

Our Side of the Table



Local Meeting – June 20, 2011

Vernon Teachers' Association Negotiating Team

We met for another full-day meeting, starting with revisiting the topic of the Joint District Health & Safety Committee (the one the District wants to eliminate). The VTA Team read from an extensive paper trail illustrating a long history of a well-functioning committee. In the end, Management suggested leaving the language the way it is. Both sides agreed to tweak the language for next meeting.

We also introduced “New and Young Worker” language, a new article to reflect the Workers Compensation Act. Management said they’d work towards it, but would not discuss putting it into our Collective Agreement through the bargaining process.

We tabled five articles of language under Professional Development including Professional Autonomy. ***“You hire teachers as experts, qualified and intelligent people...without autonomy, we are technicians delivering scripted material and it doesn’t work well; we aren’t meeting student needs...Speaking as a public school teacher and a public school parent, (teacher autonomy) is the strength of the public school system.”*** Management would not discuss it.

We also tabled proposed language to increase PD funding for Vernon teachers. ***“The number proposed is half of what Kamloops Teachers get. It would give Vernon teachers access to about \$700 for PD, which is still a very small amount compared to what an administrator gets!”*** Currently, the District spends about \$400,000 towards PD. Only about \$90,000 of that amount comes to the VTA for teachers. Where does the other \$300,000 go? The Management Team did not have an answer.

We tabled improvements to our recently restored class size, integration, and staffing language. Management would not discuss it.

VTA Team: ***“It would be nice to be working in this model, wouldn’t it?”***

Management Team: ***“Yes, it would be nice to have this much money in the system.”***

Finally, we revisited the topic of Staff Meetings. Management brought a stack of emails from administrators who all claim they're flexible, not irrational or unreasonable. We responded with our data and your concerns such as the following:

- ***“I don't have enough time to actually do the preparation and teaching parts of my job...”***
- ***“Management's comment that anyone working more than 0.5FTE should attend up to 20 meetings each year is completely revolting!”***
- ***“My principal didn't believe me when I said several of our meetings go overtime.”***
- ***“Part time attendance should be optional if the meeting is not a regular working day.”***
- ***“...dissemination of information can be done using email...Using meeting time for this is not an effective use of time for busy teachers.”***
- ***“Our meetings would almost always go over time, but we have one very vocal person who always speaks up and says it's time to end - the response from admin is cold and tense...”***
- ***“...all while trying to get report cards done, oh yeah and all the district assessments and data collection - oh yeah, all while continuing to plan and prep and assess quality learning experiences...I've had it!”***

Flexible? Reasonable? It seems we are at an impasse in bargaining this issue. Management has suggested that we deal with these issues at our schools through Staff Committees.

The bottom line: ***“The proliferation of staff meetings detracts from what teachers are able to do in the classroom.”***

Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 23rd. You can send feedback and comments to: vtanegotiatingteam@gmail.com You can also stay informed and post your comments to the new Facebook group: ***“VTA Bargaining Page.”***