



## What about the real problems?

On 2007 March 26, the Minister of Education introduced Bill 20 – the School (Student Achievement Enabling Amendment) Act.

If you haven't had a chance to find out about it yet, or look into the details, you should!

The box to the right contains a basic overview of Bill 20, with the web address where you can read the full text of the bill itself. Here are some main points that you should be cognizant of:

- The government is creating more bureaucracy while ignoring student learning.
- Students are still waiting for the support they need.
- This legislation accelerates the privatization of public education in BC.
- This legislation significantly undermines democratic governance of public education.

VESTA members are urged to contact their MLAs as soon as possible to register their concerns.

### Legislating student "achievement"

Bill 20 includes the following amendments to the School Act:

- Creates superintendents of achievement who may inspect board records, enter schools, and interview employees and students.
- Provides the ability for parents who are "dissatisfied with a board ruling, such as the suspension of a student," to appeal to the superintendents of achievement.
- Establishes boards of education and mandating that boards prepare an achievement contract with respect to student performance, plans for improving student achievement, early learning programs, and literacy.
- 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.
- Defines special academies and allowing for students to be charged fees to attend the academy and also allowing for fees to be charged for some courses and materials.
- Broadens the minister's capacity to create provincial demonstration schools.
- Requires boards to establish district literacy plans.

Bill 20 is posted online at [http://www.leg.bc.ca/38th3rd/1st\\_read/gov20-1.htm](http://www.leg.bc.ca/38th3rd/1st_read/gov20-1.htm).



### Adult Educator Agreement Reached

A memorandum of agreement has been reached between VESTA (Adult Educators Sublocal) and the VSB to address some outstanding financial issues, including:

- Salary indemnity plan allowance
- Harmonization to salary grids
- On-scale rights for TOCs
- Percentage increase to allowances of employees in roles of special responsibility
- The fiscal dividend bonus

A signing incentive is also part of the package.

Thank you to the Adult Educator Bargaining Team for all their work!

# Brief to the VSB Regarding the 2007-2008 Preliminary Budget

This brief is VESTA's advice to the VSB as it begins to formulate its preliminary budget proposals for 2007/2008. These comments are predicated on the understanding that funding allocations and projected student enrolment numbers are not yet known. Whether there is a budget surplus or a deficit, our comments apply. If there is a surplus, those monies should be allocated directly to students and their day-to-day needs. Addressing any deficit must be done as far away from students in their classrooms as possible. With those two caveats in place, VESTA makes recommendations in several specific areas.



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## CLASS SIZE/CLASS COMPOSITION ISSUES

VESTA recognizes the VSB's commitment at the elementary level to fulfill, this year, the class size regulations legislated by Bill 33. Use of the weighting formula in Vancouver has been beneficial to all students, and we are pleased that the District has continued with its use. However, VESTA members expect their students to be better served in the next school year. This new budget will need to allocate sufficient funding to address class composition issues such as exist right now in over 85 elementary classrooms in the District where there are four or more students with special needs, and in the many classrooms in Vancouver where the majority of students are ESL learners.

## EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF THE NEEDS OF YOUNG STUDENTS

VESTA members are very aware of the needs young learners have when they enter our schools. While some children have their needs identified in pre-school, most students arrive in our Kindergarten classrooms straight from home. On the one hand, the VSB must be ready to maintain without disruption those services put in place during the pre-school years and also be ready immediately to undertake early identification assessments of children's needs within the first months of Kindergarten. This means staffing the District adequately with Teacher/ Psychologists, Speech and Language Pathologists, Teacher/ Counsellors and other behaviour specialists so that identification and intervention occur in a timely manner. Our Kindergarten students deserve the best possible entry to school.

## A MENTORSHIP PLAN

The demographics of the teaching force in our district are changing. For this District to remain attractive to teachers there must be a comprehensive mentoring plan in place. Such a plan would support teachers new to teaching, teachers experienced but new to our District or teachers in unfamiliar assignments within our District – particularly those new to Resource positions. VESTA recommends that the 2007/2008 budget contain an actual dollar amount in order for a mentoring plan to be developed. A viable mentoring program would provide substantial benefit to teachers, and through them, to the students of the District. VESTA looks forward to co-operating on the development and implementation of a mentoring plan.

