

STAFF REP TRAINING



VEAES SURT OCTOBER 2022



AGENDA

Role of the Staff Rep
Representing members
Collective Agreement Enforcement
Staff Rep Assembly

Introductions

Name

Pronouns

School or site

How many years you've been a Staff Rep





ROLE OF THE STAFF REP

a.k.a. the backbone of our union

Role of the Staff Rep

- The Staff Representative is the peer of the principal in matters related to the interpretation and the application of the Collective Agreement in the school.
- Your role is to advocate, communicate, and organize at your school site

Advocacy

- Represent members in a variety of situations
- Ensure Collective Agreement rights are upheld
- Advocate without bias
- Ensure the [Code of Ethics](#) is upheld
- Facilitate collective support in meetings

Communication

- Attend General Meetings and Staff Rep Assemblies - bring information from meetings & emails to your staff
- support school-based committee chairs
- post relevant information at the school re: BCTF and VEAES
- Hold regular site-based union meetings
- Talk with reps from other school unions (IUOE/CUPE)

Organize & Lead

- hold regular VEAES meetings at your site to convey information and build solidarity
- discuss complex matters at VEAES meetings prior to taking a position to Staff Committee Meetings
- bring school issues to the SRA or the VEAES office
- ensure democratic processes (i.e. Staff Committee Meetings) are in place so members can participate fully
- increase school staff participation in VEAES efforts (i.e. bargaining)
- mentor new members and broaden awareness of union issues

REPRESENTING MEMBERS



Difficult Conversations

Sometimes you need to have a difficult conversation with a colleague or administrator.

- Use active listening skills
- Analyze the issues
- Frame a simple, clear argument
- Find common ground between teachers
- It's not personal

Difficult Convos - strategies

Without breaching confidentiality, let's discuss our experiences and share strategies:

- What are the issues that have resulted in some difficult conversations you've had?
- Who did you have to have these convos with?
- How did you manage them?
- What supports did you access? What supports did you need?

Preparing a member to meet with an administrator

- Ask questions and gather all relevant facts
- Consult the Collective Agreement
- Analyze issue – disciplinary or not
- Instruct member on how meeting will proceed
- Contact the VEAES office for support

Representing a member with an administrator

- Consult with member before the meeting to plan strategy
- Be a witness and take notes
- Allow the member to speak for themselves, or remain silent
- Intervene if the member may jeopardize their rights
- Remember advocacy is not the same as problem solving
- Build a paper trail
- Keep the local informed if things are not resolved
- Ask advice if you need it, or if you don't feel you can be an effective advocate

Note taking

What to include:

- Date
- Names
- Concern / issue / question
- Notes could be used in future investigations or grievances
- Ask admin to slow down or for clarification if necessary

