

VEAES WEEKLY

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



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BCTF AGM Delegates

by: Jody Polukoshko

The BCTF AGM is an exciting opportunity over Spring Break to work with members from around the province in developing policy and procedures for our provincial union. Many aspects of our work flow from VEAES policy and our Collective Agreement, but the BCTF determines important aspects like our union dues, the Short and Long Term Salary Indemnity Plan regulations, as well as our provincial political action and advocacy positions!

Topics for discussion include Indigenous Education, Health and Safety, Social Justice, Education Policy, Finance, Bargaining, Professional Issues and much more. It's also where members elect the BCTF Executive Committee, who have a hand in the day to day running of the BCTF, appoint staff, and determine policy.

"Why would I do volunteer union work on my Spring Break?" You ask? The answer is that most folks who come once, keep coming. Hotel accommodation, per diems to cover meal expenses, transportation and childcare are covered by the BCTF, so not only is there an opportunity for you and your family to stay downtown Vancouver for 4 nights for free, but you'll also get the chance to hear and talk about some of the most important issues facing teachers, as well as being part of important decisions that steer our union. VEAES also provides a release day for all delegates at the end of February to prep and review the AGM business, so you'll be well supported in your participation. All members are invited to [apply](#), experienced and new teachers, no matter your prior union experience.

Even though the deadline has passed for the application date, we can continue to add names to the nominees at the General Meeting on Tuesday, January 16, where an election will take place. We can send 27 delegates to the AGM and we always endeavour to have a full delegation. Talk to your Staff Rep or anyone on the VEAES Executive if you have further questions, and [send in your CV today!](#)

Remedy Update

by: Darren Tereposky

Unused Remedy from 2022-23. The Union and the Employer are still in the process of negotiating an agreement for teachers to access their unused remedy from the 2022-23 school year. The Employer is no longer willing to continue with the agreement we have renewed on an annual basis since 2019 and discussions are continuing.

Remedy for the 2023-24 Year. We encourage teachers who are accumulating remedy minutes to use them promptly. If you are receiving remedy this year, the number of minutes will be indicated on your pay advice. One half day of remedy is 150 minutes, and a full day is 300. The Employer has not yet hired an adequate number of TTOCs demonstrated in its inability to fill daily call-outs and postings. Unfortunately, this is a barrier for teachers seeking to take their remedy days. As, according to the Employer, there are more of these unfilled positions on Monday and Fridays, it would be best to book your remedy days on a Tuesday through Thursday. We also encourage teachers to pool their remedy minutes to have enough for a call-out. Your principal can assist in this process. The TTOC coming in to provide remedy can team teach with you, provide resource support or provide prep time. Be sure to indicate on SFE what type of support you are expecting so that TTOCs can come prepared for their day.

Satisfaction / Student Learning Surveys

by: Jody Polukoshko

The Student Learning Surveys, which were formerly called Satisfaction Surveys, are a census-like tool created and distributed by the Ministry of Education and made available to Grade 4, 7, 10 and 12 students, parents, and staff.

While the survey questions have changed over time, and are not particularly problematic, it's important to remember that the Ministry individually surveying members on educational issues can result in misrepresentations of our collective experience, and can result in biased or incomplete data, beset with confounds. Through our work with members, Staff Reps, and implementation of the Collective Agreement, the BCTF and VEAES can develop a much more united and representative perspective on teachers' experiences, and communicate these where necessary. Our Staff Rep Assemblies are excellent places to come hear and share about frontline teacher experiences. We will be releasing a teacher morale survey later this month for members to share their feelings about satisfaction in their employment.

In 2003, the BCTF took the position that teachers no longer participate in this survey (Policy 9.A.22, Nov 03 Representative Assembly) and as a result, BCTF members have not been participating in the staff components of the survey, nor administering the survey to students, as it's not curricular nor part of our instructional work, and adds to our workload. In most schools, administrators pull the students to administer the tests.

There are some really excellent surveys and data collection efforts that we do support, and that yield important information about student well-being, that contextualize student experiences in an ongoing context and, in our view, do a much better job of reflecting the lived experiences of youth in and out of the educational system, including the following.

