

VEAES WEEKLY

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



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VEAES Press Release

by: Jody Polukoshko

Late in the fall, members brought a motion through our General Meeting to create a joint union press release identifying the loss of service to students resulting from failures to fill. After working with our colleagues in CUPE 15, 407, IUOE and VSTA, we have reached consensus on an open letter to Superintendent, Trustees, and Senior Management regarding our concerns with staffing and service to students.

You can read the letter [here](#).

Tecumseh Flood

by: J. Polukoshko

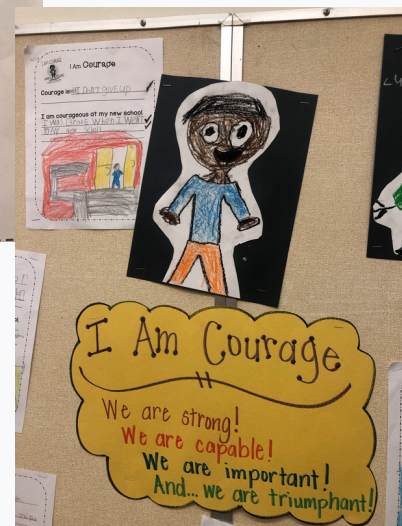
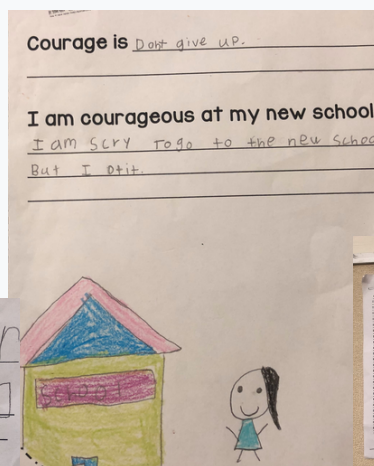
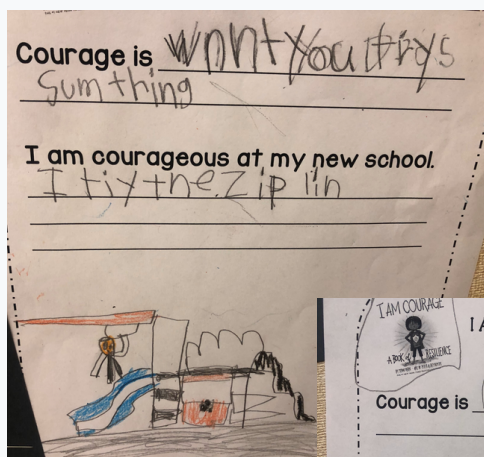
In late January, during the cold snap, Tecumseh Elementary was flooded, to the degree that all staff and students have been moved to the district swing site at South Hill. Our hearts go out to members there who are working hard with few resources.

They appreciate the support and care that has been shared with them, and the efforts of the district staff to minimize the challenges by ensuring infrastructure was in place, as well as the outpouring of support and resources from current and retired VEAES members and other Metro teachers.

The teachers are struggling with the challenge of working without resources while waiting for insurance funds to be released. Due to the age of the school, no staff has been allowed access to the site for health and safety reasons. The uncertainty is challenging, and they are requesting your support in lending or gifting specific resources.

At this point, teachers are asking members not to send unsolicited resources or materials, due to the workload of evaluating and storing them, but please look at the list [here](#) to see if you are able to lend any of the requested manipulatives, resources, or professional tools.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.



BCTF AGM

by: Jody Polukoshko

Thank you to all members who put their names forward to represent VEAES members during their spring break this year! VEAES has elected the following delegates and will be appointing four more at the Feb 13 General Meeting.

Your delegates will be at the March General Meeting to hear guidance and feedback from members about your priorities on key Resolutions to that meeting.

Sarah Adams	Marjorie Dumont	Nurit Katz	Eric Proulx	Khaled Shawwash
Lyndsay Campbell	Christian Hendren	Rob McGowan	Jacqueline Sabouniha	Sarah Stelle
Greg Canning	Sylvia Jackson	Kevin McPherson	Jennifer Sebastian	Darren Tereposky
Jenna Carpenter-Boesch	Jessie Janzen	Ariella Menashy	Louise Seto	Marcus Zheng
Alexandra de Montigny	Andrea Joseph	Jody Polukoshko		

Thank you to all who have put their name forward to do this important (and fun!) work! The AGM is held in Vancouver March 16-19 at the Hyatt hotel, all members are welcome to drop in as observers and to learn about how democracy works at the BCTF.

