

TEACHER

Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

A hard day's night

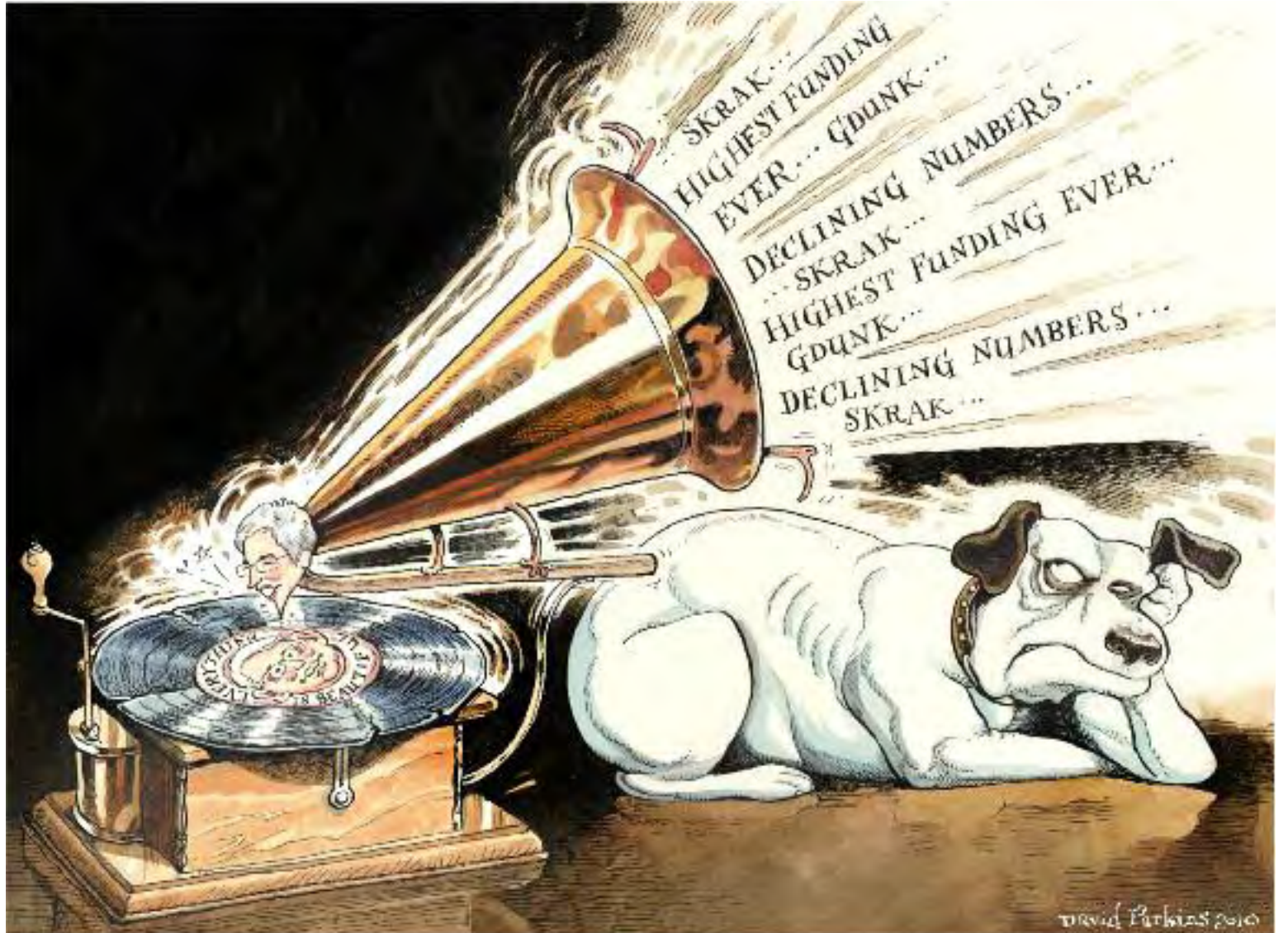
So how's your worklife?

By Charlie Naylor and Margaret White

That's what BCTF Research asked teachers across the province in a major study of teachers' work in BC's public schools. A random sample of teachers received a BCTF survey, with over 500 teachers from most school districts sharing their views on the joys and stresses of teaching in 2009. Topics covered in the survey included:

- teachers' experiences and perspectives on their own education and professional development
- workload issues
- how teachers spent their summer break
- satisfaction and stress in teaching
- changes in stress, workload, and job satisfaction, and sources of work-related stress
- teachers' perceptions of the effects of stress
- inclusive education
- the most important areas for BCTF focus to improve teachers' working and learning conditions.

After extensive analyses of data, a series of reports is now being



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published by BCTF Research on the above areas.

In a change of direction from previous surveys, we asked what gave teachers satisfaction in their work. The answer? It's the students, of course. Or words to that effect.

"I still get tremendous satisfaction working with the kids. 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. I love when my Grade 7s feel inspired and get involved in great discussions."

"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 to view themselves as capable and successful individuals."

However, when it came to stress, teachers suggested it was the combination of several different factors that caused the most severe stress.

"When you try to break down the elements of stress in the profession of teaching it actually does a disservice to teachers. It's not the individual items that cause stress; it's the combination of things that actually causes stress. When we have our most stressful times, during report-card preparation, we also have all the other items to contend with at the same time. We can't put the kids on automatic and

the meetings don't stop; there's still marking and planning; we still need to deal with behaviour issues and call parents; we still have the administration to deal with and the very real problems of kids not getting what they need at school and at home. This is when our stress levels are at their highest."

And when we asked teachers about possible stress-related factors, the four most significant sources of stress related to student needs in the classroom—students' disruptive behaviour, class-composition issues, lack of support for non-designated "grey area" students, and the unmet needs of students. The fifth most stressful factor for teachers is the attitude of the provincial government.

While teachers took an average of 5.7 weeks off during the 2008-09 summer break, they also spent time on school-related activities with most doing classroom preparation at the start and end of the school year. About half read school-related books and educational journals. Younger teachers took a shorter summer break than older teachers, some working in paid employment.

"I work full-time during the summer since my student loan payments are huge. I do not earn enough money during the school year to live in July and August."

Teachers told us that summer break is also a time to recuperate from the hectic demands of the school year, attend to personal responsibilities put on hold, and

care for dependent or ill family members.

"Does this mean relaxation time? Much of my summer is used to get things in order at home, which get put on the back burner during the school year."

Long hours at work were the norm, with an average work week of almost 48 hours, and 10% of respondents working more than 60

hours a week. Substantial time was spent in preparation, meetings, and marking, with teachers increasingly spending time on administrative tasks.

"It varies. It goes from crazy to insane. I'm at every meeting for every student and I type and distribute minutes. I rarely have a day

See *WORKLIFE* page 4

On the inside

Teachers are blessed with two "new years" and what better way to start this one than taking a look at the results of a survey our Research Department has conducted into the worklife of teachers.

The Field Service Division provides some timely advice on completing the class-size/composition consultation and reporting process. In order to secure remedies for situations that do not comply with the legislation it is important that members read and follow carefully the advice the BCTF and locals are providing.

For those with longer memories

there is an update on the progress of the challenge the BCTF is pursuing to the imposition of Bills 27, 28, and 19 enacted in 2002 and 2004, which eliminated working and learning conditions from all collective agreements.

A wide variety of political commentary is featured not only covering education but also the broader environment.

Susan Lambert delivers her first message as president and contributes an article on her visit to Honduras marking the first anniversary of the coup.

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President's message



Susan Lambert

Happy new year! January 1 may be the first of the year for the rest of the world, but for teachers, the year begins on the Tuesday after Labour Day. Each year is always exciting for

us—it holds such promise. We make our resolutions: we vow to improve lessons and units, to learn more about individual students we were unable to reach last year, and to be more assertive about resisting bureaucratic demands that are too intrusive on our teaching. We come back to a school and class full of enthusiastic kids, fresh from holidays and itching to get re-connected with friends. We are also re-invigorated. We've used the summer to rejuvenate and reflect—we've woken in the middle of the night with new ideas and we're brimming with projects we want to do with our students. Each and every year is a new beginning.

This year brings challenges as well as hope. The BCTF has been working hard to advocate for a strong public education system in this province. We have resisted the

standardization and mediocrity represented by the FSAs and the testing agenda that has proliferated in all grades and subjects, for almost a decade. We have worked hard to protect students and schools from the indiscriminate and unfounded attacks of the Fraser Institute. We finally proposed to meet with government and our education partners on a task force to try to identify the compromise that would allow us to return our full attention to authentic assessment and instruction. Unfortunately, to date, government has not agreed to participate in this exercise and so the struggle to defend our students, the integrity of the curriculum, and our professional autonomy must continue.

This year brings the promise of a new round of bargaining. We will begin with a Bargaining Conference

on October 29 and 30. The soonest that local bargaining can begin is March 1. We will all need to fully engage in this process to insure that our objectives match our needs and that our strategy is strong and concerted.

We enter this round of negotiations in a climate of uncertainty. In the wake of a financial meltdown, governments around the globe are taking stock. Some are calling for tighter regulations and a focus on sustainability, while others, including our own, both federally and provincially, seem to think de-regulation, "smaller government," and the rule of private interests in the market place create sufficient checks and balances to sustain growth.

It is our job to protect and advocate for the most precious government service of them all—public

education. Without a strong and rigorous public education system we haven't a prayer of producing a next generation capable of challenging us and of identifying solutions to the complex problems we have created for them.

We do the work of protecting public education in so many ways. We do it by being the best teachers we can be, by speaking out for education policy that builds a stronger system, by working politically to insure that our elected leaders value and protect public education, and by bargaining to insure that teaching is a valued and attractive profession with working conditions and learning conditions that respect the right of every student to the education she or he deserves.

Readers write

The correct question

Susan Duncan's article, "Let's Take a Stand For Public Education," (*Teacher*, May/June 2010) asks the (almost) right question "what would work best for the most children."

She makes the common mistake of separating the school system from the students when she says "Of course, some students will not succeed in the public school system..."

The assumption is that all children of a certain age should be learning the same things. Success is based on how well each child is able to learn those things.

The correct question would be "What would work best for every child?" Every educator knows that a child cannot learn when other needs are not being met. They also know that when those needs are being met, learning happens. The learning that happens may not be the things we want them to learn but it is learning none the less. It is the learning that is relevant to that child, that reinforces the sense of importance, accomplishment, and success. It is also the learning that leads to more learning happening.

The public school is where this type of growth happens best.

Ken Weatherill

Delta

Where are the men?

Once again, the BCTF has ignored a serious, growing problem in the teaching profession, which is the declining number of male teachers. Females make up the majority in virtually every sector of teaching, perhaps due to the proactive work of the Status of Women committees of the past. However, men are now threatened with extinction, yet nothing is being done about it. If you

doubt that the number of men is declining, look at the staff list of any school. In most elementary schools, there are only one or perhaps two men on staff and, in some cases, there are no male teachers in the school. The percentage of males in the graduating classes at universities is declining each year but no one seems to care. Where is the "Status of Men" committee to deal with this? Alarm bells should be ringing throughout the BCTF but not one word about this situation has been spoken. It is time to deal with this problem before teaching in this province is a female-only profession.

Jim Foreman

North Vancouver

Defending teachers and their profession

In response to "In defense of public school teachers" (*Teacher*, May/June 2010), Henry Giroux did an admirable, if somewhat complex, job of defending teachers and their profession from the attacks emanating from the political right as well as suggesting what education should really be about. But that threat is only half the problem. The other half is the attacks from the academic left. And, to make matters worse, teachers are usually their own worst enemy with respect to those attacks because too often they are philosophically predisposed to accept them. No better example could be given of the sort of attack I am talking about than those mounted by people like Ken Robinson and the TED organization. I became interested in Robinson and similar "gurus" when my eldest daughter used his views to justify terminating her pursuit of higher education. Nevertheless, educators who are

familiar with Robinson and TED are likely to immediately reject any suggestion that his views and the views of those like him are any threat to education. After all, doesn't he celebrate the immense creativity of children? Well, no. He doesn't. In fact, he paints teachers and the profession as the stultifiers of students, while vastly inflating the actual degree of their supposed "tremendous talents." Here is a quote that he uses in almost every talk he gives:

"If you're at a dinner party, and you say you work in education—actually, you're not often at dinner parties, frankly, if you work in education. (Laughter) You're not asked. And you're never asked back, curiously. That's strange to me. But if you are, and you say to somebody, you know, they say, 'What do you do?' and you say you work in education, you can see the blood run from their face. They're like, 'Oh my God,' you know, 'Why me? My one night out all week.'" (Laughter)

I put it to teachers plainly; is this anything other than an attack on us? But Robinson is an emissary of the misguided child worship mentality that has come to dominate the profession. Robinson and those of his ilk start with the demonstrably false notion that "all children have tremendous talents" and then uses exceptional cases along with the fact that most students do not go on to achieve greatness (or even do poorly in life) to justify his snide, derogatory characterization of teachers and teaching. But the premise is wrong. If all students did indeed have "tremendous talents," then it might be reasonable to conclude that failure to exhibit these in later life was the fault of their teachers. But all students do not

have such talents. The vast majority have average abilities. Many who do possess great talent fail to reach their potential for any number of reasons, including their own personal choices. But teachers have bought into the guilt trip being laid on them and have thus helped to spawn an industry of teacher bashing. This self-flagellation needs to stop. Teachers are professionals and constantly work to refine their pedagogy. But students have free will and only the rare few have tremendous talents. That doesn't lessen their worth as human beings but it does mean there are limits to what teachers can be expected to accomplish. Teachers are doing a great job in extremely adverse circumstances. There is no need to feel guilt over the fact that not all students do well nor is there any reason to attribute abilities to all children that only a few actually have.

Scott Goodman

Courtenay

Dear BCTF members

Tonight was our BCTF AGM and retirement dinner. It's hard to believe that 33 years have passed since I was first inducted into the BCTF, and now, after wishing colleagues well over the years, it is my turn to retire. While many things have changed, many challenges remain the same. In the late 1970s, we were then, as now, deeply concerned about class-size issues. Over time, class sizes were reduced, and we started advocating for the support services critical to the success of our students as integration into the classroom from the resource room began.

As a young teacher, I believed many of the frustrations we dealt with would be eradicated in time. Many exciting changes in curriculum have taken place, and our schools are vibrant, interesting places to learn and work in. Thanks to dedicated professional development committee members and provincial specialist associations, our professional development opportunities are exceptional. Our schools are kinder, more compassionate, and more culturally sensitive than when I first began teaching in 1977. Yet, in an unprecedented period of excellence in children's literature, our school libraries have inadequate budgets and minimal teacher-librarian time. The challenges presenting our students are greater than ever, yet counselling and special education positions continue to be eroded. Private school funding increases while public school funding fails to keep up with increased expenses. Despite the government's assertion that funding is increasing, when we examine the percentage of the provincial budget allocated to education, it is very evident that funding has decreased markedly.

The BCTF continues to work tirelessly to increase public awareness and restore funding levels so our students' needs may be met.

I would like to thank all of the BCTF members who participate as staff reps, committee members, and on local and provincial executives. Teachers' working conditions and children's learning conditions are intertwined, and the work you do on behalf of both children and teachers is so important. Thank you, everyone, for all you do!

Virginia Brucker

Qualicum

The peril of virtual reality

As an educator/counsellor working with youth aged 5 to 14, it is an existential counselling nightmare to realize that youth today are socialized/parented/babysat by a blue screen.

As of last year, digital imagery is so compelling that it has surpassed human detection; officially virtual reality is better than real life. All children are developmentally unable to comprehend satire until age 8 to 12, when they get to school they realize that acting like Bart Simpson is the equivalent of making a fool of oneself and brings them grief from the teacher. To those youth who have become as addicted as the adults around them, to better than real life sex and violence, traits such as compassion, co-operation, and responsibility are hard to sell.

Selling delusion with the tools we have today is easy. Who is profiting?

We have created, by our absence and our silence, a largely desensitized and detached (as in "Attachment Disorder") youth who feel abandoned and betrayed by the adults who were supposed to act in their best interest.

Never in human history have children murdered one another and mutilated themselves except during war, famine, genocide, mass extinction, or societal breakdown.

It's time to listen to them.

Susanna Kaljur

Courtenay

Respect our retired teachers who are TTOCs

The May/June 2010 *Teacher* newsmagazine elaborated on numerous situations in which the destructiveness of bullying was explored. Bullying is, however, not limited to the relationships between children or government and teachers. It is also subtly present within the newsmagazine when teachers criticize or intimidate each other. It is not appropriate in times of financial crisis or devastating government policy to turn inward to the teachers in our profession who choose to work after they have retired. There is an assumption being made that a "retired" teacher is taking away employment from a

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CEPA Canadian Educational Press Association

CALM Canadian Association Labour Media

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younger colleague. The assumption that working as a TTOC is a means of funding travelling is petty and shortsighted. Consider some other possibilities: health issues are becoming a concern for a working teacher and the teacher realizes that with retirement and some work as a TTOC, a full-time job is available to a more energetic and healthy individual. Thus, the cost of long-term medical leaves becomes eliminated. The pension that was anticipated is not quite what one calculated now that medical and dental costs are being deducted and perhaps indexing is in jeopardy. Investments counted on in retirement were diminished in the recent financial downturn. Pensioners know that the global financial downturn has had an enormous impact on pension funds and personal investments, etc. Some individuals decide to retire before 65 because they do realize that they are able to live without a full-time teaching position but they still love their profession and want to remain active within the profession and make a valuable contribution to children as a TTOC. There are school districts within the province that would not have enough TTOCs without the invaluable work of retired teachers who are available to cover a teacher who is unable to work on any given day. Even at age 65, not all of our colleagues retire with a full pension. Many women were out of the system while they raised children and were not able to buy back their time because of financial constraints.