## A FOCUS ON TEACHER/ LIBRARIAN SERVICES

Presently, our District has four Literacy Programs, a Teacher/ Librarian Consultant and a school-based library resource budget but something important is missing. There is no stated level of Teacher/Librarian service available at each school. Teacher/Librarian time is folded into the Incremental Staffing Allotment. It should stand separately from the Incremental Staffing figure and be calculated and assigned in the same manner as from the Area Counsellor allotment.

## DELINIATION OF INCREMENTAL STAFFING

As per the previous item, VESTA requests that incremental staffing be broken down into its separate components, rather than as a block amount. Support for ESL students, Learning Assistance students, and Designated students (along with Teacher-Librarians mentioned above) needs to be indicated separately with designated FTE attached to ensure that services reach the students who need them.

## TOC COVERAGE FROM DAY ONE OF AN ABSENCE

While VESTA acknowledges the VSB's recent move to providing a TOC for non-enrolling teachers after the second day of absence, it must be stated again that programs such as those provided by Resource Teachers for our most vulnerable students have to be provided without interruption. The learning of at-risk children relies on continuity. Therefore it is imperative that TOC coverage be provided for each and every absence.

## A BALANCE IN STAFF REDUCTION

While actual student enrolment figures are not available, projected enrolment figures are. If there is a loss of students, as early discussions with schools indicate, there will be a resultant loss of teachers. VESTA expects that if this should occur, there will be a commensurate decrease in management staffing.

## ADVOCACY FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

VESTA urges the VSB to resume its leadership role in advocating boldly for public education. This includes seeking from the Minister adequate funding to address the actual needs of the students in our District. This is the first step to rebuilding the confidence of families in our Vancouver schools. It is your advocacy in promoting public schools that will stop the spiral of student loss. In turn this would stabilize our neighbourhood schools and maintain them as the heart of each community.

*In closing, VESTA encourages Trustees and District Staff to utilize our advice in preparing your 2007/2008 preliminary operating budget.*

**Pat Gudlaugson  
Karin Bernauer**  
on behalf of VESTA

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

## VESTA news

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# Local bargaining update

## Vancouver Teachers' Federation

2915 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC V5N 4C8

2007 March 15

NOTICE TO ALL VSTA AND VESTA (K-12) MEMBERS

Local bargaining between the Vancouver Teachers' Federation and the Vancouver School Board concluded this morning with the attached memorandum of agreement. Please distribute to all VESTA (K-12) and VSTA members at your worksite.

The VTF's local bargaining objectives were ratified by a VTF General Meeting on 2006 June 13. The VTF bargaining team has been meeting with the employer at the local table since that time.

Of the objectives that were approved, the majority were considered to be "provincial matters" under the local/provincial split of issues as per the current framework imposed by legislation in 1994. Despite this, we brought our full set of objectives and some language for these "provincial matters" to the local table regardless. Unfortunately, the employer would not discuss these at the local bargaining table.

The VTF's position is that there are many, many items of mutual concern that can only be dealt with the local table. In our view, the provincial-dominated bargaining structure is not one that serves our members nor our employer very well. Needs specific to the Vancouver school community are being left unaddressed - or are being dealt with generically at the provincial level without consideration of the local context.

The VTF will continue to advocate for local collective bargaining on the full scope of issues of importance to our members. For this round, however, local bargaining has concluded within the range of "local matters" both parties were willing to discuss.

The attached memorandum of agreement includes the two items that were agreed to at the local table: 1) a modernization of the Collective Agreement's discrimination language; and, 2) expanded language related to staff meetings.

Ratification of this new language will take place in early April at a VTF General Meeting held in the Tupper Secondary School Auditorium. Date and time to be confirmed.

If ratified, the language will come into effect immediately, and will be included in the new edition of the Collective Agreement to be produced this spring for all members.

  
Glen Hansman  
Vancouver Teachers' Federation Co-Presidents

  
Bill Bargeman  
Vancouver Teachers' Federation Co-Presidents

VTF Proposal #11

December 8, 2006

### 7. PERSONNEL PRACTICES

#### J. Discrimination

##### 2. Non-Discrimination

- (a) No employee shall be discriminated against (direct discrimination or adverse effect discrimination) on the basis of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, gender, sex (including gender identity), sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability or family status. Where there exists a bona fide occupational requirement it shall not be considered discrimination.
- (b) Nothing in Article 7.J. requires the affected employee to actually possess a characteristic that is the basis for discrimination.
- (c) It is understood and agreed by both parties that certain circumstances may result in gender preference for purposes of privacy in changing area, role modeling or correction of endemic discrimination.