[McCreary Report BC Adolescent Health](#)

[UBC's Early Development and Middle Development Projects](#)

First Bargaining Issues Session

by: Jody Polukoshko

Thank you to all 600 members who participated in the first bargaining survey. Your input is really important as we prepare for both local and provincial bargaining. Please join us on Monday, January 22 at 4 pm on Zoom to review and discuss the results from this survey and their implications on bargaining. This Issues session is open to all members and will help inform the creation of the second survey, which is scheduled for the end of January, and will include input on more specific provincial bargaining objectives and strategies!

If you are interested in discussing certain aspects of our work connected to bargaining (i.e. Health and Safety, Social Justice, Professional Issues, Indigenous Education) please watch for those committee meetings and attend to bring your voice to the table.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82490897147>

Meeting ID: 824 9089 7147

Passcode: 428518

Dial by your location

• +1 778 907 2071 Canada

Health & Safety Reporting

by: Marjorie Dumont, C'tan

Be prepared for the cold weather in the next few days. There is also a chance of a snowfall next week. The Board's update on such weather events, is that all schools in Vancouver School District will remain open if possible. However, the Superintendent / CEO will make a decision about school closures by 6:30am and communicate that out through the media, on the VSB website, and school websites. The employer has also established a new TEAMS channel for inclement weather updates.

The following updates were given at previous District Health and Safety Committee meetings:

Ice & Snow Clearing

In the event of a snowfall in Vancouver, clearing main entrances, wheelchair ramps, sidewalks and parking lots will be prioritized. Not all entrances will be shoveled and cleared and/or there may be delays. Each site has their own specific plan for snow/ice removal. Check with your administrator regarding which specific paths are going to be cleared. If there is a parking lot at your site, the building engineers will close the parking lot until cleared due to the difficulty of snow removal in the presence of parked cars.

Power Outage

In the last few months there have been power outages in some of the schools. If you have any concerns or questions, please call the VEAES office. You can also find a lot of information on the VSB hub by clicking Health & Safety and then Emergency Management. There is a document called, Power Outage Guidance. The Joint Health & Safety Committees at your site will have a plan for such events and the administrator will communicate these plans to staff so that members are prepared for power-free instruction.

Please be safe as you travel to and from your sites. Bundle up, stay calm and be prepared.

Awitza (Wet'suwet'en word for ending your speech)

Bereavement Leave

by: Darren Tereposky

If you have been denied paid bereavement leave by the Employer, please notify the Union. We have several ongoing grievances on this matter, and want to ensure that we are aware of all VEAES members who have been denied paid bereavement leave. Article G.4 in the Collective Agreement provides for paid and unpaid bereavement leave. G.4.1 and G.4.2 provide paid bereavement leave for an employee's immediate family (as "immediate family" is defined in the CA). In addition, our local provision, G.4.5, provides for up to 5 days of paid bereavement leave in the case of death of any person, with the approval of the Associate Superintendent – Human Resources or designate. In an arbitration award in 2021, the arbitrator John Hall stated that "an employee may claim bereavement leave for a period which does not follow immediately upon the death of a recognized family member." And further, "the request must be consistent with the recognized purposes of bereavement leave and the activities contemplated during the leave must be "reasonably related" to the family member's death." Some examples of activities are mourning the loss of the deceased, taking time to be with family to bereave together, planning an event, dealing with the estate of deceased or planning or attending cultural or religious ceremonies.

Rethinking Schools Article “Getting to the Why: Service Learning for Social Justice”

by: Jody Polukoshko

This month's edition of Rethinking Schools has an excellent article that reflects thoughtfully on teachers' practice and experience teaching Social Justice. It focuses in on the problematic aspects of service learning (canned food drives, fundraisers, etc) and the challenges in bringing these aspects of community service to a level where the learning incorporates systemic understanding and analysis, leading to deeper understanding of intersectional Social Justice.