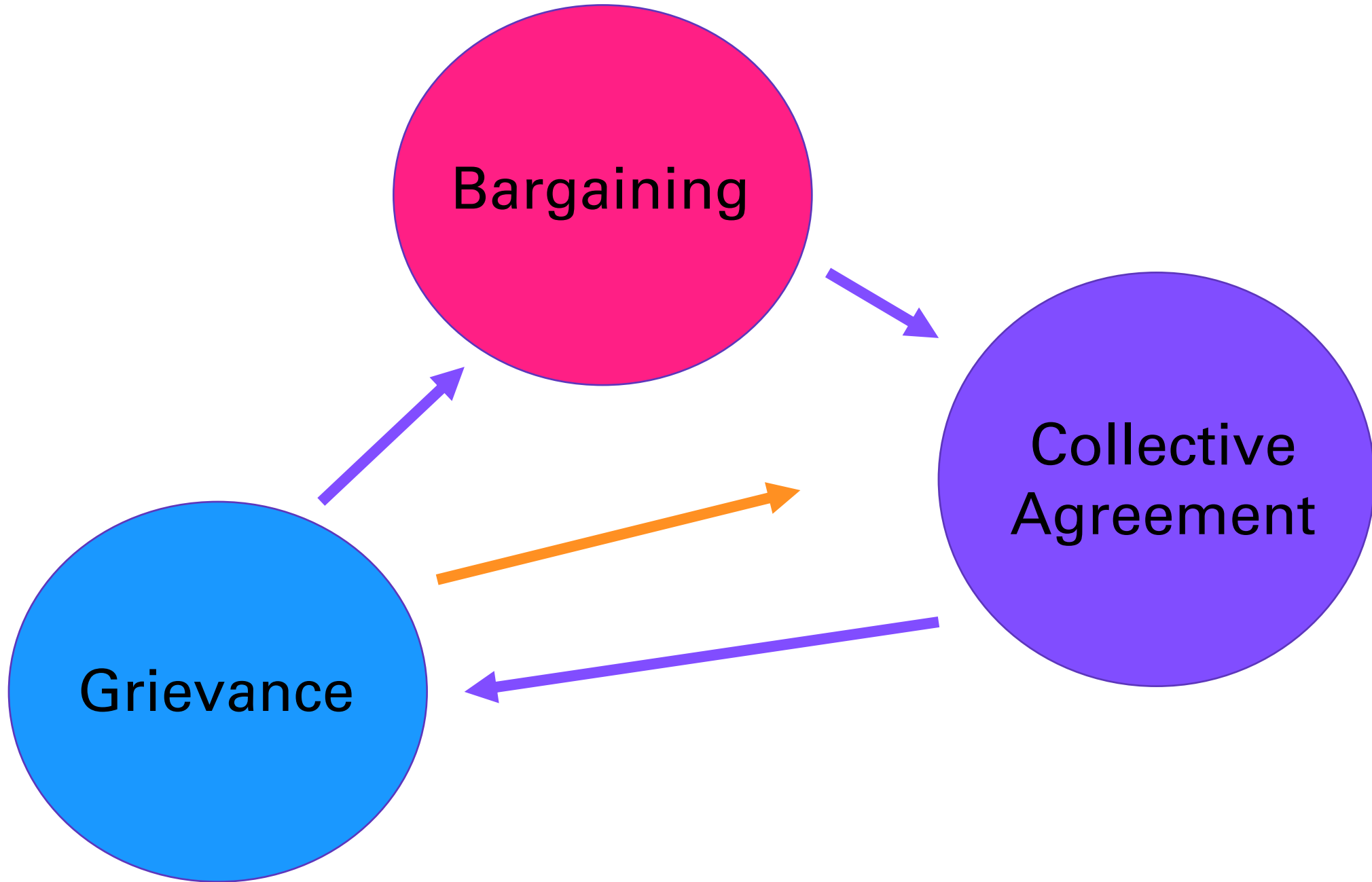
What to write:

- Objective vs subjective
- Descriptions of actions
- What was said

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COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT ENFORCEMENT





Collective Agreement

- Our CA is between the VTF (VEAES & VSTA) and the VSB
- Organized by category of rights called "Articles"
- represented by letters, and contain sub-categories called "clauses", which are represented by numbers
- 1-19 = provincially negotiated, 20+ = locally negotiated
- Table of Contents at the start, Index at the end
- Outlines rights and sometimes processes
- K-12 contained in one agreement, Adult Ed has their own locally negotiated CA
- Appendices at the back ("Split of Issues"), Letters of Understanding
- There are arbitration settlements that also guide our interpretation of the Collective Agreement language.

There are many statutes and regulations that need to be "read into" the CA, these are part of our rights:

- Employment Standards Act, School Act
- Work Safe Regulations, Human Rights Code
- Provincial and Federal Labour Code

Negotiated rights are ALWAYS better

- Responsive to change
- We have a direct influence: Maternity Leave provisions, Harassment, Health and Safety School Organization

Collective Agreement Search

- A colleague wants to go on their honeymoon in November
- A teacher wants to know how many prep minutes they are entitled to
- A part time teacher with a continuing contract wants to give up their contract and become a TTOC. (*this is found in a Letter of Understanding)
- A teacher wants to apply for a posting mid-year and is wondering if they can move right away if they are the successful candidate (*refer 2019-22 working doc)

Grievance Process

Article A6

- A problem solving mechanism when there are disputes about the application or interpretation of the Collective Agreement
- may be no adverse effect on a member for pursuing a grievance
- working relationship with the Board who respects this process as non-personal
- We use the Grievance Process to clarify, enrich, adapt, enforce and maintain our rights - this process never ends.

Grievance Process

- must be related to a Collective Agreement provisions or a statute
- are filed when the Employer fails to uphold a right (hire the most senior applicant for a position), recognize a right (decreasing FTE), or properly implement a right (weekly prep time)
- doesn't get us rights we don't already have
- with prejudice / without prejudice
- the union has carriage of the grievance
- ignoring our rights can lose us our rights

Grievance – Step 1

- an effort to solve the problem at the source
- Art.A.6.2 "the local or an employee...shall request a meeting with the employer official directly responsible"
- Staff Representative accompaniment
- within 30 days
- find the relevant CA clauses
- Fill in Step 1 report & take notes
- Send Step 1 report & notes to VEAES Grievance Officer (this year, it's Darren Tereposky, darren@veaes.ca)
- The grievance process has time constraints if we want to take action, so please be timely in your communication of issues.