VTF Proposal #25

December 15, 2006

### 11. COMMITTEES

#### E. School Based Staff Meetings Attendance

1. Staff meetings are called by the school principal. Staff meetings are distinct from Staff Committee meetings which are provided for in the Collective Agreement, Article 11. D.
2. Employees shall attend duly called staff meetings as per the School Act and Regulations. Part-time employees shall not be required to attend staff meetings which are not contiguous with their instructional assignment. It is the responsibility of every employee to apprise him/herself of the Staff Meeting agenda and minutes.
3. Notice of staff meetings, including the agenda, and provision of Staff Meeting minutes shall be provided under the Principal's direction with consideration of advice from the Staff Committee, except in cases of time sensitive information or situations.
4. Staff Meetings shall be limited to a reasonable number a year and will not be in conflict with Professional Development activities, with the exception, in either case, of time sensitive information or situations

VTF (K-12) Bargaining: done

VTF (K-12) Mid-Contract Modification: continuing

VTF (AE) Bargaining: done

## VINCE READY REPORT ON BARGAINING STRUCTURES

After a very long wait, Vince Ready has released his report on teacher bargaining structures. Ready was appointed by the provincial government a year and a half ago, to serve as a Commissioner of Inquiry into our bargaining structures and process. (Later, he was also appointed as Special Mediator to help resolve our two-week strike in October 2005.)

Mr. Ready received briefs and recommendations from a number of groups, including the BCTF and BCPSEA (the school boards' bargaining agent).

BCTF recommended that there be a return to local bargaining tables on all matters, within a financial envelope determined through bargaining at the provincial level. We also recommended that we retain the right to strike as a dispute resolution mechanism, and that the full scope of bargaining be returned (class-size limits, class composition, non-enrolling levels of service, etc.).

In this new Report on Bargaining Structures, Vince Ready recommends no change at all to the bargaining model that was used in the last round of provincial negotiations. No change to scope, and no change to the limited number of issues that can be bargained by local school boards with their local teachers' associations. Ready makes no recommendation about changing our right to strike.

Ready reflects in his report that the last round of bargaining appeared to have worked out well, so he relies on that model, ignoring the extraordinary nature of that round throughout the public sector:

- \$2 billion in financial incentives (the bonuses) from the Finance Minister to encourage settlements by the signing deadline;
- The end of the government's two-year artificial freeze on public sector salaries, and recognition of the pent-up demand for monetary settlements;
- The impact of our illegal strike in October 2005, which set the stage for government to actually bargain with the public sector unions instead of legislating us or freezing our salaries.

Ready offers no concrete suggestions that will help us wrestle with the on-going problems that have plagued us since the provincial bargaining model began in 1995, and since our scope of bargaining was stripped by government in 2002:

- Constrained decision-making at the local level;
- A constrained ability to solve local problems directly with local boards;
- BCPSEA's excessively "retentive" control of the mid-contract modification process;
- The inability to negotiate working conditions like class size and composition;
- The continued financial squeeze on school boards by the provincial government.

Thank you **Linda Watson, President, North Vancouver Teachers' Association**, for permission to adapt her article.

*VTF Ratification vote of new language will be April 12, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. at the Tupper Auditorium*

# Professional concerns about the FSA

## ***Standardized tests such as the Foundation Skills Assessment ...***

*... do not address the individual needs of students. They tell us little, if anything, about what individual children are actually learning.*

*... can, and do, actually harm many students. They emphasize what students cannot do rather than what they can. Too often they discourage children rather than motivate them and in the end limit their options for learning.*

*... do not help teachers teach. Instead they encourage teaching to the test, narrowing the scope of learning at the expense of a much richer learning experience. Important learning such as creative and critical thinking cannot be standardized and measured and therefore doesn't "count."*

*... lead to standardized teaching and that means too many of the individual needs of students are not addressed.*

*... result in a way of evaluating the school system that is simplistic and unfair. Research is clear—scores on standardized tests have more to do with social and economic factors than what happens in school.*

*... are not just a grade 4 and 7 issue. You can bet that last year's "bridging tests" for other grades piloted on some Vancouver schools are a sign of what's to come: more tests, more pseudo-accountability for all grade levels.*

Large-scale testing can provide important information. It can give us information about how well the provincially-prescribed curriculum is working, what areas might need additional support in terms of learning resources or teacher in-service, and what might need more/less emphasis when the curriculum is revised. However, these purposes can be met without testing every student every year.