There is a slight historical element to this debate to the time when the wife in a “teacher couple” was told that she was holding a job that should really go to a male teacher who was unemployed and she should give up the position so that the “head” of a household could have a job. The real demon in this employment crisis is lack of proper educational funding. We know that larger class sizes and no funding for specialists reduces jobs.

Our professionalism and certainly our *Code of Ethics* should caution each teacher, regardless of the status of their employment, to appreciate and respect the work that all teachers do.

Regina Day
Nelson

Detecting bias

This letter is in response to “On joining the military” by Nicole Davis and “Military recruitment and racism” by Marianne Neill (*Teacher*, April 2010).

I have been studying bias as a part of a Communications 12 course at the Newton Learning Centre. I am planning a career in the Canadian Armed Forces and my teacher suggested I read these two articles and examine them for potential bias. What I found was a one-sided portrayal of the military. I have written below what I have found and disagree with.

Now, I find “On joining the military” biased because according to Davis, “You also knew that should a war break out, you would be in the middle of it, and there was a very reasonable expectation of death.” I’m shocked that she would say this because it’s exaggerated. She also writes, “The military and its recruiters, provided me with the opportunity to see things through a different lens, to be forced to work with people with whom I would not normally interact.” I’m shocked she would write things like this because the Canadian forces have numerous trades and careers to choose from and the fact that Davis earlier stated in her article that she was a medical assistant (nurse) for the military, is not being “in the middle of it.” The brave men and women in the battlefield are the ones keeping those like the nurses from getting hurt and it is their constant job to be

in the thick of it. Also, the military doesn’t force you to do anything—this is Canada, and we all have free will. No one can be forced to do anything, you are your own vessel of life and if you do something because you are “forced” to, then you’re just complying and giving in to power that other people and/or situations, will hold over you.

For “Military recruitment and racism,” the way Neill wrote this article screams bias. She states that her brother told her that “during bayonet training the sergeant had advised recruits to imagine there as a ___ big ugly gook standing in front and they were to lunge and thrust with their guns.” That doesn’t mean it’s desensitization and dehumanization. It’s a rare thing to hear about the army being racist, and I would need more proof than one single occurrence. The use for such demeaning and vulgar terms is a tool as well as preparation for the soldiers, they don’t want a bunch of men and women ‘crapping themselves as soon as they enter war. They want battle-ready soldiers who will look death in the face and kill in defence for our country’s freedom.

If however, racism is used in battle by our soldiers, then that line will be easily crossed again in war, that much is true. What they do is take the hate in those racist words and use them to fuel the anger to be able to kill and fight wars. To state, however, that the military is a racist organization is totally unfounded and uncalled for. Making sure that students have an unbiased view on our military is critical to our country’s defence and militarism. If a teacher with a biased opinion goes around the classrooms slandering the Canadian forces, then we won’t even have a military to call our own in due time. Even though war and violence is frowned upon, a well-funded and well-armed military is what keeps a culture able to grow. The military is a safety net for our freedom and the more people realize it, the less bashing there will be of biased opinions. As well as assumptions that they use all their funding for recruiting campaigns, it’s also used for their wages and equipment as well.

Neill wrote that “we have seen more soldiers come home in coffins than we had in 50 years of peace - keeping.” Well good morning to you too, you just woke up and smelt the coffee and realized that there is a war going on. It’s no bloody picnic over there, soldiers are bound to die bravely and God bless their souls. Keep in mind: if you don’t stand behind our troops, imagine what it’s like to stand with them.

Johnny Woelders
Surrey

Another perspective

David Butler wrote an article on the firing of Lisa Reimer, “The clash between queer rights and religion in schools,” (*Teacher*, May/June 2010). The facts, however, are quite different.

1. Lisa Reimer was not fired. She is on paid leave.
2. She is on paid leave because she has violated the contract she had signed at Little Flower Academy. (Despite the violation she is being paid so as not to incur any financial hardship.)
3. The contract includes the Catholicity clause signed by all employees to demonstrate at all times... “a respectful and sympathetic sensitivity to the aims and nature of the school and to the Catholic beliefs and practices of the school.”

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that Catholic schools are acting in compliance with Canadian law, in particular the *BC Human Rights Code*, in requiring their teachers to adhere to religious principles within their schools. (*BC Catholic*, vol. LXXX, No. 19, pages 1 and 8)

The Catholic Church’s stance on homosexuality is clearly expressed

in the catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph #2358: “...They (homosexual men and women) must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.”

The inaccurate information has led not only to attacking the Catholic Church unjustly, but also to some bus drivers refusing LFA students from riding “their” buses. Is this not marginalization of innocent students? In fairness to all—let’s keep to the facts.

Paula Peretto
Burnaby

BC and Ontario have similar issues

I picked up a copy of the May/June 2010 newsmagazine at the faculty at UBC yesterday while waiting for someone who was registering for courses in adult education.

I am a retired Ontario teacher (five years now from Toronto District School Board), but continue to be involved with the profession in different capacities. I volunteer two mornings a week in a primary classroom and also on the executives of our local Retired Teachers Ontario and Retired Women Teachers of Ontario.

I could have submitted “Ontario” where “BC” was in many of the articles. The first thing that caught my attention was the article concerning retired teachers going back to teach. Ontario has the same problem. Someone retires in June and has a long-term occasional contract in September. Many of us have spoken out about this and finally there will be some changes in 2012. At the present time, a retired teacher can teach 95 school days for three years after retirement (the Toronto Public Board) and then can teach 20 days for a couple of years. In 2012, everyone will only be able to supply teach for 50 days a year.

I feel that if someone wants to teach until she or he is 65+, they can do this. However, if someone retires, they should not be taking a job away from a new teacher. Like BC, Ontario’s system is in decline in some parts of the city and growing in the suburbs. Young teachers are never guaranteed positions in their schools. It can, as you know, be a very stressful time for them. I always ask how we, of my generation of teachers, learned to be good

teachers? We taught and learned with our peers. I started to teach when there were many jobs available in Toronto but also, at some point, had to re-enter the profession. Retired principals/vice-principals (who do not belong to the teachers’ federation anymore) are also brought back to fill in. Again, young teachers, who are qualified, should be put in these positions—another learning experience.

BC and Ontario have so many similar problems. I wish every young teacher luck and good wishes as they start their careers. I also wish retired teachers luck and good wishes and encourage them to enjoy retirement and use their skills in some meaningful manner in the community. There are many opportunities out there for them.

Carol Nelson
Toronto

Children and Ramadan

Your newsmagazine is turning a blind eye to Muslim school children who are not eating or drinking all day long, some of them fainting in PE class or in after-school sports. Are teachers like myself to sacrifice our concern for such children at the altar of religion or political correctness?

Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic lunar calendar, is a month of obligatory daily fasting from dawn to dusk, extending this year from August 21 to September 19. Although the Koran states, “...there is no compulsion in religion” (2:256), followers are taught to refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and indulging in anything that is in excess or ill-natured (think sex).

The Muslim scholar Bukhari (810-870), who wrote an important collection of oral traditions on the words and deeds of Muhammad, claims: “The Prophet said: Whoever fasts during Ramadan with faith and seeking his reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven.” Hence Muhammad used the classic carrot and stick approach to bring about religious observance.

In northern countries like Canada, the period from dawn to dusk at this time of the year is 14 hours. That is a long time for kids to go without food and water. Over time, exemptions have been made to Muhammad’s edict, including prepubescent children, pregnant women, the old and sick, and travellers. Yet all children at the age

of puberty are expected to put themselves through this unhealthy practice.

In light of the fact that educators and parents are spending countless hours fretting about what food should be in school vending machines—deciding whether to offer pop with sugar or aspartame, or have kids go cold turkey with juice—everyone seems to be oblivious to the kids who are not getting any daytime nutrition at all.

Jim McMurtry
Surrey

BCTF wins accolades for work in communications

The BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division garnered six Golden Leaf Awards at the annual meeting of the Canadian Education Press Association in June.

There are a number of categories for which awards are given and the BCTF put forward the maximum number of entries permitted.

Print publications

Writing—Feature article

- Noel Herron “Inner-City children in crisis” (*Teacher Newsmagazine*, Vol. 22, No. 1)

Overall publication

- *Teacher Newsmagazine*, Vol. 22, No. 5, David Denyer, editor

Graphic elements—Cartoon

- David Parkins “Zip” (*Teacher Newsmagazine*, Vol. 22, No. 6)

Layout and design—Poster

- Luis Isidoro, BCTF designer Anti-Poverty Campaign

Audio-visual production for membership

“One test does not fit all” video

- Rich Overgaard, writer/interviewer
- EXL Films: Errol Lazare, producer

Public relations/media campaigns

Print advertising

“What parents need to know”

- Rich Overgaard, copywriter
- Jennifer Sowerby, designer

Looking back

70 years ago

It is only since the outbreak of war that Junior Red Cross has begun its penetration of Senior High Schools. There is undoubtedly subtle enemy propaganda that has been working for years to lure the young, as it has lured the young in Germany. Junior Red Cross is a powerful antidote against the insidious poisons of Communist and Nazi propaganda. Flag-waving, pledges, demonstrations of hatred against the enemy, and talk, are rather futile methods of teaching patriotism, but let students really do something to support the soldiers who are fighting our battle for freedom, and they then become active participants in a great cause.

– September 1940, *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

Psychologists tell us that habits of initiative and responsibility give us self-confidence and a feeling of personal worth. This self-confidence is extended through successful experiences. Unfortunately, the backward child obtains too little success, and the bright child succeeds too easily. To go slowly with a fast learner is as harmful as to go quickly with a slow

learner. If we are to be fair to both types of student, we must have homogeneous grouping of pupils, for no teacher can go quickly and slowly at the same time.

– Sept./Oct. 1960, *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

Almost half our students will soon belong to a union. Unions have a history of struggle, courage, and achievement—a Canadian success story. They also share many common work experiences with teachers. The reasons for closer ties are strong, so how can trade unions and the schools work more closely together? In the classroom the most common and effective involvement has been when the teacher invites a union member into the class, most often to a social studies or business education class. Outside the classroom the Canadian Labour Congress and the BC Federation of Labour have petitioned the government to make labour studies an integral part of the new social studies curriculum. The labour movement has always supported full funding for education, opposed cutbacks, and encouraged its members to be involved in their community and schools.

– Sept./Oct. 1980, *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

Our children are the focus of big businesses, looking for new markets for their products. Multi-national corporations, such as Coke, Pepsi, and McDonalds, are not only invading the school’s hallways, they’re also moving into the classroom. What can we do to prevent the commercialization of our schools? Two local examples were cited at a recent conference entitled “Public Education: Not For Sale.” During June 1998, Grade 3 and 4 students at a Vancouver elementary school spent months on an assignment from the White Spot burger chain to come up with creative products for kids. “It was a lot of work,” says Jeffrey Ye, age 9. On April 11, 2000, Sandra Banks, vice-president of Coke Canada, told approximately 90 BC middle school students that “Caffeine is probably one of the safest substances that is studied by government. It is naturally occurring in the coca bean. You, as the consumer, get to choose what you want but, from our perspective, caffeine is a completely safe ingredient . . . it’s a healthy substance.”

– September 2000,
Teacher newsmagazine

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

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where there is not a meeting after school or an IEP to write. I wish my energy could go into prepping lessons that help children!"

Many teachers found it hard to turn off their thinking about work at the end of the day, while about a third of respondents found that job pressures interfered with family or personal life. Teachers said:

"The hours are difficult to calculate. I arrive at school and power through most days until 5:00 p.m. with few recess or lunch breaks. Coaching eliminates prep time and we all give up time at recess. I am drained when I come home to my own two young kids. If I could afford to stay home I would; the job takes its toll on my emotional and physical health."

"Being a new teacher, I spend much of my time with preparation and marking. It is overwhelming at times as I still haven't found a balance between work and play. I love what I do and wouldn't want to do anything else. However, I struggle with balance."

The research also indicates that, in the view of respondents, learning and working conditions have worsened compared to five years ago. Increased stress and workload appear to be reducing job satisfaction, which in turn are motivating teachers to consider leaving the profession. Increasing workload and stress not only have considerable implications for students in the classroom and for teachers' quality of worklife, but will likely have an

impact on teacher retention in future years.

One in five teachers said they are considering leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement, with teachers who are mid-career being the most likely to do so. The reasons for leaving teaching include increased workload, stress and burnout, health conditions aggravated by stress, lack of encouragement, job insecurity, and dissatisfaction with the provincial government.

"I feel that I cannot keep up, physically, with the demands of parents and administrators when the needs of students continue to grow, but support and resources continue to diminish."

"Not enough time for my personal life. Always carrying the stress of school around, 24 hours a day. Seeing that there are many other occupations where people work 40 hours/week, not 60-70..."

The survey results suggest that the most important areas for BCTF to focus on to improve working and learning conditions are improving support for special education, providing more time for planning and preparation, reducing class size, improving salary and benefits.

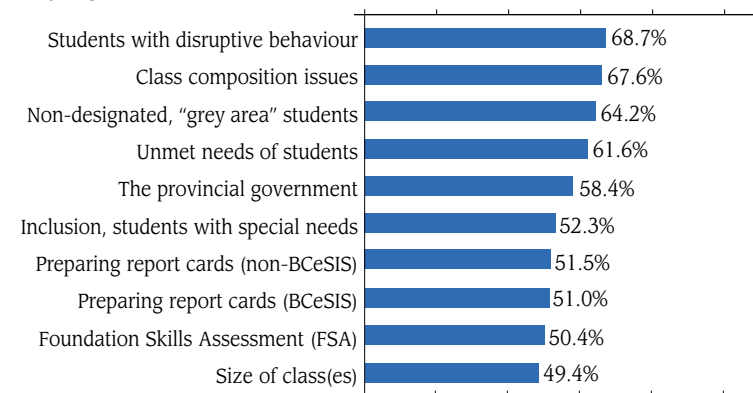
BCTF Research thanks the hundreds of teachers who shared experiences and perspectives to tell the stories of their work in BC's schools.

The full reports will be posted on the BCTF website during the fall.

Charlie Naylor and Margaret White are researchers in the BCTF's Research and Technology Division.

Ten most stressful factors for teachers

Percent of teachers who rated the source of stress as "high" or "very high" (out of 47 sources of stress)



Report cards early indicators of personality in adulthood

Comments written on report cards by teachers may be the best way to preview who your child will be as an adult.

Research that shows teachers' evaluations of youngsters' personalities 40 years ago hold true today, with the now middle-aged subjects behaving in ways highly consistent with their childhood assessments, according to a study in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

"It really speaks to the remarkable stability of personality," says study co-author Christopher Nave, a doctoral candidate at the University of California Riverside. "What people see in you as a child really does translate to behaviours that others can see throughout the majority of your life."

Between 1959 and 1967, some 2,400 elementary school students of different ages and ethnicities were recruited for a research project in which their personalities were assessed by teachers.

Decades later, many of those same people returned for a videotaped followup. Of this group, 144 were randomly selected for Nave's study, which was sponsored by the National Institute on Aging through a grant to the Oregon Research Institute.

In comparing teachers' original observations with the present-day evaluations, researchers discovered

that the vast majority of participants hadn't changed in terms of core personality.

"There seems to be some wiggle room," says Nave. "But, in general, our conclusion is that we're recognizably the same person across time and across contexts."

For example, study participants rated as having low adaptability as kids were observed as adults to have awkward interpersonal styles, say negative things about themselves, and seek more advice. Those with high adaptability as children were found as adults to be cheerful, possess strong social skills, and enjoy novel situations.

People prone to self-minimizing tendencies in childhood grew into adults who sought out reassurance, expressed insecurity, belittled themselves, and indulged in self-pity. And those youths who were highly talkative were observed in adulthood to be fluent speakers, have a high degree of intelligence, and lots of ambition.

Psychologist Delroy Paulhus, a professor at the University of British Columbia, says it's also important to remember that even if certain personality attributes remain constant, their implications can still change with environment and age.

Misty Harris, Vancouver Sun, July 29, 2010.

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UBC study says neighbourhoods predict reading skills

By Karen Lindsay

In early January, the University of British Columbia released a study in the journal *Health and Place*. Its findings—that the neighbourhoods where children live predict their reading skills. "The study found that children who lived in wealthier neighbourhoods while in Kindergarten did better on standardized reading tests in Grade 7 than children from poorer neighbourhoods, regardless of where they lived when they wrote the test."

This should come as no surprise. Socio-economic factors have always been the number one determining factor in student performance. It's part of the heartbreak of teaching—that we can't do anything about the greatest determinant of our students' success.

That said, public education is supposed to be the great leveler in a democratic society. All schools, regardless of their location, should be supplying the same quality of teaching, curriculum, facilities, and equipment. Today, the government is most committed to controlling the first two aspects, as it should be, and happy to ignore the last two, to the peril of our children. Making sure that teachers are properly qualified and supplied with appropriate curricula, without providing every school with rich, varied, consistent resources in stimulating, comfortable environments is like asking a chef to create



a feast with only her or his expertise and recipes, but with stale ingredients and a dingy, outdated kitchen. Add to the mix that two of the patrons are allergic to peanuts, 10 are resistant to eating, four would prefer not to eat in the restaurant and could he provide the meal to them in their home, and three of their parents want to come in to the kitchen to "help." Eight parents recognize that the ingredients are poor and offer to fundraise for fresh produce. However, they only want their children to eat the improved results. What chef could succeed—or even agree to try—in such a circumstance?

The UBC study is very sobering indeed. It means that as things now stand, a child's fate is sealed before she or he even enters the school system. If they begin life in poverty, they will have a reduced likelihood of success in school even if their parents' income increases over the next few years. I wonder, though, whether these children's outcomes

would be different if the schools they attended presented them with stimulating, inviting environments, optimistic, energetic teachers, abundant, diverse resources, and well-stocked and staffed libraries. Surely spending five or six hours a day in such a setting would mitigate at least some of the effects of a poor start in life.

