on the 2007/2008 BCTF Executive Committee



Elections will be held at the BCTF AGM in March.

If you would like to help support Pat on her campaign, please email glen@vesta.ca

We still need a few delegates for the AGM as well. Come be part of the process. Contact barb@vesta.ca for info ASAP

Are you a TOC in Vancouver?

Join TOC Talk:

VESTA's Yahoo Group for members employed as teachers-on-call

Visit www.vesta.ca to join