Doing the tests less often and using a sample of students only allows broader and deeper assessment, is more cost effective, reduces the negative impact on students, and still fulfills the purposes.

## ***Tests like the FSA do not help teachers teach or students learn***

Large-scale assessments such as FSA are not very accurate for individual results. They are not accurate enough to help teachers plan for individual students. Nor are they diagnostic; the results indicate which students have not done well on the tests, but do not provide information on the reasons, or even specific areas of weakness.

Even at a school or district level, large-scale assessments like FSA do not identify specific problems, suggest potential solutions, or evaluate school or district interventions and policies that were aimed at improving learning.

## ***The FSA takes time away from instruction and formative assessment***

Assessment generally, whether it is classroom assessment or FSA, has a strong impact on curriculum and instructional practice. The impacts can be positive or negative depending on the type of assessment.

FSA test administration, practice tests, and the school-wide and district-wide testing that have been introduced since FSA, all take time away from instruction. In addition, the emphasis on this type of testing puts pressure on teachers to narrow the curriculum and their instructional practices to match these tests, even though it is widely understood that the tests measure only very narrow aspects of the curriculum.

It is necessary from time to time to do summative assessments of student learning; for example, in order to report to parents on report cards. However, teachers know from their classroom experience and from research that summative judgments do not help students learn. In fact, research shows that there are three

likely effects from summative assessment – students tend to think less deeply, they avoid taking risks, and they lose interest in learning. (Alfie Kohn, 2006)

For students, there are no meaningless or trivial assessments. What testers see as the simple collection of data may be a profound event for the learner. Common negative effects of testing include:

- narrowing of instruction and instructional methods
- less successful students concluding they are unable to succeed, reducing effort
- students inappropriately focussed on short-term performance goals "What's on the test?"
- test anxiety
- students, parents, and others inappropriately generalizing test results to overall "value" or "intelligence".

## ***There are better ways to assess student learning***

The type of assessment that helps students learn is formative assessment. In formative assessment, teachers observe students, pose open-ended questions, set tasks that require students to use specific skills or apply ideas, and ask students to communicate their learning in a variety of ways. The results of this type of assessment are usually communicated in the form of descriptive feedback rather than in the form of marks. Students are given specific feedback about where they are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there. Teachers sometimes call this type of assessment, assessment for learning to distinguish it from the summative judgments that are simply assessments of learning.

We know, from research, that effective assessment for learning can improve student achievement substantially, and that improved classroom assessment helps low achievers the most.

This is very good news for teachers. It is why we put so much time and energy into reflecting on and refining their assessment practice. It is why so much of teachers' professional development time is devoted to assessment topics.

It is also why teachers are frustrated that the government, ministry, school boards, and the media seem more interested in large-scale assessment than classroom assessment.

## ***Where can this lead?***

One of the most worrisome trends now being seen in the United States as a consequence of an over emphasis on standardized testing is a decrease in school completion rates. In many jurisdictions, the American No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has led to many children

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# WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Talk to all your colleagues about these important issues.
2. Share the authentic assessment strategies used in your classrooms.
3. Support the grade 4 and 7 teachers at your school.
4. Get all the parents at your school involved, regardless of grade level.
5. Encourage parents to familiarize themselves with the issues.
6. Let parents know that they have the right to withdraw their children from the preparation for and writing of the FSA.

**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 2009. Teachers are so concerned about the negative effects of these tests on student learning that they are recommending parents withdraw their children.

Dear Principal,

Please excuse my child, \_\_\_\_\_ from all those Foundation Skills Assessment tests.

I am concerned that this test will have negative effects on my child's learning, confidence, and self-esteem about the educational time-related preparation these tests.

I understand that the ministry provides our principals the form to change students from their enrolment in these tests. Please request that they be exempted.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Parent/guardian signature

**Why are teachers concerned?**

The FSA tests do not help students reach their full potential. Teachers work with students in classrooms every day, assessing and supporting their learning. Teachers strive to meet the needs of every student and foster students' love of learning.

These tests do not help students learn, but they can have a negative effect on students' confidence and learning.