Instead, our schools are being run down as facilities grants are cut. School libraries are struggling for resources and staffing, and teacher morale has never been lower. In 2008, Statistics Canada determined that the proportion of children living in poverty in BC was 21.9%, well above the national child poverty rate of 15.8%—this despite the fact that the BC economy at the time was very healthy. I shudder to think what that percentage is today. Parents in affluent neighbourhoods raise funds to make up provincial shortfalls, while those in the areas of greatest need cannot.

This UBC study should represent a strong wake-up call to the BC government. There is absolutely no point in talking about making British Columbia the most literate jurisdiction in North America while doing nothing to reduce poverty in our province and doing nothing to rejuvenate our schools. Teachers experience this reality every day and weep.

Karen Lindsay is teacher-librarian, École Reynolds Secondary School, Victoria.

"Innovation" meets standardized testing

By Larry Kuehn

Teachers finally appeared in the report produced by the Ministry of Education to cover its "accountability" for the performance of the education system in BC. You may recall that teachers were entirely missed out in the "Service Plan" issued with the provincial budget in February of 2010. After all, teachers have nothing to do with education service, as seen from the ministry.

The good news is that teachers are finally mentioned. The bad news is that the only thing that the teachers of the province did to contribute to education in BC—as reported by the Ministry—was that "Standards [for the FSA tests] set by the Ministry are based on the recommendations of BC teachers."

That bit of propaganda is set in the midst of a lament that, "In 2010, only 83% of students participated [in the FSAs]." And it is set in the midst of a claim for the importance of the FSAs: "The FSA shows whether students are moving in the right direction at two critical points in their schooling; it can even help predict whether a student will complete school." As if teachers could not do this based on the work that a student does throughout a school year, every year!

The ministry laments that the FSA results have hit a plateau. But seeing a plateau in results should be something that can be compared over time, not just two years. However, the ministry has only two years of results that are based on comparable exams. In 2008-09, the timing of the test changed from May to February. Testing students at different times during the year will presumably have an impact on performance, unless one assumes that teaching has no impact at all.

So how to move up from this supposed plateau. Two things are suggested. One is that "BC must now innovate to remain a world leader in education."

Hmmm. What kind of innovation?

The report says the "Superintendents of achievement are working to spread the news of successful, innovative teaching practices from districts that are seeing successes." Beside that sentence is a box promoting an innovation.

And what is the innovation that is being touted? Catch this:

It's often thought that urban areas perform better than rural ones on standard tests, yet the northern district of Fort Nelson has the highest FSA reading scores in the province, with 92% of Grade 4 students meeting or exceeding expectations, compared to the provincial average of 67%.

The district uses a structured reading program that assists all students to achieve age-appropriate reading levels on schedule.

So it appears that we can expect the superintendents of achievement to be running around the province promoting some form of "structured reading program." These superintendents are identified throughout the report as the ministry's approach to ensuring accountability.

Choice and flexibility

One of the key objectives set by the ministry is, "Meeting the specific educational needs of students and parents through choice and flexibility." The performance measures for this goal are based on surveys of students and parents on whether they are "satisfied with the educational choices available to them."

For both students and parents, there was a drop from the previous year by a percentage point in those who were satisfied. The results fell even further behind the target set for increases in satisfaction.

What is the problem here? The ministry thinks the problem might be in the survey, rather than the reality. They acknowledge "the number of parents taking the survey has continually dropped since 2002-03, which could prevent accurate reporting on the attitudes of all parents." They seem to think that a structured sample might be

more accurate than a volunteer census survey that not everyone takes part in. They must have missed the lesson at the Harper school of statistics.

The main strategy for achieving an increase in "choice and flexibility" is the expansion of "high quality distributed learning choices, regardless of location."

The ministry seems not to have considered that dissatisfaction with choice may be a result of inadequate funding. Schools cannot offer the same choice and flexibility when there are cuts in staffing. And not everyone sees distributed learning as an adequate answer to choice and flexibility.

Nowhere in the Service Plan Report is there any acknowledgment that "plateaus" and drops in survey results might be a function of a school system that has fewer and fewer resources to provide the level of service that we have provided in the past.

Most of the limited media coverage of the report, when it was released, focused on the claim that "the Ministry is committed to exploring innovations in education to honour each student's individual learning style and encourage each to explore and expand his or her unique talents."

Nice sentiment. We would all like to do that. How are we going to carry out these innovations when the resources are fewer and the only pedagogical approach promoted is a structured test preparation program?

But the Olympics were great, the minister said: "Hosting the Games gave us the opportunity to showcase BC's education system, showing other countries that our students' achievement is comparable to the best in the world."

How did we do this? Sorry if you missed the standardized test downhill event that was a part of the Games. CBC didn't televise it.

Larry Kuehn is director of the BCTF's Research and Technology Division.

Why is there a College of Teachers in BC?

By Ken Novakowski

BC teachers walked out in protest on April 28, 1987, shutting down every public school in the province. They were united in protesting government legislation that introduced a College of Teachers—they didn't ask for a College of Teachers and they didn't want one.

The College of Teachers was an idea introduced by the Social Credit government of the day. At that time there was only one other known College of Teachers in the world; in Scotland. The BC College of Teachers was the first and remains the only professional regulatory body in British Columbia that was imposed upon a profession rather than being introduced at the request of, and in consultation with, the profession.

The government had a clear political objective in mind when it introduced the college—it wanted to end the professional leadership role that the BC Teachers' Federation played in the lives of BC teachers. Here's what happened.

The government introduced legislation that on the one hand granted teachers collective bargaining rights that they had long been denied; but, on the other hand, in the form of a College of Teachers attempted to split the professional aspect of teachers from the BCTF. The headline in the *BCTF Newsletter* of April 9, 1987, stated: "Government Attacks BCTF: Never in the 71-year history of the BC Teachers' Federation have the collective professional interests of teachers been as seriously threatened as they are today." What the government attempted to do with the introduction of the College of Teachers was threefold:

1. To split off the professional elements of the BCTF (PD services, PSAs, etc.) into a separate

organization with mandatory membership (College of Teachers) and make the BCTF solely a bargaining organization with statutory membership removed. This was intended to divide teachers and seriously weaken the BCTF.

2. To download the costs of teacher certification from government to teachers.

The College of Teachers was an idea introduced by the Social Credit government of the day. At that time there was only one other known College of Teachers in the world; in Scotland.

3. To submit teachers to yet another level of discipline creating for them double or even triple jeopardy. Unlike most other professionals who have colleges, teachers are employed professionals. They always have been and continue to be subject to discipline from their employer over matters of conduct and competency.

While teacher protests to stop the imposition of the college were unsuccessful, the BCTF did have success on another front. They voluntarily signed up 98% of the public school teachers in the province to membership in the BCTF; a sign-up success rate unparalleled in Canadian trade-union history.

After debating the merits of boycotting the college or participating in the college to limit its scope of activity, the BCTF decided on the latter. For 15 years after its formation, college members elected 15 of the 20 members of the governing college board. BCTF

members through their locals endorsed candidates in zones for seats on the college council. This was an attempt to mitigate the negative aspects of an imposed structure and to stem its growth and cost to members.

In 2003, the Liberal government of BC fired the 15 elected college councilors and appointed 20 hand-picked political hacks in an attempt to use the college to strip teachers of their professional autonomy and other professional rights. In a powerful demonstration of solidarity, following the leadership of the BCTF, BC teachers withheld their college fees forcing the government to re-establish a college council with an elected majority; now 12 reduced from 15.

But there are those who still question the right of teachers to organize to elect someone to the college council who will reflect their perspective on the scope of the college mandate. The BCTF has accepted the existence of the College of Teachers and sees a legitimate role for it in dealing with certification and decertification matters as well as providing input into teacher education programs for pre-service teachers. Yet both these goals can be accomplished without a College of Teachers. The public interest in public education is already served by publicly elected and accountable boards of education in every community in the province. So the question that teachers asked in 1987 is still a valid one today—Why should we accept an imposed structure that serves no purpose that could easily and more cost effectively be served otherwise?

Ken Novakowski is a retired teacher and former executive director of the BCTF.

In memoriam: John Church

By Gary Onstad

John Church was a teacher, writer, curriculum developer, school trustee, and strong supporter of public education.

He earned a BA in history and after teacher training took a Master of Arts degree in history. He taught at elementary and secondary schools in Prince Rupert, Langley, and Vancouver where he was social studies department head for 10 years at Gladstone Secondary School.

In 1964, John Church joined the Professional Development Division of the BCTF. He took a leave of absence to be a representative of the UBC Faculty of Education in a CIDA-sponsored teacher training project in Tanzania in 1968. There, Church established a teachers' resource centre and taught social, science, and history methods courses to prospective secondary school teachers. On his return to Canada, he wrote an extensive school library study, "Personalized Learning." This led to the establishment of demonstration school library projects in Vernon and Vancouver from 1970 to 1975. In addition to his interest in school libraries, Church wrote positively about the curriculum development model that gave teachers a significant role in the process. He was a key player as teachers gained direct and shared sponsorship of curriculum revision.

In the late 1970s, Church was a consultant with the Canada Studies Foundation and chair of the board of Project Canada West. This successful curriculum development project involved 14 teams of teachers and students in four western provinces. The project produced uniquely Canadian curriculum—one of Church's

professional passions. He felt strongly that the traditional British and more recent American influences needed to be balanced with Canadian points of view.

Church's service to education was recognized in 1982 when he was awarded the GA Fergusson Award, the highest honour granted by the BCTF. The following year, he was granted Honorary Life membership in the Federation. He was also an Honorary Life member of the BC School Teacher-Librarians Association and the New Democratic Party.

Education was a high priority for both John and his wife Shirley Church. She was division head of English and modern languages at Langara campus of Vancouver Community College. They were articulate, perceptive, intelligent members of the education community.

In November 1984, John Church was nominated by COPE to run for Vancouver School Board in a campaign labelled "The school wars." After years of Social Credit restraint and cutbacks, COPE presented a platform of "No More Cuts!" Vancouver voters responded by upsetting the incumbent and compliant NPA Board and electing a COPE majority. Church chaired the important Education and Student Services Committee.

When the board submitted a "needs" budget \$14 million over what the government decreed, the entire school board was fired. But to Church's delight, in the by-election the government was forced to call, COPE swept all nine seats. The cutbacks were never made.

John Church continued his work in education long after he retired. We will all miss his vision, comprehension, and tenacity. Much of his life was dedicated to support for the importance of public education and we will always honour and respect his efforts in the ongoing struggle.

Gary Onstad is a retired Vancouver teacher.

Playing with numbers...

Ministry reclassifies some administrators as teachers, inflating the teacher-administrator ratio



The 2010 Teacher Statistics report is now available on the ministry's reporting website for the province and for individual school districts. When BCTF Research compared the 2009-10 provincial data to previous reports, we were surprised to learn that the teacher-administrator ratio was significantly higher in 2009-10 (11.42) compared to BCTF's calculation for 2008-09 (9.57). Upon further investigation, BCTF Research discovered that the new ministry report showed considerably more FTE teachers and considerably fewer FTE administrators than the figures shown for comparable years in the 2009 Teacher Statistics report (See Table 1).

The ministry did not provide any explanation as to why the figures for teachers and administrators were revised in 2010. In hopes of solving this mystery, we compared the definitions for teachers and administrators described in the 2009 Teacher Statistics report to the definitions in the ministry's 2010 reporting page. It appears that as of 2010, administrators include only principals, vice-principals, and directors of instruction. Other

district administrative staffing categories (supervisors of instruction, teacher consultants, co-ordinators, helping teachers, other instructional support, testing & assessment, professional staff) are apparently now reclassified and counted as teachers. The result is an increase in the number of FTE teachers that is exactly offset by a decrease in the number of FTE administrators and a higher teacher-administrator ratio, when compared to figures in the 2009 report.

So what are the implications of this change? Lots of measurement problems. It is going to be difficult in the future to compare teacher-administrator numbers and ratios historically. Confusion may also arise in comparing numbers and ratios reported on by various sources prior to 2010. It is important to be aware, when comparing 2010 figures to earlier reports that the higher teacher-administrator ratio reflects a qualitative shift in how teachers and administrators are defined in 2010.

A positive outcome to this

definition change is that district instructional staff providing support to schools may be less vulnerable to job loss when boards reduce administrative costs to offset budget shortfalls. On the downside, learning specialist teachers are especially vulnerable to job loss and role fragmentation as FTE assignments are whittled away with each subsequent budget year. These newly defined "non-enrolling" teachers will likely be subject to similar pressures. The sad news in these reports is that whichever set of figures you use, teaching employment is on the decline in British Columbia.

To locate 2010 Teacher Statistics reports, see the ministry's reporting page: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/prov_data_summary.php.

For 2009 provincial and district figures, see BCTF Research report Teacher-Administrator ratios: A decade of change, Table 1 at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Publications/Research_reports/2009TD01.pdf

— Margaret White
BCTF Research

Table 1: Province-Teacher-Administrator Ratios (FTE): 2005-06 to 2009-10

Year	Teachers (FTE)		Administrators (FTE)		Teacher/Admin Ratio	
	2010 report	2009 report	2010 report	2009 report	2010 report	2009 report
2004-05	—	30,179.90	—	2,965.90	—	10.18
2005-06	31,006.9	30,583.00	2,693.9	3,117.80	11.51	9.81
2006-07	31,221.9	30,759.40	2,743.7	3,206.20	11.38	9.59
2007-08	31,049.4	30,573.50	2,751.6	3,227.40	11.28	9.47
2008-09	30,867.3	30,408.10	2,718.1	3,177.30	11.36	9.57
2009-10	30,393.0	—	2,660.7	—	11.42	—

BCTF Research table with figures from: BC Ministry of Education, Teacher Statistics 2009/10, Province—Public Schools, Feb. 2010. Teacher Statistics: 2004/05–2008/09, Full-year Summary Report, Province—Public Schools, Jan. 2009.

Should Wi-Fi be used in classrooms?

By Lynn Quiring

For years parents, teachers, administrators, and school boards have fought to keep cellular telephone transmitters away from their schools. Now we are installing them right into the classroom with Wi-Fi base stations.

The hot new craze in Internet access is Wi-Fi and its soon-to-be big brother Wi-Max. Wi-Fi is a wireless connection that allows users to access the Internet without the computer being connected to a cable. And yes, it's very convenient. Imagine walking from the sofa to the bedroom with your laptop and never losing your connection. Imagine the freedom and flexibility afforded schools and office workers. No more ugly bothersome cables to tie you down. You're free to roam the Internet with your fingers while roaming your home, school, or office with your feet. Freedom to move and freedom to surf. Perfect for the individual who is on the go and up-to-date with the latest technology. You can even have free Internet access at your local coffee shop. Same for airports. What a great idea. Or is it?

What exactly is Wi-Fi?

Wi-Fi is a common term that stands for "wireless fidelity." It simply means that a computer can access the Internet without wires or cables. In other words, it allows one to have a wireless connection to the Internet. It's like taking a cell-phone base station and placing it in your home, schoolroom, or office area. Wi-Fi is basically the same type of connection as used to operate a cell phone.

Wi-Fi is really very similar to your cell phone. Radio signals are transmitted from the computer or Bluetooth device to a wireless router, sometimes called a wireless access point (WAP) or wireless local area network (WLAN). The router then sends the signal to the Internet through a cable modem. So this router or wireless access point is really the device responsible for transmitting the harmful radio waves. Any number of computers or devices can be configured to connect to one wireless router to make Internet connections. The workable distance is about a range of 300 feet or more from the wireless access point while most distances for good connections are

maintained at about 100 feet. And, of course there are many variables that can affect this connection. Laptop computers and personal digital assistants (PDAs) are the most common devices utilizing Wi-Fi technology.

Wi-Fi emits radio frequencies

Wireless connections emit radio frequency signals, or radiation, just like cell phones, cell-phone towers, and other wireless devices. Wi-Fi usually transmits its signal at frequencies in the range of 2.4GHz to 5 GHz. Cordless phones often transmit in the 2.4GHz to 5 GHz range, too, and this often causes the cordless phone to interfere with a wireless internet connection to a nearby computer. The Wi-Fi frequency is considerably higher than the frequencies used for cell phones, which operate in the 850 MHz to 1900 MHz range. This higher frequency allows more data to be carried. However, as we'll see later, it is not the frequency of the signal that may do damage to our health. So the higher Wi-Fi frequency isn't really the issue at all when it comes to health considerations.

Wi-Fi hotspots now in schools

Wi-Fi has become popular in the home, office, the airport, and coffee shops. Many cities are now installing "hot spots" where one can take a laptop computer and freely access the Internet over the provided network. This is what is known as a "hot spot." It's a place to make a wireless connection to the Internet. And they are springing up everywhere. Entire cities are becoming wireless allowing one to connect to the Internet from anywhere in the city. And due to the ease of convenience, Wi-Fi connections in schools are now becoming quite popular, too. No longer are computers hard-wired to a connection in a classroom. Connections are now virtual and allow the user, student or teacher, the freedom to connect anywhere in the school without the burden of being restricted by cable connections.

Why wireless connections can be harmful

There are two potentially harmful mechanisms in which Wi-Fi users, including school children, may be harmed. The first mechanism involves the exposure to radiation from the distance or proximity of the user to the computer monitor. This form of exposure originates from the electromagnetic field being

given off by the monitor itself and has nothing to do with the wireless connection. Electromagnetic radiation is given off by the computer screen regardless of whether the connection is wired or wireless. Any and all computer screens produce electromagnetic radiation. These electromagnetic fields can be substantial in strength and can reach levels much higher than the 1 milligauss (1 mG) threshold level of exposure recommended by experts as being safe. Such a field can easily be measured with an inexpensive instrument called a gauss meter.

