

# VESTA WEEKLY

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



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## **Thank you and wishes for a safe and restful summer**

Our second pandemic year has had an impact on us that we likely are not yet fully aware of – thank you for your essential and important work holding up public education and creating spaces for students that were consistent, safe and meaningful. We’ve seen this year what an important role schools play in communities. We know that our system and our members deserve much better than was provided this year, and will continue to advocate for better and more in the months and years to come.

We here at the VESTA office would like to acknowledge and appreciate the complex and challenging role teachers have played in the pandemic, and additionally, to name those of you who took on union representation roles. We know how busy the regular workload is, and your union rep colleagues have stepped up to ensure that communication of information, advocacy, and representation continued throughout the year.

During this time, it can be even more challenging to attend to your own well-being. We sincerely hope you are able to block off some time this summer to truly get away from the intensity of our work and decompress. This time is essential to us all, especially when so much is asked of us.

Thank you all for your patience, support, collaboration and guidance in helping each other through this year! Undoubtedly, we all hope the coming year is less about the pandemic and more about recovery.

Have a well-earned, well-deserved, and restful Summer Break!

## **Summer School**

Summer school is taking place on a limited basis and the same heat provisions will be in place. Please remember that your rights as a worker are always in force, and the ability to seek support from a site-based Occupational Health and Safety Committee and Worksafe continue.

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## **VESTA office hours**

While the VESTA office is open during the school year, your elected officers are in the office for two weeks after June 30 and the two weeks prior to school opening to wrap up issues with the Board, follow up on any outstanding matters, and help with urgent matters. Jody and Darren are in house until July 7 and Allison and Joanne will be working until July 14. Email and calls are the best way to reach us for urgent matters. Given the workload this year, we ask that members hold on to matters that are not time sensitive for the fall.

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## **School Restart September**

While discussions continue about the return to school in September, much of the finalizing of these plans will take place closer to September, when there is a better understanding of the progression of COVID-19 at that time as well as vaccination numbers. We have been advised to expect changes to the provincial plan on July 1 and then again for September 7. VESTA will be participating as part of District Health and Safety to ensure that teacher voices are part of the restart plan and that information is communicated to teachers as effectively and efficiently as possible.



## **Funding of Summer Professional Development**

After much thoughtful and energetic discussion at various VESTA Meetings, VESTA members debated and voted at the January 2020 General Meeting to pass the following motion which continues to be VESTA policy as directed by the membership:

*That Pro-D Funds including the Temporary Supplemental Funds not be used to fund summer professional development.*

Teachers involved in the Collaborative Inquiries that focus on story workshop need to be aware that the September 1 book launch session available through the VSB pro-d site that includes a \$20 fee will not be eligible for refund from professional development funding as per the membership vote above.

Teachers engage in pro-d on an ongoing basis. Not all of it is funded. We are professionals and it is part of our professional responsibility to engage in professional development. Some teachers enjoy spending part of their summers preparing for the oncoming school year and that is great for them. Other teachers have obligations to families or simply need the summer to recover from the hectic demands of the school year. In Vancouver, we have the right to duty free summers so that teachers can make a choice of whether or not engage in professional activities during that time off. Vancouver teachers have also made the decision to support that by keeping the funding within the bookends of the school year.

Prior to 1972 there were no professional days during the school year. Teachers lobbied to have the pro-d days added and in 1972 those days were added without an increase in pay. In subsequent years we bargained for funding to support those professional days. Keeping the funds in the bookends of the school year is a commitment to our profession as a collective and a countermeasure to the pressures to have mandated professional development in the summer.