These tests take valuable time away from teaching and learning. Items and items of preparing for the tests take time away from other, more meaningful learning experiences.

These tests are expensive. They take away every item from students such as textbooks, support for students with special needs, student equipment, and library books.

**What is the FSA?**

The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) is a set of several provincial tests that measure students' reading, writing, and math skills. These tests do not assess students' overall skills in any way.

**Who writes the FSA tests?**

The ministry expects most Grade 4 and 7 students to complete these tests. Some students with special needs and language skills students, to write the tests. Parents may request the principal to exempt a student.

**When are the FSA tests?**

This year FSA tests will be given to students between May 7 and 18, 2017.

**What can you do as a parent?**

- Withdraw your child from the FSA tests by writing a letter to the school principal. Simply use the form that comes with the letter or write your own.
- Make concerns with the teachers and principal at your child's school.
- Talk with other parents about the negative effects of FSA tests.
- Bring the issue to your Parent Advisory Council.
- Make concerns with your local school board.
- Go to the BCTF web site (<http://www.bctf.ca>) for more information on teachers' concerns and the FSA tests.

VESTA's print ads about the FSA that have appeared in the *Ming Pao*, *Sing Tao*, *World Journal*, *XtraWest*, and *Georgia Straight* over the past couple of weeks. The ads include the opt-out letter for parents to give to principals

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Testing, testing, testing page: <http://www.bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=5644>

Video: "What really counts! Rethinking accountability" (BCTF Conference, Oct. 2006) keynote speech by Dr. Paul Shaker, Dean of Education, SFU  
[www.workingtvc.com/rethinking-accountability.html](http://www.workingtvc.com/rethinking-accountability.html)

"Marketing or Scholarship" by Dietmar Waber  
[www.educ.sfu.ca/news\\_item/Marketing\\_Scholarship.pdf](http://www.educ.sfu.ca/news_item/Marketing_Scholarship.pdf)

"Cautions About Rating BC's Schools" (PDF) by Dr. Phil Winne, Dr. John Nesbit, and Carmen Gress, SFU  
[www.educ.sfu.ca/news\\_item/Cautions\\_About\\_Rating\\_BC\\_Schools.pdf](http://www.educ.sfu.ca/news_item/Cautions_About_Rating_BC_Schools.pdf)



Opinion piece: "The Report Card Conference" by Dr. Paul Shaker, Dean of Education, SFU  
[www.educ.sfu.ca/news\\_item/Report\\_Card\\_Conference.pdf](http://www.educ.sfu.ca/news_item/Report_Card_Conference.pdf)

Video: Mark Kelley from CBC's *The National* plays teacher at British Columbia's lowest-ranked school  
[www.cbc.ca/news/media/seven.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/media/seven.html)

Video: "Issues in public education" speech by Dr. Paul Shaker, Dean of Education, SFU (North Vancouver School District event, May 2006)  
[www.educ.sfu.ca/shaker/personal.html](http://www.educ.sfu.ca/shaker/personal.html)

"The New Common Sense of Education: Advocacy Research Versus Academic Authority" by Dr. Paul Shaker, SFU and Elizabeth E. Heilman, MSU  
[www.educ.sfu.ca/news\\_item/New\\_Common\\_Sense.pdf](http://www.educ.sfu.ca/news_item/New_Common_Sense.pdf)

American Educational Research Association. AERA position statement concerning high-stakes testing in pre K-12 education.  
[35.8.171.42/aera/about/policy/stakes.htm](http://35.8.171.42/aera/about/policy/stakes.htm)

Canadian Teachers' Federation. Moving from the cult of testing to a culture of professional accountability.  
[www.ctf-fce.ca/bilingual/publication/pdnews/PDVolume3-3English.pdf](http://www.ctf-fce.ca/bilingual/publication/pdnews/PDVolume3-3English.pdf)

Kohn, Alfie. *Essays about standards and testing*.  
[www.alfiekohn.org/standards/testarticles.htm](http://www.alfiekohn.org/standards/testarticles.htm)

Moll, Marita. *Standardized testing in Canada*.  
[www.maritamoll.ca/webmom/news.html](http://www.maritamoll.ca/webmom/news.html)

A joint position statement by the Canadian Psychological Association and the Canadian Association of School Psychologists on the Canadian press coverage of the province-wide achievement test results.  
[www.cpa.ca/documents/joint\\_position.html](http://www.cpa.ca/documents/joint_position.html)

