

## **BCTF supports teacher PD**

The BCTF has a long and proud history of supporting teacher professional development. After years of requests from the BCTF, the British Columbia School Calendar for 1973 finally provided for more than one day for classrooms to be closed so that teachers could be away to participate in conventions, workshops, etc. For more detailed information on the role the Federation has played in the promotion of ongoing teacher professional development, go to [www.bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx](http://www.bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx).

Teaching is a complex job involving constant decision making. There is not a ‘one size fits all’ professional development model that could meet the needs of all teachers.

The draft curriculum has fewer learning standards that are broad in nature which means that, more than ever before, teachers will have autonomy over much of the curriculum content and process.

The Ministry of Education describes the redesigned curriculum as: *A more flexible curriculum that prescribes less and enables more, for both teachers and students and a system focused on the core competencies, skills and knowledge that students need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*”

Prescribed professional development would do little to help teachers decide how these learning standards will be taught, and even what content to include. The ‘transformation of education’ also requires that teachers guide students with their own learning and encourage them to be in charge of their own learning. It appears that the same expectations for autonomy over learning is not extended to teacher professional development.

### **Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs)**

PSAs have existed since 1957 and are communities of practice where members can collaborate and share ideas and up-to-date information on the new curriculum, ministry initiatives and research relating to their specialist area. The methods of communication include email listservs, websites, blogs, twitter chats, webinars, social media, sites where members go to exchange ideas on research, teaching strategies, curriculum development, and other shared interests. There are currently 32 Provincial Specialist Associations with a total membership of over 10,000 members.

An example of professional resources produced by PSAs include professional journals and newsletters, as well as teacher professional guides such as *Best Practices Guide* by the BC Technology Association and *Questions Worth Asking about Assessment* by the BC Association of Mathematics Teachers.

Each PSA has at least one major conference per year, with many having more than one conference. These conferences are attended by large numbers of teachers. As an example, the recent BC Teachers of English Language Arts and Environmental Educators PSA conference where over 400 teachers attended the conference titled, “Connecting to place through literature and text.”

The BCTF supports PSAs through annual membership grants, plus a complimentary PSA membership, at the induction of new teachers in their first year with the BCTF.

### **Support for New Teachers**

**The New Teachers' Mentoring Project** is a joint BCTF, UBC, and BCSSA project, provided for by a Ministry grant. Currently there are 78 working teacher mentoring partnerships in the province. The project provides training to mentors as well as release time for partners to allow for collaboration.

In addition, 10 districts have been assisted in the development of new mentoring projects and 4 districts have been assisted with the strengthening of their existing mentorship program. The project is also in the process of developing a provincial resource team of 15 people who will support the establishment of mentoring programs throughout BC.

The second annual Summer Institute for teachers involved in the mentoring project will be held at UBC in July. Last year there were 55 attendees at the 3-day institute.

A joint BCTF/UBC Mentoring Conference was held last May with 135 attendees.

**BCTF new teachers' conference** is an annual conference for new teachers and teachers in their first 5 years of teaching, as well as teacher candidates. The conference usually attracts between 400 and 450 attendees where over 50 workshops are presented over the 2 days. The majority of these workshops are facilitated by teachers.

This year the conference will be held regionally in Prince George as part of their Spring Fling PD event. Many PSAs will be offering workshops at this event

### **BCTF Workshop Program**

The BCTF has a vibrant workshop program designed to support teachers (in both official languages) in their classrooms.

All of the workshops are written and facilitated by BCTF members and are developed according to needs expressed by BCTF members. These workshops are offered free of charge, upon request, to locals or schools.

Last year there were over 355 workshops facilitated around the province by the BCTF.

### **Teacher Inquiry**

The BCTF, through the Program for Quality Teaching, offers up to 10 grants per year to support groups of teachers with their inquiry projects. These grants are matched by funding from school districts. Since 2008 there have been more than 80 inquiry projects supported by the BCTF.

The BCTF trains facilitators to guide teachers through the inquiry process. Many inquiry groups carry on after the initial project has been completed, with some groups still operating after 8 years.

The BCTF inquiry model is one that has been successfully replicated in many districts as more and more teachers see teacher inquiry as an excellent form of self-directed professional development that is situated in their classroom practice.

### **BCTF Pro-D News**

This is a monthly on-line newsletter for Pro-D chairs. It provides information for Pro-D chairs such as links to recent relevant research on teacher professional learning, BCTF workshops, curriculum and other ministry updates.

The newsletter is a venue for local Pro-D chairs to share their conference information and it serves as a resource for Pro-D chairs. The link for current and past issues is

[www.bctf.ca/publications.aspx?id=35947](http://www.bctf.ca/publications.aspx?id=35947).

### **Peer Support Service**

The Federation has a service to support teachers with their teaching practice. This Peer Support Service (PSS) is designed to provide direct, individual assistance to active teachers who are experiencing difficulty with their teaching practice, or who want to improve their classroom practice in a particular area. This service is offered free of charge to members. There are currently 26 ongoing peer support cases.

The support is provided by BCTF peer support consultants who have an extensive background in teaching and training in planning, consultation, classroom observation, analysis, and feedback skills. Peer consultants will offer support in a collaborative and non-judgmental environment and support the growth of a teacher's professional practice through a non-evaluative, peer coaching model.

### **Project of Heart**

This work supports teachers as they become more familiar with the Aboriginal education content in the new curriculum.

A number of workshops have happened this year to increase awareness of the residential school issue.

### **Social Justice**

The BCTF social justice program supports teachers by making safe spaces through various programs:

- antiracism
- antihomophobia
- antisexism/anti-oppression
- antipoverty

Through the Committee for Action on Social Justice (CASJ), teachers come together to develop workshops, posters, and lesson plans for use by teachers in their professional learning.

## **French Programs and Services**

The BCTF has created workshops designed to meet the needs of teachers with French as a First or Working Language.

There is a weekly online newsletter that provides information such as links to recent relevant research on teacher professional learning, BCTF workshops, local, provincial, national or international organizations offering workshops, resources, conferences in French, etc. It is a venue for PSAs, faculties of education, locals, etc., to share their conference and post-secondary program information with Francophone colleagues.

## **TeachBC**

This online resource-sharing site was launched by the BCTF in 2014. While still in its infancy, there has been a lot of interest, with over 12,000 downloads of resources so far.

The site is free and open to everyone for uploading and downloading of resources.

TeachBC is very much in tune with the new curriculum and encourages teachers to share teaching strategies and resources that support the new curriculum.