



**Stronger Together**

September 25 2020

# VESTA Weekly

**Topics Worth Talking about! Please read and discuss with your colleagues**

## School Based Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) Process

The school-based Health and Safety Committee is a powerful tool!

The VESTA Health and Safety Training will be taking place on Tuesday, September 29 from 9-12. Please make sure one of your school reps will be in attendance. Alternate members can be sent! This training will use the H&S rep's monthly release time.

Remember, if you identify a hazard, Step 1 is to notify your Principal / Vice Principal immediately.

If the situation is not resolved, the JOHS is the next step. The key function of the committee are inspections, investigations and inquiries as per worksafe regulations.

The committee can consult, make recommendations, ensure compliance, resolve complaints, advise and propose changes to improve health and safety and the occupational environment (Workers Compensation Act Section 36)

Any member can request that the Principal or the JOHS address an issue of concern, and no request should be precluded from being considered by JOHS or denied without appeal to the JOHS. **For example, if a member feels that a plexiglass barrier is an important part of a safe worksite**, especially those who work with multiple cohorts, such as Teacher Librarians, Reading Recovery teachers, Prep teachers, they:

- make that request to the school administrator.
- If the request is denied, the member should take the request to the JOHS committee through the H&S rep.
- If the matter is not resolved at the JOHS, and the worker still feels unsafe, they can contact WorkSafe, who will investigate

Steps in this process cannot be skipped, and the same is true for refusals of unsafe work.

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## COVID-19 Reporting Protocols

Members province wide are concerned about the process for reporting confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases in the workplace. WorkSafe identifies the "Right to Know" about hazards in the workplace as one of workers' fundamental rights. So why are school staff being kept in the dark about the presence and transmission of COVID-19 in school communities?

The reason given by the Provincial Health Authority includes respect for student and family privacy and the need to manage speculation and stigmatization. Of course these are factors teachers embed in their practice every day.

In this case, the issues we have identified and raised are that schools are different animals than other workplaces. Students may not be able to accurately name each of their contacts, itinerant staff and TTOCs may not be a consistent part of communication strategies. We also believe that the right to medical privacy has to be balanced against the worker's right to know.

We also have grave concerns about the delay in symptoms, testing, and the inadequate scope of contact tracing. These are not helped by the apparent disconnect between the PHO and Coastal Health. Please know that both VESTA and the BCTF are working on your behalf to fight for a transparent communication strategy and a mechanism to ensure staff and students are informed and protected. This includes increasing protective protocols in schools.

The Ministerial protocols that school and district administrators are using as the basis for all decisions can be found [here](#), and includes directives for all information to be conveyed through school and district admin, and that assessment and determinations of risk can only be made by the Health Authority

In your school community, remember:

- Yes, speculation and rumour can be harmful, but if information is provided by your administrator, please ensure all colleagues are included in any communication. That includes SLPs, Teacher Psychologists, Area Counsellors, District staff and TTOCs.
- Please remember to work collaboratively to minimize the risk for teachers who work across cohorts
- Ensure that a site-specific health and safety plan is available for TTOCs and itinerant / district teachers.

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## Political Action Contacts

We are now less than a month from our next provincial election. Education is a provincial matter and boy do we have issues to raise with government. We have the chance to raise the profile of education and ensure that education supports are vote-determining matters. The BCTF funds release time and training for 11 VESTA representatives (one per Vancouver riding) for training on October 1. If you're interested in working to support public education in this election, please complete the [CV form](#) and email to [amy@vesta.ca](mailto:amy@vesta.ca) before noon on Tuesday, September 29. The VESTA EC will

appoint PAC and notify members of appointment on Wednesday, September 30. Additional release time for election related projects will also be available. TTOCs please consider this opportunity, you will receive your daily rate!

**Professional Development**

In discussions with the board at the District Professional Development Committee meeting Wednesday the board stated its intention to have teachers report to worksites for pro-d days even when they are participating in online professional development activities. VESTA has objected to this requirement on your behalf, but it is a work now, grieve later situation. If your principal directs you to report to the worksite for professional development please ask for the direction in writing and follow that directive. Please send a copy of the principal’s directive to [allison@vesta.ca](mailto:allison@vesta.ca). We are continuing to raise the issue with the board and will inform members when any changes occur.

On your pro-d day you may wish to spend a portion of your time considering plans for collaborative or individual professional development through the coming year. Temporary Supplemental Funds can be applied for anytime and applications are reviewed monthly. Collaborative Inquiry funding needs to be submitted for review by the following dates: **September 25, November 6 and December 1**. The application forms and guidelines are available on the VESTA website here: <http://vesta.ca/documents/>

**VESTA reps to VSB Committees**

Each year, VESTA appoints representatives to sit on VSB committees, and provide teacher input. If you are interested in representing Vancouver Elementary Teachers and Adult Educators on committees such as the VSB Diversity, Active Transportation, Sustainability, Information Technology, Indigenous Education, Special Education Committees, please contact your staff rep who has the form. [Please send your CV to amy@vesta.ca](mailto:amy@vesta.ca) by September 30 and prepare for training on Oct 1 from 4-5pm.



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**Dates to Remember:**

<p><b>Executive Committee Meeting</b> September 29</p>	<p><b>Health &amp; Safety Rep Training</b> September 29</p> <p><b>Join Zoom Meeting</b> <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82157138220">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82157138220</a> Dial by your location +1 778 907 2071 Canada Meeting ID: 821 5713 8220 Find your local number: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcNeemRubm">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcNeemRubm</a></p>	<p><b>Professional Issues Committee Meeting</b> September 30</p> <p><b>Join Zoom Meeting</b> <a href="https://zoom.us/j/94494789260">https://zoom.us/j/94494789260</a> Dial by your location +1 778 907 2071 Canada Meeting ID: 944 9478 9260 Find your local number: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/abwtJ023FI">https://zoom.us/j/abwtJ023FI</a></p>
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*The Vancouver Elementary School Teachers’ Association is the union representing elementary teachers and adult educators working in public schools in Vancouver.*