“Although service learning has the potential to make both the service and the learning more meaningful, the common framing of a group of fortunate people donating their time, energy, and expertise to help less fortunate people can be problematic. David Kirkland of NYU wrote that, in some cases, “service learning has come to mean something equivalent to an extended and sustained field trip for privileged learners who often imagine their roles in communities as agents of salvation as opposed to agents of service.” When teachers and students conceptualize the service as charity, participation can intensify feelings of difference, rather than break down barriers. Without conscious efforts to reject stigmas around need and weakness, children absorb societal messaging that insists if people worked hard enough, they could improve their lives, reducing poverty to the result of individual choices.

Service learning for social justice (SLSJ) probes the roots of the issue. In an SLSJ approach to the canned food drive, students would explore racialized, socioeconomic, and geographic patterns of food insecurity as they sought to understand why food isn't distributed equally.”

Read the full article [here](#). Rethinking Schools is an excellent place for resources, information, original research, and analysis of broad Educational issues through an Intersectional and Anti-Oppression lens.

Pacific Blue Cross

by: Jody Polukoshko

Members have been reaching out with concerns about change in practice connected to Pacific Blue Cross' coverage of Physiotherapy services. We have been in communication with the district who have advised the union that there have been no changes to the coverage of this service, but that some of the claims previously approved have been denied if they are not provided directly by a Physiotherapist. Some forms of this include fees for group classes held at Physiotherapy centres, or services provided by non-Physiotherapists under the supervision of a Physiotherapist.

While many of these issues appear to be resulting from a change in how Physiotherapists are organizing their work, we are continuing to discuss the matter with the district and seek advice about the requirement of the district to communicate such changes and/or parameters of that change, whether or not the changes are consistent with the Plan Policy.

In February, we will be holding another membership vote to determine whether Vancouver members wish to remain in the local plan or join the provincial plan. We are voting again this year because the second staged improvement for the provincial plan has been put into place. Please follow this [link](#) to the VEAES website to see the updated comparison chart for the two plans. We will be making a report out at the January 16 General Meeting on the process for the vote, and we hope members will begin talking about the upcoming choice and becoming informed about the potential gains and losses.

Payroll and Benefits Information from VSB

by: Jody Polukoshko

This week, Payroll and Benefits sent an extensive email to all employees regarding Payroll and Benefits information related to the upcoming and future tax years. Please review this information to determine whether you need to take action on any of the items included in that email.

These include:

- Information about additional pension deductions for higher earners that may impact your experience of CPP deductions resulting from increases in average Canadian salaries,
- Steps to opt out of contributing to CPP if you are 65 years or older
- Information about the School Supply Tax Credit Form
- Online tax slips

Please also remember that for many members, maximum contributions to EI and CPP will have occurred for you late last year, and those deductions will begin again on the Jan 15 pay advice. For this reason, many members will see a lower take-home pay in January as a result. In other words, once you have contributed the maximum contributions to EI and CPP, you no longer had those deductions from your pay in 2023. Usually this happens around October or November.

Remember also that while teachers can claim tax exemptions for spending personal income on supplies, there is no requirement that teachers subsidize learning with their own funds. It is the responsibility of government to fully fund and support learning in public schools.

Current Events, Global Issues and Curriculum

by: Jody Polukoshko

In any school year, there are global or local events that teachers or students raise in the classroom. Our curriculum invites and requires engagement with these concepts as well as building capacity in developing connections, embracing diverse perspectives, and practicing ethical judgment. This year in particular, and frequently stemming from student experience, requests, and needs, the requirement to have these discussions with our students seems increasingly politicized.

However, our jobs have not changed. We continue to be directed and governed by Curriculum, our Professional Standards, Professional Autonomy, and the needs of our students. Parker Palmer is often cited as saying “You teach who you are” as a way of encouraging teachers to de-center themselves as experts, or externalizing skills and pedagogies. However, this statement is, in my view, also dangerous, in that it implies that we as teachers, simply replicate our own identities and privileges in the classroom.

It's important that we not only are aware of the ways that our personal identities and values impact how we approach the work, but also that we not shy away from important and sometimes difficult conversations with our students and colleagues. When we learn together, listen, and make efforts to embrace complexity, we become stronger as a profession and individuals.