Teacher Pension Webinar

by: Jody Polukoshko

If you are working now, there's a good chance you have some of your pension that was earned under the old system and some that is under the new plan. We receive frequent questions from members about the Year Maximum Pensionable Earnings, including help understanding the meaning of Reduced vs unreduced pensions.

You can watch a great video created by the BCTF at this link [here](#). If you haven't yet attended a BC Teachers' Pension Plan workshop, or visited the BCTF's website, we encourage all members to do, as your pension is a significant benefit that you receive as part of your compensation, and, for most members, will be their largest lifetime investment.

Please also take the time to visit the Teachers' Pension Plan website, which is excellent, and allows members to calculate their pension based on retirement year. Thank you to VEAES member Leslie Roosa, who is one of the TPP trustees and works hard to ensure your pension is well taken care of and ethically invested.

Bargaining Survey – Provincial Matters

by: Jody Polukoshko

Members! Your participation on the first bargaining survey was amazing! Please remember to complete the second survey, which focuses on provincial bargaining priorities. Check your email last week for the link to complete the survey, which closes on February 5 at midnight.

This survey provides an opportunity for members to dig into the objectives that are negotiated at the provincial table, such as workload, salary, benefits, and paid leave. This survey provides an opportunity for members to comment on the full list of provincial bargaining as well as to prioritize outcomes and provide feedback on strategy. It should take 15 minutes or less to complete.

This survey was created in conjunction with members who attended the first issues session on bargaining in January, and the results will be analysed by the VEAES EC and ratified by the General Meeting on February 13. Make sure your opinion and voice are part of the decision!

Social Justice in February

Excerpted from BCTF Communications

February is **Black History Month**! This is a vital time to recognize and celebrate the many significant contributions of Black individuals and communities, and to reinvigorate our work toward decolonizing our schools. If you or your members are looking for resources to help foster discussions around Black history, the BCTF has several available. Consider using the [Teaching African Canadian History/Canadian Black History](#) resource, which provides a compilation of lesson plans, posters, and teacher guides for all grade levels. For something more local, check out the [Black Strathcona Project](#), which offers an in-depth look into the social history and geography of the Black community in the Vancouver neighbourhood of Strathcona. This resource supports the curricula of English Language Arts 7–10 and Social Studies 7–10, but is an excellent resource for teacher learning and unlearning! Lastly, the latest issue of [Teacher magazine](#) has several articles about Black history, including [book reviews and recommendations](#) for Black History Month.

February 19 is **Family Day**—a day to celebrate the importance of all kinds of families. Whether your family includes children, grandparents, foster siblings, a partner, friends, or even pets, Family Day is a chance to spend quality time with your loved ones. It's also an opportunity to discuss different family structures with your students; for elementary students, the [Tango Makes Three](#) lesson plan is a great resource to get this conversation started.

Failure to Fill Update

by: Eric Proulx

As of January 31st, teachers have submitted 1293 unique failure to fill events using the VEAES Failure to Fill Reporting Tool. Previous trends continue with Resource Teachers being most profoundly affected with about 75%, or 972 times resource time was lost due to failure to fill coverage provided by Resource Teachers. Libraries have been reported as closed 211 times, ELL classes cancelled 60 times and District Literacy Teacher service lost 42 times all as a result of failure to fills. We believe that these numbers, though astounding, are not even a full representation of the scale of the problem.

VEAES gives gratitude for all those who have already used the tool this year to report failure to fill events. This data has been invaluable when discussing the failure to fill crisis and has thus far been shared with the Minister of Education, the BCTF President, VSB senior management and all VSB school trustees who have found the time to meet with us (7 of 9). The data members have sent in has made it impossible to deny the problem exists and serves as a strong argument for improved recruitment and retention in our district.

So keep sending in reports, and please ask your union colleagues to do the same when they are affected by failure to fills! If you have friends at other sites, ask if they are using the tool and show them how to find it on the [VEAES homepage](#) if they are not aware!

If you have not seen a VEAES Failure to Fill Reporting Tool poster at your school site, please send an email to eric@veaes.ca and we will send a few your way so your site can join in on the fun!



VEAES Meets (Again!) with Minister of Education Rachna Singh ***VDLC Union Groups Meet with the Minister to Share Member's Concerns***

by: Eric Proulx

On Monday, as a joint-union effort coordinated by the Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC), VEAES, CUPE 15, IUOE 963 and VSTA met for a second time with NDP minister of education Rachna Singh as a follow-up meeting to one that occurred in September 2023.

