

# HEADS UP

**For Members**

## **Professional Development Under Our Control**

Unfortunately, some administrators cannot tolerate the idea that they do not control every aspect of teachers' professional lives. So every year we print an article to remind everyone that Professional Development is under the control of teachers.

Most of the controversy surrounds the use of non-instructional days. There are 6 non-instructional days: convention day, 4 pro-d days, and the Administration day in June. A seventh day has been provided for the last few years for a specific purpose. Currently, that day is for activities that enhance student achievement.

Five of the days, convention and pro-d, date back to 1972. The government of the time refused to provide professional days, so teachers agreed to lengthen the school year by five days. Those days are bought and paid for by us.

Professional development is teacher directed. That right was freely bargained and agreed to by the Board. We also bargained a professional development fund that is under the control of the union. The Board agreed to these demands because they acknowledged the professional nature of our work. Professionals, by definition, take responsibility for their own development and are the best judge of their individual needs.

Article 12.20 leaves the approval of the date of non-instructional days with the board, but gives control of their use to teachers. That right is given to individuals, and we have consistently advised members that, if their school activity does not meet their needs, they have the right to plan their own. We suggest they inform the pro-d committee of their plan. We also suggest that they inform their administrator of their location for the

day. Administrators have no right of approval of school wide pro-d activities or individual plans.

Some administrators have sited Board policy on professional development. The policy, dated 1987, predates the Collective Agreement and has no force. It should have been deleted long ago.

Our professionalism is under attack by this government. We shouldn't have to be fighting with our employer at the same time. Administrators should be too busy for this kind of nonsense. Goodness knows teachers are.

**Note: Some AO's are circulating a form that requires a description of your activity for the 24<sup>th</sup>. Don't return it, they are exceeding their authority. Call the STA office if there are any repercussions.**

## **Sick Police Up and Running**

You will receive a flyer from the district soon entitled, "Employee Attendance Support Program". We ran an article earlier this year as a warning.

Nothing in the pamphlet changes your ability to use sick leave. You are under no obligation to keep your "supervisor informed about issues that may impede your ability to be at work". (Where did they get this language from?) Sick leave includes, and has always included, medical and dental

appointments. You can be required to produce a medical certificate, but not unreasonably or retroactively (see Article 39.45, pg. 64) Otherwise, the only information your "supervisor" needs is that you were sick.

If you are asked to attend a formal interview about your attendance, it is our position that an STA rep must be present as the issue is potentially disciplinary. Consult your rep or this office immediately.

## **Monday, October 27 is National School Library Day**

**School libraries make a difference!**  
Come and encourage parents to come to an event organized by our own Surrey Teacher Librarian Advocacy committee in the theatre at Elgin Park, 13484 – 24th Avenue at 7:30 pm. It is entitled *How Harry Potter Made Reading Popular Again! The Importance of Reading, Your teacher-Librarian and Your School Library*. The guest speaker is Paul Whitney, Director of the Vancouver Public Library.

# College Update

## **College Changes in Brief**

- College council of 15 elected teachers and 5 appointees fired;
- replaced with interim council of 20 political appointees;
- new council dominated by retired administrators and parents;
- new council to define and enforce teacher conduct and competence;
- parents and the general public encouraged to make complaints directly to the council regarding teacher conduct and competence;
- teachers and administrators under legal obligation to report on colleagues;
- a public database to be available on individual teacher qualifications and discipline;
- new College no longer in control of teacher training programs; private, for-profit training possible;
- teacher upgrading and re-certification program to be implemented;
- Minister has final say on all College business.

## **Our Bottom Line**

- Two-thirds of the council members must be chosen by members the profession;
- members must have the right to seek advice from their union confidence;
- the college must be independent of government;
- discipline citations should only be initiated by a discipline committee that is comprised of a majority of elected council members.

## **What We Have Done So Far:**

- 78% of BCTF members have withdrawn their permission for automatic deduction of College fees;
- we are pursuing a Charter Challenge in the courts;
- we have gained the support of 20 School Boards.

## **What's Next?**

**The BCTF Representative Assembly on Nov 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> will decide a course of action from the following options:**

- Withhold the college fee;
- pay the college fee into a trust fund;
- pay the college fee;
- pay the college fee in a prescribed manner;
- protest by withdrawing service.

**Note: STARA voted to support a boycott and trust fund.**

Whatever course is adopted it will be brought back to the **November 19<sup>th</sup> General Meeting for a vote.**

**REMEMBER, THE FEE IS NOT DUE UNTIL NOVEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup> EVEN IF WE DECIDE TO PAY THE FEE YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO DO SO AFTER THE MEETING ON THE 19<sup>TH</sup>.**