

The Advocate

In consensus atque unitate stat potential - "There is strength in unity"

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER (MAYBE)

ISSUE NO. 1 - SEPTEMBER 2016

President's Message

Welcome Back,

I trust you had a glorious summer and that you are well rested for what is sure to be a busy start to the year. On behalf of the Abbotsford District Teachers' Association Executive, I want to welcome you to the 2016-2017 school year and encourage you to contact the ADTA Executive, myself, or Jennifer Brooks should there be anything we can help you with.

Along with the new curriculum now being in place for K to 9, and a new directive from the Ministry on reporting coming into effect, there will no doubt be much to digest in the coming months. As all of this unfolds I hope you can bring the positive feelings of summer vacation back to work with you and focus on the important priorities of our profession rather than be overwhelmed by seemingly urgent fodder that can often derail the best of plans.

Just as members new to the profession or to your staff would likely benefit from your assistance over the fledgling first days of the school year, the ADTA is also reaching out for your support. One of our goals is to ensure that the operation of your workday is contract compliant; to that end we want to ensure that every teacher is receiving fair and equitable treatment. If there are questions or concerns with issues that often arise each year in September such as post and fill, preparation time, hours of work, assignment within the school, PD, etc., then please feel free to contact the ADTA for advice and assistance.

Remember to take care of yourself and feel free to stop in at the ADTA to chat when the mood takes you.

Cheers,
Doug Smuland



Some Items of Interest from the ADTA & BCTF ...

Professional Development

There are 7 non-instructional days this year. 5 of these days are teacher directed PD days. 2 days are devoted to curriculum implementation. There is no individual school goals day.

The ADTA concluded conversations with SD#34 last June and have agreed to the use of the dates for the 7 non-instructional days in the coming year:

Sept 23, Oct 21, Dec 5, Feb 24 and May 19th are PD days controlled by teachers for their personal PD plans.

Nov 25th and April 28th have been designated as the 2 NI days devoted to curriculum implementation.

The day in November is being planned by Darlene MacDonald who is the District Principal for Aboriginal Education and the ADTA.

Curriculum Implementation Day in Abbotsford on November 25.

The Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom Curriculum Implementation Day on November 25 will be hosted by Abby Middle. The keynote speaker (to be confirmed) will be held in the comfort of the Abby Arts Theatre with the other workshops and sessions held at Abby Middle School. This will be available to all K-12 educators interested in how to infuse aboriginal content and perspectives into the curriculum.

Other PD ...

Each year, the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) organizes a conference that engages a different sector. This year, the PHABC is organizing a conference focused on collaborative dialogue between public health and education professionals.

This year's theme of "*Strengthening Healthy Development: Education and Public Health in Partnership*" speaks to the importance of collaboration in addressing health and learning outcomes for all. The BCTF has partnered with the PHABC to promote this important conference and would like to invite all members to consider registering as a participant or submitting a proposal to the call for abstracts. The PHABC conference organizing committee is seeking proposals that speak to the conference sub-themes of collaborative partnerships, common interests and issues, social justice and equity, supporting families, environmental health, and schools as healthy workplaces. A variety of presentation formats are available from workshops to oral presentations to facilitated World Café discussions.

For more information, please contact the BCTF Health and Wellness Program or the PHABC organizing committee at coordinator@phabc.org.

Conference Information

Conference dates: December 11 and 12, 2016

Location: Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, 7551 Westminster Hwy, Richmond, BC

Registration opens: September 1, 2016

Deadline for call for abstracts: September 15, 2016

Provincial Grievance: September Pay 2014

BCTF and BCPSEA wrapped up the September Pay arbitration with Arbitrator Chris Sullivan this August. Our BCTF legal counsel on this grievance did a great job in presenting our case and had Jim Iker review the bargaining processes and the intention of the union in negotiating the Return to Work Agreement.

This case revolved around the intent of the parties in negotiating the Return to Work Agreement in September 2014 that ended our job action. Specifically, how the paid day for our return to work, which was negotiated as part of that agreement, should be paid.

As you will recall, Abbotsford, along with 15 other districts, chose not to pay teachers for the 8th day in September 2014 citing local collective agreement language. The ADTA grieved this decision and in the end became a part of the larger provincial grievance. The resolution should be made available some time early this fall.

The Ministry of Education Curriculum Updates

Some days ago, the Ministry posted the finalized version of the revised K–9 curriculum, as well as updated proposals for the 10–12 curriculum. A new “Educator Update” has also been posted. It functions as a pretty useful FAQ for many of the changes under way, and may be of interest to members.

The Ministry has also begun posting instructional examples on their website. These were developed by BCTF members working on the curriculum revision team.

Federation representatives have continued to impress upon government the need for proper supports to be in place in order for implementation to be successful and sustainable. Since this time last year, we’ve perceived at times a government emphasis on “getting it done.” And, experience has taught us that in the lead up to an election there can be periods of instability when, unfortunately, professional expertise may at times take a back seat to political expediency—rather than an approach that understands that system-wide change done well requires time, support, resources, and strong working relationships. During the summer, in meetings and correspondence, Federation representatives underscored once again the need for responsible implementation timelines and plans to be developed to better support teachers and students.

In response, the Ministry now seems to be softening its approach. Following a meeting on August 16, Deputy Minister Dave Byng wrote acknowledging that a ***“change of this scale will take time, and we fully expect to continue to make adjustments to curricula based on teacher feedback. Please be assured, there will continue to be time to refine and adjust in order to support successful learner outcomes.”***

The Ministry knows that we will be emphasizing to our members the need to take things slow—to make changes gradually within the realities of their teaching and learning conditions.

