

Vernon Teachers' Association VOICES

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*Merry Christmas Everyone and all the Best to
You and Your Families in 2016!*

From the VTA executive and Staff

Speaking for Teachers in the North Okanagan

Reflections.....

Happy December!



Another fall has flown by, with all the usual busy-ness: class placements, parent-teacher conferences, year plans and reporting. It's hard to believe we get so much completed in a few short months.

Amidst all of that hustle, I am constantly impressed by my colleagues' dedication to their pedagogy and to this profession. We have engaged in such a wide variety of learning in our first two PD days, and many groups are looking forward to the formalized inquiry that has launched once again. Years ago, our teachers began to test the waters with self-directed PD and inquiry groups, and this process has grown into something remarkable.

There are many new initiatives to be proud of in this local, and we are certainly embracing the new curriculum and all the challenges that come with it. I also believe we need to acknowledge how this inventiveness in our locals is balanced and complemented by the quiet reflective pedagogy that occurs each day behind classroom doors. We do well to recognize the skills of our colleagues in the classroom next door or down the hall, and to engage in those professional discussions. Much can be learned by chatting in the staff room over a cup of tea.

I have been privileged to participate in some amazing committee work and discussions this fall. At the BCTF Zone and RA meetings, there is a focus on Mental Health and Wellness, Professional Development, and Curriculum and Assessment. There is so much great work being done provincially, and Vernon is contributing to that field.

Locally, the Educational Change committee has been helping to formulate a vision for the curriculum non-instructional days, with thoughtful discussion and swift action plans. The Professional Relations committee continues to be a very positive structure, with dynamic brainstorming and problem solving. The District Occupational Health and Safety committee is making strides toward proactive and visible school site committees. The new Technology committee is in its early stages, but we are certainly on the right path. Many school Staff Committees are operating with a consistent system and realizing meaningful solutions. We need these school-based and district structures in order to support a culture of communication and collaboration. This work is done by insightful, dedicated professionals in this local. I am honored to support you along the way.

Thank you for all you do. Enjoy a restful and deserved break.

Lisa





Living with Balance

A Six-Week Group Program for Teachers

Wednesdays/Thursdays - January 20 & 27, February 3, 11, 17 & 24, 2016

Pre-registration is Required, Minimum no. of Registrants Required to Run the Program

We are excited to announce another series of workshops for our *Living with Balance* group program for BC teachers. This program was initiated by the BCTF Rehabilitation Program and developed by the Occupational Rehabilitation Group of Canada, a long-established service provider to the BC Teachers' Federation. *Living with balance* is a six-week program, which runs for two hours once per week. It focuses on developing tools and skills related to improving one's vitality and resiliency. Our holistic approach to wellness will equip teachers to make simple lifestyle changes that will positively affect their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

We are now taking registrations for another series of workshops, 'Living with Balance'

This six-week group program will provide opportunities for:

- education, self-evaluation, and examining the importance of maintaining lifestyle balance.
- discussing the importance of nutrition; exercise; sleep.
- managing symptoms of low mood, anxiety, and stress; boundaries and managing conflict.
- learning strategies that increase awareness of factors that contribute to fluctuations in mood as well as methods to manage them.
- reviewing proven techniques used to improve self-esteem and self-confidence, and manage stress and low moods.
- defining what work-life balance means to each of us and what happens when our roles collide, having good boundaries is often attributed to having clear values.
- discussing how to be intentional, creative and assertive when you need to be.
- learning the importance of social connections and community in building long-term wellness, understanding that social isolation is a significant health risk factor.

To register and for more information go to:

1. bctf.ca/LivingWithBalance.aspx or
2. Contact Lynn Hiscoe: 1-866-766-5911 or by e-mail at lhiscoe@orgoc.ca. or
3. Contact VTA President, Lisa LaBoucane: 250-542-0456 or by email at vtapresident@shaw.ca

Health & Safety Report

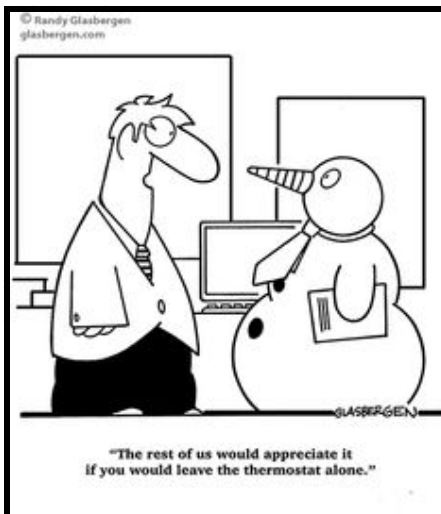
December 2nd the District Joint OHS committee organized a training session which focused on the new tools to protect worker health and safety. The legislative changes received Royal Assent on May 14, 2015. The goal of the changes is to improve workplace health and safety and strengthen the tools used by WCB to enforce the Act and the OHS Regulations.

