

Vernon Teachers' Association

VOICES

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4004-31st Street, Vernon B.C. V1T 5J6

Ph: 542-0456/Fax: 542-0564

www.vernonta.com



Annual VTA 'Back to School' Barbeque

The weather was fabulous, the food fresh and beautifully prepared, the drinks cold and the company outstanding! A good time was had by all and a very big thank you to Vernon Secondary for such a wonderful job of hosting the event!



Speaking for Teachers in the North Okanagan



Reflections.....

Greetings, colleagues;

Welcome back to another school year. Have you ever had those “teacher dreams” in the summer? They start for me in August at some point. Basically all the neuroses would emerge, leading up to a jittery start, and then all the fears would be washed away once the bright shiny faces became real people. One of my recently retired friends said that her teacher dreams continued into retirement, but they were all rosy instead of waking you up in a cold sweat!

The VTA executive is a dedicated, keen group of teachers who are working on your behalf. This year in particular, we will be calling on you to be actively involved in your union. You have several opportunities in your schools or work sites: professional development, staff committee, OH&S, social justice, staff representatives or alternates. At a more general level, there are several committees with VTA representation.

As you all know, the Collective Agreement expires at the end of June. The leadership of the BCTF and the VTA are gearing up for a ‘year of bargaining’ with the goal of having another CA signed by the end of June. After so many years of imposed, arbitrated, and stripped collective agreements, it is gratifying to get down to work preparing to negotiate another agreement. We’ll be keeping the staff reps in the loop and they will your best source of reliable information. I say this, because it is very easy to believe what the media produces, and the media often aren’t very critical about what they are ‘fed’.

It is very difficult to predict the outcome, but an important Supreme Court Challenge will be heard in November. The BCTF challenge of Bills 27 and 28 comes about because:

- ◆ · Bill 27—Imposed a collective agreement. In several amalgamated districts, the collective agreement of one local was unilaterally imposed upon the other.
- ◆ · Bill 28—Stripped key provisions that teachers had gained over many years governing class size and provision for special needs.

The current Collective Agreement can be found on the VTA and SD22 web sites.

I hope your start to the school year is going well!

Regards,

Bruce

Run for the Cure - In Memory of Penny Thorburn

Join us on October 3rd, 2010 at Fulton Secondary School for the annual run for the cure. This year the run is being held in memory of Penny Thorburn, a teacher, a mom, a partner and a friend who lost her life to cancer last year. Please come out and support her memory and a cause worth running for. Go to www.runforthecure.com for more information and to register. Make it a family event!

Registration: 8:30 / 9:20 Opening Ceremonies / 10:00 Run Starts / 11:00 Awards Ceremonies

Know your Collective Agreement

Part-Time Teachers Preparation Time

"Where the Board and the Association agree that scheduling difficulties with respect to part-time teachers require adjustment to the operation of this Article, the part-time teacher may be assigned instructional time equal to the percentage of appointment in proportion to 1425 minutes per week in elementary schools and eight blocks in secondary schools and shall receive in lieu a premium of 6.32 percent of salary in elementary schools, and 12.5 percent of salary in secondary schools."

* We actually have 1465 minutes of instruction for Elementary, and the Association won't know about 'scheduling difficulties' unless you tell your staff rep or VTA president! The point is, part-time teachers should be getting their prep time in practical periods of time - at least 30 minute blocks. But when all else fails, you should have pay in lieu of prep time.

CHANGES TO PACIFIC BLUE CROSS EHB AND DENTAL ID NUMBERS

We are in the midst of transitioning your current Pacific Blue Cross ID numbers from SIN to a more secure number. This change will take place over the weekend of October 1st to October 4th 2010.

Please note the following:

1. Your group number will not change.
2. Access to CARESnet, Pacific Blue Cross' secure, online access to benefit and claims information. You will not be able to access CARESnet during the conversion weekend. Immediately following the conversion, you will need to use your new ID number along with your existing group number and password when signing in to CARESnet.
3. Your new ID number is your employee number which can be found on your pay slip and will be 9 digits. i.e. If your employee number is 1234 then the ID number will be 000001234

Visit CARESnet at www.pac.bluecross.ca <<http://www.pac.bluecross.ca>> .

