

# VESTA WEEKLY

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



## IN THIS ISSUE

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
COVID related leaves and PPE	2
WCB Claims during COVID	3
School Safety Requirements	3
Daily health check	4
COVID-19 safety plans	4
Personal prevention practices	4
Role of Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee (JOHSC)	5
Failures to Fill and TTOC callout	5
Refusal of Unsafe Work	6
VSB Calendar Committee Process	7
Guest Author Kevin McPherson on attending local bargaining as an observer	7
SURT February 2 and 3	7
Observe Black Shirt Day today and tomorrow	8
VESTA Meetings Virtual until Spring Break	8
January Professional Development	8

## COVID related leaves and PPE

BCTF is working with BCPSEA to seek support for two leaves with government, firstly, to continue the asymptomatic leave that ended December 31, 2021 for folks who need to isolate. In the fall, the advice was that fully vaccinated individuals didn't need to isolate. That has changed and we are making an effort to re-invigorate this leave.

Secondly, we are seeking leave to care for family members who are required to isolate or who are sick with COVID-19. VESTA members have access to 5 days of Immediate family illness from our sick bank, but other than that, members cannot access sick leave unless they are sick themselves.

In the meantime, we continue to work with government to tighten up criteria for mask exemptions and increased compliance with mask mandates.

Additionally, the BCTF is lobbying for the provision of N95 masks for all staff and students. The BCTF received a donation of 100,000 N95 masks that will be distributed to locals in the coming week and VESTA will ensure that they are made available to staff.

If your vaccination must take place during the working day, you need to take personal illness leave through SFE, then email confirmation of the time and date of your appointment to [leaves@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:leaves@vsb.bc.ca) so the draw on your sick bank will be reversed.

If you are managing your illness at home you can end isolation when all three of these conditions are met: (source: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/if-you-have-covid-19>)

1. **Fully vaccinated:** At least **5 days** have passed since your symptoms started, or from test date if you did not have symptoms. You should wear a mask even in settings where a mask isn't required and avoid higher risk settings, such as long term care facilities and gatherings, for another 5 days after ending isolation. Fully vaccinated means you received both doses of a 2-dose series (e.g. AstraZeneca, Pfizer, or Moderna vaccine) or it has been more than 14 days since you received a single dose of a 1-dose series (e.g. Janssen/ Johnson and Johnson).

**Not fully vaccinated:** At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms started, or from the day you tested positive if you did not have symptoms.

2. Fever has resolved for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

3. Symptoms have improved.

## **WCB Claims during COVID**

If a member has COVID-19, the COVID-19 infection coincides with employment in a classroom environment, and they are missing work due to this condition, members are encouraged to apply for WCB using the Teleclaim service (1-888-WORKERS, toll-free). This applies to members regardless of employment status (contract, temporary, TTOC, continuing, etc.).

Onset of symptoms for a WCB claim should coincide with attendance in a work environment where the member is in close contact and possibly being exposed to the COVID-19 virus. COVID-19 related claims are streamlined through Worksafe.

The WCB claimant must have COVID-19 to file a claim. Verification is either from a lab test result, or a diagnosis from a physician. If you would like to file a claim, you will need a positive test result or attend with a physician and receive a diagnosis of COVID-19 infection. The type of test is not relevant, but this should be an official lab result document.

We encourage you to apply for WCB should you have COVID-19 while working as a classroom teacher, using WCB's Teleclaim Service.

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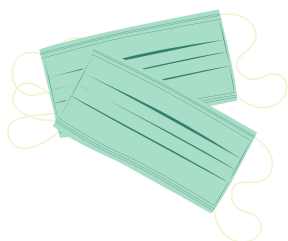
## **School Safety Requirements**

Schools have now reopened with additional requirements to implement specific measures. The following are the new documents that apply in addition to those prior to winter break.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/covid-19-protocols-for-administrators.pdf>

This document provides guidance on the enhanced measures that the Minister has determined must be in place by January 10, 2022, and includes the checklist later referred to in this document:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines-addendum.pdf>



## **Daily health check**

- All staff are strongly encouraged to complete a daily health check.
- Complete any reporting tool provided by public health if they test positive for COVID-19 (regardless of test type), including providing all school-related information requested.
- Specify that the absence is illness-related when notifying their school of an absence.
- Continue to follow public health guidance and recommendations.