FairTest's Assessment Reform Network (ARN).  
[www.fairtest.org/arn.htm](http://www.fairtest.org/arn.htm)

**學能測驗可能對學生有害!**

學能測驗是每年舉行一次的一系列省級測驗。用以測試學生閱讀理解、寫作、數學及某些計算方面的能力。這些測驗的結果不會以任何方式計入學生的成績。

**誰參加學能測驗?**

教育廳期望大多數第4及第7年級學生都參加測驗。某些有特殊需要或剛開始學習英語為第二語言的學生除外，家長可要求校長豁免學生參加測驗。

**學能測驗甚麼時候舉行?**

本年度的學能測驗將於2007年5月7日至18日期間舉行。

**教師們為何感到擔心?**

學能測驗對教師育您的子女並沒有幫助。教師每天在課堂與學生一起努力，不斷評估及支持他們的學業。教師竭力滿足每位學生的需要，同時促進學生對學習的熱忱。

這些測驗對學生的學業沒有幫助。其實，測驗對學生的積極性及學習可能有負面的影響。

這些測驗分薄了教學及學習的寶貴時間。為寶貴測驗而虛耗了很多時間，這些時間本來可用於更廣泛及有意義的學習。

這些測驗很昂貴，佔用了本來可用於課本、支援有特殊需要學生、科學器材及圖書館藏書各種優先項目的經費。

**作為家長，您有甚麼可做的?**

- 向您子女學校的教師及校長提出您的疑慮，您只須留下書面信件樣本，加簽名後交給校長便可。
- 與其他家長討論學能測驗的負面影響。
- 將這問題提交您所在的家長諮詢會。
- 向您所在地區學務委員會提出您的疑慮。
- 有關教師的疑慮及學能測驗的資訊，請瀏覽卑詩省教師聯合會的網頁：[bctf.ca/fsa.aspx](http://bctf.ca/fsa.aspx)

尊敬的校長：

請允許小兒/小女 \_\_\_\_\_

不必參加所有三個「學能測驗」(Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) tests)。

本人願意學能測驗可能對小兒/小女的學業、積極性及自尊有負面影響。

本人了解如果家長以書面要求豁免其子女參加測驗，教育廳已為校長提供如何豁免參加學能測驗的指引。

多謝您的合作。

家長 / 監護人 謹啓 (簽名)

**You wouldn't seek medical advice from a bank.**

**So why accept education advice from the Fraser Institute?**

Education advice from the professionals who your children every day—their teachers. Get seek out the facts, and get involved. Stand quality in education. It's in all our interests.

Message from the public school teachers of BC



BC Retired Teachers' Association  
presents

### There's More To It Than Money

- For educators planning to retire in the near future
- What you need to understand about your pension
- How to make a successful transition from career to retirement
- Individual planning

Wednesday, 2007 April 25  
4 pm—7 pm

BCTF office  
550 West 6th Ave

Limited to 30 persons

Facilitators: Sheila Gair, Sylvia MacLeay,  
Annette O'Connor, Sheila Pither, Ken Smith

To register call: Sheila Gair 604.594.5023

Registration deadline: Saturday, 2007 April 21

Seminars sponsored by BCTF and the Pension Corporation

### INNOVATIVE SCHOOL GOALS

Not everyone's doing Social Responsibility and Literacy . . .

Tell us about the most creative school goals for next year. Please share with [barb@vesta.ca](mailto:barb@vesta.ca)

### The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Music For Literacy Concert

**Who is performing?** Talented musicians employed at the VSB

**Where?** Templeton Secondary

**When?** Thursday, May 3, 7-9 pm

**Why?** To support early literacy in our community.

Proceeds to be donated to "Success By Six", a United Way program

Tickets are \$10.00

Tickets can be purchased through VSB Continuing Ed Office, Call CIE 604-713-4550 or order on-line at [www.continuinged.ca](http://www.continuinged.ca) code #TP22222 or phone 604-713-6000 local 2468 for info and order forms Tickets will be mailed up to April 26 via Blue Bag After this date tickets will be held at the door.

