

VESTA WEEKLY

TOPICS WORTH TALKING ABOUT! PLEASE READ AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES

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FSA's

Of all years, this year is not the year for the VSB and the Ministry of Education to be forcing the issue around FSAs. We are continuing to fight for their cancellation, but it currently appears that they will be proceeding in February.

In the category of “really? You’re going to do what? This year?”

The district approached VESTA to let us know they were contemplating having teachers mark the FSA this spring. We were able to push back against that and it appears that marking will be done in the usual fashion. Disappointingly, this was the year that the district also asserted limits to individual teachers and schools producing and distributing their own communications to parents about the FSA.

It’s time for this ridiculous test to end and be acknowledged for what it truly is – a waste of resources, goodwill, instructional time, and available technology.

There are no changes to the district process, although we are hearing of some situations where the principal is pushing back against a parent’s right to opt out of the FSA. We support parents’ right to opt out, and there has been no change in this direction from the ministry of Education or the VSB. Please contact the VESTA office if you are experiencing pushback or refusals of opt-out parent letters.

Health and Safety

The provincial health and safety guidelines and the new district plan have been updated. To be posted to the VESTA website once published. Please continue to create a culture of mask wearing in your class and your school.

The BCTF continues to advocate for teachers to be among those prioritized for the vaccine, and VESTA is seeking school-based clinics similar to the employer-provided flu shot. Any information will be updated when available.

The VESTA EC made the decision Tuesday night to use a new COVID grant from the BCTF to support continuing the half-day release for one H&S rep per school per month. Please use the same process, starting this month, to access the release time. As there is a limited fund available, the intention is to use those funds until spent and will communicate with H&S reps regarding the length of time this will be available once we have more information.

The new 3-layer VSB provided masks are arriving in schools, with 2 provided for each staff member and student. Early reviews find an improvement in this set of masks. Please ensure you wash your mask before use and encourage your students to wear them as much as possible and to launder them regularly at their home as well.

New Teachers' Conference

The BCTF New Teachers' Conference will be held on Friday February 26. This is an excellent virtual event for networking, sharing experiences, learning from and with other new teachers. VESTA has set aside funds to sponsor release time and registration for up to 10 TTOCs and the registration fees for early career teachers who are able to access school or district pro-d funds.

Please apply for these funded spots using the VESTA [CV form](#).



The banner features a large stylized 'NTC' logo with '2021' on the left. To the right, it reads 'Community and connections for early career teachers' and 'February 26, 2021'. Below this, it says 'REGISTER NOW!' in large blue letters. At the bottom left is the URL 'bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2021' and at the bottom right is a circular logo with a hand holding a flame.

Section 53 – Labour Relations Board Bargaining

The BCTF is back at the Labour Relations Board this month to continue to pursue improvements to the bargaining process, a replacement of the “Best Efforts” provisions for school organization, an additional 1% at the top of the grid and prep time for Adult Educators.

Discussions so far have been productive and progress has been steady. Our hopes are that these discussions will result in a stronger and more streamlined bargaining structure for the rounds to come, and school and class organization based on compliance with the Collective Agreement.

Contacting the VESTA office

As we continue to manage our health and safety responsibilities as employers to our staff at the VESTA office, and the increase in the number of online and virtual meetings, you may encounter a recorded message when you call during office hours. If this happens, please know that your VESTA reps and staff are working hard to support members, but are unable to answer the phone. Sending an email to your IHTO liaison is the most efficient way to receive a response.

VESTA VP, Jody Polukoshko, is one of the BCTF's lead negotiators at the LRB table, which means that Jody will only be at VESTA part time between now and May. Please continue to contact the VESTA office in the usual fashion, but if you are emailing Jody you may receive a response from another Executive Committee member. Thank you for your understanding!

Feedback on the October Indigenous Focus Day

In September 2021, the first day of school, September 7, will be a district anti-racism in-service day. Students will not attend until September 8. Given that the district will soon be planning for that day, we'd like to provide as much feedback as possible on the content and format. VESTA asked for your feedback on the October Day in order to identify and address areas that you'd like to see considered for the upcoming training and areas that you think were less effective.

We'll be collecting that feedback at the General Meeting on February 16. Please make sure your staff rep is aware of your perspectives.

#RedforBCED

The latest announcement from the Minister of Education and the Public Health Officer fell short of mandating mask wearing by all students in BC schools and did not address reducing classroom density. We hear your frustration of not having sufficient safety measures implemented and not considering teachers in the current vaccine rollout plan. VESTA and the BCTF continue to fight these battles on every front.

In December, we brought back the #RedforBCED campaign to highlight these issues as we believe that schools are not the safe place that government is claiming them to be.

We know that your day-to-day reality has not changed; many teachers are working in isolation and anxiety is high. We are encouraging our members to wear red on Fridays as an act of solidarity – a way of bringing us together when we're feeling so disconnected. Here are our colleagues from Douglas Annex, who have been wearing red on Fridays. If you are up for it, send photos our way: vanessa@vesta.ca, or tag us on Twitter @VESTA39.



BCTF AGM delegates elected at Feb 16 General Meeting

We still have room for 9 delegates to represent VESTA members at the BCTF Annual General Meeting during spring break. It's an exciting time to play a role in the creation and evolution of BCTF policy and to have a say in how we navigate the coming year. Please contact chloe@vesta.ca, anne@vesta.ca or heather@vesta.ca if you have questions.



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Dates to Remember

Newly Scheduled General Meeting and Staff Rep Assembly

February 16, 2021 @ 4:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82186116650>

Meeting ID: 821 8611 6650

Passcode: 746148

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

WLC/B Committee Meeting

February 17, 2021 @ 4 pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96850664021>

Meeting ID: 968 5066 4021

Passcode: 790893

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

TTOC Committee Meeting

February 18, 2021 @ 4:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97833137147>

Meeting ID: 978 3313 7147

Passcode: 173264

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada



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