As supported by public health, students and staff do not need to disclose if their absence is specific to COVID-19. However, those who test positive for COVID-19 should be diligent in ensuring their school is aware their absence is illness-related.

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## **COVID-19 safety plans**

On January 7, 2022, the Provincial Health Officer announced an order requiring employers to re-activate their COVID-19 Safety Plans. This replaces the previous requirement for employers to have communicable disease prevention plans in their workplaces. This order does not apply to the broad K–12 sector.

What is the difference between a COVID-19 Safety Plan and a Communicable Disease Plan?

While communicable disease prevention plans and COVID-19 Safety Plans share some of the same fundamental principles, COVID-19 Safety Plans are formal, written plans, with more rigorous controls.

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## **Personal prevention practices**

- Have staff demonstrate and model how to practice personal prevention measures at school (e.g., wearing a mask, hand hygiene, etc.). Supportive school environments.
- Schools must continue to support personal prevention practices (including mask use) through positive and inclusive approaches, that are aligned with existing professional practices to address non-compliant behaviour.
- Approaches should not exclude students from participating in school or potentially result in stigma.



## **Role of Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC)**

During this time, JOHSC should be meeting regularly to address emerging issues and concerns at the school level. JOHSCs should also be reviewing and completing the checklist (on page 4 of the addendum) to ensure the Communicable Disease Plan in place is sufficient and appropriately implemented:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines-addendum.pdf>

The requirements are:

- All schools must update their communicable disease plans to incorporate the additional measures included in this addendum.
- To review ongoing prevention measures to identify areas where measures may be inconsistently implemented, and to identify mitigation efforts. For instance, any items on checklist marked “sometimes” are great places to begin with the JOHSC recommendations to the employer.
- Measures should be communicated to the school community (e.g., newsletters, posters, etc.). JOHSC worker representative(s) should be in collaboration with school union representatives in communicating unaddressed concerns with their local Health and Safety Chair and/or local offices.

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## **Failures to Fill and TTOC callout**

VESTA has serious concerns about some of the strategies being used to address staff absences. Under no circumstances should teachers be redeployed to cover absences of SSWs and this should be immediately reported to the VESTA office. At this point, the VSB is using teacher prep time and the redeployment of non-enrolling staff across classrooms and, in some cases, schools. We have spoken clearly to management that we disagree with this practice. What makes it particularly onerous is that we are hearing reports of TTOCs who are not being called out.

VESTA will be striking a 5 person task force of TTOCs to determine and track failures to fill and TTOC callout to ensure all efforts are being made to cover absences without teacher reassignment. Please keep track of reassignments, failures to fill and delay of prep time. It is our expectation that delayed prep time will be made up and this should always be done within 5 days as per the Collective Agreement.



## **REFUSAL OF UNSAFE WORK**

Workers in BC have the right to refuse unsafe work. Section 3.12 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation spells out the right of a worker to refuse work if there is reasonable cause to believe it would create an undue hazard to their health and safety. An “undue hazard” would include a condition at the workplace that may expose a worker to an excessive or unwarranted risk of injury or occupational disease.

### *During COVID-19:*

For COVID-19, an “undue hazard” would be one where a worker’s job role places them at increased risk of exposure and adequate controls are not in place to protect them from that exposure. WorkSafeBC will likely be using the following documents to make any assessment on appropriateness of workplace safety and Communicable Disease Plans.

### *Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings:*

[www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caringorderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines.pdf](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caringorderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines.pdf) Addendum—  
[Provincial COVID-19](#)

### *Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12:*

[www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caringorderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines-addendum.pdf](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caringorderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines-addendum.pdf)

### *Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools:*

[http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID\\_public\\_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf)

### *Addendum—Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools:*

[http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID\\_public\\_guidance/Addendum\\_K-12Guidance\\_12292021.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Addendum_K-12Guidance_12292021.pdf) –



## **VSB Calendar Committee Process**

It's time for the VSB to seek advice from stakeholders on the 2022-2023 calendar. VESTA has policy that Pro-D days not be consistently attached to long weekends, that we investigate models of providing collaborative time with instructional minutes above the School Act minimums, that the VSB create a calendar that corresponds to a greater diversity of religious and cultural days, that the schedule include a 20 minute recess, and that Professional Development days be alternated across days of the week. These motions are intended to ensure that our school calendar values the working schedules and diversity of member faith, and that part time members have equitable access to Professional Development. Bayview teacher Sam Asmoucha will be representing VESTA on this important committee this year.