Wi-Fi is a common term that stands for "wireless fidelity." It simply means that a computer can access the Internet without wires or cables.

The second mechanism of harm comes from the radiation or radio wave itself. The wireless signal, oscillating at 2.4 to 5 GHz, moves much too fast for the body to recognize. So this wave isn't doing the damage. However, anytime any data or information is transmitted, say through our voice, through text messages, or through the sending of information, the data is packaged and "piggy-backed" onto the first wave. This creates a second carrier wave and this wave is called the information-carrying radio wave, or ICRW. It is the information-carrying radio wave that is producing the harm. Here's how this happens. This second carrier wave, or ICRW, oscillates in a much lower Hertz (Hz) range that is easily recognized by the body. When the ICRW comes in contact with the body, the body recognizes this wave and responds to it as if this carrier wave were some type of foreign invader. When this happens certain physiologic changes occur which are very significant. First, at the cellular level, the cell membrane changes and becomes less permeable. This occurs because the active transport channels shut down as the cell goes into a protection mode. This loss of permeability means nutrients can't get inside the cell where they are needed. In other words, the cell doesn't get nourished.

Conversely, since the cell membrane is now less permeable, the toxins and free radicals that build up inside the cell as a natural part of our daily metabolism can't get out. The buildup of toxins and free radicals inside the cell causes other problems. These toxic products damage the mitochondria

inside the cell. If you'll remember from biology class, the mitochondria are where energy for the body is produced. When this energy-producing process is damaged the cell begins to lose its ability to function.

In addition, cells lose their ability to communicate with one another. When one cell can't communicate with another cell and messages don't get sent or received, the body can't respond properly to any type of stress, injury, or invasion. Furthermore, the DNA inside the cell becomes damaged. Fragments of DNA break off and form something called micronuclei. Micronuclei are precursors to cancer formation. And when enough energy is lost and when enough malnourishment occurs, the cell eventually becomes dysfunctional and dies. When enough cells die the tissues are affected. When enough tissue is affected organs become damaged and don't work properly. And the cascade of damaging events begin that can lead to a multitude of symptoms and failure of the body's defense mechanisms to act appropriately.

The Wi-Fi problem

Think of Wi-Fi this way. It's really nothing more than a small version of a cell phone tower placed in the classroom or office. Or, it could be similar to having a cordless phone in your home with multiple handsets throughout the house. The base station is the access point and all the peripheral phones connect with it wirelessly. The radio frequency radiation being emitted is the same. The information-carrying radio wave is being transmitted continuously 24 hours a day. The connections from the computers and other wireless devices throughout the school, office, or home to the wireless access points cause any user around them, (children, teacher, staff, etc.) to be continuously exposed. Everyone in the building is caught in the crossfire of the continual access to the wireless access points. Even non-users are exposed because of the blanketing effect of these wireless access points throughout the building. So no one escapes the exposure.

In understanding the danger of Wi-Fi we must remember that it is not the type of device, in this case a wireless access point or router that is important. Rather it is the type of radio frequency radio waves that are being produced by the device that are significant. Whether from a wireless router, a cell phone, a cell phone tower, or personal digital assistant (PDA), electromagnetic frequencies are produced by all these devices. We must look at the technology being used by these devices and not the device itself as the problem. This should be the primary concern as we evaluate their safety, particularly in the classroom.

Another important aspect of Wi-Fi exposure is that of modulation. Modulation refers to whether or not the signal frequency is constant or pulsed. The new digital cell phones operate on a pulsed frequency, as does all wireless technology. Studies have shown that these pulsed signals are a greater risk than analog, non-pulsed signals.

Certainly, by the addition of any type of wireless we are adding to the burden of electropollution we are all currently exposed to. Special consideration should be given to the additional exposure that Wi-Fi technology would bring to those in a classroom, including the teachers, staff, and certainly students.

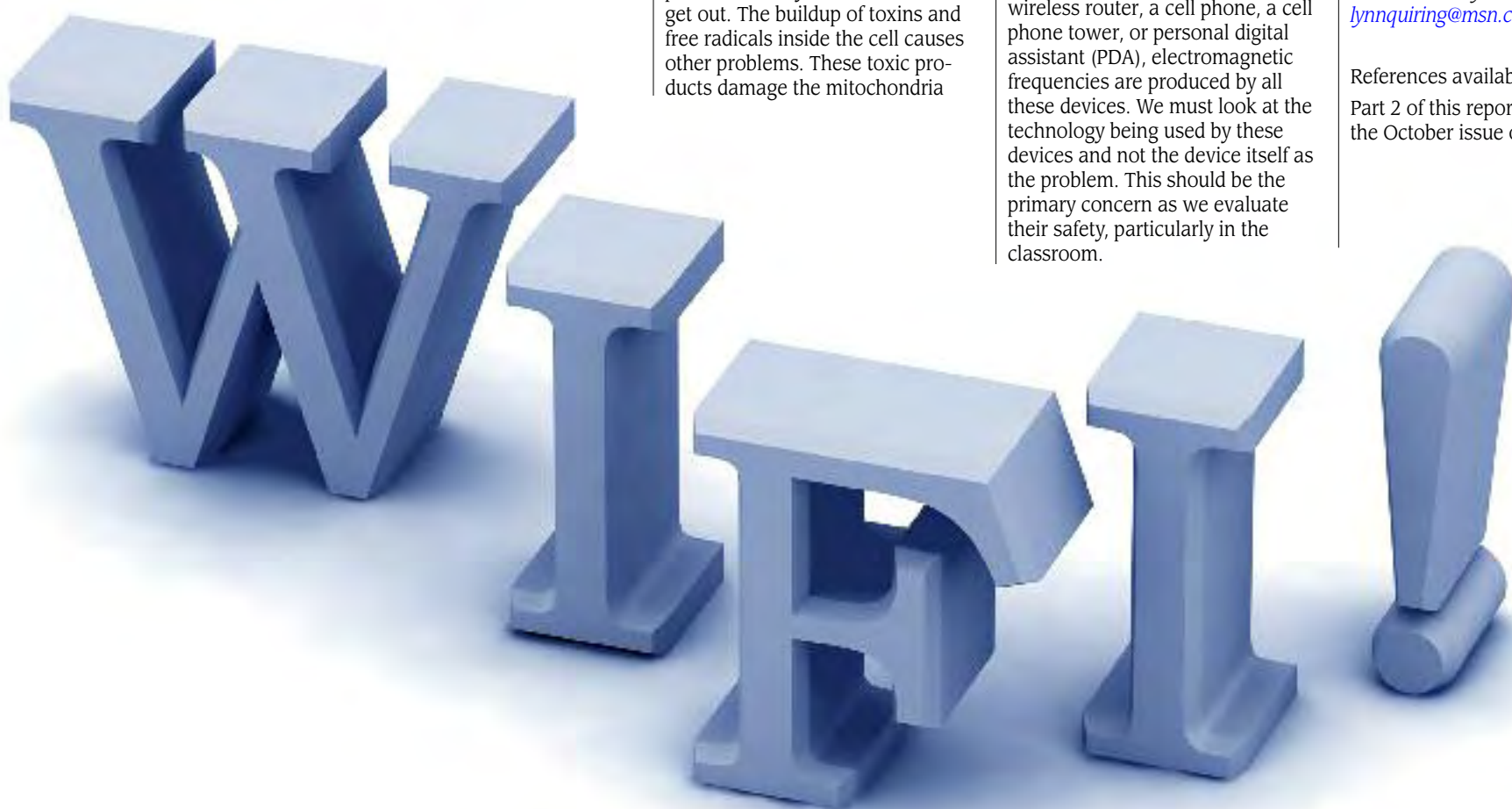
Children are more vulnerable

Concern about the increased vulnerability to electropollution by children has valid reasoning. Since the skull bones of the head don't fully harden until about age 22, the skull bones of a child's head are softer than that of an adult. A softer head bone translates to easier penetration through the skull and into the head by radio frequency radiation. Furthermore, the head of a child contains more water since the brain is not fully developed. It would make sense then that water will act as a conductor to electromagnetic radiation increasing the possibility of even further damage. And since a child's brain and nervous system is still developing, it only stands to reason that the potential damage would be greater since cells that are in a growing phase are more easily damaged.

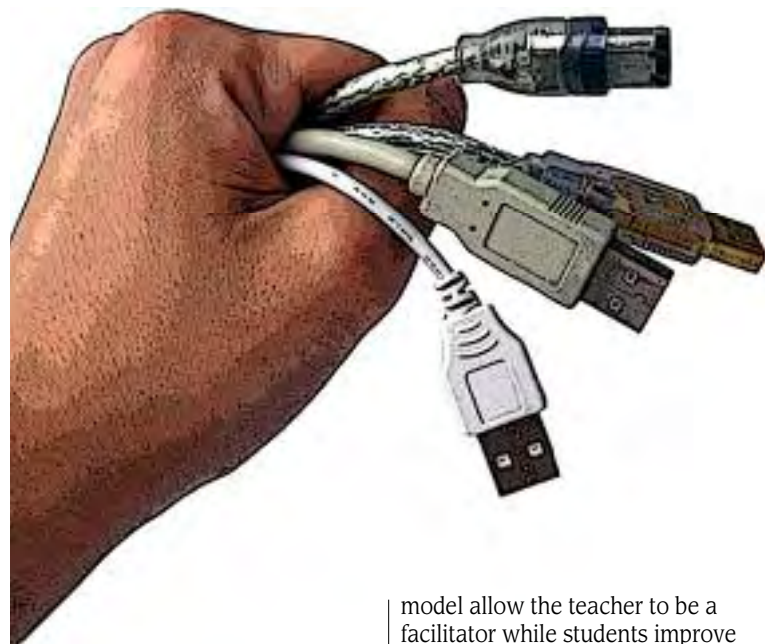
And finally, exposing children in the elementary schoolroom will add to both the amount of electromagnetic radiation exposure and the accumulated length of exposure over their lifetime that they will be exposed. No one can argue that the children of today's generation will be exposed to far greater amounts of electromagnetic radiation and will be exposed to it for a much longer period of time than any generation before. We simply don't know the consequences of this increased and cumulative exposure. And it's an experiment that we shouldn't place our children in. Why set up these networks without understanding any of the long-term consequences? Did we not learn a lesson from the tobacco and asbestos industries?

Lynn Quiring currently owns and operates Logical Health LLC. He can be contacted by e-mailing to lynnquiring@msn.com.

References available on request. Part 2 of this report will appear in the October issue of *Teacher*.



Linking technology to student engagement



By Jennifer Chatt

As an educator, have you questioned how you can have students more focused, more engaged, and taking responsibility for their learning? Are you frustrated with the lack of enthusiasm of students completing their class project to the best of their ability? Engaging primary students has proved not nearly as challenging as intermediate students. Why is it more difficult to reach these older children? We are teaching to digital natives, but somehow we are enraging them through our chalk and talk instead of engaging them with technology. How can we overcome these issues?

I shared those feelings of concern, and was baffled as to how I could turn this educational dilemma around, instead of watching children learn and excel in their demonstrations of knowledge via assigned projects. I was observing students wasting classroom time on their projects while using the computers. Behaviours such as wandering around the room, talking off-task to other students, surfing the net for games, music, and unrelated pictures seemed to occupy much of their time. Only when the project deadline came to a close did many students recognize their lack of effort was going to result in a lower grade than hoped. This is not how educators want to grade projects. We want to grade our students, who on completing projects, are beaming with knowledge and pride on their accomplishments. I believed there must be some way to change how projects were being done and allow children the opportunity to be fully involved in their learning, having fun at the same time. I began to find solutions.

I thought this could be best put to the test through an action research project. I wanted to find ways to willingly invite my students into their learning instead of forcing them to learn. After much research, I discovered if I could link technology into their learning, provide choice and structure, then there was an excellent chance I would see evidence of improved focus, engagement, and responsibility for their learning. I decided to use a research-based model called the iNtegrating Technology for inQuiry (NTEQ) model. This model allows teachers to create lesson plans that will help incorporate computer technology into the classroom. Similar to lesson plans, teachers still specify objectives, specify the problem, and give supporting activities, which will result in a form of demonstrating knowledge that will be assessed, but now they include activities before, during, and after computer use. Studies have shown classrooms using the NTEQ

model allow the teacher to be a facilitator while students improve their writing ability, view the computer as a research tool to find information, and create independent inquiry.

I saw these additional steps as a way to help bridge the gap in student focus and engagement. Now all I needed was a computer program to apply the NTEQ model. I selected Microsoft's free download digital storytelling program Story 3. I felt confident that this dual combination would bring positive changes in the classroom.

My enthusiasm led me to create a student project where students were given choice, based on a specific topic; for example, a famous Canadian they would like to learn about. I then designed my lesson plans to include specific computer activities before, during, and afterward, which kept students focused and provided data for me to track student levels of focus, engagement, and learning responsibility. In each of these projects, class time provided opportunities for students to be focused on the task at hand and did not allow for them to work past the requested activity. For example, students would only import pictures and not create titles, narrate dialogue, or create background music for their project. It was my hope that by the end of our allotted weeks of working on this project, students would have successfully completed all the steps. Time would tell if my theory would work.

My action research project came to a close, the data was in, and much to my delight, the results were positive. I had hoped to increase student focus, engagement, and responsibility for learning and was happy to discover that there were increases in these desired areas. Some areas showed more improvements than others, but the most rewarding experience I had was reading my participating students' comments: I was focused because I was getting pictures; I was interested more and didn't want to waste time; I was more focused because I had a due date; it started to get more fun as I got further; and I'm excited because it was fun to work on. These comments were very encouraging for me as an educator.

This action research project was not perfect, but it certainly gave me a moment to pause and enjoy the fruits of my labour. Most importantly, I was able to provide students with fun, education, and the chance to see growth in their individual learning. What more can an educator want for their students?

Now, I am ready to tackle the next classroom issue!

Jennifer Chatt is a teacher in Burnaby. For further information on this project you may contact her at jchatt@telus.net.

Health and safety

When is it time to pay attention to health and safety?

By Karen Langenmaier

When 100,000 barrels of oil spew daily into the Gulf of Mexico, establishing itself in the words of President Obama, "a massive and potentially unprecedented environmental disaster," the causes are said to have been technical with inadequate sealing of the well, a buildup of natural gas, and the resultant blowout. Eleven workers lost their lives, the number of birds and sea life killed climbs every day, and the future of the fishing and shellfish industry is dismal. Could this devastation have been prevented?

A teacher repeatedly exposed to glues, paints, and cleaning compounds through a school renovation project developed severe environmental sensitivities and is no longer able to teach. In fact, her movement within the community in general is restricted to the degree that she has to plan trips to town early in the morning before traffic exhaust builds up. She has had to renovate her house to compensate for the sensitivities at a significant financial and emotional cost to herself and her family. Could this have been prevented?

A student in an elementary school had a three-year history of hitting teachers, educational assistants, other students, the bus

The acceptance of unhealthy and unsafe working conditions in schools has become our normalization of deviance. Budget cutbacks mean fewer custodians and dustier, dirtier, mouldier schools.

driver, and a volunteer parent. Most of the incidents were reported to the administrator, who, uneducated in the health and safety rights and responsibilities processes, allowed the reports to pile up on his desk until the education assistant, after being told she should wear oven mittens to protect herself from being bitten, booked off on stress leave and never returned to the school system. Could any of these incidents have been prevented? The short answer is—yes.

In her book, *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology,*

Culture, and Deviance at NASA, Diane Vaughan investigates the series of events leading to the ill-fated Challenger launch from a different perspective. She rejects the explanations of the cause of the accident as technical failure and describes instead a sociological phenomenon with the concept of "acceptable risk" becoming normalized. She rejects the hypothesis that a moral managerial decision led to the event and turns her attention to the culture of the work group of NASA engineers and managers in which decisions were made to change design structures and components based on what they considered to be acceptable risks.

The deviations in design were based on performance trials and the team incrementally increased the acceptable risk criteria to the point where the deviation from the norm became the new norm. The early decision to accept the risk became a precedent and part of the work-group culture, which Vaughan proposes, led to the resultant explosion of Challenger.

The same hypothesis could be true of the BP oil disaster. According to various reports, contributing factors include faults in the pressure tests, procedures in testing for hydrocarbons in the well, emergency disconnect system, and the cement that seals the bore hole. An acceptance of the risks associated with deviations in practice and procedure in any of these systems could have led to the blow out.

The acceptance of unhealthy and unsafe working conditions in schools has become our normalization of deviance. Budget cutbacks mean fewer custodians and dustier, dirtier, mouldier schools. Ventilation ducts and filters are cleaned less frequently circulating this dust, dirt, and mould from room to room. Fewer behaviour support teachers, fewer learning support and resource teachers, and fewer specialists translates into less support for students who are most at risk to offend. Construction takes place during instructional hours with dust, cement, asbestos, glues, paint, noise, heavy equipment, and extra traffic associated with a construction site. There are fewer maintenance staff to do preventive maintenance, let alone repairs as our buildings age and deteriorate around us.

And we keep coming to work every day. The changes have

occurred incrementally over the last decade to the point where now these deviations have become an acceptable risk of a healthy and safe work environment and are becoming the norm. That is, until we get sick or hurt.

The good news is that there is something we can do about our work environment. We don't have to accept this normalization of deviance. The *Workers Compensation Act and Regulation* have very clear language on how to establish a health and safety program. It is the law. The employer must establish a health and safety program. The process is designed to prevent injury and illness. Talking about and establishing a program after an incident is second best.

WorkSafeBC has, for the first time, designated a "manager of interest" specifically for the public education sector Grades K-12.

