

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How many non-instructional days are there?

The School Act Regulation allows for a maximum of six non-instructional days (NIDs) per year in the school calendar. This does not include the last day of June, which is designated as an "administrative day."

Where did these days come from?

Until 1972, there was only one day in the school calendar for classrooms to be closed so that teachers could be away to participate in conventions and workshops.

In 1972, non-instructional days were added to the school calendar at the request of the teaching profession after years of advocacy by the BCTF. The inclusion increased the number of days of work for teachers with no loss of instructional days for students. Starting in September 1973, there were five non-instructional days in the school calendar.

In the early 1990s, the ministry allowed school districts to designate up to two School Community Interaction Days (SCIDs) in addition to the five NIDs. The standard calendar attached to the 1993 regulation set out two SCIDs for each of the 1993–94, 1994–95, and 1995–96 school years. The impetus for the addition of these days was the implementation of Year 2000 initiatives.

In May 1996, the ministry introduced legislation establishing an Implementation Planning Day. This sixth non-instructional day replaced the two School Community Interaction Days (SCIDs) that existed until June 30, 1996.

How can these days be used?

The minister only designates the purpose for one of the days, the sixth NID. The designation is done through a Ministerial Order that is revised from time to time. In the past, the designation has included purposes such as activities relating to the implementation of new assessment, evaluation and reporting policies, the implementation of Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs), accreditation, school planning, student safety, interpretation of Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) results, Aboriginal education, and special education, etc.

The Ministerial Order 122/93, the Designation of Purpose for Non-Instructional Day Order, www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/e/m122-93.pdf, requires school boards to schedule one NID each school year for a purpose designated by the minister of education, and PD chairpersons and locals should familiarize themselves with the current order.

What control do teachers and their locals have over these days?

During the years of local bargaining, most locals of the BCTF were successful in achieving contract provisions regarding the five NIDs that existed at that time. In general, the contractual provisions designate some or all of these as professional development days, and provide for school and/or local PD committees to determine and plan the activities for these PD days. Sometimes these clauses specify a provincial PD day, a district day, a certain number of school-based days, etc. A related provision of local agreements provides most local PD committees with control over the allocation of PD funding for teachers.

Only a few locals have contractual provisions that give them some input into the sixth NID.

Since the government mandated provincial bargaining, locals have not been able to bargain improvements in PD funding clause language in local collective agreements. However, locals can negotiate issues of control over PD days and may get improvements in local practice through other methods.

What pressures are there to use NIDs for things other than PD?

If the five NIDs are not clearly designated as PD days in the local collective agreement or if these contract provisions are not carefully enforced, other activities will reduce the amount of time teachers have to engage in professional development activities. Locals and PD committees are finding that the two biggest sources of pressure on PD time and funding are activities related to implementation and accountability.

Implementation of provincial curricula and new ministry policies

The number of curricula, policies, and initiatives that the ministry and districts expect teachers to implement clearly exceed what can reasonably happen on the sixth NID each year. This has resulted in considerable pressure on the other five NIDs. A number of years ago, the ministry got out of the business of implementation and downloaded the task to school districts as another under-funded mandate.

The pressure on both PD time and PD funds comes directly from the district and school administrators, and indirectly from our own members. District and school administrators have been given the task of getting things implemented. They are typically not given the resources to accomplish this so they look to our PD time and PD funds. If members know they must implement a new curriculum and have been provided no other time or support, they will inevitably look to their PD time and money.

Work related to the accountability agenda

Again, there is typically more work generated by the district accountability contract process and district goals, and the school planning process and school goals than can reasonably fit into the sixth NID. District and school administrators argue that the district and school goals should become teachers' professional development goals. This argument confuses ongoing work and professional development. It also favours collegial work to the near exclusion of individual pursuits.

What strategies can be used to maintain teacher control of PD days?