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## **Guest Author Kevin McPherson on attending local bargaining as an observer**

Union processes are mysterious until you have an opportunity to live them. For me, our bargaining process was not only unknown but very intimidating. Recently, I got to sit as an observer on our local bargaining team while we negotiated changes to our collective agreement with our employer. I had no bargaining experience going in, but I found the back and forth fascinating. Both sides presented proposals and counterproposals to each other, then both groups retreated into private discussions—like a sport's huddle, except held virtually over Zoom. In our huddle (officially called a 'caucus'), members shared their thoughts, trying to figure out how changes would affect all members. I enjoyed this experience and you can too. This opportunity is open to all members, pending time and space.

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## **SURT February 2 and 3**

Staff Reps will be invited by school to attend our Winter SURT. Please register as soon as possible and indicate your preference of workshop. Options for programming include: "Is it a Grievance? Problem-solving at the school level" and "Managing Conflict", with an afternoon session on Staff Committee Meetings. Please plan to attend, and if you cannot, consider sending another rep from your school to build capacity and ensure all worksites gain from this learning opportunity!



## **Observe Black Shirt Day today and tomorrow**

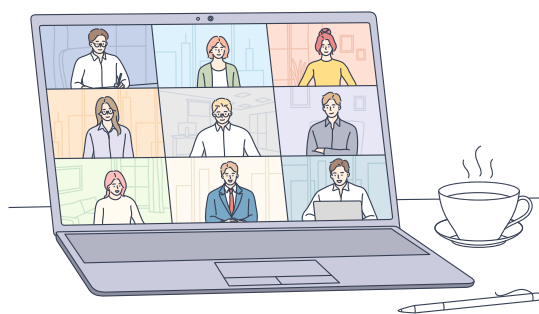
Today and tomorrow, students and educators across BC and Canada wear black shirts in recognition of the struggle for civil rights fought by Black and racialized Canadians. It is scheduled on the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr and its goal is to educate, remember, and to collectively participate in necessary conversations about racial justice. It's important to remember that those struggles are ongoing, and need engagement and continuous learning. For those of us in the education system, we have a particular responsibility to unlearn the conscious and unconscious bias we all hold, and we urge members to read, reflect, and reckon with their own understanding of anti-black racism and how it impacts our teaching.

We'd urge you to research solidarity days, as we know, there can be more than one "event" on the same day, and they sometimes have different underpinnings and focus. Similar to the broad and corporate anti-bullying Pink Shirt Day that arose after the International Day of Pink, which was meant to specifically address LGBTQ discrimination in schools, this year there has been a great deal of promotion of the Day of Black Excellence on the same day as the grassroots Black Shirt Day. Please research solidarity events as they can be a very helpful educational tool and demonstrate the importance of standing together against oppression.

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## **VESTA Meetings Virtual until Spring Break**

VESTA will continue to hold all meetings virtually until Spring Break, at which point, the Executive committee will make a further determination.



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## **January Professional Development**

The District has provided for teachers to work from remote sites including home for the January Professional Development Day.





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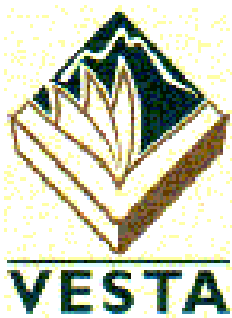
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## Dates to Remember

### General Meeting/ Staff Rep Assembly General Meeting to adopt BCTF AGM resolutions

January 18, 2022 @ 4:00 PM

#### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85306029529>

Meeting ID: 853 0602 9529

Passcode: 391392

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada



### Professional Issues Committee

January 19, 2022 @ 4:00 PM

#### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84983675403>

Meeting ID: 849 8367 5403

Passcode: 483251

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada



VESTA

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