



RTA Newsletter

December 2018

A Message from the Old Guy in the Office

Thank you for taking the time to read through this newsletter at this busy time of year. There is a lot going on in our schools, and I know all of you are putting in lots of extra time, both as a result of the demands of your job, and in providing the extra opportunities and supports for students that make our schools such special places. Added to that are the demands of the holiday season, which is a wonderful time of year but also a time of significant stress for many. Over the next three weeks I hope you are able to find time for looking after yourselves, and I and your RTA Executive Committee wish you all the very best over the winter holidays.

Staff Committees

We have language in our collective agreement granting teachers the right to form staff committees. Staff committees can be invaluable in helping to develop and maintain effective communication and consultative processes in school, reviewing school policies and procedures, and receiving and making recommendations on matters of concerns identified by staff. When employed effectively, staff committees can improve the working and learning conditions at our schools, and I encourage you consider getting involved if your school currently has a functioning staff committee, and working with others at your school to form one, if there is not one currently in place. I would be glad to offer information and/or advice where needed in order to assist in this regard.

Bargaining

It appears that the BCTF and BCPSEA will begin bargaining as early as February 2019, and once provincial bargaining begins we will be able to begin local bargaining as well. Jason Stevens, RTA Bargaining Chair, and I attended the BCTF Bargaining Conference in October where the bargaining priorities were set for the provincial bargaining team, and that team is now meeting to write language and prepare proposals for bargaining. Locally, our team will be meeting within the next few weeks to bring the same process on local matters.

I will be working with staff reps to schedule school visits over the few weeks in order to give you more information and answer questions regarding both local and provincial bargaining.

TTOC Corner

*RTA TTOC Chair Heidi Hermanski and I will be working with Mike Hooker to create a District TTOC Handbook, which we hope will be a valuable resource for our TTOCs, and we are also hoping to convene a TTOC Committee if there is interest.

*Your RTA will be partnering with SD 19 to ensure that TTOCs have access to our Employee Family Assistance Plan (EFAP). This service provides telephone, online and in-person counselling and other supports for members and their families who are in need of support, and we feel strongly that this needs to be available to TTOCs as well as contract teachers. You can access the website at <https://www.workhealthlife.com/> Enter School District #19 to find the plan for our district.

Improvements to Salary & Benefits

As of **July 1, 2018**, several improvements to our extended health benefits negotiated in our last provincial collective agreement came into effect, including improvements to:

- * hearing aids
- * orthopedic shoes
- * vision care
- * chiropractor, physiotherapist, psychologist and other practitioner visits

As of **May 1, 2019** you will receive a salary increase of 1% and an Economic Stability Dividend increase of 0.75% for a total increase of 1.75%. The wage hikes and ESD lifts between July 2014 and June 2019 add up to a compounded increase of 9.52%. You can find your pay grade at bctf.ca/SalaryGrids/ and your benefits at pac.bluecross.ca/teachers

Professional Autonomy

Article F.25 of our collective agreement states that

"Within the bounds of effective educational practice, school instructional goals that have been collegially determined, prescribed curricula and district program requirements, teachers shall have professional autonomy in determining methodology of instruction and the planning and presentation of course materials for the classes of students to which they are assigned."

The BCTF Member's Guide contains the following statement regarding Professional Rights and Autonomy;

Teachers have the professional right and autonomy:

- 1. to establish the teaching and learning environment including setting standards of behaviour and using classroom management strategies that best suit the needs of students and teachers*
- 2. to use discretion in carrying out their professional responsibilities and primary control in diagnosing learner needs, planning and delivering curriculum, and determining appropriate methods of instruction to meet those needs*
- 3. to use primary control over assessment and over the interpretation and communication of evaluation data in regard to students*
- 4. to use significant influence over curriculum development, learning resource evaluation and selection, policy formulation, and other decision-making through the school staff at the school level, through locals at the district level, and through the BC Teachers' Federation at the provincial level*
- 5. to a working environment, that supports the judgments and choices that teachers make in order to carry out their professional responsibilities, and is free from administrative procedures or supervision practices that limit or undermine their professional autonomy*
- 6. to significant opportunities and resources to organize and engage in professional development activities, which address their self-determined professional needs and interests*
- 7. to advocate for the rights of children and adult students
to have unrestricted participation in union activities.*

Why is this so important? The short answer is that teachers are professionals, and they are the ones who best know the strengths and needs of their students. What works in one classroom with one group of students may very well not be successful in the classroom next door. Administrators or colleagues may suggest particular resources or approaches, but individual teachers have the autonomy to decide what best suits the needs of their students.

