

YOU CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

VESTA endorses the joint COPE/Vision slate for school board trustee

Dear Colleagues,

The Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association and the Vancouver & District Labour Council have endorsed the **joint COPE/Vision slate** of school board trustees. Voters in Vancouver can choose up to nine trustees to be elected. In November, all of us need to work hard to help elect a progressive school board comprised of . . .

- BACCHUS, Patti** Vision Vancouver
- BARGEMAN, Bill** COPE
- BLAKEY, Al** COPE
- BOUEY, Jane** COPE
- CLEMENT, Ken** Vision Vancouver
- GREGSON, Sharon E.** Vision Vancouver
- LOMBARDI, Mike** Vision Vancouver
- SINGH, Alvin** COPE
- WONG, Allan** COPE

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

Vancouver teachers have worked many decades to get progressive trustees elected. These are trustees who will:

- Advocate continually and publicly for the students they serve
- Challenge the provincial government on its decisions around education, regardless of which party is in power
- Make decisions based on broad, meaningful consultation
- Speak out against intrusion of the private sector into public education
- Work *with* the employee unions where and when possible, and respect differences in opinion when they occur
- Be concerned with equity and broader social concerns
- Support teachers in their fight against the FSA and other externally-mandated assessments

The best-case scenario occurred in 2002, when we were successful in electing a progressive, pro-education Board for three years.

Unfortunately, the current NPA-majority Board elected in 2005 refuses to speak up on the underfunding issues, it hasn't followed through on seismic upgrading timeline, it hasn't fought the BC Liberal agenda, it has cut non-enrolling positions unnecessarily while at the same time creating more management positions, it has approved more funding for BCeSIS, it has proceeded with a faulty process to close schools, and has back-pedalled on the previous Board's anti-FSA position.

You are the most important aspect of the campaign. Our polling repeatedly confirms that teachers are the most trusted voices on public education. Your voice and just a little of your time are needed to elect a progressive school board.

YOU CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!

Glen Hansman
President

Freedom of Expression dispute settled in teachers' favour!

Sometimes teachers in British Columbia must speak up, even when others in the system try to pressure us not to do so. We've had to take our right to communicate on public education issues to arbitration and even to the courts, and we've had that right affirmed time and time again. Now we've had another dispute on the same issue settled in our favour!

As reported at the October Staff Rep Assembly, our dispute with the Employer pertaining to the distribution of material opposing the FSA has now been resolved.

On October 15, a consent award was reached between the parties. In this award, *the Employer concedes that its directive prohibiting teachers from sending material opposing the FSA test home to parents through students was contrary to the Canadian Charter of Human Rights & Freedoms.*

Consequently, the Employer will withdraw its April 2007 directive to principals which blocked teachers' freedom of expression rights, and will withdraw a letter of expectation given to a Vancouver teacher because she distributed material (via students) opposing the FSA. An expedited procedure has also been put in place in case there are future issues around the distribution of these materials.

The 2008-2009 version of our FSA flyer has been distributed to schools, and is available for you to print off at www.vesta.ca The flyer is the same as last year's - except for a change in photograph and a date change reflecting when this school year's FSA will be held.

It is now absolutely clear that teachers in Vancouver may distribute material opposing the FSA by a variety of means. Teachers may distribute the material

- by giving it directly to parents
- on school property
- by posting it on bulletin boards
- by sharing it at PAC meetings
- by distributing it via students
- and by other means

If you have any questions about the consent award, or about the campaign opposing the FSA, please contact glen@vesta.ca



Withdraw your child from FSA testing!

The Ministry of Education has been administering Foundation Skills Assessment tests to students in Grades 4 and 7 since 2006. Teachers who are concerned about the negative effects of these tests on students learning that they are unnecessary parents withdraw their children.

What is the FSA?
The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) is a standardized test that measures students' reading, writing, and math skills. It is used to assess students' progress and to identify areas where they need additional support.

What are the risks?
The FSA is a high-stakes test that can cause students to feel stressed and anxious. It can also lead to students being labeled as "at risk" or "needing additional support," which can have negative effects on their self-esteem and learning.

What can you do as a parent?
You can withdraw your child from the FSA by contacting your school principal or the Ministry of Education. You can also contact your local VESTA chapter for more information.

Why are teachers concerned?
Teachers are concerned about the FSA because it is a high-stakes test that can cause students to feel stressed and anxious. It can also lead to students being labeled as "at risk" or "needing additional support," which can have negative effects on their self-esteem and learning.

How to withdraw your child:
1. Contact your school principal.
2. Complete the withdrawal form.
3. Return the form to the principal.

For more information, contact:
Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association (VESTA)
1000 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V6H 1G6
Phone: 604-681-1111
Fax: 604-681-1112
Email: info@vesta.ca

School board elections

Members are urged to mark their calendars for the **advance polls on November 5th**, so that they will be free on the official election day of **November 15th** to help pull the vote for progressive candidates - whatever community you live in.

