

Vernon Teachers' Association

VOICES

Volume 60

October 2011

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

Ph: 542-0456/Fax: 542-0564

www.vernonta.com



Speaking for Teachers in the North Okanagan



Reflections.....

I have a long, sometimes faulty, memory. Shortly after I started teaching, Bill Vanderzalm in his role as Minister of Education decided to cancel PD days, but he 'gave' every teacher a \$200 pay raise (that's right, \$1 per day) back in the day. It was part of the Bill Bennet Sacred Gov't Restraint Program. Can you imagine the galvanizing of teachers resulting from the mean-spirited action? Certainly teachers at that time were happy to have binding mediation about salaries but we were frustrated at not being able to get many working/learning conditions into agreements. However, when given the choice we rallied to the BCTF, we rallied to unionize. This was a direct result of concentrated attacks from the government of the time. The so-called Liberals in this government have a preponderance of MLA's with the same mind-set.

In the recent throne speech, teachers in this province are accused of being out of date with our teaching methods and use of technology. Well, here my faulty memory cuts in again – I participated in a pilot project to introduce 'microcomputers' into schools. My Apple II had 16K of memory, and there was no such thing as email. Teachers have been on the forefront of bringing technology into schools for our students. The only mistake we made was showing administration how computers could make their lives easier. In our defense, we thought that if administrators could be convinced that computers were a great tool, then they would support us when we tried to get computers into classrooms. Can you believe it, there are scheduling programs available to principals and yet many insist on doing everything manually to this day? Our District Administration has such an awkward computer system that the people in payroll do umpteen dozen things manually, and the system can't even add part time teaching experience to TOC experience to allow teachers to be paid increments when they have earned them. The truth of the matter is that teachers in B.C. have been leading education in this province for decades. It was through the efforts of teachers that PD days are part of the school calendar. It is through the efforts of dozens of Provincial Specialist Associations that we have honed our teaching. Teachers are the source of innovation in schools and always have been.

BCPSEA doesn't seem to remember & learn from history. The BCTF doesn't have the same fatal character flaw and we have a very long history. Every gain we have made in our collective agreement has resulted in a benefit to students and a better education system.

Let's keep up our dialogue with parents. Let's send messages to trustees, send letters to the editor, and talk to our neighbours. We are in the struggle of our professional lives: by far the most drastic 'remake' of the profession that I have seen in my 32.1 years of teaching is being planned by the government. Here in Vernon the 'my way or the highway' top-down approach is resulting in an increasing sense of resolve in every school I've visited. By staying on the high road, at least for now, we will keep our profession safe so we can get on with rediscovering the joy of teaching.

In solidarity,

Bruce

Vote! Vote! Votez! Votez!

Municipal and Trustee Elections are being held again this year on Saturday, November 19. Trustees for School District #22 (Vernon/Lumby Area) are elected as follows:

City of VERNON & Regional District Electoral Areas "B" & "C" - 4 Trustees

District of COLDSTREAM - 1 Trustee

Village of LUMBY & Regional District Electoral Areas "D" & "E" - 2 Trustees

If you know someone who is passionate about public education, I encourage you to talk to them about running in the election this year. Do it quickly because nominations close on Friday, October 14. Currently, Kelly Smith, a former Vernon teacher, has indicated that she will run in Vernon but other candidates have yet to declare themselves.

The Board is responsible for making sure that the community's priorities are represented in public education. As teachers, we are well aware of the issues facing us in our classrooms. We need to elect trustees who are willing to advocate for public education and our students.

What can you do? There is a lot that you can do (and it is pretty easy.)

1. Stay informed. Find out who is running in the area where you live. Information is published in the media. As well, there will be information on our VTA website.
2. Attend a forum. Watch for when and where forums are being held and come out and ask questions of the candidates.
3. GET OUT AND VOTE. There are advance polls on November 9th, 2011 for those who are unable to vote on Saturday, November 19. And while you are at it, take friends and family along with you and get them to vote too.

General Voting Day November 19th, 2011

Voting Hours: 8:00 am - 8:00 pm. Locations are as follows:

VERNON: Recreation Complex, 3310 - 37 Avenue (Auditorium), Vernon, B. C.
Ellison Elementary, 2400 Fulton (Gymnasium), Vernon, B. C.
Vernon Secondary, 2303 - 18 Street (Gymnasium), Vernon, B. C.

LUMBY: TBA

COLDSTREAM: TBA



Advance Voting Opportunities Wednesday, November 9, 2011 - 8:00 am to 8:00 pm

There are three (3) Advance voting opportunities. Dates and locations as follows:

VERNON: Schubert Centre. 3505 30 Avenue, Vernon, B. C.