4. New ID cards: After the conversion, Pacific Blue Cross will issue new ID cards. When you receive your new card, please:
 - * Destroy your old ID cards
 - * Use your new ID number when contacting Pacific Blue Cross
 - * Use your new ID number to access CARESnet
 - * Indicate your new ID number on all claims*
 - * Provide your dentist and pharmacist with your new ID number at your next visit*.
 - * Although our claims system will continue to recognize the social insurance number for six months. Following conversion, we recommend using the new ID number as soon as possible.

Jackie Main
Payroll & Benefits Coordinator

PAID EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

The Board may grant educational leave to applicants with a minimum of five years service in the District for the purpose of furthering the excellence of instruction in the District. Any of the following general activities at or through an approved educational institution or training facility as determined by a Joint VTA & District Committee may be considered to fulfil such purposes:

- To obtain formal academic training regardless of whether it leads to higher certification.
- To complete studies or programs designed to bring new techniques or educational strategies to the District.
- To assist established teachers to refresh and advance their knowledge or method, subject matter or general background for teaching.
- To undertake other programs approved by the Joint Committee and the Board.

The basic unit of leave is one year but may be taken on a semester basis, i.e. September – December/January - June. Payment for a full year's leave is six-tenths of annual salary with payments being made at a full monthly rate for the first six-tenths of the leave period. That period is understood to fall within the months spanning September to June. A teacher returning to teaching duties from Educational Leave shall be assigned to the position in the school and the assignment held previously in that school provided that position and assignment continues to exist.

Method of Application

The teacher applying in writing to Bev Gess will make application stating clearly the particular purpose for the leave and the proposed activities designed to fulfil that purpose. Applications for full or part year educational leave must be received **prior to January 1, 2011** for leave in the 2011/2012 school year. The Director of Instruction or Designate submits the applications to the Joint Committee for recommendations to the Board. The Board will notify teachers of acceptance or rejection of their application by April 30, 2011. Teachers granted leave under this section undertake to return and to stay in the service of the Board for not less than the full-time equivalent of two school years.

Forms are available from Judy Sedge in the Board Office or Bruce Cummings at the VTA Office.

BCTF Web site - Where to Look for Information

- For new teachers (and a link to TTOC information): <http://bctf.ca/newteachers.aspx>
- For everyone: <http://bctf.ca/SalaryAndBenefits.aspx>
- For anyone thinking about your pension: <http://www.bctf.ca/ContactUs.aspx?id=4780>

Teachers' Pension Plan: <http://pensionsbc.ca>

In collaboration with the BCTF, the Teachers' Pension Plan is once again offering pension information seminars to plan members. Depending on where you are in your teaching career, members can choose from two different seminars:

- ◆ Your pension, Your Future (1.5 hours), for new and mid career plan members.
- ◆ Thinking about Retiring (2 hours), for members within five years of retirement.

Members can learn more about these seminars, view the most current schedules and register online (manually) at <http://pensionsbc.ca>. Under Featured Info, click on Pension Information Seminars. For the Okanagan the following seminars are currently scheduled:

Thinking About Retiring

November 4, 2010 - Thursday	Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre Kelowna
February 19, 2011 - Saturday	Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre Kelowna
April 9, 2011 - Saturday	Best Western Vernon Lodge Hotel, Vernon
May 5, 2011 - Thursday	Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops

Your Pension, Your Future

April 9, 2011 - Saturday	Best Western Vernon Lodge Hotel, Vernon
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BC Teacher's Vitality Project