Grievance - next steps

- If there is a CA violation and the union determines it wants to further advance a grievance, the Grievance Officer has up to 2 formal meetings with management to try and solve the issue
- In preparation for these meetings, the Staff Rep and members affected might be contacted for more information.
- It is helpful to take notes, save emails and forms related to the issue as the union will be asking you for them if a grievance is pursued beyond Step 1.

STAFF REP ASSEMBLIES

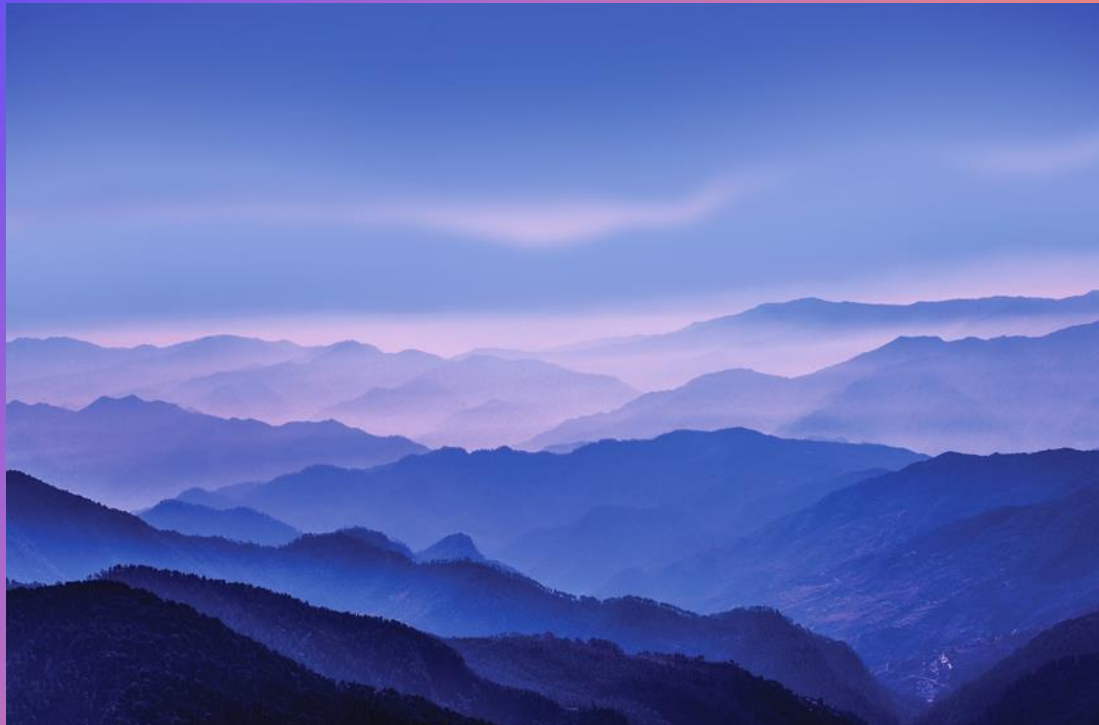


Staff Rep Assemblies

- Decision-making body: can bring new motions, respond to recommendations from EC, can refer items to EC, etc.
- Monthly meetings
- Sharing strategies among schools to help site-based organizing
- As we are coming back together after a few years apart, this is a great time to look at the purpose and structure of this meeting.
- As this is your meeting, we need your input to make it more meaningful & responsive to Staff Rep needs

Topics of discussion

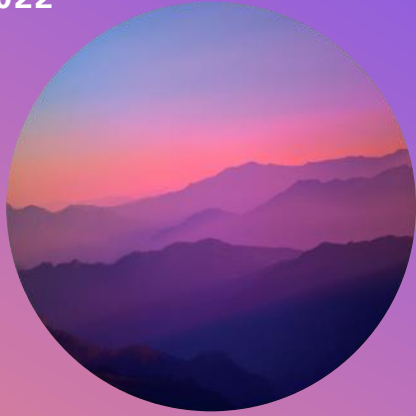
- What information do you need and aren't getting?
- What ways do you currently access info from VEAES?
- What do you need from a Staff Rep Assembly?
- Things to keep, things to add, things to change, things to leave behind



Support for Staff Reps

- ▶ VEAES meetings
- ▶ Staff Rep Assemblies
- ▶ Staff Committee Meetings
- ▶ In-House Table Officers
- ▶ VEAES Executive Committee
- ▶ School Union Rep Training (SURTS)
- ▶ Mentorship
- ▶ School Visits
- ▶ School Union Team

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THANK YOU

We know this is a complex role and that you are problem-solving on a daily basis.

We are here to support you and provide advice on dealing with site-based issues.

The work you are doing is making our schools safer and our union stronger. We are grateful for your service.