Classroom Assessment

There are no required changes to classroom assessment. This is entirely up to the autonomy of individual teachers, and will remain as such.

Pedagogical Choices

While some individuals in government continue to refer to “personalized learning,” a change in curriculum does not necessitate a change in pedagogical approach. Choice of how to teach the curriculum is captured by the professional autonomy language in our collective agreement.

The Federation has neither a position for nor against the concept of “personalized learning.” Furthermore, it isn’t even a new concept in BC.

Reporting to Parents

The Ministry has now released the changes to the Ministerial Orders associated with communicating student learning to parents. More information about these will be developed by the Ministry and made available to teachers. We can confirm again that **teachers will not need to report on the Core Competencies.**

In a nutshell, the Ministry will be allowing districts to maintain the status quo, or to choose district-developed approaches. It will be important for locals to be involved in any discussions at the school district level, and to ensure that school districts do not go overboard in what they opt to do. Reporting should be meaningful—not a make-work project for teachers, only to be read by (or even wanted) by a very small percentage of parents.

Abbotsford has created a District committee to discuss these issues and we continue to look for members interested in being involved. Contact either Jennifer or Doug at the ADTA if you are interested in being a part of this committee.

Resources

The BCTF has repeatedly raised the need for new resources to support curriculum change. Making available a limited number of teacher-made samples to be posted online does not address the depth of the need. While helpful in a limited way, the Federation does not view online exemplars to be an adequate response or an approach that supports successful implementation. Accurate, up-to-date, and inclusive teaching and learning resources need to be developed and made available for schools’ use in all

communities around the province, and there needs to be a plan and funding available to ensure that this happens.

In the letter from Deputy Minister Byng referenced above, he also went on to say that he recognizes the concerns that the Federation has repeatedly raised about resources to support the new curriculum, and he “agree[s] accurate and up-to-date learning resources need to be made available.”

The plan is to meet early in September to begin mapping out where gaps are, and a plan to address the gaps. There is particular interest on the part of both the Federation and the Ministry to attend to the gaps in supports related to the enhanced Aboriginal content in the curriculum, and there is acknowledgment that there are many other areas that need attending to. Conversations began last spring about the variety of resources needed to support the implementation of the health curriculum, which has been moved over into what is now known as Physical & Health Education, and we will continue to work with the Ministry on this front as well, in addition to pushing for resources across all subject areas.

It will continue to be very important for locals and the Federation to be hearing from members about their needs. EC members travelled to many locals last year to hear first-hand from members about their experiences with implementation thus far.

No doubt, this is a conversation that needs to continue to happen at the district level as well, and school district management has its responsibilities too to ensure that people in their employ have the tools to do their job!

The Additional Non-Instructional Days

The Federation was pleased to see a step in the right direction with the provision of two additional NI days devoted to the curriculum change in the 2015–16 school year, and the additional day in both 2016–17 and 2017–18. Further, we appreciated that the Federation played a key role in the overall design of the days, with local teacher associations taking the leadership role within districts. This was a positive undertaking.

We believe there remains a strong need for continued teacher collaboration and planning at both the district and school levels, and that will require time for in-service. This must be properly funded and cannot be yet another expectation layered onto teachers’ already very demanding workload and very scarce collaboration time.

Provincial Student Assessment Program

The province has committed to eliminating the FSA and provincial exams. The Annual General Meeting and Representative Assembly have made decisions about the Federation’s next steps in the process of developing possible alternatives at both the elementary level and secondary level. We are awaiting, though, a final decision from the government whether they will agree to not release school and student data to third parties. Discussions on this continue.

Find Resources for the Revised Curriculum at TeachBC

The BCTF’s TeachBC site just turned two years old and there are already hundreds of lessons, resources, and other teaching materials centred specifically on BC’s curriculum posted in the database. The site has been updated to now accept tags for resources that fit under the revised curriculum. When uploading your materials, tag it with “revised curriculum” as a subject.

BCTF Opportunities for Members

1. The BCTF is seeking eight teacher-librarian members to serve as Education Resource Acquisition Consortium (ERAC) learning resource evaluators. The posting and application form can be found here: bctf.ca/opportunities/ERACCommittees.aspx

The deadline for applications is Thursday, September 29, 2016, at 5:00 p.m. All members will be notified of the opportunity in the next BCTF News, but in the meantime please circulate to your networks.

2. The BCTF is seeking 20 members to attend the Student Mental Health Summit, a one-day issue session being hosted by the BCTF on Thursday, September 29, 2016. The posting and application form can be found here: bctf.ca/opportunities/BCTFCommittees.aspx

The deadline for applications is Thursday, September 15, 2016, at 5:00 p.m.

BCTF seeking members for three important committees

The Federation currently has openings on three important committees. Visit the BCTF's opportunities for members page to learn more about each committee and the application procedures. The deadline for applications for all three committees is September 9, 2016. The committees with vacancies are:

G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award Trustees. One, three-year term is open for the committee that examines nominations for the G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award, and selects the recipient.

Teacher Magazine Advisory Board. One, three-year term is available for the board that participates in the planning and review of Teacher magazine, the Federation's flagship publication.

W.R. Long International Solidarity Fund. One, three-year term is open for the committee that promotes international understanding and raises member awareness of BCTF participation in international projects.

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