While there are a number of key changes, the change that impacts our work environment the greatest is the change to employer incident investigations. There are two major changes to the requirements for the employer. First the employer must undertake a preliminary investigation within 48 hours. Second, the employer must submit a full investigation report to WorkSafeBC within 30 days. Your representative on the school OHS committee can provide you with more details.

If you are injured or have a near miss, on the job, you must fill out Form 6A. The District Joint Committee reviewed the ease of access for employees to this form and implemented changes to the District and VTA websites. Now you can access this Form 6A on the VTA web site under the Teacher Resources section, Occupational Health and Safety. The link will provide you with a pdf that you can fill in and print off. If you need help with the form, your representative on the OHS committee can walk you through the process.

Wishing all employees a safe and joyous winter break and remember to wear proper footwear, it may return to winter conditions.

Craig Leverman
VTA OH&S Chair





OCTAV Report

We hosted our AGM in November and saw a new OCTAV Executive elected. We have a full Executive this year, and this will help us to better represent TTOC voices at the VTA meetings, and District Committee meetings. We will continue to work diligently to communicate TTOC's concerns regularly at the VTA RA and Executive meetings.

As well, we had an opportunity to ask questions of the District and the VTA at the Wine & Cheese social event in November. We have learned that TTOC information at school sites varies significantly- regarding building layout, access to keys and other important communication pieces. The District has communicated this concern to school administrators, and they are working to provide consistent TTOC folder information.

I encourage you all to communicate with us; we would like to hear your positive ideas and insights, as well as challenges you may face. We look forward to opportunities to support the TTOC community, and are planning many workshops and information sessions, such as FAQ's about our collective agreement, understanding benefits plans, and organizing technology workshops. Please also consider the New Teacher conference in Richmond on February 26 and 27, 2016 (registration opens mid-January). OCTAV has a Pro D fund available to support TTOCs in attending workshops and purchasing professional materials.

Please visit the OCTAV page on the VTA website (www.vernonta.com) or the BCTF website (<http://www.bctf.ca/TeachersOnCall.aspx>) for more information and updates.

We would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy Holiday season.

Sincerely,

Eric Martinen
OCTAV President

Paid Ed Leave

Please be reminded that the deadline for Ed Leave applications is December 31, 2015 and should be submitted to the attention of Diane Rhenisch. You can find the application on the School District portal under 'Forms/Teacher Forms. For more information see the Collective Agreement (on the [vernonta.com](http://www.vernonta.com) website) article G.26.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW CURRICULUM

What's good about the current curricular change:

I am very encouraged by the level of cooperation and engagement with teachers by the ministry. We didn't ask for change but we have been deeply involved in it's development and implementation. We've had a big influence on the content. It's a curriculum for teachers, by teachers.

I am excited by what I see as more authority and autonomy to work within the curriculum given it's new structure. Fewer specific outcomes and more emphasis on doing rather than knowing, suit my teaching style and philosophy. This curriculum, in most areas, has caught up to what most teachers have already been doing pedagogically for years.

What my concerns are:

Classroom based assessment and communicating student learning are not yet clear so it's been a challenge to explore a new curriculum within the reporting expectations that currently exist.

I think we are all wondering how standardized assessment like the FSA, provincial exams, and locally developed district wide assessments for reading and math fit with a personalized learning model? If the new curriculum has a focus on exploration and inquiry then large group assessment doesn't make sense.

Information and assurances I still need:

Knowing what reporting will look like will help. In addition, one of the biggest areas I've heard is that teachers need information and assurance on resources. We need to know what value is being placed on resources in terms of materials (whether printed or web-based) and time. The biggest resource we have is each other. I would like assurances that teachers will have time (in addition to the already negotiated additional days) to work together and support each other within a professional model.

My hopes for support from government, school boards, the BCTF:

Government and school boards need to be responsible for the communication about curriculum change. That communication needs to honour teachers and our ability to navigate change in a professional and reflective manner. The BCTF needs to continue to promote the idea that curriculum implementation is a process, not an event. Change is stressful and time rather than pressure, and respect rather than control, for professional learning around change is essential to its success.