LUMBY: Municipal Office. 1775 Glencaird Steet, Lumby

COLDSTREAM: TBA

Advance Voting Opportunities November 9, November 16, AND Thursday, November 17, 2011

Voting Hours: 8:00 am - 8:00 pm / Location: **City Hall, Council Chambers.** 3400 30 Street, Vernon, B. C.

Trustees have an important role in public education. Please make sure that you take the time to vote and help make a positive difference in the lives of students and teachers!

Are you a fan of the BCTF?

Please join us on Facebook.



www.facebook.com/BCTeachersFederation

Check out the VTA and BCTF on Facebook!

[Wall](#) - [Info](#) - [Photos](#) - [People](#)
[Discussions](#) - [Favourite Pages](#)

And so much more.....check it out!

If you haven't already done so now is the time to register at the BCTF Members' portal to ensure you are kept up to date and your contact information is current.

To easily access the VTA Facebook page visit www.vernonta.com and follow the link. While you're there check out the PD information, Bargaining updates and much, much more!



PAID EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

Reminder that applications for full or part year paid educational leave must be received **prior to January 1, 2012** 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, 2012. 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 (jsedge@sd22.bc.ca) or Diane Rhenisch (drhenisch@sd22.bc.ca) at the Board Office (250-542-3361) or Bruce Cummings (vtapresident@shaw.ca) at the VTA Office (250-542-0456).



Social Justice Report

October has 2 important focuses: anti-poverty and women's issues. Check the BCTF website for information, resources and posters. The link between these issues and the impact they have on our schools is significant. Go to the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition website for more. Get involved in the Municipal elections with your students.

Remind our local councillors of their commitment to poverty reduction. Write, email, phone or meet with at least one municipal candidate and ask them what concrete actions they have taken or plan to take to reduce poverty in your community. In particular, ask them about plans for **social housing** and on becoming a **living wage** municipality (see <http://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca> for briefing notes). Address other issues that are important to you and your community. And, finally, **ask them what they have done to urge the provincial government to commit to a poverty reduction plan?**

Talk to your favourite candidate before Election Day **November 19th**.

Many Canadians are concerned that reducing poverty means more spending on people living in poverty, leaving others worse off. The growing body of research and experience in the past few years tells a different story. It shows that **investing to reduce poverty benefits everyone**.

Read The Dollars and Sense of Solving Poverty (Sept 2011):
<http://www.ncw.gc.ca/c.4mm.5n.3ty@-eng.jsp?cmid=4>.

Hallowe'en is a great time to focus on Social Justice too. Try ordering the Reverse Trick or Treating kit and engage your students in promoting fair trade and supporting fair labour practises around the world.

This may be the year that you want to try working on a social justice project with your students that will have a systemic impact. Grants are available through BCTF, the deadline on the first [Ed May] grant is Nov.25.



LABOUR NEWS: I attend the North Okanagan Labour Council meetings on your behalf and they have endorsed Kelly Smith, a retired Seaton teacher, as a labour friendly candidate for the School Board elections on Nov.19. Congratulations,Kelly! The Canadian labour Congress is focusing on a retirement security campaign and making improvements to the Canada Pension Plan;you can check their website for details. The United Way is Labour's designated charity so keep that in mind as you make your donations this year.

Nancy Ingersoll, VTA Social Justice Rep

Sept. 29, 2011

To our BCTF Colleagues,

In recognition of World Teachers' Day October 5, 2011, please know that the retired teachers of this province, the BCRTA, acknowledge and applaud the efforts of each of you as you strive to meet the needs of our young people and to make BC's education system among the very best in the world.

We wish you well as you negotiate optimum learning conditions for students in your classroom and for the welfare of all educators in the province.

Yours sincerely,

Douglas Edgar

Doug Edgar, President

British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association

Your PD Funds

PLEASE BE REMINDED that if you ***change schools*** you **MUST** contact your previous PD Rep and ensure that the balance of your available PD funds are transferred to your new school asap. It is your responsibility to ensure that your funds 'travel' with you. As well, be sure of your school's PD Fund Policies to ensure that monies aren't lost due to non-use/time expirations. Know where your money is and what amount you have access to!!

RENTALS, FOR SALE AND OTHER STUFF

HOUSE RENTAL—AVAILABLE JANUARY, 2012

Enjoy the beautiful Okanagan Valley in a 3 bedroom, 2 bath house on a corner lot in a quiet neighborhood in the gorgeous East Hill of Vernon, BC.