Locals and PD committees have worked hard to resist the pressures on PD time and funding. In the interests of helping people not re-invent the wheel, here are the pros and cons of some of those strategies:

Making distinctions based on definitions

Some locals have tried to establish teacher control of PD by defining terms such as "in-service" and "staff development." This is problematic as these terms have broad meanings. For example, in-service is anything that occurs after a teacher has been hired. It is distinct from "pre-service" but not from "professional development." Similarly, staff development is anything that develops a staff. It could be professional development for the staff or not, it could be professional development for some teachers on staff and not others. The definition of professional development, its purposes, etc. in the *BCTF Members' Guide* (30.A.01–03, p 126) is very broad, and includes both individual and collective work.

Making distinctions based on who initiated the activity

Some locals have also tried to make distinctions between activities teachers choose and those that are “laid on.” The problem is that under sufficient pressure from administrators or peers, or simply time, teachers will choose to do activities that would otherwise be clearly designated as “laid on.” Also, some teachers will genuinely feel that an activity initiated by a school or district administrator would provide them with good professional development.

Making distinctions based on the type of NID

Some locals have tried to make sure that there is a common understanding about what days are for what purpose. They make sure that members and administrators alike know which NIDs are PD days in their local. The local collective agreement may specify that up to five NIDs are PD days. If the collective agreement is silent on this issue, there may be positive past practice that the local can rely on.

Locals can have their district identify which of the NIDs the school board is scheduling for the purpose designated in Ministerial Order M122/93, i.e., which is the sixth NID. The local can then communicate clearly to members how many PD days they have and which day is the sixth NID. This may help confine activities related to the district accountability contract, school planning, district or school goals, district or ministry initiatives, etc., to the sixth NID and keep other days free for professional development.

Helping members speak up

Members will be more likely to speak up if they have been encouraged to, if they know who to speak to, and if they are given “scripts” for common issues, such as teacher control of PD.

Breathing new life into PD

Members will value professional development and defend PD days if their experiences are positive and meaningful. Planning professional development activities is difficult and time-consuming work, and local PD chairs, and district and school PD committees need support in order to provide quality professional development services to members.

Many locals have built on the broad BCTF definition of professional development and explored new ways to do professional development. They have expanded their local PD offerings to include self-directed PD, action research groups, etc. The BCTF material on self-directed PD logs includes the attached list of possible professional learning experiences but there are many more.

Why no school today? The facts about professional development days

Many parents question the need for schools to be closed to students on professional development days. The BCTF has produced an information brochure for parents. Also there is a free BCTF presentation for parents on teacher professional development. Details can be found at <http://bctf.ca/ParentPresentations>.

DESIGNATION OF PURPOSE FOR NON-INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS ORDER

Authority: *School Act*, section 168 (2) (m)

Ministerial Order 122/93 (M122/93)	Effective July 1, 1993
Amended by M102/94	Effective July 1, 1994
Amended by M231/96	Effective July 1, 1996
Amended by M298/97	Effective August 18, 1997
Amended by M336/97	Effective October 7, 1997
Amended by M212/00	Effective June 8, 2000
Amended by M290/03	Effective May 29, 2003
Amended by M150/04	Effective April 26, 2004
Amended by M104/05	Effective April 14, 2005
Amended by M97/06	Effective May 2, 2006
Amended by M123/07	Effective May 30, 2007
Amended by M149/08	Effective July 1, 2008
Amended by M193/09	Effective August 31, 2009
Amended by M176/10	Effective June 21, 2010
Amended by M143/11	Effective June 2, 2011

Orders of the Minister of Education

Definition

1. In this order, "non-instructional day" means a non-instructional day within the meaning of the School Calendar Regulation, B.C. Reg. 114/02.

[am. M290/03; am. M104/05]

Designation of purpose

2. Pursuant to section 168 (2)(m) of the *School Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 412, and section 9 (1) of B.C. Regulation 114/02, the School Calendar Regulation, a board must schedule one non-instructional day in the 2011/2012 school year for the purpose of facilitating activities that in the board's opinion are designed to enhance student achievement, with a focus on either personalized learning or aboriginal student success.