During this meeting, union reps followed-up on the topic of the discrepancy between VSB and the Provincial government's student enrollment numbers. Teachers may recall how over ten years, the VSB projects a decline of 5,000 students in the district, whereas the provincial government projects a 10,000-student increase. Quite the difference! Minister Singh has assured us that the province and the VSB are now working together and sharing information with the goal of reducing this drastic discrepancy so that the district is better able to accurately plan for future growth. Student enrollment projections are important for teachers, as they inform the district's decisions to close schools or sell off public land, as well as move district programs into larger consolidated spaces.

On the topic of school closures and selling public lands, Minister Singh reassured VEAES and other union groups their government did not "want to make mistakes of the previous government" when it comes to selling public land and would not approve school closures and land sales when the province is growing rapidly.

In terms of recruitment and retention, the minister shared that they were looking forward to our next round of collective bargaining where they hoped teacher working conditions would be improved.

On the topic of failure to fill, VEAES asked the minister to require districts to transparently collect and share their own data, and appeared quite interested when we shared what we have collected thus-far with our Failure to Fill Online Tool. We argued that such data is essential to understand the true scope of the problem and to see if certain districts were more affected than others in the province. Our CUPE 15 colleagues also shared that the failure to fill crisis is affecting their members on a daily basis, leading to many violent incidents against theirs and our members.

The VDLC has secured another meeting a few months in the future and we will continue to bring teachers' concerns forward with the goal of collaborating towards improved learning and working conditions.



Withdrawing from LTD

by: Jody Polukoshko

There is the opportunity for members to withdraw from the BCTF's Long Term Disability Plan and save the premiums (about 1.5%).

Withdrawing from LTD is available to members who:

- Are age 64 or older
- Or have reached Factor 88 (age + contributory service)
- Or are in receipt of a pension

And, who have sufficient sick leave days, combined with the 120 days of available SIP benefits to get you to Factor 90 or the end of the month you reach age 65, whichever comes first.

Factor 88 (age + contributory service = 88

i.e. 62 years old with 26 years of service

OR age 64

your accrued sick leave + 120 days of SIP benefits must be sufficient to get you to from Factor 88 to Factor 90 in case of illness or injury, as you will no longer be eligible for Long Term Disability

Factor 90 (age + contributory service = 90)

i.e. 63 years old with 27 years of service

OR end of the month you reach age 65

At Factor 90, members cease being eligible for LTD

For more information on Short and Long Term Disability, and to read more about withdrawing from Long Term Disability payments, click [here](#)

Additional notes for clarification:

1. if you will reach 35 years of Contributory Service between age 55 and 65, and before you reach Factor 90, please ensure that you have enough sick leave when combined with 120 days of SIP: Short-term benefits to protect your salary to the date when you will no longer be eligible to receive SIP: Long-term benefits.
2. if you will reach Factor 90 before the age of 61, please ensure that you have enough sick leave when combined with 120 days of SIP: Short-term benefits to protect your salary to the end of the month in which you turn 61 before you complete this application.
3. if you will reach Factor 90 between age 61 and 65, please ensure that you have enough sick leave when combined with 120 days of SIP: Short-term benefits to protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach Factor 90.
4. for teachers reaching the age of 65, or in receipt of a pension from the Pension Corporation (BC), no application for withdrawal is required. Please contact your employer directly and they will stop deducting the long-term portion of the SIP fee.



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Correction to last week's VEAES Weekly

by: Jody Polukoshko

Thanks to intrepid reader and retired VEAES member, Jan Coleman for catching our error. Jan was on the Board of TQS and represented VEAES to the VSB for many years.

Jan says: "The 15 commonly referred to in PB plus 15 is 15 units which UBC previously used to measure coursework to be completed in one year of study. A teacher must finish the equivalent of 15 units which is 30 credits not 15."

Dates to Remember

Executive Committee Meeting

February 6, 2024
4 pm
VEAES Office

TTOC Committee Meeting

February 7, 2024
4 pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85110082182>

Meeting ID: 851 1008 2182
Passcode: 580475
Dial by your location
• +1 778 907 2071 Canada

General Meeting/ Staff Rep Assembly

February 13, 2024

to elect additional delegates to the BCTF AGM
Tupper Secondary - Cafeteria

VEAES

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