WorkSafeBC has, for the first time, designated a "manager of interest" specifically for the public education sector Grades K-12. Through the work of the Federation, the Health and Safety Advisory Committee, the health and safety trainers, health and safety representatives, and every local officer and member who has contacted WorkSafeBC, WSCB recognizes that schools and educational facilities are unique work environments and deserving of a designated manager to address the needs of the workers.

If we continue to help our employers, administrators, local and provincial officers, and colleagues understand the importance of health and safety programs, we will be able to prevent injuries, illnesses, and deaths. We need to work back to the future, incrementally to make our work places healthy and safe. Make sure that your work place has a joint health and safety committee and that each member takes their annual entitlement of eight hours of training so that they all know how to establish and maintain healthy and safe working conditions. The BCTF, as a WorkSafeBC training partner, offers this training.

Get the word out.

Karen Langenmaier is the BCTF's Health and Safety Officer.

Social justice at work in Nakusp!



Grade 7 students in Heather Jenkins's class hold up mittens they knitted to send off to children in Afghanistan. This is the fourth year that students at Nakusp Elementary School have knitted items as part of a yearly Social Justice project. Thank you to the BCTF Social Justice Committee for giving us grant money each year, and also to the local ALTA for donating money to this worthwhile project as well.

Class-size and composition consultation

Instructions for completing this form

- Please fill out one form for each class that is overloaded either by exceeding more than three IEP students (consultation required) or the following class-size limits:
 - 22—Kindergarten
 - 24—Grades 1–3
 - 30—Grades 4–7 (consent required)
 - 30—Grades 8–12 (consultation required).
- You have the right to ask a staff rep to come with you to the meeting, and to ask the administrator to schedule the meeting accordingly, with as much time as is necessary.
- Fill out as much of the form as you can, especially the size and composition numbers. The most common responses on last year's forms have been included in checklists to save writing time, and help us organize your information.
- When asked, administrators have generally been helpful in supplying codes and explaining IEP types. Try to get the exact numbers for each type. There should also be a discussion of the individual students' IEPs, how they should be implemented and whether there are realistic resources in place to be able to meet the requirements of the IEPs.
- To help us identify what type of class you have, we have asked for the course title, which is usually the full name for the class without abbreviation. Where there is more than one section of a class please indicate the section number, i.e., Social Studies 9, sec 3.
- It's your consultation, so don't be shy about asking direct questions, making requests, and trying to get a commitment from your administrator to supply solutions for your concerns. You should indicate clearly (by checking the appropriate response) whether you disagree with the organization of the class and why. This need not be decided in the meeting, but you should not delay in making your decision, as time is limited.
- When you have finished the form, please turn it in to your staff rep.
- Staff reps should collect the forms; make two sets, one to keep, one to be delivered to the principal in the initial grievance meeting. Send the originals to the local office.

Ministry special needs categories	
Category	Description
A	Physically Dependent
B	Deaf/Blind
C	Moderate to Severe/ Profound Intellectual Disability
D	Physical Disability/ Chronic Health Impairment
E	Visual Impairment
F	Deaf or Hard of Hearing
G	Autism
H	Intensive Behaviour Interventions/Serious Mental Illness
K	Mild Intellectual Disability
Q	Learning Disabilities
R	Moderate Behaviour Support/Mental Illness



Your information will help teachers make our case for better learning and working conditions

Class Size and/or Composition Consultation Form
Report to Local Union Office 2010-11

1. School _____ Administrator _____

2. Teacher _____

3. Course (secondary) title/section _____ Grade _____

4a. Date you were informed of the class organization _____ 4b. Did you request a meeting? Yes No

5. Were you provided with the relevant information you requested? Yes No Date _____

6. Was there a consultation meeting? Yes No Date _____

7. Was a staff rep at the meeting? Yes No Staff rep _____

8. Approximate duration of consultation: Started at _____ Ended at _____

9. Proposed class size and composition Total number of students _____ Total number of IEP students _____

10. IEP student type and numbers: A _____ B _____ C _____ D _____ E _____ F _____
G _____ H _____ K _____ Q _____ R _____

11. Does the organization of this class allow you to meet the requirements of each student's IEP? Yes No

12. The organization of this class will adversely affect the normal learning expectations for a class because:
Check any that apply:

<input type="checkbox"/> too many students for effective instruction	<input type="checkbox"/> unable to meet the prescribed learning outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of resources to meet student needs	<input type="checkbox"/> too many high-needs students for effective instruction
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of support personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> classroom management impacted adversely
<input type="checkbox"/> safety	<input type="checkbox"/> lack of space
<input type="checkbox"/> other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> workload

13. Administrator's rationale for exceeding class-size and/or composition limits/guidelines:

14. Solutions requested by teacher and the response from administrator:

1. reduce class size	<input type="checkbox"/> requested	<input type="checkbox"/> will do	<input type="checkbox"/> no
2. reduce number of IEP students	<input type="checkbox"/> requested	<input type="checkbox"/> will do	<input type="checkbox"/> no
3. assign additional SEA time	<input type="checkbox"/> requested	<input type="checkbox"/> will do	<input type="checkbox"/> no
4. provide additional teaching staff	<input type="checkbox"/> requested	<input type="checkbox"/> will do	<input type="checkbox"/> no
5. provide additional preparation time	<input type="checkbox"/> requested	<input type="checkbox"/> will do	<input type="checkbox"/> no
6. other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> requested	<input type="checkbox"/> will do	<input type="checkbox"/> no

15. Comment _____

16. Is the principal aware of your opinion regarding the organization of this class? Yes No

Check only one: I disagree with the organization of this class.

I agree with the organization of this class (based on comments made by the administration in section 13 above).

Teacher's signature _____ Staff rep signature _____

Tips and advice

- Use plain language. Local school codes often don't mean much to someone outside the school.
- The IEP is a legal document with recommendations to be implemented for each student, (e.g., required adaptations for instruction, testing).
- Teachers must outline the factors that lead to the conclusion that in the professional judgment of the teacher, the class is not educationally sound.

If you are not certain that you will be able to meet all of the prescribed learning outcomes in the course, you should identify this to the principal and explain what activities or lessons you may have to omit.
- Remember it is not just students with IEPs who might affect the normal learning expectations for the class. You should discuss students who require additional time/support such as "grey area" students, ESL students, and students waiting designation and testing.
- The employer in arbitration relied on the lack of specific requests for solutions to say teachers were satisfied and the classes were appropriate.
- The arbitrator ruled that if teachers feel that a class is inappropriate they must articulate that to the principal and the principal must then take that opinion into account in forming their opinion.

Charter challenge to Bills 27 and 28

By Diane MacDonald

In September and October, the Federation will be before the BC Supreme Court to argue that the provincial government infringed the *Charter* guarantee to freedom of association of teachers by the passage of legislation in 2002 and 2004. That legislation stripped the provincial collective agreement of many working and learning conditions, including all clauses related to class size and composition, and prohibited their inclusion into the collective agreement in the future.

By way of background, in 2002 the government imposed draconian legislation on a number of public sector workers including healthcare workers, post-secondary educators, and public school teachers. Bill 29, which applied to healthcare workers, overrode provisions in collective agreements such as transfer and reassignment rights, restrictions on contracting out, and layoff and bumping rights. Bills 27 and 28, which applied to teachers, struck from the provincial collective agreement provisions that dealt with, among others:

- class-size maximums
- class composition
- staffing levels of non-enrolling teachers
- support for the integration of students with special needs
- the length of the school day
- hours of instruction in a school year.

In addition, the legislation amalgamated several previous local agreements, effectively stripping hundreds of locally bargained terms. The legislation also prohibited the negotiation and inclusion in future collective agreements of the above listed provisions. Lastly,

the legislation imposed an arbitration process to remove the provisions from the provincial collective agreement, a process that was subsequently quashed by a BC Supreme Court Justice because the government-appointed arbitrator committed fundamental errors of law. Rather than appeal that decision, in 2004 the government passed Bill 19 to remove all provisions from the collective agreement that the arbitrator had deleted.

In 2002, the legislation was immediately challenged by health-care unions and the Federation. The healthcare workers went to court first while the BC Teachers' Federation held its legal challenge in abeyance pending the outcome of the healthcare workers' case.

The healthcare workers' case resulted in a landmark decision by the Supreme Court of Canada—*Health Services and Support-Facilities Subsector Bargaining Assn. v. British Columbia*, 2007 SCC 27 ["*Health Services*"]—that altered the legal landscape regarding the associative right to engage in collective bargaining. The Court held that the section 2(d) *Charter* guarantee of freedom of association extended to the right of employees to join together to negotiate with employers on workplace issues or terms of employment. The Supreme Court of Canada was clear that the *Charter* protects the process, but not the content, of collective bargaining. The court held that section 2(d) could be infringed both by legislation and by conduct, which amounted to bargaining in bad faith.

The landmark decision provides a strong precedent for teachers to challenge the legislation that applies to them, namely Bills 27 and

28, and Bill 19 that was passed in 2004.

The Federation specifically submits in its *Charter* challenge that the impugned legislation breached freedom of association in three ways:

1. that the government acted in concert with the employer bargaining agent, BCPSEA, in a process of bad faith bargaining.
2. that the legislation voided existing and important collective agreement provisions, which were agreed to between the parties.
3. that the legislation prohibited teachers from bargaining these issues in the future.

In the *Health Services* case, similar legislation was held to infringe the right to collective bargaining that is now protected by section 2(d) of the *Charter*.

Health Services establishes that the determination of whether good faith collective bargaining has been significantly and adversely affected requires a contextual and fact-specific inquiry. Further, the court requires that there are two tests that must be met by the Federation.

The first test is to review the importance of the subject matter affected by the legislation to the Union and to its members. The Federation will argue that class size, class composition, and other working conditions that were stripped from the collective agreement are extremely important to teachers, both historically and currently. Similar arguments will be made with respect to the school calendar and the amalgamated locals.

The second test requires a determination of whether the legislative measures respected the fundamental precept of collective bargaining, namely the duty to consult and

negotiate in good faith. The Federation will argue that in 2002 there was no consultation by the government with the BCTF or its members before the draconian legislation became law, nor was there any indication in collective bargaining that such legislation was forthcoming. Rather, the bills were rushed through the legislative process (over a weekend) to end the job action before a single teacher had withdrawn a single day of instruction.

If the Federation successfully meets the above tests, under section 1 of the *Charter*, the onus is upon the government to demonstrate that its legislation is justified in a free and democratic society. The government will have to prove that the legislation addressed a pressing and substantial objective, and that there was a rational connection between the legislation and those objectives. Even if the government can demonstrate the above, the government will have to establish that its legislation minimally impaired the associative rights of teachers. Lastly, the government will have the onus to prove its legislation was justified given the severity of the deleterious effects on teachers.

The Federation believes it has strong arguments to counter any section 1 argument by government. For example, it will be difficult for the government to establish that it had no less impairing measures available to it.

The Federation has a strong case that the legislation violated section 2(d) of the *Charter* and that the violation cannot be justified in a free and democratic society.

A decision is not expected until 2011.

Diane MacDonald is BCTF legal counsel.

AGM bargaining survey responses



Christina Wilson
Greater Victoria

What would you like to achieve in the next round of bargaining?

- respectful and meaningful dialogue between the parties
- looking forward at the big picture rather than creating band-aid solutions.

Most important issues for you?

1. local bargaining
2. class size and composition—to create realistic goals that improve working/learning conditions for all
3. salary—increase in salary; shortening the grid = getting to the maximum sooner = more money in our pension plans.



Doug Smuland
Abbotsford

What would you like to achieve in the next round of bargaining?

Ultimately, I hope to see teachers triumph. I believe that there is now a collective understanding that the ongoing underfunding of public education by the BC government will continue unabated, and that it is a part of an insidious and purposeful plan aimed at eroding our working conditions and the past contractual gains made by our membership. What I want is a victory, even if it is measured in inches rather than miles.

Most important issues for you?

- salary
- class size and composition
- salary.



Alice Rees
Central Okanagan

What would you like to achieve in the next round of bargaining?

A negotiated settlement! Legislated settlements of all previous rounds have not allowed improvements in many outdated aspects of local agreements.

Most important issues for you?

- benefit improvements—a harmonized package
- workload improvements—all the additional demands on teacher time must be addressed
- salary improvements—especially for our newest members (shortened grid).

Advice on class-building process

If it becomes clear during the class-building process that the employer has not provided enough classes for the school to stay within the class-size and composition standards in the *School Act*, teachers should inform the principal that they will continue to participate only if directed to do so.

Arbitrator Dorsley states that participation by teachers and departments in class-building

influences the principal's opinion as to whether the class is appropriate for student learning. Principals have used teacher participation to justify their opinion that a class is appropriate for student learning. Participation in organizing oversize classes will make it very difficult for teachers in September consultations to object to or argue for a resolution for oversize classes, including classes with large numbers of

students needing extra assistance.

Dorsley also warns against "platooning" or re-arrangements of students for instructional purposes to create oversize classes because it could also preclude them from pursuing a grievance.

If teachers, counsellors, or department heads assist in creating classes that exceed the *School Act* standards for size or composition, they may be placing a barrier to the

right of students and their teachers to classes that are educationally sound and truly appropriate for learning.

Please consult the wallet-sized brochure, "What teachers need to know about class size and composition" that are available in your school.

—George Popp
BCTF Field Services Division

Teaching in a diverse classroom

By Terry Callender

In one of my classes, all my students require IEPs. In another, all but one struggle with English, which impedes their ability to understand and absorb course material. In yet another class, the students often arrive tired and hungry. None of these students have course support available to them, nor is there any limit on class size and composition. All of my students must master their courses in 90 to 99 hours. In other districts, they only have 80 hours.

Although these students are challenging to teach, and most need differentiated learning techniques, I receive no prep time to be able to offer them this. Many resources, evident in most classrooms, are not available to my students. Teachers in my school receive very little Pro-D, which is so desperately needed to effectively teach our students.

These classes are typical where I teach, for I teach adults. My students come to school for a variety of reasons. Some are trying to improve their marks in order to gain university or college admission.

Some are upgrading in order to enter future college programs prior to re-entry into the workforce after raising families. Some are retraining after industry changes or layoffs. Some are training to re-qualify in their professions for work in Canada.

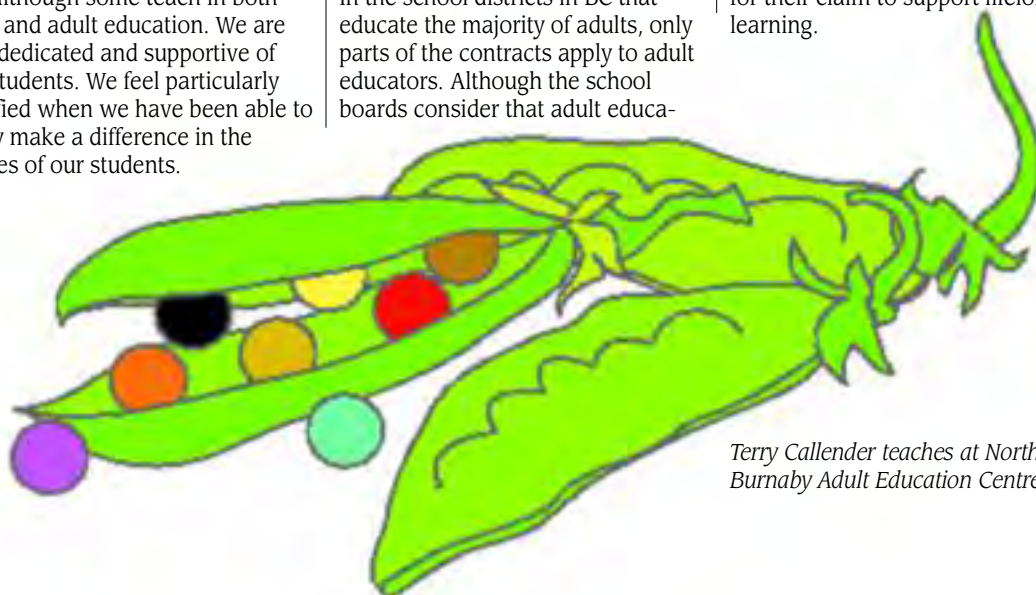
My colleagues are mainly teachers who have been teaching adults for much of their professional life, although some teach in both K-12 and adult education. We are very dedicated and supportive of our students. We feel particularly gratified when we have been able to really make a difference in the futures of our students.

Although our students are supposed to be at least 19 years of age or 18 and out of school for at least a year, some are as young as 17. Some have had serious behavioural issues at their local secondary schools and thus return to school with us.

As we approach a contract bargaining year, we are hoping for a couple of changes in our contracts. In the school districts in BC that educate the majority of adults, only parts of the contracts apply to adult educators. Although the school boards consider that adult educa-

tors are paid on scale, we receive no prep time, little Pro-D, and must complete a course in 80 to 100 hours. This means we must teach 11 courses during the year to work the equivalent of a 1.0 job!

Let's hope that during the next round of bargaining we can make some inroads into stemming the tide of education underfunding and hold our government accountable for their claim to support lifelong learning.



Terry Callender teaches at North Burnaby Adult Education Centre.

International presence in Honduras

Susan Lambert, BCTF president, was on a witnessing and accompaniment tour to provide an international presence on the occasion of the observance of the anniversary of the coup.

From the moment of landing, to the 10-minute trip to the capital's core, a visitor is aware that in Honduras, government is either unable and/or unwilling to govern. The landing strip is too short, the airport is in town and surrounded by shanties and suburbs, the terrain hilly. Planes have to dance and bob and tumble to the ground barely missing rooftops and hillsides and then brake hard to land.