As professionals, we look at what's out there, reflect on what we are already doing, and make changes based on that reflection. We are always moving forward. It's what we do. I need the ministry, my district and school board, and the BCTF to honour that.

Robyn Ladner
PD Chairperson

Grade 7 teacher



BCRTA Golden Star Awards

AWARDS WILL BE GIVEN TO CURRENT PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAMS THAT

- ✓ feature the interaction of seniors and students
- ✓ require students to think and work creatively
- ✓ access and use the community as an information source
- ✓ require students to work cooperatively with each other and outside sources
- ✓ use a variety of media to record and display results

FIVE \$1500 AWARDS
GIVEN TO PROGRAMS FROM
KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12

PLUS ONE \$1500 AWARD
SPONSORED BY
Legion

SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS APRIL 15 OF EACH YEAR
Award Ceremonies will be held in each community where a winning program exists.

BCRTA Golden Star Awards:
Celebrating Programs that Feature the Interaction of Seniors and Students
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE:
ON THE WEB: www.bcrta.ca
TELEPHONE: 1-877-483-2243 or (604) 871-2266 or (604) 871-2262
EMAIL: krtsi@bcrta.com or laurie@bcrta.com
IN PERSON OR BY MAIL: 100-350 West 6th Ave., Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2



PROTOCOL TO HANDLE CONCERNS/COMPLAINTS BETWEEN CUPE AND VTA MEMBERS *

Preamble: Both CUPE and VTA members value the strong working relationship that exists between us. We recognize that maintaining this relationship is in the interest of all members from both unions. Consequently, we recognize that at all times CUPE and VTA members need to work hard to build, maintain and enhance their working relationships by basing all interactions on patience, open communication and mutual respect. To that end this protocol has been developed to facilitate a respectful process to address concerns/ complaints that may arise in the day-to-day working relationship. This protocol is not meant to replace any contractual provisions on harassment nor to undermine any contractual rights that a CUPE/VTA member might exercise, specifically rights to engage in the grievance process. Finally, this protocol is not meant to replace or limit the agreement that the BCTF and CUPE BC negotiated called "Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Teacher Assistants".

Procedure: In the event that a CUPE/VTA member has a concern/complaint regarding a member of the CUPE/VTA, the following procedures will be used to address the concern/complaint.

1. The member who has a concern/complaint shall first discuss the issue with the member in question and attempt to resolve the problem (Step 1).
2. If a resolution is not reached at Step 1, the concern/complaint may then be taken to the CUPE and VTA union reps. They shall arrange a meeting between themselves and the parties to the concern/complaint within seven (7) days of the Step 1 meeting to try to resolve the problem (Step 2).
3. If a resolution is not achieved at the Step 2 meeting, either member may take his concern to the president of his/her union. The presidents of both unions shall meet with the union reps and the members involved and attempt to reach a resolution. This meeting (Step 3) shall take place within seven (7) days of the Step 2 meeting.
4. If a resolution is not achieved at the Step 3 meeting, the member with the complaint/concern may then take the concern to administration.

* **Note:** It shall not be considered a breach of this protocol to report reasonable grounds for suspected child abuse to the proper authorities according to official requirements.



Hello from the PD office,

The last few months have been all about the money. By now, your school PD rep has received the PD funds that we are entitled to by the Collective Agreement. So you may now spend, spend, spend, your funds on workshops, conferences, or professional materials to enhance your professional learning. Or you may save, save, save your funds so that you can attend a conference once every few years.



I was successful in applying for a Teacher Inquiry Grant from the BCTF, which infuses an additional \$3500 into local teacher inquiry projects along with two facilitators. In partnership with the school district, the VTA, and the BCTF we were able to put together \$12,000 to support local teachers with Inquiry projects. I continue to lobby both the district and the BCTF to support autonomous professional learning in our district but it doesn't work without your overwhelming willingness to participate. Thank you.



Speaking of autonomous professional learning.....
February 19th is our next PD day. This is our annual Okanagan Zone Conference - Making Connections 11. I am so proud and excited to have Ivan Coyote as our keynote speaker this year. Ivan is a renowned author and storyteller who will be speaking on diversity and inclusion followed by two break out sessions. Look for registration opening soon.

Vernon is also hosting the Interior Math Conference on February 19th. Details coming soon.

Happy holidays to you and your families. Enjoy a well-deserved break and maybe we'll see you on the ski hill.

In solidarity,

Robyn Ladner
Professional Development Chairperson
prodchair@shaw.ca