

Our Side of the Table



Meeting #5 – May 12, 2011

Vernon Teachers' Association Negotiating Team

We met with the Management Team today from 8-4. The meeting began with Management again reducing the number of issues they're willing to discuss. From our original list of 48 *local* concerns, they're now choosing to discuss only 5!

Currently, the Collective Agreement article on Parent-Teacher Conferences is found in the Professional Development section. Though Management agreed at our last meeting that the article would make more sense under Working Conditions – a simple housekeeping task – today they said, *"...we do not have the mandate to even move it."*

Management says they're only willing to discuss: mainstreaming/integration, discretionary staffing, maternity leave, Pro-D funds (maybe), and staff meetings.

Both sides tabled language on Staff Meetings: the Management team's proposal was to change a typo from "he" to "be"; the VTA Team tabled language regarding the frequency and duration of staff meetings, and part-time teacher attendance. Unfortunately, Management said, *"We're not prepared to work with this language...when it comes to a counter-proposal, we came up with what's already there."*

The VTA Team brought these points (and more) to Management's attention:

- The increased frequency and duration of staff meetings are a significant stressor for our Vernon teachers.
- Staff meeting agendas are often filled with items that could be discussed elsewhere.
- Teachers are overwhelmed; our workload has steadily increased. Too many face-to-face meetings actually interfere with our responsibilities to our students!
- Many administrators advise teachers to keep their Tuesdays free for meetings.
- Although not always called "staff meetings" there are several (by other names) every month.
- 20 years ago, the contract language may have been adequate, but now, with better means for staff communications, we shouldn't be having *more* face-to-face meetings!
- Staff meeting agendas are often filled with inappropriate activities, for example Pro-D and inservice.

Although Management would welcome us presenting more school data regarding their staff meeting practices, they would rather talk with administrators about the issue than bargain with us!

VTA Quote of the Day:

“How do you think our members will react to your decision not to bargain?”

Vernon Teacher Quote of the Day:

“I find it hard to accept that these individuals were once teachers with the same concerns as we have now. They have now become political and do not seem to understand that what is at stake here is the education of the students - not fulfilling politically driven agendas. We should be working together - not against each other. Maintaining an "us versus them" approach will only erode relations that are already strained.”

For our next meeting, Management asked us to table some of our proposals; however, they've already said they will receive them, not bargain them!

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 16th. 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.”**