

VESTA WEEKLY

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

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Truth and Reconciliation

The concept of Reconciliation as an active process that we continually engage in is a fundamentally important aspect of the work of decolonizing. As teachers, we work in a system that is inextricably linked to the Residential Schools and Indian Day Schools whose sole purpose was genocide and cultural genocide that was required by the colonial project of Nation building. For those of us who are settlers on this land, it's essential we never stop questioning the structures and the methods we employ in our work in schools and in communities.

As teachers, we are often told “you teach who you are” as a way of indicating that our teaching is deeply connected to our strengths, values and knowledge. But it's important to understand that for many of us, this can mean that we are reproducing our own privileges and biases in our work or the way we approach the work.

Schools have a long history that includes a feminized workforce, required postsecondary education, heteronormative or gendered expectations of students, streaming of students based on ability, and historical narratives of Canadian identity, alongside the legacy of Residential Schools. It's not enough for us to consider whether we have biases; it's essential that we actively work to recognize the biases in our system and work to undo the harm caused by these longstanding structures, many of which pretend neutrality.

We hope that this past week you have taken the time to consider the 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, these actions are not limited to the week surrounding September 30. Teaching, thinking, learning and reflecting on Reconciliation and decolonizing are year- and life-long practices. We here at VESTA are starting this work with our union structures and processes as well. Let's commit to doing this together.

VSB Education Plan Survey

The VSB circulated a survey to members this week soliciting feedback on the Education Plan, which used to be called the Strategic Plan. VESTA represents the VESTA membership on matters connected to our work as elected representatives and stakeholders in the Vancouver School Board.

We have policy that the district should notify VESTA in advance of such surveys being distributed, which was done. Please do not feel any responsibility or obligation to complete this survey. Should you choose to do so, please feel free to express your values and priorities, as well as identifying areas where you identify concerns related to, for example, underfunding and lack of classroom supports, increased need for anti-racism or Indigenous Education strategies, reduction in resource and support teacher time, increased and meaningless accountability measures, the teacher shortage, increasing standardization and workload.

Please rest assured that VESTA's elected representatives will continue to advocate on behalf of teachers through all stages of the creation of the VSB Education Plan, as well as the budget, upcoming curriculum and reporting matters, and the day to day operation of the district. Your reps to VSB Standing Committees include:

Policy and Governance: Glen Hansman and Joanne Sutherland

Facilities: Danielle Durant and Allison Jambor

Student Learning and Wellbeing: Greg Canning and Marjorie Dumont

Personnel: Sylvia Jackson and Darren Tereposky

Finance: Vanessa Lefebvre and Jody Polukoshko

There continue to be available opportunities for members to represent VESTA on VSB Advisory Committees. If you are interested, please complete your CV and contact allison@vesta.ca to set up the required training session.

Feedback on VSB Anti-racism day

Thank you to Staff Reps who have collected feedback on the VSB Anti-racism inservice day. The input received to date has been thoughtful and very helpful in supporting our ability to respond to the district about this and future Anti-Racism inservice. If you have not yet submitted your feedback, it's not too late! Email jody@vesta.ca or allison@vesta.ca as we will be collating for a report to the October 19th Staff Rep Assembly.

VESTA Executive Committee

The VESTA Executive Committee is an excellent place to come together with colleagues and dive more deeply into the workings of our union. We have two vacancies on the VESTA Executive Committee that we'd love to fill – the greater number of voices, the more diverse the voices, the stronger we are as an organization that represents teachers! We are seeking members to step into the role of Teacher Teaching on Call Committee Chair and someone who identifies as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Colour for our designated Member at Large Position.

If you have questions about the role, the commitment or the experience, please don't hesitate to reach out to any member of our current Executive Committee.

A reminder as well that the VESTA Executive Committee meets twice a month on Tuesdays and meetings are open to any member. You can find the calendar and links to join the meeting [here](#)

Topics regularly discussed include: Bargaining and grievance matters, professional issues, VSB Board updates, BCTF matters, VTF building, VESTA's work on Social Justice and Aboriginal Education, Health and Safety, reports from standing committees and decision-making in response to emergent issues.

Bargaining

VESTA continues to prepare for the upcoming rounds of Local and Provincial bargaining. The BCTF Executive Committee is working hard to ensure that bargaining in this round reflects the strong mandate provided by members in the Spring.

The BCTF Bargaining Conference will be held on October 28-30 and your VESTA President and Bargaining Chair, Joanne Sutherland and Greg Canning, will be advocating there along with 6 additional delegates. VESTA policy provides for the appointment of those delegates from VESTA standing committees and general membership. If you are interested in applying to represent VESTA at the Provincial Bargaining Conference, please complete the CV found [here](#) and submit prior to noon on October 12.

VESTA is also seeking members to work on the VESTA Local Bargaining Team. This role reflects a significant amount of work and time out of your role between November and March. Some training will be provided. This posting is open until noon on October 12 and you can find the CV form [here](#)



FSA

Despite overwhelming information that the Foundation Skills Assessment is an ethically bankrupt, misused, inaccurate, redundant tool that has neither teacher nor parent support, the ministry is continuing to insist on its' use again this year.

The BCTF has provided new resources for the FSA along with a campaign addressing government and the irrational commitment to a test that is not required in curriculum, helpful for reporting, nor resulting increased supports for students.

The usual updated parent withdrawal forms can be found here (<https://www.bctf.ca/advocacy-issues/campaigns>) along with a petition to Minister J Whiteside – we are hoping it will go viral, please share! You will also find some supports for social media posts to #canceltheFSA

In the coming days and weeks, the BCTF is producing videos of Teri Mooring, grade 4 and 7 teachers speaking about our position and experience with the FSA, a response to the government's FSA pamphlet, an open letter to parents, and additional social media shareables.

A message from the The Professional Specialist Association AOEC (Anti- Oppression Educators Collective):

We are excited to invite you in our shared journey of continued advocacy against oppression, delving deep into pedagogy and committing ourselves to unlearning the colonial. This year our PSA Day conference on Oct 22 is focused on Dismantling Borders, join us in a thoughtful discussion with Harsha Walia, and the opportunity to participate in an array of workshops on dismantling oppression in education. We are thrilled about our conference and our future events.

Check out the workshop selection and register early to avoid disappointment: <https://aoec.ourconference.ca/>

The poster is for the PSA Day Conference, organized by the Anti-Oppression Educators Collective (AOEC). The central theme is "TEACHING TO DISMANTLE BORDERS" on October 22nd, 2021. A large yellow circle contains the title and date, with the slogan "NEUTRALITY IS NOT AN OPTION" written along its bottom edge. The AOEC logo is in the top left, and a "SAVE THE DATE" graphic is in the top right. A photograph of Harsha Walia is featured in the bottom right, with a yellow vertical bar next to it that reads "KEYNOTE SPEAKER". A yellow box in the middle left states "OVER 20 WORKSHOPS AM + PM", and another yellow box below it says "CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS & REGISTRATION". The BCTF logo is in the bottom left corner. The background is blue with silhouettes of birds in flight.



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Dates to Remember

Executive Committee Meeting

Oct 4, 2021 @ 4:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81182082534>

Meeting ID: 811 8208 2534
Passcode: 708544



VESTA

The Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association is the union representing elementary teachers and adult educators working in public schools in Vancouver.