Voter turn-out in Vancouver municipal elections is very low, and so every vote by a teacher is significant. During the 2005 elections, we lost several of our progressive trustees by only a slim margin.

If you are a VESTA member who lives in Vancouver, support the endorsed candidates. Please . . .

- make sure that **you** vote for the COPE/Vision school board slate
- urge your friends to vote COPE/Vision
- urge your family to vote COPE/Vision
- get involved in the COPE or Vision campaigns – email cschut@vesta.ca to get connected

Everyone who teaches in Vancouver, please . . .

- connect with the parents of your students, and encourage them to vote for the COPE/Vision slate
- make plans with your colleagues at your school to help pull the vote for November 15th (*material will be coming to your school to help you do this*)

If you live outside of Vancouver, please . . .

- please support the candidates and issues identified by teachers in the community where you live

WHAT IS YOUR HISTORY OF DIRECT AND MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION?

BACCHUS, Patti Vision Vancouver

At the school/parent level, I've been involved in many volunteer and PAC-related activities, including the one-to-one reading program for grade one students, to coordinating the "Let's Walk To School" program, to driving on field trips, volunteering in the classroom and organizing school events.

At the district level, I've served as the DPAC representative to the Educational Facilities Review Phase I and the Emergency Preparedness & Planning Committee. I also coordinate a parent advocacy/networking group called Vancouver Parents for Successful Inclusion, and serve as their representative on the VSB's Special Education Advisory Committee.

I've played key roles in advocacy groups including Vancouver Save Our Schools (SOS), the BC Society for Public Education, and Families for School Seismic Safety.

During the 2006 teacher job action, I organized a successful and well-publicized parent rally on the picket lines in an effort to convince the provincial government to negotiate respectfully with teachers.

I've presented workshops for the BCTF on how teachers and parents can work together to remove barriers to successful inclusion and communicate effectively on "hot-button" issues.



BARGEMAN, Bill COPE

I am asking for your support as one of the COPE, Vision & Green candidates to return progressive government to Vancouver.

I've lived in Vancouver for 40 years, and taught at Tupper and Gladstone schools for 30, where I learned how important well-funded public education is for our children and for a democratic society. I learned that when students and parents engage in public education, the quality and relevance improves. I treasure the diversity of these schools and the growing culture of inclusion. I developed the understanding that no two children learn in the same way and that educators need the resources to meet all students' needs. I served as vice president and president of the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association and worked with teachers and administrators throughout the district gaining a thorough understanding of the challenges facing Vancouver's schools. Help your COPE, Vision & Green candidates create Schools for Everyone.



BLAKEY, Al COPE

I am a retired teacher with 33 years experience on the teaching staff in Vancouver and nine years experience on the School Board of Education. In my nine years on the Board, I and my COPE colleagues, have actively advocated for the students in our classrooms, for increased funding; improved class size; open and transparent decision-making; seismic upgrading; improved parent, student and teacher consultation; anti-racism and anti-homophobia programs; ESL programs and strong labour relations. We will continue to work on these issues, and will continue the important advocacy for our schools, which the NPA refuses to do.

I spent 11+ years on the VESTA Executive, with three of those years as President of VESTA. I also spent 11 years on the BCTF Executive, 2 of which were as President of the BCTF. I have served on virtually all committees in both. I have also spent 6 years of the Board of Co-Development Canada, one as president, linking Canadian unions with their counterparts in Central and South America to strengthen civil society.



VESTA News

Published by the
Vancouver Elementary School
Teachers' Association,
Local 391 of the British Columbia
Teachers' Federation

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Articles herein reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily the policies of the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association. No reprints without permission.
Printed by Thunderbird Press

BOUEY, Jane

COPE

I am asking for your support as one of the COPE, Vision & Green candidates to return progressive government to Vancouver. Help your COPE, Vision & Green candidates create Schools for Everyone.

I've been active since my son started in 1992. I was a typical parent volunteer at Dickens (my son's school). When we discovered my son had major challenges to learning, I advocated and worked alongside an incredibly supportive teaching and support staff at Dickens to get him assessed. Together we attempted to get him the supports he needed. Frustrated by the cutbacks and lack of resources that created barriers for thousands of students like my son, I became involved in broader campaigns for public education.

In 1999, I ran for school board and was narrowly defeated by less than 200 votes. I continued to publicly advocate in defence of public education. I had the honour of speaking to a teachers rally at the Pacific Coliseum in 2002 when your collective agreement was stripped of its class size and class composition language. I was elected as part of the COPE/Green board of 2002-2005. Our board redirected money to

classrooms, expanded all-day K, reduced class size for intermediate grades, increased SEAs, increased money for resources, renewed antiracism education, and developed and implemented the groundbreaking LGBTQ policy and action plan to make our schools safer and more welcoming for all students. We reached out to, listened to, informed and involved parents, teachers, students, staff and community.