The murderous potholes and broken traffic lights of the capital, Tegucigalpa, are the outward signs of a government in disarray. There is little political will in Honduras to reliably provide even the most basic of civil services. Military dictatorships of the past were succeeded by governments that didn't believe in governing. Instead, the civil service shrank by 50% since 1981, privatization was fostered, and many businesses and most industries are now owned and controlled by foreign multinationals. The military has open control of telecommunications and people have no faith in the police or judicial systems. In May, a Chief Justice of the Honduran Supreme court was removed from the bench for the crime of publicly defining President Mel Zelaya's forced removal from office by the military as a *coup d'état*. Even the Red Cross is implicated in the repression with reports of tear gas being stored in their vehicles. The level of distrust of civic authority is palpable.

The coup in Honduras crystallized the disparities between the privilege of the wealthy, the corruption of power, and the poverty of the masses. Eighty per cent of the country's 7.5 million population live in poverty. Thirty-five per cent live on less than a dollar day. Ten families, known as the oligarchy, control the country's natural resources, industry, and service sectors. The June 28, 2009, coup fuelled the anger of the Honduran

people and united them like never before. The promise of President Zelaya was a promise of a civil society; the promise of a government that would finally govern in the interest of the people. It was this promise that was violently cut short.

And so the National Front of the Resistance, a broad-based coalition that is inclusive, populist, and divergent, was born. The movement spans Zelaya loyalists in the mainstream Liberal party, through the labour movement with its 60-year history of struggle, to a multitude of social movements including the women's movement, LGBTQ groups, human rights groups, Youth For The Resistance, the Committee of the Families of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), which has been operating for 30 years, to professionals like the Lawyers for the Resistance, to campesinos, indigenous people, and the poor.

Our delegation visited an affluent community about 12 km outside of the capital to speak with Margarita and Louis Pavos Mainend, both economics professors at the Autonomous University of Honduras in Teguz. Forty families in this community gathered together into an informal collective immediately after the coup to form their arm of the national resistance movement. They wanted us to know clearly that their activism was spontaneous and not at the advice or behest of the national movement. Their activism was sparked by outrage at the coup and their loyalty to a president they saw as courageously struggling to implement policies that would improve the lives of all Hondurans and especially of the poor. They enunciated a list of economic policies that resulted in real benefits to many Hondurans.

A national poverty reduction strategy implemented by Zelaya's regime meant this region received \$23 million US. His Central Bank

policy resulted in a reduction of mortgage rates from 18% to 7% to help people afford mortgages and stimulate the economy. He raised the minimum wage by 60%, basing the rate on the cost of a food basket. Zelaya adjusted the formula for the price of oil and gas (applied as a factor of the delivered temperature thus insuring that consumers paid only for what they actually received), which reduced the price of gas by 6 limperas a gallon. Then he entered into the Petro Caribe,

The murderous potholes and broken traffic lights of the capital, Tegucigalpa, are the outward signs of a government in disarray. There is little political will in Honduras to reliably provide even the most basic of civil services. Military dictatorships of the past were succeeded by governments that didn't believe in governing.

Hugo Chavez's oil cartel group. These moves were strenuously opposed by the two main oil companies of Honduras as their monopoly and profits were eroded.

Since the coup many of these reforms have been reversed. In March 2010, the new government under President Lobos ordered a 20% reduction in social services spending across the board. Both Margarita and Louis fear that an IMF agreement undertaken by Lobos in June 2010 will only mean more hardship for the Honduran people. Margarita Pavos told us that since the coup, "bodies started to show up," dumped in the countryside. One member of their collective has been shot; violence is done with impunity. Louis Pavos said they

were "living in an era of state terrorism. There are high levels of uncertainty and fear."

We spoke to many representatives of groups within the resistance front. All had stories of violence and repression and spoke of the incomprehensible fury of the troops in the streets, the embargoes, the open violence, the curfews, and the killings. There have been 144 documented deaths related to work in the resistance since the coup. In the LGBTQ community, prominent supporters of the resistance, there have been 26 deaths. Teachers and journalists have been the primary targets with seven journalists killed since January 2010 alone. Honduras is now rated by Reporters Without Borders as the most dangerous country for a journalist to work in the world. The last teacher killed was Manuel Flores. In March 2010, masked gunmen shot him down in his classroom in front of his students.

The resistance movement is powered by women. Betty and Dirian of the National Front of Popular Resistance are co-ordinators of the International Committee. They introduced us to the movement and gave us an historical overview. Lawyers Addye and Gloria explained the constitutional crisis that framed the coup. From Margarita, the economist, to Neesa and Daisi at the women's centre, to Berta Oliva who told us of her 30-year struggle on behalf of the families of the disappeared since the moment her own husband was taken from her in the middle of the night, women provide this movement with its strength and determination.

Yet familiar tensions exist. This is a Latin American machismo country. Only two of the fifteen top resistance leaders are women. There is a debate within the movement regarding the use of feminist and inclusive language.

LGBTQ groups feel isolated from the leadership. There are constant discussions about the future. Some would like to form a political party and enter into the next election with a platform of populist candidates. Others feel that this would legitimize the current fraudulent regime. Still others maintain that the power of the resistance is built on its ability to attract a broad coalition. In their view moving from a social movement to a political one would inevitably create cracks within the unity of the resistance.

One thing all of these groups agree on is a commitment to peaceful resistance. The movement is undertaking a petition campaign with 600,000 signatures collected so far and a goal of 1.2 million by September 15, 2010. The petition seeks to implement a representative national Constituent Assembly. Such an assembly will revise the constitution and insure that future governments govern to benefit the people. On the anniversary of the coup, the resistance inaugurated its own Truth Commission in contrast to the government's fraudulent Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is seen as a grave insult to the dead and disappeared, done as it is by a government currently engaged in ruthless repression.

All of these actions aim to enlist support for peaceful revolutionary change and to assert and implement that change with or without the authority of the *oligarchs* who, through the military, rule Honduras. All this work is done openly and transparently in the face of ongoing brutality, disappearances, and assassinations. The resistance movement in Honduras is optimistic, determined, and nothing short of heroic.

Susan Lambert is president of the BC Teachers' Federation.

Turning Canada into USA North without the checks and balances

By Errol Mendes

Does the Harper government understand the fundamentals of Canada's constitutional democracy? There are worrying signs that either they do not understand them or are trying to rewrite them in order to design a form of American presidential republican democracy without the safeguards of a true separation of power and the requisite checks and balances. This is a recipe for a new form of authoritarian order that Canadians should rightly recoil from.

As any constitutional expert would attest, Canada's constitutional democracy is based on the principle of responsible government. This means that while Canada's executive draws its authority from powers derived from a unique form of constitutional monarchy, it can only remain in power if it maintains the confidence of the elected House of Commons and is accountable to Parliament. The supremacy of Parliament is entrenched by its powers to call for papers, records, and persons and its ability to curtail the prerogative powers of the executive.

The Harper government seems to be launching an assault on Canada's constitutional democracy on several fronts. The most well-known examples of this are the two antidemocratic prorogations in 2008 and 2009, with the most egregious

being the earlier one manipulated to avoid a vote of confidence. The demonization by the prime minister of any form of coalition government between parties that can maintain the confidence of the House of Commons is also part of the desire to install a presidential system in Canada despite the fact that Canadians elect MPs, not the prime minister. The recent statement by the prime minister that there can't be a government of "losers" reinforces this republican perspective. This statement is particularly ironic given his strong support of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who was a "loser" to Tzipi Livni and the Kadima party who won more seats, but did not form the government. The president of Israel, Shimon Peres, had correctly concluded that the right-wing parties, although "losers" in Harper's view, had a better chance to establish a more stable government.

More recent assaults by the Harper government have included refusal to allow the Afghan Committee to see the uncensored documents on transferred detainees until the speaker's ruling that has forced them to do so. The speaker ruled that the ability of the House of Commons to see the documents went to the heart of the principle of responsible government that was the foundation of the Canadian constitutional democracy and that

the government could not be the sole arbiter of what could be seen by the elected representatives. However, he also urged that all parties come to an agreement that would allow the MPs to see the documents while still respecting the vital national security interests of Canada. Three of the parties did come to such an agreement in the dying days of the parliamentary session. The NDP, however, alleged that the speaker's ruling was still not being followed as the government insisted that documents relating to cabinet confidences and legal documents that are covered by solicitor-client privilege had to be first screened by three eminent jurists acting as arbiters who would decide what could be disclosed to the MPs and the public. The speaker's ruling and the subsequent agreement was one of the first victories by the opposition parties against the desire of the Harper government to institute a presidential system of government in Canada without the critical checks and balances.

Other assaults include the creation of manuals to undermine parliamentary committees, undermining vital officers of parliaments like the chief electoral officer, the access to information commissioner, and the parliamentary budget officer. Less analyzed assaults include diminishing the most vital role of parliament to

supervise the spending of monies by announcing economic and budgetary statements outside parliament. In one case this occurred in a plane over the Pacific Ocean!

However, the most worrying sign that there seems to be every intention by the Harper government to continue to march to an authoritarian form of republican government is the recent insistence that political staffers will not be allowed to appear before parliamentary committees even if they have been issued summonses to do so. This time the paradoxical defence is that of ministerial responsibility. This doctrine requires ministers in the executive to take responsibility for actions within their departments and where necessary offer their resignations, in part, to fulfill their duties to the notion of responsible government. Responsible government and the supremacy of parliament is the reason for the existence of the concept of ministerial responsibility. The tail of ministerial responsibility can't wag the dog of responsible government.

Responsible government could well be endangered from the logic that the Harper government is using. If staffers are justified in not appearing before parliamentary committees due to the principle of ministerial responsibility, the same would apply to any public servants as they too fall under the principle of ministerial responsibility.

Therefore, if ministers can refuse to appear before the same committees, then everybody in the executive would be perfectly justified in refusing to appear before these committees due to the principle of ministerial responsibility! This could happen in the case of public servants in the Privy Council Office and staffers in the Prime Minister's Office—like Dimitri Soudas, the communication director in the PMO who is the subject of a summons, given that the prime minister is unlikely to be a frequent witness before parliamentary committees. Soudas has now officially ignored a subpoena from the Ethics Committee triggering potentially another showdown between his boss—the prime minister—and the opposition over contempt of parliament.

This prime minister, his cabinet, and political staffers seem intent to slowly transform the constitutional order of Canada into an authoritarian republican form of government. Given the lack of even the most rudimentary checks and balances if we go down that path, this failure to respect the fundamentals of our constitutional democracy should be a central issue in the next federal election.

Errol Mendes is a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa and a former senior advisor of the Privy Council of Canada.

Raw politics at play: The Vancouver School Board report

Part 1

A dismissive education minister pushes for increased centralization and backs off firing the board after much bluster

By Noel Herron

Months after the controversial comptroller general's report on the Vancouver Board of Education was tabled in early June 2010, the reverberations from this document have far from diminished across BC.

Delivered through the media to Vancouver trustees by Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid, arguably the most inexperienced and pratfall-prone (think of her outrageous and ridiculed response to the cancellation of the BC School Sports grant) of the four BC education ministers since 2001, the report was widely viewed within the Vancouver education community for what it really was—a blatant political document designed by the BC Liberals to silence their leading critic.

It was also crafted with two other goals in mind: to send an unmistakable message to other school boards to be wary of joining the VSB in criticizing Victoria; and, most importantly, from a political perspective, to attempt to smother growing criticism of the Liberals' chronic underfunding of public schools.

This provincial report itself is the very antithesis of a thoughtful and fair document. It loaded the dice from the outset against the VSB by ignoring the central and crucial issue of the adequacy of education funding. It singled out the VSB for retribution. As one Vancouver trustee memorably put it: "it's pay-back time."

In a series of public press conferences characterized by bluster ("I will absolutely make the tough decisions, if I have to..."), brinkmanship, and bullying over a two-month period, MacDiarmid sidestepped the central and crucial funding issue by pointedly ordering the comptroller general to avoid examining "...the structure of the provincial funding model for education."

Leading up to the appointment by the minister of the comptroller general was an amazing display of public and parental dissatisfaction—six happenings, by one account, took place—marches, meetings, parades, and protests, many in front of the minister's Vancouver constituency office—that demonstrated how the Liberals were losing the public relations battle. A poll commissioned by the BC Society for Public Education and conducted by Angus Reid found that almost 80% of British Columbians wanted more money for public schools. An unprecedented emergency motion from the City of Vancouver calling for increased support for public schools added to the chorus of criticism.

Leading the protest were VSB parents from across the city and it was clear by this time that Victoria had to do something about the strong and gathering public opposition to the government's bogus claim that it was adequately funding public schools. The precipitous drop in public approval for the BC Liberals due to the imposition of the

despised HST tax added to the governing party's angst at this time.

The appointment of Cheryl Wenezenki-Yoland, the provincial comptroller general, accompanied by a retinue of 10 provincial civil servants, led by the deputy education minister and his assistant, was a clear indication that Victoria was determined to not only discredit the VSB, but undermine public confidence in a duly elected board that repeatedly refused to bow to the arbitrary and centralizing wishes of an out-of-touch minister. Ostensibly, this was all being done under the guise of providing "a special advisor" who would "assist" the board.

The 88-page document produced was drafted with an aim to not only portray, but to isolate the VSB as an "inefficient" and "ineffective" board directed by an advocacy-obsessed and unqualified group of trustees. The minister charged, "this board is unwilling or unable to manage its resources to protect students."

Reading the report one gets the clear and unmistakable impression that Vancouver was the only board in BC in crisis, when in reality every board in the Lower Mainland (see sidebar) was in deep financial difficulty. A total of \$120 million of unfunded costs to the province's 60 schools, this year alone, was the shortfall estimate provided by the provincial secretary treasurers' association.

Of the 42 recommendations in the report, 10 were well underway by the VSB prior to the appointment of the special advisor while 13 were concocted to give the appearance of so-called "objectivity," directed at the Ministry of Education.

It seems that there is nothing like providing good advice to yourself.

There is an astounding, if not swaggering, arrogance to the recommendation that examines the VSB decision-making process and its accompanying committee structure, demanding, in no uncertain terms, that the "Board change its philosophy on consensus decision making to better balance the need for input from stakeholders with operational requirements of the organization..."

The VSB bluntly responded to this by stating: "the Board has no such philosophy as indicated by the recommendation regarding decision making."

The deliberate distortion in this specific recommendation of the role of the long-established and broadly based VSB stakeholder committee structure is both disturbing and unacceptable.

VSB committees include, where appropriate, representatives of students, parents, teachers, support staff, principals, excluded and non-excluded staff from various organizations, and groups, and are an exemplar of participatory democracy for many boards. Far from being bogged down in the work of committees and interest groups, this system functions smoothly. There is a profoundly parochial take to this particular recommendation. Participatory democracy it seems did not rate highly with Victoria's visiting team.

However, the ideological bias of the special advisory group truly surfaces when the report demands that "...the Board take immediate steps to fully address the concerns about the lack of impartiality of several of the Trustees." and especially to curb, "...the political activities of Trustees..." on the VSB Advocacy Committee. The *ad hominem* attack on the qualifications and capabilities of trustees was singularly inappropriate, not to

mention insulting, further diminishing the credibility of this document.

The strong public stands by VSB trustees reflected in their own words "...the views of their constituents." Elections do count and trustees are answerable to their

Reading the report one gets the clear and unmistakable impression that Vancouver was the only board in BC in crisis, when in reality every board in the Lower Mainland (see sidebar) was in deep financial difficulty.

constituents. Andree Janyk, a former Sea to Sky district trustee put it very well, in a letter to *The Vancouver Sun*, when she wrote: "During election campaigns trustees have to say what they stand for. Citizens vote on a particular school-trustee candidate based on their confidence in that person to bring quality education to the students in the district."

Much to the chagrin of the visiting Victoria bureaucrats and successive Liberal ministers of education, Vancouver trustees not only lambasted but underscored Victoria's inconsistencies as illustrated by the following four examples over the years:

1. The promotion of community participation in the life schools while cutting Community School grants.

2. The insistence that every service including non-profit daycare, before- and after-school care rentals is maximized for generating revenue (up 700% in a few years) while supposedly supporting early childhood initiatives.

3. The yo-yo approach to the current provincial funding model with the cancellation of the \$110 million facilities grant one year and its reinstatement the next.

4. The surreptitious underfunding of incremental salary increases, employee benefits, and inflationary increases in goods and services while averring that the province was adequately funding schools.

The list goes on.

Absurdly, the report also suggests that the VSB wring concessions from its unions when the province holds the purse strings.

After the tabling of the Vancouver report, the minister continued to berate the VSB in the media, finding little time (30 minutes) for her first face-to-face meeting with the board, yet finding plenty of time for extended press conferences. Repeatedly hinting that she would take strong action and fire the board, she gradually backed off this politically risky option, perhaps recalling the unpalatable fate of the discredited 1986 Social Credit government, which dismissed the VSB board of the time only to have it re-elected by an embarrassing 9-0 vote in a subsequent election. Certainly the BC Liberals ongoing, rock-bottom status in public opinion polls put a crimp in her bravura performance and her diminishing options.

MacDiarmid's final gesture in her media war with the VSB was what one observer correctly characterized as provocative. In what must go down as unprecedented in the annals of ministry-school board relations in this province, MacDiarmid publicly demanded that she review and approve the draft VSB budget before

the duly elected VSB board of trustees voted on it. This uncalled for and unnecessarily disrespectful gesture of ministerial muscle flexing served only to underline the minister's overweening arrogance.

The VSB filed a balanced budget in late June much the same as trustees had been working on in April before Wenezenki appeared on the scene.

The Vancouver report is now history.

However, its flawed recommendations and the subsequent ominous comments by the education minister about co-government by the ministry with school boards (Victoria's code words for increased centralization, suppression of dissent, and unilateral decision-making) hold serious implications for all BC boards.

This provincial report itself is the very antithesis of a thoughtful and fair document.