This executive home is available, fully furnished, from **mid January 2012 to mid December 2012**. Other features are secured garage for one vehicle, mud-room with lockers, office and gym. There is lot's of natural lighting from the many windows, vaulted ceilings, gas fireplace, patio/BBQ area, minimal yard work, raised garden beds, and laminate, cork and lino flooring (no carpets).

Rent is \$1500/month plus utilities (approx.\$100). Additional pictures are available upon request. **Please call JC or Shelley at 250 545-3853 if interested**



PPC Online
personal
performance
consultants

The Balance Sheet

Health, Balance and Productivity

October 2011



Mental Health in the Workplace—A quick guide for employees

Mental Health is a part of overall health, just like physical health. In fact they are both intertwined. Mental health can be seen as a state of well-being, where a person realizes his/her own abilities, copes with daily stress, works productively, enjoys life outside of work and contributes to his/her own community.

In Canada, we have come a long way in terms of understanding mental health. Mental health and mental illness are now more openly discussed in mainstream and social media than ever before, yet we still have a way to go in terms of bringing this understanding into the workplace. Let's look at some facts and myths about mental health and illness, and then explore what you can do to look after yourself and support others at your workplace with mental health issues.

What is a mental health issue?

Mental health issues are broadly defined as a person's experience of excessive stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, addictions & substance abuse, manic episodes, bipolar and schizophrenic disorders, among others. Abnormal situations can trigger temporary mental health symptoms in all of us from time to time. The Conference Board of Canada's survey on mentally healthy workplaces states that 44% of employees are either currently experiencing or have experienced a mental health issue. Clearly, mental health is something about which we all need to be aware.

To Access this month's Newsletter and read the full article(s) go to:

www.ppconline.info | username: healthy | password: living

Call **1.800.663.9099** 24/7/365 for confidential help with any of life's challenges.

Know Your Contract.....

ARTICLE D.22 DURATION OF THE DAY

1. In an elementary school the duration of a teacher's instructional day shall not exceed six (6) consecutive hours to be inclusive of:
 - a. Five (5) hours of instructional time which shall be inclusive of fifteen (15) minutes of recess;
 - b. A regular lunch intermission;
 - c. Preparation time as set forth in D.4.
2. In a secondary school. the duration of a teacher's instructional day shall not exceed six (6) hours and thirty (30) minutes of consecutive time and shall be inclusive of:
 - a. Five (5) hours and thirty (30) minutes of instructional time which shall be inclusive of time allotted for homeroom students to change classes, breaks;
 - b. A regular lunch intermission,
 - c. Preparation time as set forth in Article D.4.



SD#22 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to a new school year! There is a lot to tell you on the Professional Development front.

LSA GRANTS: If you are part of an established LSA or are thinking of starting one up, there is money available for your group. Please apply for your start up grant soon and there are additional funds for special activities. These forms are on the VTA website under Pro D forms.

PQT/INQUIRY: One of my goals as PD chair is to increase the awareness of Inquiry as a model for PD across the district. I'm pleased to tell you that once again the VTA is the recipient of a grant from the BCTF (matched by the VTA) for teachers to do Inquiry projects. Many groups have already submitted proposals but if you have an Inquiry project you would like to undertake let me know by October 15th and I'll see if there are some funds still available.

PSA DAY OCTOBER 21st: There are over 30 PSAs in BC and all of them put on conferences. The link to the conferences is on the VTA website under Professional Development. If you are attending a conference and have used up all of your individual PD funds, then you can apply for additional funds to offset your travel costs. The form for this is on the VTA website.

If you are not attending a conference then I encourage you to seek out your LSA or like-minded teachers and use the time to collaborate, work on an inquiry project and learn from each other. If you need some funds for this then let me know.

NOVEMBER 10th PD Day: The VTA will be funding and helping to plan PD activities for teachers on this day. Details are still being finalized and the full format will be set to school PD chairs and staff reps in the next few weeks.

In the meantime...

Think about what you would like to work on and whom you would like to work with.

If you have a "workshop" you'd like to put on or a program you would like to share then this is your opportunity.

LSAs may want to use this day to meet and work and maybe attract new members.

Inquiry groups may want to use this day to meet.

Reclaim, revive, or reinvigorate your professional development! This day will be all about professional autonomy and teacher directed collaboration.

As always, if you have any PD questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact me at the VTA office on Fridays or anytime at prodchair@shaw.ca

Robyn Ladner
Professional Development Chairperson
prodchair@shaw.ca