Together we stopped cuts to inner city funding, made public education funding a political issue, and won increased funding for schools across the province.

Since 2005 (when I was narrowly defeated by around 200 votes), I have continued to be active in advocacy for special education as a member of Vancouver Parents for Successful Inclusion. I have continued as a member of the VSB's Pride Advisory Committee, and sit on Egale's national Education Committee. And I am an active and founding member of the Vancouver Public Education Project.

My goals is a well-funded, quality, universally accessible, free, and engaging public education system where every student receives the support they require for their diverse learning needs.

My community work includes local literary events, literacy tutoring, a term on my housing co-op board, and co-managing an independent bookstore.



CLEMENT, Ken

Vision Vancouver

I am from Ktunaxa First Nation (Cranbrook) and have resided in Vancouver for 25 years. My experiences through residential school have contributed my resilience and strong community leadership.

Within Vancouver's School Board, I will provide the specialized knowledge that will bridge the gap between the diverse cultural communities within Vancouver.

Involvements:

- Healing Our Spirit HIV/AIDS Society, Executive Director
 - Lu'ma Native Housing, President
 - Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) Chair
 - National Aboriginal Council on HIV/AIDS, Co-Chair First Nations Caucus,
 - Vancouver Coastal Health Aboriginal Health Committee
 - Vi Fineday Transition Shelter Society, Board Director
 - Circle of Eagles Lodge Society, President
 - Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society, Board Director



GREGSON, Sharon E.

Vision Vancouver

I have experience at various levels. As an involved parent on several school PACs, of course, and also since 1987 as an outspoken activist for quality, publicly funded, affordable, non-profit early childhood education. I was involved with the SOS project actively calling on the provincial government to restore funding for inner city school programs. I was elected in 2005 as a trustee and have supported teachers, parents, and community in their efforts to ensure all children have access to quality public education. I have been outspoken during the Educational Facilities Review in my position that public land must not be sold and that communities need more respectful and meaningful consultation (Garibaldi and QEA). I have argued against accepting class size and composition reports that exceed guidelines. I have put forward motions and voted from investment of budget surpluses into



classrooms rather than rainy day funds. I have also supported individual parents in their efforts to deal with the education system as it impacts their children. As the mandate of school board has increased to include early learning, I believe my experience in early childhood education and middle-childhood issues will be even more of an asset on the Board.

LOMBARDI, Mike

Vision Vancouver

I believe in a public education system that helps all students realize their potential so that they can become active members of our democratic society. As a progressive school trustee I will provide leadership, advocacy, and action to strengthen an inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable public education system. Throughout my 35 year career in education I have been a passionate advocate for public education. In every capacity—as a teacher, as an education leader, and as a parent activist—I have worked tirelessly to support and improve our public schools.. My priorities include: building confidence in public education, promoting program alternatives and options, engaging the community in genuine consultation, preserving neighbourhood schools, reducing class sizes, improving services for students with special needs, seismically safe schools, equity and access, increased education funding, and environmental sustainability. If elected, I will use my knowledge, skills, and experience to put Vancouver students first.



SINGH, Alvin

COPE

I am asking for your support as one of the COPE, Vision & Green candidates to return progressive government to Vancouver.

For the last seven years, I have campaigned for safer schools, more student engagement, and better education. In 2001, I helped found a student-based lobby group that campaigned for seismic upgrades of all at-risk schools. During that same time, I served as President of the VanTech Student's Council, Vice-President of the District Students' Council, and sat as representative on the VSB's Committee II.

I want a Board of Education that works with all stakeholders, especially students; a Board of Education that is transparent. In 2001, I helped found a student-based group that successfully campaigned for seismic upgrades of at-risk schools. But since then, upgrades have ground to a halt, parents are left in the dark, and student engagement has ceased.

My entire education has been in Vancouver. I have seen what the Trustee's decisions mean for students in classrooms across our city. I will continue to advocate for student input and transparency in decision-making, and for more options for education in Vancouver's schools

Help your COPE, Vision & Green candidates create Schools for Everyone.



WONG, Allan

COPE

I am asking for your support as one of the COPE, Vision & Green candidates to return progressive government to Vancouver.

I am a father of four; two in elementary, two in secondary. After graduating from UBC, I taught in Vancouver area public schools for five years, and have worked at Telus for twenty.

As a three-term Trustee, I advocated for public education and ESL and Special Needs students. I was chair of the School Board Committee that initiated Vancouver's seismic upgrades. I also advocated for properly maintained schools that are safe and conducive to learning. I am a current and past member of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diversity and the ESL Advisory Committee.



Where are the statements from the NPA candidates?
All candidates running for school trustee were asked the same questions for VESTA to be able to share with the membership. At press time, Heather Holden is the only NPA candidate to respond to our survey. Her response to the open-ended question is printed on page 6.