[am. M290/03; am. M150/04; am. M104/05; am M97/06; am M123/07; am M149/08; am M193/09; am M176/10; am M143/11]

Interpretation

3. Nothing in this order prevents a board from providing an opportunity for parents of students attending schools in the district, other employees of the board, and members of the community to participate in the non-instructional days described in section 2.

4. [en. M231/96]

BC Ministry of Education
Governance and Legislation Branch

E-19

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

Do PD days shorten the school year? Why do teachers need professional development days? Can't teachers do PD on their time? These questions and others continue to be a matter of discussion for teachers, parents, and the public.

HISTORY OF PD DAYS

Professional development days represent a hard-won recognition of our needs and responsibilities as teachers. For many years, the BCTF made representations to our employers and the Ministry of Education to recognize the importance of teachers having the time and resources necessary to engage in professional development.

In 1972, PD days (non-instructional days) were added to the school calendar at the request of the teaching profession after years of advocacy from the BCTF. The inclusion increased the number of days of work for teachers with no loss of instructional days for students. PD days in the school calendar recognized that teachers needed time during the school year to hone their skills, improve practice, and stay current with changes related to teaching and learning.

During local bargaining most locals of the BCTF were successful in achieving provisions regarding PD days. In general, the contractual provisions provide for school and/or local PD committees to determine and plan the activities for PD days. A related provision of local agreements provides most local PD committees with control over the allocation of PD funding for teachers.

VALUE AND PURPOSE OF PD DAYS

Professionals in most fields routinely network with fellow practitioners, conduct and review research, and talk to experts and colleagues about trends, issues, and plans for ongoing professional development.

As active learners, teachers use PD days to keep on top of changes that affect their work with students, such as new technology, new ideas about teaching and learning, and different community needs. PD days help keep teachers current.

Topics for PD days come from the classroom experience of learning and teaching. Teachers decide individually and collectively the issues to address. They attend workshops and conferences, participate in mentoring programs, pursue self-directed professional development, and undertake other activities designed to enhance teaching and learning. They take their new skills back to the classrooms.

In addition to PD days many teachers attend university, take evening classes and weekend workshops, read professional journals, and attend summer school. These experiences promote a culture of teaching and professional development that has teachers working together as members of a learning community, rather than in isolation.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-BASED PD DAY PLANNING

The starting point for effective school-based PD day planning is a needs assessment process. The school PD representative should work with other members of the teaching staff to identify needs and plan training to meet those needs.

Over the past 20 years many of the schools in the province have called on BCTF PD associates (trained teachers) to facilitate the school-based needs-assessment process (currently called, teacher development) on PD days. This interactive process leads to the development of a school PD plan.

PD DAYS UNDER THREAT

The use of PD days for activities such as ministry/district in-service and school growth plans seriously undermines our statements about the need for time for teacher professional development.

The use of PD days for activities other than professional development, such as sports tournaments, also undermines our statements about the need for time for PD.

As a result of government/employer-mandated training such as child abuse protocols and health and safety, teachers are under pressure to use PD days for in-service training. In October 1999, the BCTF Representative Assembly adopted a motion stating that schools should not use PD days for WCB health and safety training, including violence prevention.

Issues such as school-wide discipline, anti-bullying, and other related professional development needs, as determined by school staffs, are appropriate for PD days.

The Federation has requested the ministry provide additional non-instructional days for mandated training and curriculum implementation. A sixth non-instructional day has been provided, but teachers cannot possibly attend to even all the mandated activities in one day.

The intensification of teaching and other local factors are leading teachers in some districts to consider taking their PD days in late August. This decision sometimes provides teachers with an additional week of vacation at the Spring Break. This could lead to a longer school year. In response to this development, and acting on advice from the Professional Development Advisory Committee, the BCTF Executive Committee has adopted a policy encouraging locals to organize school-based or district-based PD days during the school year rather than during the summer.

WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The challenges raised in this report can be addressed if we work together. As a union of professionals, we must use a strategy that includes bargaining, advocacy, professional influence, and communications to support teacher professional development.

DISCUSSION GUIDE ON SCHOOL CALENDAR ISSUES SCHOOL CALENDAR DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEACHERS SECTION

Working conditions

Salary

Teachers are paid an annual salary. Many years ago, professional development days were added to the school year without any extra salary. Now, teachers are agreeing to put those days outside of the school year without additional pay and the days themselves are under constant attack. If days or weeks are lengthened or shortened, are there any guarantees that a year from now members of the public or the government won't turn around and forget that Fridays are days off because the school day from Monday to Thursday was lengthened? Might they ask why teachers are being paid for a day off? Are teachers losing their paid statutory holidays? Are the TTOCs being compensated for a longer school day? Will TTOCs lose work (a form of layoff) with the proposed school calendar change?

Hours of work

A year from now, might the employer turn around and say "We're adding the Friday back to the school week, but we're not going to shorten the day?" Has the public ever supported the five-hour school day? Are we making ourselves more vulnerable to permanent increased hours of work in the long term? With a longer school day, how will teachers manage the marking and preparation? Will it be more difficult for teachers to prepare for absences when they are ill? When will they collaborate with other teachers if the day is longer? How will this affect our members who have young children? What risks are posed for our unpaid vacations if we lose the traditional school calendar? Could the employer begin to take vacation days away bit by bit? Is the lunch hour being shortened thereby cutting teacher breaks beyond what should be the minimum?

Teacher meetings

When will meetings occur about school policy, student progress, department matters, school based team issues, and so forth? Won't a longer day make these impossible? Will meetings begin to be scheduled on what is supposed to be "time off?" Does a shortened lunch break further jeopardize teacher socialization and/or collaboration?

Union strength

One of the most important aspects of member involvement in the union is the chance to meet as union members and discuss the issues and strategize about tactics. It is through our union involvement that we gained professional development days, professional development funding, maternity and parental leaves, salary increases, class size limits, class composition guarantees, and non-enrolling staffing ratios, to name a few quality education issues. A longer day and/or a shorter lunch break will mean that it will be difficult to get most union members to a meeting. When will general meetings and staff rep assemblies be held? How will we mobilize for bargaining or professional development campaigns? Will a longer day make it harder for most teachers to prepare if they are going to be absent for union training or union meetings?

Our support staff colleagues ensure that important services are provided both in and outside of the classroom. Is any school calendar proposal cutting their jobs or wages? If we agree to proposals that are at the expense of our support staff colleagues, will we be next? Who will support us if we violate the union principle of “an injustice to one is an injustice to all?” Are we working with the support staff union to ensure that we are adopting similar positions and tactics?

Health and safety

Major risk factors for the work of a teacher are overuse of voice, prolonged standing or sitting, repetitive bending or squatting beside students’ desks, and so forth. Stress is a huge component of a teacher’s job that has been proven to heighten the risk factors for hypertension, heart disease, migraines, and other health effects. Will a longer work day put our health and safety at risk? Will there be an increased risk of violence with a longer school day for students? When will the schools be cleaned if costs are cut by losing support staff and the schools are in operation longer? Will students be riding the bus in the dark and arriving home in the dark? Will teachers be arriving and leaving when it is dark? How will longer teaching hours during a day affect women who are pregnant or teachers with chronic illnesses such as arthritis or MS?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

BCTF policies and procedures

1. That the BCTF oppose any proposed school calendar that schedules professional development days outside the months of September through June. (Executive Committee, April 2002)
2. That locals be encouraged to organize school-based or district-based PD days during the school year rather than during the summer. (Executive Committee, June 1999)

NEW (not included in original document)

30.A.02—That BCTF PD support be available for those locals who had summer PD imposed upon them. (07 AGM, p. 12)

30.A.16—b. That where the employer directs that PD days are to be held outside of the school year book ends of the first working day after Labour Day and the last working day in June, the BCTF will support members in exercising their right to choose not to participate. (Nov. 03 RA, p. 22)

During local bargaining, most locals achieved provisions regarding PD days. In general, contracts provide for schools and/or local PD committees to determine the dates and to plan the activities for PD days.