Here is a [document](#) that draws together K-7 Curriculum Connections to support teachers in their work, to provide clear references to parents and colleagues in these discussions, and to ground our work on what can be difficult topics.

Important deadline for Salary Change

by: Vanessa Lefebvre

Members who consider that they have completed requirements for reclassification of salary category must not only make a TQS request, but must also apply to the Board. There are 3 times in the year that you can apply to ensure you get retroactive payment and January 31st is the next deadline. You need to submit the Change of Salary Category form by January 31st in order for it to be retroactive to January 1st. Even if you are still waiting for your TQS request to process, it is important to submit this application before January 31st.

If the VSB does not receive the form prior to January 31st, the salary adjustment shall be effective the first day of the month following the filing of a successful application. To complete the application, you will need to submit your TQS change of category validation when you receive it. ***It does not go automatically to the VSB.***

The procedure for change of salary category is Article B.25.4 (pg 55 in your [Collective Agreement](#)). The VSB has provided a detailed document that outlines the steps necessary to fill out the VSB Change of Category form. If you cannot locate the documents on the Employee Services Sharepoint, you can obtain a copy of the entire packaged which includes the application form through your school's Admin Assistant, or by emailing humanresources@vsb.bc.ca.

New Members to Health & Safety Committee

by: Marjorie Dumont, C'tan

New members to the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee (JOHS) that missed the training this past fall can attend the following training sessions at the VSB Education Centre, Room 180. The first session (New Member Training) is on Thursday, January 25, 2024 from 8:30 am – 3:00 pm and the second session (Advanced Training) is on Thursday, February 8, 2024 from 8:30 am – 3:00 pm. These sessions will be the last offerings for both New Member Training and Advanced Training for the 2023/2024 school year. NOTE: these are repeated topics from the Fall 2023 sessions. You can find the info on the [Pro-D site](#). Spots are filling up, so register soon!

We would also like to highlight the [BCTF's Health & Safety handbook](#) that is a great resource for members to learn more about their Health & Safety rights in their workplace.





Jody Polukoshko
President
jody@veaes.ca

Marjorie Dumont
Vice President
marjorie@veaes.ca

Darren Tereposky
Vice President
darren@veaes.ca

Karine Ng
Vice President
karine@veaes.ca

Vanessa Lefebvre
Vice President
vanessa@veaes.ca

Eric Proulx
Vice President
eric@veaes.ca

Rob McGowan
AE President
rob@veaes.ca

Office:
604-873-8378

veaes.ca

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

by: Karine Ng

Every year on January 15, many individuals and communities celebrate Black history in honour of the civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In recent years, the day has also been called Black Excellence Day or Black Shirt Day. This is an opportunity to celebrate the joy, resilience, leadership, and significant but often unacknowledged contributions of Black People around the world in past and present histories, and to build our capacity to support strong and vibrant Black futures. We encourage members to reflect on the relevance of this day within the context of their school communities while planning activities, displays, lessons and discussions with students and colleagues.

If you are looking for resources to supplement your teaching around this time, you will find below websites that provide some great resources. There are posters, lesson ideas, videos, Specifically, there is a [Black Excellence Day 2024 virtual event](#) which takes place on January 15, 2024 from 10:15 am to 12 pm and is age appropriate for students in Grades 6-12.

<https://www.bctf.ca/news-and-opportunities/news-details/2022/01/14/black-excellence-day>

<https://blackexcellenceday.ca/>

<http://www.antiracismcoalition.org/black-shirt-day.html>

Dates to Remember



General Meeting/ Staff Rep Assembly

January 16, 2024 - 4 pm

Tupper Secondary - Cafeteria

*to elect delegates to the BCTF AGM

First Bargaining Issues Session

January 22, 2024 @ 4 pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82490897147>

Meeting ID: 824 9089 7147

Passcode: 428518

Dial by your location

• +1 778 907 2071 Canada



VEAES

The Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society is the union representing elementary teachers and adult educators working in public schools in Vancouver.