BC Liberal government record on public education

PART THREE OF
THREE

Since coming to power in 2001, the BC Liberal government has blatantly attacked the public education system by cutting education funding, reducing services to students, destroying collective bargaining for teachers, increasing support to private schools, demonstrating a bias toward privatization of public school services, removing the right to strike, and imposing terms and conditions of employment. Our chronology of legislation and actions illustrates the impact on services to students and teachers' working conditions.

Time to take stock and gear up to make change!

DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT OF LEGISLATION AND ACTIONS

2006

May 11, 2006 (3rd Reading) Bill 33 - Education (Learning Enhancement) Statutes Amendment Act

Establishes new class size limits and addresses requirements for consultation and reporting. Amends provisions for distance education courses, now termed "distributed learning". BUT . . . The government does not provide school districts with any new funding to implement the legislation -- nor does the legislation get anywhere near the detailed and nuanced class size and class composition language that used to be Vancouver teachers' Collective Agreement. with the Vancouver Board of Education.

October 2, 2006

BC Supreme Court decision upholds a section of the School Act prohibiting the charging of fees for materials that are required in courses leading to graduation.

Impact: It is the second time the courts have ruled against user fees in the public education system.

November 28, 2006

The International Labour Organization (ILO) again finds the BC government in contravention of international labour law by interfering in collective bargaining and undermining the province's collective bargaining system.

Impact: The BC Liberals ignore the ruling.

2007

February 8, 2007

The BC Government releases its report on the collective bargaining system for BC teachers.

Impact: The report on bargaining structures fails to address any of the concerns raised by teachers

which the BCTF presented in its submissions to government. It recommends no changes to the current bargaining system. It does not provide any avenue for teachers to bargain what they need in their classroom or their school. It has been over 15 years since teachers have been able to address their full scope of concerns across a local bargaining table. It fails to provide any opportunity for teachers to alleviate deteriorating conditions facing their students.

May 15, 2007 (3rd Reading) Bill 21 – Teaching Profession (Teacher Registration) Amendment Act, 2007

Requires the B.C. College of Teachers to establish an online discipline registry of its members and adds provisions for mandatory reporting of matters relating to dismissal, suspension or discipline.

May 15, 2007 (3rd Reading) Bill 22 – Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

Makes amendments regarding school district business companies. Adds provisions for the reimbursement of designated educational activity expenses and the creation of personal education numbers for students attending private post secondary institutions.

May 16, 2007 (3rd Reading) Bill 20 – School (Student Achievement Enabling) Amendment Act, 2007

Authorizes the appointment of Superintendents of Achievement. Requires boards to establish a district literacy plan, prepare achievement contracts and report on student achievement. Allows school districts to charge fees for certain courses and materials. Provides for the appointment of a special trustee if a board does not comply with an administrative directive to meet its obligations under an achievement contract.

Impact: The bill centralized power in the ministry and increased the education bureaucracy. Government directives must be obeyed and the minister has the power to remove boards or trustees who do not fall in line.

June 8, 2007

The Supreme Court of Canada issues one of the most important decisions in Canadian labour history by declaring, for the first time, that collective bargaining rights are protected by the Charter of Rights.

Impact: The court ruled in favour of the healthcare unions' appeal that the BC Liberal government did not have the right to unilaterally strip provisions from their collective agreements in January 2002. As a result of the ruling, the BCTF is proceeding with legal action to challenge the legislation which stripped the teachers' collective agreement in January 2002.

October 18, 2007

BC's Ministry of Education changes the course/rules in the middle of the school year, creating further instability in public education and leaving school districts across the province scrambling.

November 7, 2007

The Ministry of Education appears to be partially backing away from its mid year claw back of funds from school districts. The ministry released six pages of revised rules for school districts to use in recalculating funding for the current school year.

2008

March 12, 2008 (3rd Reading) Bill 7 – Local Government Statutes Amendment Act, 2008

Makes various amendments with respect to local government elections. Requires groups and individuals organizing around issues which could have an impact on local government elections to register and jump through several hoops in order to express themselves..

May 27, 2008 (Amended); April 30, 2008 (1st Reading) Bill 42 – Election Amendment Act, 2008

Prohibits contributions from Federal political parties, sets new spending limits and adds provisions concerning advertising, powers of enforcement, voter registration and voter identification.

Impact: This gag law, a restriction on the freedom of expression, significantly expands the definition of third party advertising and extends the period to which the rules apply before the provincial election.

Fall 2008

No sitting of the provincial legislature – again!

Premier cancels the fall session of the provincial legislature.