It loaded the dice from the outset against the VSB by ignoring the central and crucial issue of the adequacy of education funding. It singled out the VSB for retribution. As one Vancouver trustee memorably put it: "it's payback time."

Summing up the report, VSB Board Chair Patti Bacchus, wrote: "...our professional staff (who the comptroller tells us to listen to) advised that if we incorporated more of her (the comptroller general's) recommendations than we already have, we would be in worse financial shape as many would require additional funds for implementation."

This report is replete with an openly dismissive and disrespectful attitude toward school trustees. It raises serious questions about the supposedly non-partisan status of the deputy education minister and his assistant both key advisors in Victoria's team. It repeatedly undervalues and depreciates local governance in education.

It was also crafted with two other goals in mind: to send an unmistakable message to other school boards to be wary of joining the VSB in criticizing Victoria; and, most importantly, from a political perspective, to attempt to smother growing criticism of the Liberals' chronic underfunding of public schools.

The frequently made and repeatedly broken promise that the "...ministry should develop a long-term plan for education to facilitate better long-term planning in the school districts..." will justifiably be greeted with open cynicism in all of the province's 60 school districts. After nine years of cuts, confusion, and crisis any other reaction would be suspect.

The rigid, one-size-fits all, recommendations in the report belong to another era. With the province-wide thrust in many of its recommendations, it provides neither futuristic leadership nor good management for education in BC.

As such, the Vancouver report should be allowed to gather dust on a shelf where biased and politically motivated documents remain unopened.

Noel Herron is a former Vancouver trustee.

Part 2 of this analysis will appear in the October *Teacher*.

Shortfalls in seven Lower Mainland school districts

Vancouver is just one of seven Lower Mainland school districts that experienced sharp and ongoing budget crunches this year. The following seven districts ranked by enrolment, including Vancouver, all faced substantial shortfalls.

Surrey

Shortfall: \$12.3 million on estimated \$555 million budget
Impact: drawing on snow removal funds to bridge funding gap this year; cutting board staff; extending spring break from one to two weeks; dropping of daytime elementary school custodians; 25% cut in elementary school counsellors; loss of estimated 43 FTE positions this year; over past decade many key programs—ESL and programs for kids with severe learning disabilities—sharply cut or completely eliminated; Surrey has the largest number of portable classrooms in BC, rising to 292 from 217 this year.

Vancouver

Shortfall: \$16.23 million on \$500 million budget
Impact: elimination of the three junior Kindergarten programs for 4-year-old inner-city kids (the only ones of their kind in BC); dropping of universal hot-lunch program in five city schools; potential school closures of 12 elementary schools; layoff of almost all board consultants, secretarial positions (board and school-based); layoff of entire school board painting department; shrinking of original six city-wide board administrative areas to two areas; increase in fees to daycare and before and after school groups; loss of estimated 97.3 FTE positions; all aspects of K-12 instructional programs adversely affected.

Coquitlam

Shortfall: \$4.1 million on \$258 million budget
Impact: drawing on benefit plan contingency fund; extending spring break from one to two weeks; cutting back on school maintenance such as grass cutting and painting; loss of 15.9 FTE positions (mostly specialists positions).

Burnaby

Shortfall: \$5.2 million on a \$200 million budget
Impact: reducing supply and service spending; increasing average class size from 25.4 to 25.8 students; cutting staff (number not finalized).

Richmond

Shortfall: \$5.9 million on an \$18 million budget
Impact: cutting early morning custodial staff, learning resource teachers, and educational assistants; loss of estimated 60 FTE positions that will impact on programs at all levels; five years ago this district produced a comprehensive report on the dramatic decline in ESL support and services

New Westminster

Shortfall: \$630,000 on a \$56 million budget
Impact: sharp cuts to programs and staff made in two previous years.

North Vancouver

Shortfall: \$6.5 million on a \$137 million budget
Impact: loss of 30 to 50 FTE positions; all aspects of instructional programs affected; impact of school closures an ongoing issue.

Conclusion: Peer behind these numbers and you will see one of this country's finest public school systems in deep distress. The cumulative impact of volatile funding over nine years is biting deeply, with parents being asked to make up shortfalls in many areas. Only one Lower Mainland district—West Vancouver—does not have a sizeable shortfall. Since 2001, over 3,000 teachers, across the province, particularly in specialty areas (learning assistance, ESL, special needs/special education) have been cut. With this and other cutbacks we see an increase in class size, the loss of valuable education programs, schools that are less clean, more neighbourhood school closures, less classroom supplies and resources and the further short-changing of students through an abbreviated school year with extended spring breaks (Surrey, Vancouver, Coquitlam). PD programs and services in almost all boards have been sharply reduced over the past decade. The above list is preliminary for this year, but the goal of providing a quality public education system for every child is rapidly diminishing.

Gender ideology

By David Butler

Last year I was a teacher-on-call in a class with a student teacher who was responsible for gym that day. When class started, the teacher asked all the girls to run each of the lines on the gym floor, and then she had the boys do the same activity. In giving feedback later, I asked her why she decided to divide the class this way, to which she replied that she just wanted to easily separate the students so they could quickly warm up. In other words, she was attempting to carry out an effective management strategy. I responded, "Would you have asked the Chinese-Canadian students to run the lines first and then had the white kids do it?"

When institutions like schools actively engage in such processes as gendering, attaching cultural meaning to biological sex, they are engaged in a process that social scientists refer to as "constituting the subject." Within this process, an individual's (or subject's) sense of themselves becomes forged by an array of cultural processes that align in certain ways to produce an "effect," resulting for example in creating a racialized, classed subject or gendered subject, among others. Schools play a significant role in constituting the student-subject (creating various effects) in all sorts of ways—for instance with academic labels like "she's an 'A' student" to less positive identifiers such as "he's designated." However, of all the school processes that contribute to constituting the student-subjects, probably none are more pervasive than the cultural practice of gendering. A few of the many in schools include lineups, gendered gym activities, afterschool

sports, dance activities, and the seemingly innocuous ones such as addressing the class with "boys and girls."

This is different?

When I have made this argument in other spaces, some people have responded by acknowledging that, while race is one thing, gender is completely different. Boys and girls are different. People point to the huge amount of research out there backing up their claim on how girls'

When institutions like schools actively engage in such processes as gendering, attaching cultural meaning to biological sex, they are engaged in a process that social scientists refer to as "constituting the subject."

brains are wired differently from boys', ignoring the heaps of research that concludes that the supposed differences are minor at best. Genderists, people who believe that differences are genetic and exist regardless of cultural paradigms, also point out that even children themselves prefer to be grouped by sex without any influence from the teacher. To me, the fact that students request being grouped this way is only evidence to how deeply entrenched our gender ideology is. In Kindergarten, I find that many of the kids have little hesitation of sitting/playing with the other sex, but even by that age they have a deeply indoctrinated belief in how boys and girls are different. Just today, one Kindergarten boy pointed at another boy's

pink shirt and called him a girl. By Grade 1, the gender camps are firmly entrenched. As educators, we often just think these are the normal antics of children, without looking at the ways that our own cultural practices are actively constructing the great gender divide.

What's the harm?

Marking bodies by biological sex and then mapping these bodies to gendered assumptions of how they should or will behave inevitably leads to excluding the many students who do not fit those gender norms so readily. Even if I concede that some boys are more physically active than some girls, this does not mean I would carry out a pedagogical practice privileging those who fit my gendered expectations. Moreover, a girl might seem "girly" in some ways and a "tom boy" in others. So dividing them by some assumption of their undeniable difference is surely then a division based on a difference that is shared by only some people of both sexes, not all people of one. The range of differences between girls and the range between boys should be enough to convince a teacher that dividing the two is an inappropriate pedagogic strategy.

I will go further and suggest that those who are supposedly better served (those girls/boys who fit the gender norms) are actually being short-changed by such educational practices. If boys and girls are being separated because things would run smoother in the classroom, then they are being denied an opportunity to negotiate,

compromise, create meanings, and learn from interactive experiences with the gendered other. While we teachers lament that girls start showing little interest in competitive sports as they get older or boys seem to be less interested in reading, we never stop to think that we inadvertently are participating in creating this gendered reality partly because we keep constituting them as different beings via our many gendered pedagogical practices. They never stood a chance to be otherwise.

The phobias

These gendering practices are problematic for another reason. The main targets for homophobic and transphobic bullying are students who do not conform to strict gender norms. Whenever teachers participate in articulating a gender ideology by carrying out pedagogical practices that divide students by biological sex, they are encouraging their students to believe in the ideology's core tenants—that girls and boys are unique beyond their anatomical specificity. When

students then display behaviour, desires, or aspirations that challenge that ideology, they become the targets of homophobic or transphobic bullying. I do not want to cite the arsenal of convincing statistics from current research on the school experiences of students perceived to be LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning), but the rates of verbal and physical threats are highly elevated compared to their straight-perceived classmates. Also, these bullied students' perception of the school as a safe environment, as you can imagine, are tragically low.

As a teacher, you can't be in all places at all times to curb these elevated rates of gender bullying, but you can make a real difference by interrupting the ideology that underpins such bullying—the ideology that girls and boys are, at the very core of their beings, different. Gender ideology has no place in public school environments where students should be given the freedom to just "be" without teachers and others attaching our own constructed meanings to their bodies.

David Butler teaches in Vancouver and is the VESTA Pride Committee chair.



Yours for the asking

Outsmart waste

Did you hear about TerraCycle, the "upcycling" company that, in Canada, sponsors the recycling programs of more than 130 schools, including four in BC (Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, and Burnaby)?

TerraCycle is an eco-civic company that turns your waste (mainly industrial food wrappers) into backpacks, umbrellas, shower curtains, lunch boxes, flower pots, etc.

Our goal is to eliminate waste and the idea of waste.

To prevent tons of non-recycling waste ending up in landfills, schools can send us their used drink pouches or cookie wrappers for free (we're offering free shipping) and we're giving back 2¢ for each item sent to us for the school or the charity of your choice.

We're already sponsoring the recycling programs of more than 130 schools in Canada and we're expecting 5,000 schools will send us their waste, as do more than 30,000 schools in the USA.

The big difference between us and the ENCORP recycling program that you have in BC is that they don't recycle drink pouches! We are using these materials to create new products.

TerraCycle was founded by Tom Szaky, a 27-year-old Toronto native, who dropped out of Princeton University in 2001 to sell worm poop fertilizer made with the food from the campus cafeteria. Right now, TerraCycle creates 114 different new, cool, useful, and eco-friendly products that you can find at major retailers.

See the list of products and for more information, visit

www.terracycle.net or call Laurent Cassar, 416-661-9676.



The man who planted trees

In celebration of Vancouver's 125th Anniversary and in partnership with the Vancouver School Board, the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival and Coast Capital Savings Credit Union are delighted to present the Oscar winning film, *The Man Who Planted Trees* to Vancouver secondary and elementary schools.

This timeless piece was originally written by Jean Giono and renowned Canadian animator Frédéric Back adapted this book into a film. The evocative images will educate students about the potential for one person to influence permanent change.

Back has personally planted over 100,000 trees and millions more

have been planted by children whose educators have used this film as a learning resource. Back purchased the Festival's Birthday Blossoms flowering cherry trees to celebrate Vancouver's 125th anniversary this spring. For information to buy your Birthday Blossoms for your school or private property, visit www.vcbf.ca/birthdayblossom.

This unique opportunity will be available from January through February, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays for one-hour weekly presentations by Vancouver Film School animation instructor, Keith Blackmore. This event will conveniently take place in your school auditorium free of charge as all presentations have been generously donated by Coast Capital Savings. Sign up by November 19 as space is limited.

For screening bookings, please contact Karen Woodman at Phone: 604-257-8120, kwoodman@vcbf.ca. Visit www.vcbf.ca "School Outreach" for program details.

The Ladybug Foundation Education Program makeChange:

When Hannah Taylor was five years old, she was startled to see someone rummaging through a garbage dumpster in the middle of winter in Winnipeg. After several months of constant inquiries to her parents about why someone would be looking for food in a garbage can, her mom explained, "Unfortunately sometimes people are left with no other options." Her mom, Colleen, further suggested that Hannah might feel better if she did something to help.

That was all the encouragement Hannah would need to bring awareness and financial support to

Canada's hungry and homeless.

Her story and her work through The Ladybug Foundation (now has raised over \$2 million) sparked the creation of The Ladybug Foundation Education Program Inc., called *makeChange*. This K-12, dynamic multimedia resource has been aligned to meet social studies curriculum outcomes. However, the process of working through the literature, original documentaries/videos, activities with several dozen lesson plans, and online software creates character-building qualities in students.

makeChange increases awareness, knowledge, and understanding of homelessness and related hunger, poverty, and street life issues, encouraging responsibility for, and leadership toward, actions initiated by students to get involved and help address these and other difficult social challenges.

Ultimately, *makeChange*: The Ladybug Foundation Education Program empowers students to initiate their own social action project and more importantly future life choices.

For more information about *makeChange*: The Ladybug Foundation Education Program, visit www.ladybugeducation.ca or 204-897-0461.

Developing curriculum materials on homelessness

As the homelessness crisis continues to grow in Canada, the engagement of students in conversations about homelessness has become ever more important—it makes for more thoughtful and understanding citizens, encourages critical thinking, and can actually help contribute to solutions to homelessness. In response to this, a

new series of curriculum resources focusing on homelessness have been developed and made available to teachers across Canada.

In September 2009, the Homeless Hub officially launched an "Education" section that houses educational resources for teachers and students (www.homelesshub.ca/Education). The Homeless Hub was originally developed with learning in mind. In addition to making a wide range of research, firsthand accounts of homelessness, and a plain language topics section more accessible, the hub now offers a range of curriculum materials and resources for schools, educators, and students all across Canada. These materials have been developed in a number of subject areas and across all levels and provinces. All of the resources are free and available for download by teachers and students alike.

For more information and to access all the resources mentioned above, visit www.homelesshub.ca/Education.

Green school grants

Finally, plastic bags are doing some good—thanks to Loblaw Companies Limited's generous donation of plastic bag fees, WWF-Canada's Green Community School Grants Program has distributed \$100,000 in grants to elementary and secondary schools across Canada this year to engage students in green initiatives.

Winners include Richmond's own AR MacNeill Secondary School, which will use the funds received to support its Eco-POWER Green Team, a group of students who grow edible plants in the community garden on school grounds.

For more details on the program, please visit wwf.ca/takeaction/greencommunity_recipients.cfm.

Teachers' Pension Plan

Why does my pension contribution seem to be bigger this year?

The simple answer is that it is.

All contributing pension plan members will be contributing 2.04% of salary more to their pension as of July 1, 2010.

The first 1.04% increase was announced early in the year and is the result of an actuarial valuation of the Basic Account of the pension plan. This valuation is done every three years as a legislative requirement. The actuary determines whether or not the plan's Basic Account has sufficient funds to pay

All contributing pension plan members will be contributing 2.04% of salary more to their pension as of July 1, 2010.

the pension promise to all members. The actuary determined that there was a shortfall of approximately \$289 million dollars. This shortfall will be eliminated over the next 15 years with the contribution increase. The employer is obligated to match that 1.04% as part of their contribution. This contribution increase is required to ensure that the plan can meet its pension obligations.

The second increase of 1% of salary comes as a result of the BCTF pension consultation in 2009. All pension plan members were given the opportunity to provide input to the BCTF, as plan member partner, with regard to shoring up the Teacher Pension Plan's Inflation Adjustment Account in order to provide inflation protection for retired members and future retirees. The Annual General Meeting voted overwhelmingly in favour of a contribution increase of 1% of salary to ensure ongoing, sustainable inflation protection.

These pension contributions are tax deductible.

— Rob Taylor
BCTF Income Security Division

Factor 88? Don't wait

A member who has attained age 64, has reached factor '88' (age plus contributory service), or is in receipt of a retirement pension under a registered pension plan, may voluntarily withdraw from the long-term portion of the Salary Indemnity Plan. Withdrawal may be made during any school year in which one of the foregoing conditions has been met and upon the completion of the appropriate withdrawal form. Withdrawal will be effective, upon approval, in September for applications received in that month. Applications submitted later will be effective the month following approval of the application.

In making application for withdrawal, you should ensure that in the event of serious illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave which, when combined with 120 days of benefit from SIP: short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach factor '90' or the end of the month you attain age 65, whichever comes first.

Principals and vice-principals should contact their HR department to inquire if they are members of the BCTF SIP or the disability plan offered through the BCPVPA. The BCPVPA plan will have its own withdrawal guidelines.

Applications are available online at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SalaryBenefits/SIP/LT-withdrawalForm.pdf or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.

Time to fix pensions

All of us have the right to a secure income in our retirement years, but 11 million Canadian workers who have no workplace pension plan face an uncertain retirement future.

Only one in five employed in the private sector belongs to a workplace pension plan. Most Canadians are not able to save enough to cover basic retirement expenses. Existing pension plans are under stress because of the global economic meltdown, while employers are shirking their responsibility to ensure workers have decent retirement incomes.

The RRSP model is struggling because too few Canadians—about 25% of tax filers—are able to afford contributions. And the global meltdown has exposed individual RRSP investors to extreme risk and significant financial loss.

We can start to fix the crisis through a balanced approach that combines strong workplace pensions with public pension plans that cover all working people.

The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) can be strengthened with a phased-in doubling of benefits to a maximum of about \$23,000 a year. This would offer secure and enhanced benefits for the 93% of Canadians who make CPP contributions.

The CPP is extremely efficient. Management and administrative fees are a fraction of those charged

by mutual fund companies. Expand a very small contribution increase for workers and employers can expand benefits. The guaranteed income supplement (GIS) should be raised to lift hundreds of thousands of poor pensioners out of poverty.