# Teachers on Call E Workshop

4 p.m., Wednesday, 2007 May 9

VESTA office, 2915 Commercial Drive  
(at E 13th Avenue)

To register: email [vilmam@vesta.ca](mailto:vilmam@vesta.ca) or fax registration to VESTA office



Pat, Barb, Suzie, Margaret, and Christine at the VESTA office in March. VESTA's General Meeting has endorsed Pat for Member-at-Large on the BCTF Executive.

## TOCTalk

Welcome to the April edition of TOCTalk, brought to you by your TOC committee members. We hope that you can join us on the TOCTalk chat group at yahoo.com to share your concerns, ideas, and comments about life as a TOC. We also hold regular TOC committee meetings on the last Wednesday of every month at the VESTA offices with the added incentive of snacks! If you wish to be added to the TOC email list, please contact [vilmam@vesta.ca](mailto:vilmam@vesta.ca). The TOC committee also has new TOC posters which should be posted in the staffrooms of every Vancouver Elementary school. Look there for information pertaining to TOCs.

#### Upcoming Events:

This years New Teacher Induction is at Rime Restaurant on April 16th. If you would like to celebrate being a new teacher in Vancouver, want a delicious free dinner and to meet the VESTA exec and your fellow TOCs, RSVP by April 11 to [vilmam@vesta.ca](mailto:vilmam@vesta.ca) to reserve a spot as there are only 90 available. There is also an EI workshop on Wednesday May 9 at the VESTA offices. Email [vilmam@vesta.ca](mailto:vilmam@vesta.ca) to register.

The next TOC committee meeting is on Wednesday April 25, at 4pm. We would love to see you there!

#### Idea of the month:

Never give instructions or address a class until you have every student's attention. Simply standing in front of the class and waiting until everyone is giving you their full attention is usually enough or try counting out loud from three. This tip will likely save your voice and your sanity!

#### Did you know?

Tax time is here and as a TOC you may be able to claim for car expenses and phone bill expenses. If you weren't at the TOC tax workshop, make sure you look into this, and contact an accountant. [Note: The VESTA office does not provide tax advice to members. If you have questions about the completion of your return, contact a tax professional or Revenue Canada.]

Jane Ann Kay  
TOC Committee Co-Chair

## Upcoming events

### APRIL

11 - Sustainability Workgroup, 4 p.m. at VESTA

12 - VTF (K-12) Ratification Vote of new local language, 4 p.m. at Tupper Auditorium

16 - New Teachers' Induction, 5 p.m. at the Rime. Email [vilmam@vesta.ca](mailto:vilmam@vesta.ca)

17 - VESTA Executive Committee, 4 p.m. at VESTA

18 - VESTA Professional Development Committee, 4 p.m. at VESTA

24 - Staff Rep Assembly, 4 p.m. at Tupper Cafeteria

25 - Teacher-On-Call Committee, 4 p.m. at VESTA

26 - Health & Safety Committee, 4 p.m. at VESTA

30 - Pride Committee, 4 p.m. at VESTA

### MAY

4, 5, 6 - BCTF Annual General Meeting, Hotel Vancouver. All members welcome to drop by to speak on issues and support our elected delegates.

15 - VESTA Annual General Meeting, 4 p.m. at Tupper

### JUNE

1,2 - BCTF Representative Assembly, Richmond. All members welcome to drop by to speak on issues and support our elected Local Reps to the BCTF.

19 - Staff Rep Assembly, 4 p.m. at Tupper

22 - Retirement Dinner

## THOSE NEW 'SUPER' SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS HAVE GOT TO GO!

Changes to the School Act are a throwback to earlier decades.

Nowhere is the provincial government's obsession with testing and assessment more evident than in the recently tabled Bill 20, which provides for the unprecedented appointment of four new 'super' superintendents of achievement to "inspect" the province's public schools.

Overshadowed by the uproar over school fees, the startling emergence of a new inspectorial regime, linked to student achievement, confirms (if ever a confirmation was needed) that testing and assessment will relentlessly drive the BC public education system for years to come if this bill is passed as is.

More than four decades ago, Victoria ceded the right to appoint superintendents of schools to local school boards. But here we are once

again with Victoria-based superintendents of achievement being appointed to "inspect" and "direct" local boards and schools, all in the name of "student improvement."

Unprecedented in Canada, this startling and heavy-handed power grab will have (despite the province's claims to the contrary), a chilling and negative impact on both the quality of instructional programs and on school climates in BC's elementary and secondary schools.