Sources: *BC Hansard, Ministry of Education website, www.bctf.ca*

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Ms Nelson waits until all the Grade 1 children have put their coats and books away and have seated themselves on the carpet, sitting around the rocking chair in the corner of the room. On the walls around her, at eye level with the seated children, is a large calendar decorated with cards on which there are numbers and pictorial symbols to show the weather, holidays and other important information about the day and the month. There is a number chart to show how many days school has been in session. We are at day 75 and Ms Nelson is noting the number of children who can count to 75 and those who are still having some trouble. 100 day is still a month away and Ms Nelson wants to make sure that everyone can count to 100 by then.

Ms Nelson begins the morning with a little song and identifies the special helper of the day. Cherrine, the special helper of the day, begins by holding up the name cards. As each child recognizes their name they claim the card and sit down again. Ms Nelson is keeping the attendance list as this goes on. When all the children present have claimed their name cards, the leftover cards are identified and anyone who has information about why these students are away shares it. Ms Nelson and the class know already that Jerry is away in hospital having some surgery and Ms Nelson explains that she has included get well cards in the writing centre today so that students can send get well messages to Jerry.

As soon as the attendance is completed Sukhi who is the messenger today takes the sheet to the school office. This has to be done promptly because the school has a safe arrival program and the parent volunteers are waiting for the information so that they can begin making calls to the homes of those students who have been reported absent. The class continues with identifying today's date, discussing upcoming events and holidays and counting to 75, the number of days school has been in session today . . .

We're being told what BCeSIS can do but we're not hearing much discussion about whether all these changes are doing anything better than the way they were done before, or what the pedagogical impact on these things are.

How will this change when BCeSIS, the school and student information database supported by the Ministry of Education, is implemented in Vancouver

schools? In the course of her morning activities Ms Nelson has worked on learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and social responsibility. The data of the classroom is not a side administrative issue, it is part of the learning activities of the children in the class. BCeSIS will replace Turbo, the current program used in the schools by school secretaries to track attendance and enrolment. Instead of school secretaries entering the data teachers will be expected to do so on the shiny new computer that has been provided especially for that purpose. Attendance is not something that you can leave until later—emergency procedures require that we know who is at school and both the school office and the teacher need that information first thing every day. Will we see teachers sitting behind computers in the mornings instead of facing their students? **For whom is the new system better?**

The VBE is spending millions of dollars on implementation of what is essentially new proprietary software. This includes new computers for teachers' desks, staffing for inservice and support as well as the cost of the software itself. Once it is implemented the program will cost ten dollars per student per year, about five hundred thousand dollars to take attendance every year!

While the program is currently limited to taking attendance and maintaining such student information as special needs designations, its proponents will tell you that it is capable of much more. I'm told it can give parents access to their children's marks as soon as the teacher posts them on the database. Teachers can post homework and other information about what is happening at school so that parents can have up-to-the-minute information about what is going on at school.

We're being told what BCeSIS can do but we're not hearing much discussion about whether all these changes are doing anything better than the way they were done before, or what the pedagogical impact on these things are.



Christina Schut
Local Rep to the BCTF

Jody's article

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New District Parent Advisory Council chair, Gwen Giesbrecht

Congratulations on becoming the DPAC Chairperson for this year! What has drawn you to this important work and has kept you involved?

My son started in 2003, and having been a long-time supporter of public education, I had no doubt that with a child enrolled I would be an involved parent. When my son started school there were changes to our education system that I saw as detrimental to the quality of public education. Funding to inner city schools was being cut, there were reductions to library services, there was increasing pressure on parents to raise funds for things like books, playground equipment, sports equipment, art supplies, and it was clear to me that teachers didn't have the resources required to fully meet the needs of those students who struggle in the classroom – and therefore were also not able to meet the needs of those students not being challenged. Seeing the undermining of a system, which I had always been a huge proponent of, at a time when there is a steadily increasing need for excellence and expansion, when the expectations and demands of what public education should and could provide are growing, I was unable not to understand the mechanisms through which influence could be exerted, and possibly have that influence work to maintain and enhance an institution that I see as being of utmost importance. Those are some of the reasons I was drawn to the role. What has kept me here is the growing awareness, through involvement, of the importance of the parent voice in public education and a fuller understanding of how much work there is still to be done.

DPAC has taken a more public stance in its advocacy over the past few years in sharing parents' concerns about the state of public education in Vancouver. Why is it important at this time in particular for DPAC and for parents in general to take that vocal and visible position?

It's importance for parents to keep the conversation going with the district, the provincial government, and the educators – on the issues that they identify as important in public education. If parents are not vocal and visible, the conversation stops, and public education is at a risk of going in the same direction that we have seen many things in our culture go. There is an increasing trend of decreasing costs and maximizing output in many areas. This is not a

model that is of benefit for children, or for the cultivation of a society that values critical, independent, creative thinking and learning. As the parents on watch, at this time in history, we have the responsibility to ensure that our public education system is valued by everyone in society, and is not diminished in the interest of making it fiscally accountable.

Trustee elections are only a handful of days away. What opportunities do you see for parents and teachers to work together during the lead-up to these elections?