Living with balance

A six-week group program for teachers

October 18 — November 16, 200: Pre-registration is Required

We are excited to announce our new *Living with balance* group program for BC teachers. This program has been initiated by the BCTF Health & Wellness program and developed by the Occupational Rehabilitation Group of Canada, a long-established service provider to the BC Teachers' Federation. There are a select number of BC communities where this program will be offered this year. *Living with balance* is a six-week program, which runs for two hours once per week. It focuses on developing tools and skills related to improving one's vitality and resiliency. Our holistic approach to wellness will equip teachers to make simple lifestyle changes that will positively affect their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

This six-week group program will provide opportunities for:

- ◆ education, self-evaluation, and examining the importance of maintaining life-style balance
- ◆ discussing the importance of nutrition; exercise; sleep
- ◆ managing symptoms of low mood, anxiety, and stress; boundaries and managing conflict
- ◆ learning strategies that increase awareness of factors that contribute to fluctuations in mood as well as methods to manage them
- ◆ reviewing proven techniques used to improve self-esteem and self-confidence, and manage stress and low mood
- ◆ defining what work-life balance means to each of us and what happens when our roles collide, having good boundaries is often attributed to having clear values
- ◆ setting goals and achieving them
- ◆ discussing how to be intentional, creative and assertive when you need to be.
- ◆ learning the importance of social connections and community in building long-term wellness, understanding that social isolation is a significant health risk factor.

We will review the necessary interpersonal skills needed to build and sustain long-term relationships that will enhance your vitality and resiliency.

Living with balance is a program that we hope will raise teachers' awareness and understanding regarding key concepts that affect one's physical and emotional health, while providing support and encouragement in recognizing that they are not alone. The primary goal is to improve one's health and well-being. Many BC school districts, the Federation, and teachers have recognized the need for a program like this that promotes healthy lifestyle choices and emotional well-being.

To register please access a referral form from the BCTF website at <http://bctf.ca/LivingWithBalance.aspx> or contact your local president.

Note: Here are a few comments from teachers who attended the program.

"If not for this course, I might very well have wallowed in an unhealthy state until I slipped out of teaching. I now look forward to charging forth until I hit retirement running.

It forces you to sit back and analyze yourself in all areas and to make changes while getting the support of your "mentor" and colleagues. It is very beneficial to know that you are not alone in all of this.

It is encouraging to have help so readily available. I have been exposed to numerous and varied alternatives to my situation. I will endeavor to implement these changes in the coming days. Thank-you!

For further information, please contact Lynn Hiscoe at 1-866-766-5911 or by e-mail at lhiscoe@orgoc.ca. Lynn Hiscoe is a consultant with the Occupational Rehabilitation Group of Canada (ORGOC). ORGOC is one of several service providers who provide supports to teachers across the province. Lynn is a clinical social worker who specializes in workplace mental health. Note: The purpose of this program is not to treat, but to promote, healthy lifestyles and improve emotional well-being. Consult your physician for specific guidance on health concerns.

BCTF NEWS RELEASE

September 1, 2010

BC teachers find immense satisfaction in their vocation

While many academic studies focus on the problems and challenges in public education, the BC Teachers' Federation also wants to focus on the many joys of a career in the classroom. As part of a larger study on the work life of BC teachers, BCTF researchers have published 'The satisfaction in teaching: What BC teachers say about the positive aspects of their work.'

A comprehensive survey, with returns from more than 560 teachers across the province, revealed a tremendous passion for the work of teaching, for the magical moments when students capture new concepts or master new skills, when professionals and parents work together to meet children's needs. The data revealed that teachers find greatest job satisfaction from:

- Helping students learn.
- Being positive influences in children's lives.
- Collaborating with colleagues and parents.
- Exercising professional autonomy.

Not surprisingly, the relationships built through the actual process of teaching and learning provide the primary source of satisfaction for teachers. Through qualitative data analysis based on standard research methodology, the following comments can be said to reflect the perspective of most respondents.

One music teacher wrote: "I love when I get to experience their 'ah-ha' moments. I still get tingling in my knees when they hit all the right notes with their recorders, or their voices come together in harmony."