Benefits of holding PD days during the school year

- Teachers at the school are in the best position to determine the best dates for PD days.
- Teachers are able participate in the province-wide October PSA day and other PSA conferences held during the school year.
- For program planning purposes, school staffs can decide to take consecutive PD days during the school year.

- By holding PD days during the school year teachers have the opportunity to reflect on and deal with the emerging issues facing schools.
- School staffs can use the days to implement and review school-wide PD goals in an ongoing manner.
- If the PD days are held during the school year, it is less likely that the school district/administrator will be able to co-opt the days for in-service/implementation of district priorities.
- Teachers are able to maintain control over how they use their summer vacation days.
- All school staff, including those hired after the school year begins, are able to participate in PD days.
- Schools can access BCTF PD resources and workshops for PD days held during the school year.
- If PD days are held during the school year, the integrity of the school year is maintained.
- Teacher facilitators for PD-day programs are generally available during the school year.

Key questions

- Why move PD days to the summer? Financial or professional/educational reasons?
- How will school staffs deal with professional issues that arise during the school year?
- How will the change affect support staff?
- How will teachers be able to participate in PSA conferences, which are held during the school year?
- Will teachers be able to exercise professional autonomy in selecting PD activities?
- What are the implications for teachers who have made commitments for the summer (travel, university programs, etc.)?
- Will the change be good for students, teachers, parents, and the communities?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARENTS

Following are a list of questions and considerations you may wish to talk about with your PAC and others in your community. Obviously some questions are more suited to your PAC than others will be.

School calendar changes

Currently many districts are considering changing the length of the school day, week or year. Last year legislation was passed to allow your local school board more flexibility in scheduling when schools are open and in session. Legislation passed in January 2002 no longer requires parental approval before such a change can be made. Parents must be consulted but they do not have to give their approval. Each school may have its own calendar different from every other school in the same district. Holidays and hours do not have to be uniform across the community. You could find you have each of your children in a school that operates on a different calendar from the others. Your children could be on different school bus schedules or begin and end at different times of the day or year. Lunch hours and recesses may be extended or reduced, one child may have a week longer of holiday in the Winter or Spring break than your other children. The changes are accomplished by adding minutes to the school day. Research does not show that student achievement or learning is enhanced by any of these changes.

Why then would a school board consider making such changes?

Cost savings

The plan to move to a four day school week originated as a cost savings plan during a time of energy crisis. All of the districts that have moved to this plan have done so when facing dwindling budgets. It is often done out of desperate necessity in the hopes of not having to close schools. This plan works best in small rural areas. Most of these districts have small enrolments, great travel distances, student attendance problems and challenges recruiting and retaining teachers. The week is shortened by extending the hours in the four days and students not being required to attend on the fifth day.

Another scheme is to add minutes to the school day and then have a longer Winter and Spring breaks. Teachers may be required to attend in August to attend professional development activities.

Both schemes result in the boards saving money. Costs are saved in the budget lines of transportation, heating and air conditioning, building wear and tear, custodial costs and a reduction to support staff and or support staff time.

How will these cost saving initiatives affect parents?

Transportation

Will your elementary child have to go and come from school in the dark for the winter months?

Will additional minutes a day add to the stress and tiredness of your child?

How long in a day should a young child be expected to concentrate and learn?

If you take your children to school and they are on different schedules at different schools, how will you schedule this?

If you work away from home, how will that affect your schedule?

Child care needs

Will an extended winter and spring break mean you must pay more for child care?

If you rely on an older sibling to care for younger siblings and the older child is no longer available, how will you accommodate the younger child's needs?

Will your child be able to cope with a shortened lunch break, and perhaps no recess, and not become overtired?