I see the opportunities for parents and teachers to work together as the same opportunities for all of us in a democracy. We have a right and a responsibility at election time to become informed on the issues, to give thought to who will best address the issues, and to vote. Parents, students, and teachers are the people directly affected by the decisions made by the elected officials. When parents and teachers work together to identify the issues they see as important in the district, there is an opportunity. By looking at the actions of incumbent trustees, and by determining common goals, parents and teachers could elect a school board that will work in the best interests of the district.

What sort of advocacy does DPAC expect of public school trustees?

Advocacy and more advocacy. If there is an importance for parents to be visible and vocal, there is an even greater importance for public trustees to be visible and vocal. Parents spend a lot of time and energy working to advocate for and support public education. As our elected representatives, we want trustees to articulate the concerns we have identified, in as clear a way possible, to the source of the funding. There are many areas of concern to parents that the district cannot adequately address, simply because there are not enough funds available. I think there is an expectation from parents that since their input has been sought and given, though countless hours of volunteer time, that the trustees that they have elected will take that input to heart and advocate to have those concerns addressed at the provincial level.

Last school year, much of the Board's attention was taken up by the Facilities Review, the Avison Recommendations, and constant adjustment to the many top-down

changes mandated by the province. What important issues got missed as a consequence?

The Facilities Review and the Avison Recommendations were items that required attention. Unfortunately, they did take the focus away from some of the other items that should have received greater attention. Although the process of seismic renewal did proceed slowly forward, there was great concern from parents in the district, one, that there were too few projects started, and two, that the ones that did get started had major problems with the consultative process. Parents were not happy with the timelines for consultation, with how fully and transparently information from the district was forthcoming, and with the decreases in the space provided for under the guidelines. All of these items could have had a great deal more time and attention spent on them. Another item that could have had more attention, before the expanded implementation this year, is the BCeSIS program. Another item: school-based emergency response teams and earthquake preparedness. Although there was some money included in the budget to start to address the shortfalls in the district, on this very basis need for student safety, no movement toward implementation was in place at the start of this year. These are a few examples of items that are of major significance in the district that really didn't, in my opinion, get the attention they deserved last year.

Teachers have the professional responsibility to communicate concerns about educational issues to parents and the public. Beyond the individual progress of their children, what do you think are the issues parents most want to hear from teachers about?

Parents, in general, I think, are caring people. The individual progress of their child may be the thing teachers are asked about most frequently. However, I do feel among parents there is an interest in all the children in the classroom. Although the conversations between teacher and parent, quite rightly, would be about their child, I think parents do have a broader concern for all students in the school. I think parents want to hear from teachers, in a generic way, about the issues that they face in their endeavour to support, not just that parents'

THE OTHER CANDIDATES FOR SCHOOL BOARD

As stated on page 3, HEATHER HOLDEN is the only NPA candidate for trustee who responded to VESTA's survey for trustee candidates. She is a Vancouver Library Board Trustee, and is former chair of the Vancouver Parks Board.



Here is her response to the same question about "direct and meaningful involvement in public education" asked of COPE and Vision

candidates on pages 2 & 3:

"As an educator in the public post-secondary system in Ontario, BC and Singapore. As the Director of Research at the Vancouver Aquarium, contributing materials for educational programs for teachers and students. As a volunteer Big Sister, helping my Little Sister through situations involving her public school."

VESTA appreciates that she took the time to respond.

VESTA also received a response from the two independent candidates, PETER RAYMOND HASKELL and ROBERT ALLAN STARK. In response to our question about "direct and meaningful involvement in public education," Mr. Haskell wrote:

"From 1968 thru 1972 I was a student in Mrs. Sharps' dyslexia program at McBride elementary school, a program that the Vancouver School Board has no record of ever existing. Why is this so? Could it be that this past program was much more progressive than anything which now exists?"

To the same question, Mr. Stark only wrote his name in capital letters. On the City Clerk's webpage, however, Mr. Stark makes a number of claims about his experience as a former Vancouver Board of Education employee.

You can read the official candidates' statements at:

vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/election2008/candidate-profiles-schooltrustee.htm

REMINDER: VBE/VESTA Joint Statement on School Goal-setting & Planning

Are teachers expected to be involved in School Goal Setting and Planning?

Yes, the sixth non-instructional day is for this purpose. (This could be taken as two half days or other equivalent.) **School Goal Setting and Planning** is dynamic and on-going. Frequently monitoring progress towards attaining goals allows adjustments to be made.

The School Plan is a reflection of the learning taking place and a guide for future focuses. **The Plan should be narrowed to one or two goals based on real school needs.** Goals should be eliminated or modified as necessary. Time lines to meet school goals need to be realistic and appropriate to the school community.

What have teachers been advised to stop doing?

Across the province, teachers have decided through the BCTF not to participate in the development of government mandated School Growth Plans or to be part of School Planning Councils (SPCs). As professionals, teachers are encouraged to be involved in setting school and classroom goals.