Another teacher said: "I love working with my students and can't imagine doing anything else, even though it is a very challenging job. I love knowing that I have made a difference in my students' lives and helped them view themselves as capable and successful individuals."

Yet another said: "It is wonderful to be able to help them learn and inspire them to be curious. It is an honour when they remain in contact after the course is over and after they have graduated from high school."

BCTF President Susan Lambert said the study demonstrates how teachers' passion for their work is expressed in many ways. "Teachers find deep satisfaction working with students in school and also by contributing in our communities, coaching sports, directing choirs, leading study tours, taking courses, and many other aspects of our profession and vocation of teaching."

As this school year kicks off we'll stay focused on the job of learning, even as we face the many challenges in our public schools," Lambert said.

Social Justice Report

Welcome back, everyone! Moira Manthorne (chezmanthorne@gmail.com) & Nancy Ingersoll (nancyi@telus.net) are your VTA Social Justice Reps and are anxious to connect with reps from each school. Thank you to those who have signed on as reps but, if your school is still looking for one, please try it out. We get a lot of good information on many issues, including resources and lesson plans and we would love to share it with all schools. We just need someone who will receive the info on e-mail & spread it to your staff.

This year we will also be focused on bargaining and will be looking at the social justice implications of bargaining priorities. We are hoping to set up a training workshop for Social Justice reps so stay tuned for that. If you have a project that you'd like to try with your class or your school, we can help you apply for grants from BCTF.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Look for posters in your school (ask your Staff rep) about Gary Anaka on Oct. 20 & Dr. Martin Brokenleg on Nov.3 -both dynamic and informative speakers.

RESOURCES & WEBSITES:

*** The latest issue of *Teaching Tolerance*, a free on-line magazine examines some of the [best ways to address cyberbullying](#). See also this site for lesson plans on SJ issues through cartoons:

<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/editorial-cartoons-conclusion?newsletter=TT083110>



***Integrating homelessness issues into senior social sciences and humanities courses, including Civics 11, Social Studies 11, Economics 12, First Nations 12, Law 12, and Social Justice 12

<http://www.sfu.ca/~pendakur/Homelessness%20Teaching%20Resource%20Flyer.pdf>

*****The Mathieu Da Costa Challenge** (MDC) is an annual writing and artwork contest that is open to youth between the ages of 9 and 18. The deadline is Dec.10

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/mathieudacosta/index.asp>



Professional Development in S.D. 22

Dear Colleagues,

As we begin a new year I think it's worth it to revisit and remind ourselves about what Professional development means. Professional development is considered to be a process of strengthening teaching and professionalism through teacher collaboration, mentorship, inquiry groups, workshops, and professional coursework. Central to this, is the recognition of the professional autonomy of members to plan and pursue their professional growth.

If you haven't made a personal professional development plan for the coming year it's not too late! A good place to start is with a **Professional Specialist Association (PSA)**. A PSA exists for nearly every level and area of teaching and I strongly encourage you to seek out yours. Membership is around \$35 per year and it comes with a wealth of support and resources. You may use your personal PD funds to pay for this. The BCTF website has a link to all PSAs and forms to join.

A PSA Conference folder has been sent to all schools and if you didn't get one in your mailbox then your school PD chair should have a copy. Please consider attending one of these conferences. As an added incentive, the VTA has set aside \$2000 to off-set costs for teachers travelling to PSA conferences this year. The form will be available on our website soon.

Many of the conferences are taking place on the lower mainland but there are some quality local offerings.

Looking forward, the VTA and the district are once again joining funds and forces to bring local teachers a one day conference on November 15th at Fulton Secondary. If you have a great idea or method and would like to provide a workshop for this conference, please contact me.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact me with your PD related questions.

I wish you all a successful and fulfilling year.

Sincerely,

Robyn Ladner
Professional Development Chairperson
prodchair@shaw.ca



DATES TO NOTE:

October 22, 2010

Provincial PSA Day

November 12, 2010

School Based PD Day

November 15, 2010

VTA/district PD Convention