Will your child require extra food for the longer day? Does your family income allow for this? In some schools on the four-day week programs, costs were saved due to no food being served on the fifth day. Can you afford the extra costs of now providing for the fifth day?

Will there be an increased risk of bullying and violence with an extended day and fewer supervisors?

Will the district ensure there is improved or more lighting provided on sites where schools are open later.

Will students have to travel on dark streets?

If students leave later, do they have to travel in periods of peak traffic due to rush hour?

Many students enjoy community and school extra-curricular activities. If the day is extended by an hour or more, will they be too tired to take part in such events? Will inter-district and intra-mural sports programs be affected?

Family life style needs

How will it affect your family, if you are no longer able to have common meal times?

If all of your children are not on a common holiday schedule, how will family outings and vacations be scheduled?

Will an extended day adversely affect the employment possibilities for your older children?

Will families new to the community be able to adjust to this new calendar without hardship?

Children with special learning needs

If there are fewer support staff available, what will it mean to your child?

How will a longer day impact your child's ability to learn?

Community

How will school facilities used by community groups be affected?

Will the changed use of facilities impact on community groups and programs either because of the changed facility availability or because of the changed attendance patterns of students and staff?

In some districts the extended day and/or day off allows college courses to be held at the local high school sites. How do parents feel about the older students sharing a facility with the secondary or elementary students?

If schools are closed on Fridays, what will the impact be on the community and businesses in vandalism, loitering, and policing?

**For more information regarding *School Calendars*, please see:
bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=5532**

BCTF POSITION ON SUMMER PD DAYS

BCTF POLICY

After significant discussion and debate, the BCTF Executive Committee adopted the following policy regarding the use of PD days during summer months:

30.A.16 *That the BCTF encourage locals to organize school-based or district-based PD days during the school year rather than during the summer.*

June 99 EC

Arguments against using PD days in the summer

- If using PD days on consecutive days is such a good idea why don't schools take their PD Days during the first week of the school year or at another time during the school year.
- Funding may not be available to support a summer program.
- Lengthens the school-year bookends.
- PD days can be co-opted for non-PD purposes (i.e., district priorities, implementation/in-service, etc.). Fear that some staff may not be engaged in *teacher-directed* PD.
- While attendance may be voluntary, teachers may feel pressured by colleagues to attend.
- Harder to organize school-based PD.
- Some schools may vote for summer PD; therefore, some spouses may be on different work schedules.
- Some teachers may not be able to attend due to prior commitments (i.e., late summer holidays).
- Loss of teacher autonomy in determining their PD needs.
- Inability of school staff to respond to emerging needs during the school year.
- Need to come to school a week earlier in summer to prepare for classes.
- Loss of October PD day in some locals.
- Staff hired after the beginning of the school year miss out on PD days, as well as, the opportunity to work those days so they cannot be paid for the extra days at Spring Break.
- Planning during summer months is difficult...schools are closed and teachers unavailable to get information about PD programs.
- Some teachers have indicated that they miss the PD days during the school year.
- Concern that by voluntarily extending the school year...this could be used against us in the future if government decides to extend the school year.
- The debate about school calendar can lead to staff conflict, guilt, etc.
- Planning must be done six months in advance.
- Some staff opt out of the days at the school level.
- There is a conflict for teachers who wish to take summer university courses.
- Administration likes the concept!
- If not district-wide...it is a holiday for some schools and not for others.
- Fewer breaks during the school year.
- Teachers who do not opt for summer PD may be forced to give up their discretionary day or take a pay cut.
- Low attendance at summer PD days could disrupt both district and school planning.
- Hard to resist using a summer PD day for a school-based staff meeting.
- Works against October PSA day.
- Some PD chairpersons and other local leaders may not be able to attend BCTF Summer Conference.
- Limits individual choice/autonomy.

The two main arguments advanced by proponents of using PD days during the summer

- Intensive PD in a concentrated period of time.
- Two-week spring break or other time off during the school year.