How will this impact parent involvement in School Goal Setting and Planning?

Parents and family play an essential role in the child's learning and development. Widespread and on-going dialogue with parents is essential. SPCs, mandated through legislation, will continue without teacher involvement. Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) represent the broader parent community. Some schools include parents in the sixth non-instructional day set aside for School Goal Setting and Planning.

What does this mean for the collection of evidence (data) of student progress in School Goal Setting and Planning?

The School Goal Setting and Planning process asks participants how they will know there has been movement toward goal(s). It is important to have evidence, although **the evidence does not have to be in the form of numerical data.**

What does this mean for the collection of evidence (data) of student progress for government mandated School Growth Plans?

The data collected in the School Goal Setting and Planning process and the data that is normally collected and recorded by teachers can be shared with Principals/Vice Principals. Teachers have decided through the BCTF that they are not to provide this data "in any additional way beyond their normal record keeping (e.g. chart form)" for the purposes of developing government mandated School Growth Plans.

What are the expectations for reporting assessment information from Community School Teams and Inner City Projects?

Community School Teams and Inner City Project assessment information is required to ensure continuation of Community Link funding from the Ministry. Teachers are still expected to submit this data in the format required by the Principal for the compilation of a district report for the Board of Trustees and the Ministry.

What are the expectations for all teachers to be involved in school and/or grade-wide assessments?

Teachers assess to determine student progress and inform instruction. Through Staff Committee and professional dialogue, staff make decisions regarding the most appropriate assessments for their school community and context, as well as the use of school and grade-wide assessments. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school and grade-wide assessments if this has been the decision of the school, but **individual teachers may choose to use other assessments.** The same expectations regarding the sharing of this data with Principals/Vice-Principals apply.

What kind of assessments are recommended?

On-going classroom assessment and modification combined with students' abilities to self-assess are most powerful in enhancing student learning. Student learning needs are best met with assessment that is broad and varied in its range, and includes qualitative evidence.

Teachers have decided through the BCTF that FSA not be used for any kind of measure of school goals.

Agreed-to in Winter 06/07 by the Board, VESTA, and the Elementary Principals & Vice-Principals Association



When Will They Learn website

The BCTF election page, WhenWillTheyLearn.ca, is now live. It will be used for trustee elections, and building toward the provincial elections in May so that public education issues are in the forefront.

On the buses and in supermarkets

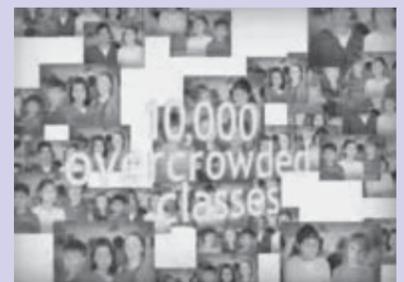
The BCTF's province-wide advertising campaign began with ads on Translink and BC Transit buses province wide, as well as in Lower Mainland supermarkets. The bus ads are running from October 13 to November 17. There are three different ads, each featuring one of the following issues:

- 177 schools closed
- 10,000 overcrowded classes
- Special needs neglected

The campaign uses the slogan "**When will they learn?**"

TV ads beginning on October 20

The Federation's TV ad will be aired during the news hour, running province-wide through the weeks of October 20 and 27. The ad will emphasize the 177 closed schools, 10,000 overcrowded classes, and special needs neglected and will make the link with the importance of the school trustee elections. You can watch the TV ad at whenwilltheylearn.ca or on the YouTube link posted at www.vesta.ca. Please circulate the YouTube link to friends and contacts.



Critically Examining the Olympics: A Collaborative Website for Teachers

There is just over a year until the Vancouver 2010 Olympics. Teachers may be looking for resources and lessons on the Olympics for their classroom. It is important that teachers provide students with the opportunity to think critically about how the Olympics will impact people and the environment.

The official Vancouver 2010 website provides a portal for teachers to share and access resources. Unfortunately, this resource is limited to a celebration of sports and teaching what the Olympics could be and should be, but aren't; environmentally sustainable, accessible to everyone and a positive influence on communities.

According to No One Is Illegal - Vancouver, a grassroots anti-colonial immigrant and refugee rights organization, the Olympics will increase homelessness, the privatization of public services and expand sports tourism and resource extraction on indigenous lands (<http://noii-van.resist.ca/>).

So where can teachers find resources that go beyond celebrating to critically examining the Olympics? An informal group of Vancouver teachers are compiling resources, lesson plans and links for a website called teach2010.org. We are planning to launch the website at the end of November. It will be a collaborative site for teachers to find and post ideas for teaching the Olympics in a thoughtful way.

We are looking for lesson plans, resources and links to information geared for K-12 classes as well as upcoming events listings. Please email us at contact@teach2010.org

Stephanie Lofquist

To play or not to play?