Tougher laws to protect pension plans are needed. We need better regulations to protect existing workplace pension plans from bankruptcy, high-risk investments and employer underfunding. Workers—like those at Nortel—should never again have to pay for employer bankruptcies with their pensions.

Those who oppose decent retirement incomes go to great lengths to misrepresent public sector workers' pension plans. Public sector workers make significant contributions to pay for future pension benefits. An average pension for a 30-year employee would be a modest \$17,900 a year.

— CUPE/CALM

Expand CPP to ease pension problems

An expansion of the Canada Pension Plan is the most effective way of addressing Canada's pension problems, says a recent report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

Pension expert Monica Townson, a CCPA research associate, looked at the options for expanding the

CPP to ensure all Canadians have adequate retirement incomes.

"There is now widespread concern that unless changes are made, a significant number of workers will reach retirement age without sufficient income to support themselves," Townson says. Here are some findings from the report:

- The CPP is by far the most secure and cost-effective way to deliver a pension benefit for retired workers—11 million employed Canadians have no workplace pension plan other than the CPP.
- RRSP schemes do not fill the gap.
- Most Canadian workers have no RRSP because they can't afford it (last year, only 31% of eligible Canadians contributed to their RRSP, and the unused RRSP contribution amount now exceeds \$500 billion).
- Experts are now supporting expansion of the CPP to replace 50% or even 70% of pre-retirement earnings (compared to 25% today). These include experts like David Denison, CEO of the CPP Investment Board and Bernard Dussault, former chief actuary for the CPP.
- Expanding the CPP is financially possible, and would produce a fairer, less expensive, and more secure pension system.

To read the full report, go to: www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/options-pension-reform or tinyurl.com/22qdy5p.

— Contact/CAW/CALM

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The Alfred Adler Institute announces a new certificate in School Counselling

The Certificate program in Adlerian School Counselling is a PCTIA approved part-time professional training for teachers working in school settings. Using an appropriate apprentice model, the program provides expert training from renowned Adlerian faculty. Through combined courses in theory and methods, and a mentor-based clinical supervision, candidates will prepare for a specialization in the Adlerian approach to school counselling. The program includes theory and skill development in Adlerian Psychology, counselling techniques with children and teens, ethical issues, interviewing and assessment techniques, classroom management, counselling in a diverse society, working with exceptional children, aiding with post-secondary transitions, working with case conferencing and multidisciplinary teams and working with families and care-givers. The certificate leads to the professional qualification *Certified Adlerian School Counsellor* (CASC).

For more information, please contact Jennifer Lee at The Adler Centre, 604-742-1818 or e-mail: apabc@adler.bc.ca www.adlercentre.ca

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Classified

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WHISTLER Condo. Sleeps 4, views, close to village, 604-943-9423, preddyplace@telus.net.

BLACKCOMB Luxury 2 bdrm/loft, 3 bath, sleeps 8, ski-in/ski-out, 604-940-0156.

SHUSWAP LAKE cabin, sleeps 4-6, lakeview, weekly rentals from June to Sept. Call 604-525-9558.

LAKE ERROCH cozy cottage, 1.5 hrs from Vancouver, 30 min. from Harrison, sleeps 4-6, golfing, hiking, fishing nearby. Call 604-525-9558.

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Cloverdale Learning Centre
5741-176 Street
Surrey, BC

Carol Wilkins, from the Canadian Education Exchange Foundation, will be presenting information about exchange opportunities.

Teachers currently here on exchange will be attending to answer questions specific to their country.

To register, contact:
Kulwant Toor, vice-president, BCETA
toor_k@sd36.bc.ca or 604-574-4141

For further information, guidelines, and an application form, visit www.ceef.ca

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PD Calendar

SEPTEMBER 2010

24 Abbotsford. Start UP Your Class Successfully for early career teachers, TTOCs, and teacher candidates. This workshop will help you successfully start and manage your classroom by building good routines and begin planning the year. Each participant will receive a 33-page booklet—The First Week of School—with lesson descriptions, checklists and suggestions of what to do in your new school. For details go to www.pita.ca/workshops or contact Ray Myrtle president@pita.ca

25 Vancouver. Celebrate Science! A BC Science Festival at the Beaty Biodiversity Museum, UBC, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Visit the spectacular Beaty Biodiversity Museum home of the Blue Whale skeleton. Learn about great teaching ideas, books and hands-on activities to engage children and youth in rich science experiences. Keynote speaker Jaymie Matthews, UBC Astrophysicist and a stellar line up of science writers from the Children's Writers and Illustrators of BC (CWILL). Contact Jo-Anne Naslund at 604-822-0940 or jnaslund@interchange.ubc.ca.

27 Surrey. Start UP Your Class Successfully for early career teachers, TTOCs, and teacher candidates. (See September 24 entry for details.)

29–October 1 Vancouver. Health and Wellbeing in Persons with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities "Autism, Intellectual Disabilities and Other Neuro-developmental Disorders." Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites. Pre-conference workshops: Sept. 29, 30, Oct. 1. This conference will provide education and informative updates on psychiatric, behavioural and complex health components specific to individuals with developmental disabilities, and showcase best practices in the field. For information, www.interprofessional.ubc.ca or contact us at ipad@interchange.ubc.ca or 604-822-7524.

OCTOBER 2010

21–22 Surrey. Civic Engagement and Critical Thinking: BC Teachers for Peace and Global Education PSA (PAGE), Surrey School District, and the City of Surrey at The Future Lives Here... Uniting Schools & Communities Conference. Sullivan Heights Secondary School. Keynote speakers: Stephen Lewis, Oct. 21, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., Dr. Ruby Payne, Oct. 22, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m. Workshop Strands: Children, Families, Strategies for Schools, Communities & Neighbourhoods. PAGE PSA Panel, 12:15 – 2:15 p.m.: Dr. Henry Milner (skype), Dr. Chris Shaw, Dr. Ozlem Sensoy. Visit www.pagebc.ca or www.communityschoolpartnership.surrey.ca. For info, contact Roz Johns, rjohns@sd38.bc.ca, Susan Ruzic, sruzic@sd43.bc.ca, Bonnie Mackwood mackwood_b@sd36.bc.ca

21–22 Vancouver. Visions 21: Best Practices Across the Curriculum sponsored by the ESL (English as a Second Language Provincial Specialist Association), Churchill Secondary School. The ESL PSA will be celebrating its 21st birthday. Please check our website for details www.bctf.ca/psas/eslpsa

21–22 Vancouver. BCSCA (BC School Counsellors' Association) annual conference at the Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites, just steps from English Bay and Stanley Park.. "INVEST in children...in

youth...in families...IN YOUR - SELF" will include intensive workshop sessions reflecting current and emerging issues in school counselling. Keynote speaker is Margaret Trudeau. She will be speaking on "Making Tough Choices." Burning Issues event and Marketplace for vendors will be available. For information and to register, visit www.bcschoolcounsellor.com or www.bcscaconference.ca.

21–22 Richmond. (BCTELA) BC Teachers of English Language Arts annual conference brings together educators who are committed to teaching practices that respect and engage diverse learners. This year we feature sessions focusing on First Peoples literature and learning, social justice, and multiple ways of knowing. This year's theme is Building Pathways. Come join the conversation with educators from around the province and beyond. Featuring Ruth Shagoury, Sharon Jeroski, Richard Wagamese, Theresa Rogers, John Golden, Pamela Winsor, Leyton Schnellert, Rhian Brynjolson, Kathleen Gregory, Chris Bose, Lee Edward Fodi, and Sue Montabello. For more information and to register go to: www.bctela.ca

21–22 Kelowna. 2010 BCTLA (BC Teacher-Librarians' Association) Conference "Kelowna Fresh" Kelowna Senior Secondary, 1079 Raymer Avenue, Kelowna. Keynotes: Jamie McKenzie, The Disruptive Innovators (Donna DesRoches & Carlene Walter) and Dr. Art Hister. "Refresh-Revitalize-Rethink..." Kelowna Fresh will refresh your network of colleagues. Rethink your teaching practices with some new ideas. Revitalize your professional spirit. \$150.00 conference fee includes Thursday evening social, three keynote presentations, three one-hour sessions (43 workshops presented by educators, authors and experts in the field of literacy, technology and librarianship), coffee, baked goodies, lunch and publisher's display. For more information and registration visit: www.cotla.sd23.bc.ca or contact Misty Smith (msmit3@sd23.bc.ca) or Angie MacRitchie (amacritic@sd23.bc.ca).

21–23 Richmond. La conférence annuelle de l'Association provinciale des professeurs d'immersion et du programme francophone se tiendra à l'hôtel Executive Airport Plaza de Richmond. C'est sous le thème "La magie de la littérature" que nous vous invitons à venir rencontrer l'auteure et chroniqueuse Chrystine Brouillet. Pour plus de renseignements, visitez notre site web au www.congresappipc.ca

21–23 Salmon Arm. The BC Art Teachers' annual conference "Pots, Paints, and Pixels," will continue to address the needs of studio arts teachers at K-12 levels, and will also provide a strand aimed at photo educators interested in learning more about digital photography. The conference website is potspaintpixels.wikispaces.com

22 Burnaby. LATA (Learning Assistance Teachers' Association) conference "Adaptations in Action," Classroom Practice at Byrne Creek Secondary School, 7777 18th Street, Burnaby, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Keynote speakers: Saima Fewster "Learning Support" and Lenora Archbald and Bill Standeven on the Ministry of Education's

Adaptations and Modifications paper. Conference includes keynotes, sessions and lunch. Registration and method of payment to be announced. Check the website at www.bctf.ca/lata/ for details.

22 Delta. BC Association of Mathematics Teachers (BCAMT) Fall Conference 2010: We Connect. North Delta Secondary School. Keynote speaker Marion Small brings her vast expertise as a mathematics educator, author and program developer to her presentations. A variety of presenters and exhibitors included. For more information www.deltasd.bc.ca/bcamt2010/default.htm

22 Delta. Encompass Conference 2010: All About Engagement—Practical Strategies K-12 co-sponsored by BCCLA (British Columbia Co-operative Learning Association) and SRCLE (Social Responsibility and Collaborate Learning Environments). Themes: Engagement, Social and Emotional Learning, Social Responsibility, Building Community, Social Justice Issues. Seaquam Secondary, 11584 Lyon Rd., Delta. Cost: \$95 (\$50 student teachers) includes boxed lunch and PSA membership. To register, bctf.ca/bccla/ or srcle.net/ Contact: mgalilford@sd43.bc.ca

22 Penticton. Mother Earth, Okanagan Valley Conference of the BCCASA (British Columbia Culinary Arts Specialist Association). Our conference will explore the unique and wonderful foods of the southern Okanagan. This journey will take us to foods that are traditional, that are new and that which are yet to be developed. We will see the Mother Tree of Ambrosia Apples and see beekeeping. We will see and taste vinegars, wines and cheeses for the latest in taste sensations at the places of their origins. Tour the Pacific Agri-Food Research Center to see what is on the horizon for foods in the Okanagan. All of our chef instructors will have a great opportunity to bring back to your kitchens the different perspectives in food production. web.me.com/lesgau/BCCASA/Conference.html. For registration contact Daniel Lesnes at lesgau@mac.com

22 Richmond. CUBEC (Computer Using Educators of BC) and (BCEDLPSA) British Columbia Educators for Distributed Learning PSA will co-sponsor the 30th annual conference at Cambie Secondary School in Richmond. "Connecting Diversity through Technology" focuses on helping teachers from all content areas meaningfully integrate technology into their practice. Explore and discuss innovative practices; workshops for a range of content areas and specialties. David Comrie, president of the BCEDLPSA, will be offering a workshop on the results from the BCTF's research survey of teachers working in DL schools. We are also developing technical sessions for IT support staff. More details as they become available can be found at cuebc.ca

22 Surrey. THESA (Teachers of Home Economics PSA) conference "The Future Lives Here," Ecole Panorama Ridge Secondary. \$125. Registration: www.thesaconference.ca. For more information visit the website or e-mail Jennifer Johnson at info@thesaconference.ca.

22 Vancouver. The BC Dance Educators' Association presents "JUST DANCE 2010" at Gladstone Secondary School, Vancouver. We welcome all generalist and specialist teachers of dance Grades 4–12! Workshops will be offered in areas such as hip hop/street styles, creative dance, jazz/musical theatre, ethnic dance, and modern dance. For detailed information look for ongoing updates on our web site: www.bctf.ca/bcdea or contact Linda Medland: lindamedland@shaw.ca, phone 604-986-0644, or Judy Herridge: judy_g@shaw.ca, phone 604-541-8170.

22 Vancouver. AEGTCCBC (Association of the Educators of Gifted, Talented, and Creative Children in BC) Gifted Ed 2010 Conference. Holiday Inn at 711 West Broadway, Vancouver. Guest Speaker Judy Willis, neurologist, middle school teacher, author and gifted advocate, is author of Inspiring Middle School Minds: Gifted, Creative and Challenging. Conference topics are Brain Friendly Strategies to Ignite Gifted Learners in Middle Years, Beyond Differentiation to Individualization: Appropriate Challenges for all Students. Online registration at www.aegtccbc.org or contact Linnea Lanstrom at llanstrom@hotmail.com

22–23 Richmond. BCPTA Primary Leadership Conference. McMath Secondary, 4251 Garry Street, Richmond. Conference Hotel: Executive Airport Plaza Hotel, Richmond 3711 Westminister Hwy. Rate \$129 (S/D). Friday keynote speaker Debbie Miller, "Reading with Meaning—Teaching With Intention" a.m. & p.m. breakout session choices. Evening component: Jenn Johns & Gretchen Fletcher "New Primary Teacher (K-3) Toolkit." Sat. Mini-Conference, full-day sessions, Debbie Miller, Primary FDK team: Carole Saundry, Bonnie Davison, Conference Site: Fee includes catering & BCPTA membership: BCTF member: Fri. \$145. Sat. \$120. Two Days \$195. TOC/Student/Retiree: Fri. \$73. Sat. \$60. 2 days \$98. Non-BCTF: Fri. \$191. Sat. \$166. 2 days \$241. Fri. evening New Teacher component: \$50 (Includes a light meal). Registrar: Joy Silver: odetojoy@telus.net

22–23 Surrey. PITA Fall Conference, featuring over 60 workshops in literacy, math, science, social studies, PE, and so on. Learn from: Adrienne Gear: Reading Power; Diana Cruchley: Writing; Mary Moody: Teaching Strategies; Liliana Lanfranchi: French strategies; Action Schools, Elaine Jaltema: Literature Circles; Ray Myrtle: Start UP Your class Successfully, and many more! Watch for details at www.pita.ca or contact Ray Myrtle president@pita.ca

22–23 Abbotsford. BC Technology Education Association Conference 2010 "Imagine... No Limits!" WJ Mouat Secondary School, Abbotsford. Workshop topics include: Laser Engraving, Vehicle Wraps, Vinyl Graphics, Cox .049 Model Air Boats, Wood Turning, Robotics in the classroom, Marine Technology, Castrol Lube Tech, Carveright, Saw Stop, Tours to Cascade Areospace. Keynote speaker Todd Pratt, Vice President, Fuel Vapor Technology. Contact conference

chair: Dave Liversidge dave_liversidge@sd34.bc.ca. Check the BCTEA website www.bctea.org for online registration.

22–23 Burnaby. BCSSTA (British Columbia Social Studies Teachers' Association) Annual Fall Conference. "Building a More Civil Society; Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities in the 21st Century" with extended activities on October 23. Burnaby North Secondary School. Contact info at bctf.ca/psas/bcssta/

22–23 Vancouver. ABCDE (Association of British Columbia Drama Educators) conference "Process to Performance" at Crofton House School, 3200 West 41st Avenue. Contact conference co-ordinator Cheryl Causley at ccausley@croftonhouse.ca or 604-263-3255.

24 Kelowna. BCATML (BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages) "Creating Connections" conference. Delta Grand Okanagan in Kelowna. For more information visit www.bcatml.org

NOVEMBER 2010

18–20 Vancouver. 16th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education, "Norming Excellence." The conference offers a unique networking and learning opportunity for educators from public schools, First Nations schools, and independent schools to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal learners. Hosted by the First Nations Education Steering Committee and BC Ministry of Education. Event details: www.fnesc.ca/conferences/index.php, e-mail jenniferw@fnesc.ca

JANUARY 2011

21–22 Vancouver. Adult Educators' Provincial Specialist Association (AEPSA) 15th Annual Conference and AGM. Dealing with Neurodiversity, Addiction and Mental Health Challenges in Adult Students. Keynote: Robert Aitken, VCC. www.bctf.ca/aepsa or contact psac74@bctf.ca

MARCH 2011

17–18 Vancouver. The Special Education Association (SEA) is proud to present the 36th Annual Crosscurrents Conference at the Westin Bayshore Hotel. Keynote: Dr. Paula Kluth plus a variety of quality sessions and exhibitors for regular and special education. For information, contact or visit the website at www.bctf.ca/sea or contact conference chair Leann Buteau, lbuteau@gmail.com.

Future October PSA days (BCTF procedure statement 30.A.14) 30.A. 14 That for the purposes of a province-wide PSA day, the BCTF supports the third Fri. in October as the day on which all districts hold a professional day, except in years in which Thanksgiving Monday falls in the same week, in which case the fourth Fri. would be the designated day.

2011–12: October 21, 2011
2012–13: October 19, 2012
2013–14: October 25, 2013
2014–15: October 24, 2014
2015–16: October 23, 2015

PSA PD Day October 21, 2011

PD Calendar website: bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx
Additions/changes: sdrummond@bctf.ca

October 25, 2010 National School Library Day

**Drop Everything
and READ
Challenge**



Reading is a beautiful thing.
Today. Every day. Read for twenty minutes.

The DEAR Challenge is sponsored by the

British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association

<http://bcotla.org>

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