Under the act, four (the act permits more) new 'super' "superintendents of achievement" will be put in place by the Minister of Education. With wide-ranging powers, they will have the legislative heft to override local school superintendents and local school boards.

Local school board governance will take a huge hit as these, "Victoria-knows-best," educational czars and the education minister issue educational "directives" and regulations to ensure what was formerly labeled school board "accountability contracts" now morph into newly designated student "achievement contracts".

In case one is in any doubt about this pointed authoritarian switch by the provincial government, the four

newly appointed 'supers' will have wide-ranging powers to inspect records, interview students and employees plus attend any meeting of a board.

Local superintendents of schools are warned that they "must promptly provide to a superintendent of achievement for the school district any information or report required by the superintendent of achievement."

And to make sure that nothing is being hidden from Victoria, the act accords these powerful new bureaucrats onsite "powers of inspection" to "enter a school building, or any other building, or any part of a building used in conjunction with the school or offices of the board."

If there is any lingering doubt about the real intention of this hard-ball legislation, note that the act further specifies: "failure of a board to comply with an administrative directive is grounds for the appointment of an official trustee." In other words, the board will be fired.

Alarms are already being sounded at a recent Vancouver School Board meeting by presenters about another key amendment in Bill 20 that allows the minister to create provincial schools outside the jurisdiction of school boards thereby opening the way for charter schools.

In recent closed door meetings with selected parents, ministry of education officials made it very clear that they were discussing a new governance model for "demonstration schools" that was non-negotiable.

That such major changes to the School Act would be contemplated by a provincial government using an authoritarian, back door, approach mocks legitimate and necessary dialogue that should proceed the tabling of a key education bill.

Apart from the strictly structural changes in Bill 20, the pressing need to examine three key student instructional improvement components remain unaddressed.

These are: the downward slide in ESL support, the growing wait lists for essential special education services, and the erosion of crucial professional development programs for teachers.

Anchored in distrust of our high performing public school system (as reflected in international assessments), this massive centralization of authority, plus the lack of public dialogue, undermines local school board governance. It will unquestionably create a chilling effect (as some provincial ESL audits have already done) with the advent of instructional czars descending on our schools.

The education ministry may talk a good line about "building partnerships," "engendering co-operation," "building capacity," and "harnessing collective energy" – but there is an unmistakable and undisguised iron fist in this velvet glove.

All of this is presented with amazing chutzpah – especially when many key instructional support issues are ignored – by the deputy minister of education in the official guise of "supporting" schools and school boards.

When one considers the new million dollar layer of powerful senior bureaucrats being imposed on schools, plus the implications of the introduction of provincial schools outside the jurisdiction of publicly elected school boards, there should be a strong push to have these two elements deleted in their entirety from this new bill.

For starters, certainly, those four new 'super' superintendents of achievement have got to go with other changes to follow.

Noel Herron is a former school principal and Vancouver School Board trustee.

## It's time to get serious about climate change.

On Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup> 2007, people across North America are joining forces in over 800 cities to tell their governments that it's time to take real action to combat climate change.

Recently, Canada's federal and provincial governments have started to speak the language of climate change by committing to long-term targets for reducing carbon emissions. Setting long-term targets is important, but none of the governments' announcements will reduce emissions this year, the next or even the year after. We need laws and public policy that reduce emissions right now. It's time to step it up.

Saturday,  
April 14, 2007  
11 am – 2 pm

Vancouver  
Art Gallery  
(On Georgia Street at Hornby)

Visit us online at  
[stepitup2007.ca](http://stepitup2007.ca)  
for more information.

• RALLY • CONNECT • SPEAK UP •

STEP  
IT UP  
CANADA

Senior Staff Reps are invited to accompany new teachers at their school to this event! If you plan to attend, please call Vinya at VESTA 604.873.8378

2007 April 16  
5pm  
Vancouver Secondary School Teachers' Association

New Teachers' Induction

Join us for the Induction Ceremony and Turkish delights: food, music and hospitality  
No Host Bar

RVSP by April 11  
email [vinyam@vesta.ca](mailto:vinyam@vesta.ca)

Rime Restaurant  
1130 Commercial Drive

Are you a TOC in Vancouver?  
Join TOC Talk:  
VESTA's Yahoo Group for members  
employed as teachers-on-call  
Visit [www.vesta.ca](http://www.vesta.ca) to join