Teachers raise several kindergarten-specific issues

A few teacher colleagues have often told me that they believe Kindergarten teachers should be paid more than other teachers because of the various needs of students at that age. This statement has always mystified me to some extent because I've often wondered whether other people are inclined to think we should be paid less than other teachers. After all, Kindergarten students only do one thing at school, don't they? Play?

A large number of Kindergarten teachers from all over the district have met at the VESTA office three times over the past several months to discuss issues that they believe are pertinent to their Kindergarten students in particular and—in some cases—to all students in general.

One of these issues is indeed the question of play, or more specifically perhaps, the lack of it. Many teachers worry that where Kindergarten students should be involved in social skill development, social responsibility, and learning in a play-based environment, academics are still being pushed down on them "from above"—especially on students attending All-Day programs. And since the provincial government is looking into establishing All-Day Kindergarten for all Kindergarten-aged students, and is also looking into having junior school programs for three- and four-year olds, there is a worry that this "push" may extend to even these younger children.

Teachers have raised a number of other issues as well. For instance, there seems to be a reluctance on the part of schools to allocate support for the needs of Kindergarten students. A misperception exists that students will necessarily grow out of whatever behaviours or needs they're evidencing. However, every teacher present at the meetings could cite an example of a student who would likely have benefited from proper support in Kindergarten.

One of the great surprises at the meetings was in regards to the variability in the access of Kindergarten teachers and

students to School-Based Teams. At some schools, Kindergarten students were allowed to be brought up to SBT; at other schools, they were not allowed at all. At still other schools, Kindergarten students were allowed to be brought up to SBT, but only later in the school year; and at yet other schools, Kindergarten teachers could not sit on SBT when their students were being discussed. Even where Kindergarten students were brought to SBT and their needs recognized and the required support pursued, those same students often finished Kindergarten without that support. When support came, it came to the child in Grade 1 or 2. There is a definite need for appropriate support of Kindergarten students to be accessed more readily, and for students requiring 100% support to be allocated that same amount rather than a portion thereof.

These issues must be looked into more deeply and then they must be addressed in ways that best meet the needs of our students and that create the best possible learning environments for them.

Questions also arose around ESL-assessments on potential students for All-Day Kindergarten programs. Once again, there seemed to be a fair amount of variability in the kinds of assessments used and in the standards used for determining entry into or exclusion from an all-day program. One of the

biggest questions raised was around the value in placing ESL students into a separate program from English-speaking students. The general consensus was that segregating non-English-speaking children into a separate class is not a good language experience for them. Where are their role models in speaking English during this critical school year?

These issues must be looked into more deeply and then they must be addressed in ways that best meet the needs of our students and that create the best possible learning environments for them.

**Ken Kilback
Fleming Elementary**



DATES TO WATCH OUT FOR

NOVEMBER 17
Status of Women Committee meeting, 4 p.m. at VESTA

NOVEMBER 19
Aboriginal Committee meeting, 4 p.m. at VESTA

NOVEMBER 19
Health & Safety Committee, 4 p.m. at VESTA

NOVEMBER 28
Applications for AE Education Leave due

NOVEMBER 30
Adult Educators' General Meeting, 2 p.m. at VESTA

VESTA acknowledges the joint traditional territory of the Musqueam, Tsleil Waututh, Squamish, and Sto:lo Nations.



In commemoration of the lives lost in the Montreal Massacre of 1989 the VESTA Status of Women Committee will give a presentation on the **We Can Project**. - an international organization working towards ending violence against women. (It began in Bangladesh and is supported by Oxfam.)

Dec. 8
4 - 6 p.m.
VESTA office
snacks will be served
Please register as space is limited.

Staff Rep Assembly November 18

TUPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL CAFETERIA at 4 p.m.

**MAKE SURE YOUR WORKSITE IS REPRESENTED EVERY MONTH AT THE STAFF REP ASSEMBLY.
YOUR STAFF'S VOICE IS NEEDED!**

<http://lateliteracy.blogspot.com>

As a means of communicating with intermediate and high school teachers interesting in literacy across the curriculum, I created a blog (thanks to help from Moira Ekdahl, teacher librarian consultant). I to update it on a regular basis, talking about a variety of topics related to literacy. This might be book reviews of trade books, professional books, or even adult books. It could be a report on a conference or a workshop or a link to an interesting web site. I try to keep it updated weekly but must admit I am currently a bit behind! Blogs are actually easy and fun to do and one of my colleagues, Joanne Carlton at McBride has found it a wonderful way to give her students voice and an opportunity to use the internet in a responsible way. You can find the blog at [http://](http://lateliteracy.blogspot.com/)

lateliteracy.blogspot.com/
If you want to learn more about blogging and wiki possibilities please feel free to contact me.

Meredyth Kezar
Later Literacy Consultant
(Grades 4-12)