Likewise, teachers have professional autonomy with regards to their professional development as well. As professionals, teachers know best what their needs are with regards to professional development, and have the autonomy to choose what best suits their needs. Unfortunately, efforts are being made to erode teacher autonomy in many jurisdictions, even in our own province. If you ever feel pressured by an administrator to attend a particular event on a Pro-D day, remember that the decision is yours alone.

Teacher autonomy is an example of a hard won right that could be easily lost if we don't continue to assert it.

Elementary Preparation Time and Prep Make-Up

Our collective agreement provides for 100 minutes of preparation time per week for elementary teachers (pro-rated for part-time teachers who teach at least 0.4 FTE). There is some confusion as to when missed prep time will be made up, so I thought it would be useful to clarify this. Preps that are missed due to statutory holidays, Pro-D days and NI days are to be made up. Preps that fall on early dismissal days are **not** required to be made up. If your prep time falls during a school activity or event (such as a sports day), whoever provides your prep should take over your duties for the duration of your prep time. Also, teachers are encouraged to keep prep times in mind when scheduling field trips and other class activities that take place outside of the school. Preps that are missed due to activities planned by the teacher are **not** required to be made up, but often teachers are able to coordinate with other teachers and whoever is providing prep time to adjust schedules in order to avoid missing prep time. I hope this helps to clarify this issue, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Opportunities for Members

There are some exciting opportunities coming up in the new year that you may be interested in – I encourage you to think about putting your name forward if you are interested. Delegates for all BCTF events are provided with their own hotel rooms, and are reimbursed for all travel and meal expenses.

BCTF AGM

The BCTF AGM is being held March 16 – 19 at the Empress Hotel in Victoria this year, and as always, we will be electing one delegate and one alternate at our January General Meeting. Please consider attending on behalf of our membership.

BCTF Women's Institute

The first Women's Institute was held in March 2018, and this year's conference is scheduled for March 7 – 9 in Vancouver. This two-day conference was an opportunity for members who identify as women to share their experiences, build community, and learn new leadership skills and strategies together. Watch for the call for delegates from your Local President, as each local is able to send one delegate.

BCTF New Teachers' Conference

This year the BCTF is holding two New Teacher Conferences, in Vernon on April 4-5, and Nanaimo, May 9-10. Last May, the RTA approved funding to help up to three delegates who are in their first five years of teaching attend this event – please contact Bob at the RTA office if you would like more information.

Pro-D Update

Our next Pro-D day falls on Friday, February 22nd. This is our zonal Pro-D day, and members are reminded that we have an arrangement in place to allow RTA members to attend the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association's Conference at no charge. You can check out the conference web page [here](#). The PD Committee is looking forward and continuing to plan local Pro-D offerings as well for Feb. 22nd. So far, two of our colleagues have offered to do PD for us on outdoor education and visual art. At the request of our colleagues, we are also trying to organize a yoga session. If you are interested in facilitating a PD session on Feb. 22nd please contact Colleen Wall. Other options will be confirmed in January.

The assessment series continues on January 28 @ 3:45 in Room 201 at BVE. The January session will focus on success criteria. Please RSVP Colleen Wall if you would like to attend. Also, please be reminded that your school Pro-D rep has access to your Pro-D account balances as of Oct. 1st, so if you're not sure how much you have available, please don't hesitate to ask.

Lastly, Bob Rogers, Colleen Wall and Stacy Grimm have completed a revision of our Pro-D Handbook. It is now in the hands of the PD Committee for feedback and we hope to have it up on our website in the near future.

RTA Newsletter Challenge

Thanks for reading the newsletter! As always there is a newsletter challenge question designed to help you become more familiar with our contract and other related issues.

The question this time is **"What is the current amount available every 24 months for vision care under our extended health benefits plan?"** The link to the answer can be found somewhere in the newsletter. Email your answer to rtapresident19@gmail.com by Sunday, Dec. 9th for a chance to win a box full of goodies from the Modern Bakery for your school's staffroom. If the prize is won by a TTOC they can pick the school and the day of delivery.

