

Issue #3

November 26, 2009

President's Column

Foundation Skills Assessment 2010

The BCTF's campaign against the overuse and misuse of standardized testing is set to resume with an effort to inform parents and the larger public of the negative aspects of the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), the Ministry-mandated tests given to Grade 4 and 7 students in reading comprehension, writing, and numeracy.

The window for the administration of these tests has been set wider than in previous years, increasing the potential for these tests to disrupt the regular pace of teaching and learning in the school. FSA results do not count toward students' marks, nor do the results support student learning in any meaningful way, but they do take large amount of classroom time.

So far, the government has been unwilling to yield to calls from the BCTF to discontinue its annual exercise in standardized testing, nor have they been open to the advice of teachers that the tests be set aside altogether, or administered on a random-sampling basis. There are good reasons why government should act on this advice. Changes to the FSA to allow for random-sampling would be much less expensive, and potentially more valid than the current census-based approach. It's also an approach that has worked well in the past, as participants in the Provincial Learning Assessment Program will attest.

The issue of the overuse and misuse of standardized testing is one which deserves the full attention of teachers, not just those teaching grades 4 and 7. There is not subject or grade level where some kind of standardized testing instrument might be misused or misapplied. Ask colleagues who teach provincially examinable subjects, commencing in grade 10.

The truth is, teachers acknowledge the importance of tests; teachers create, administer and use tests to evaluate student learning all the time. We know how to use tests appropriately, both as a diagnostic tool (prior to teaching, to determine what needs to be learned), and as an evaluative instrument (to be used after teaching, to confirm what has been learned). And teachers know how to combine test results with other evaluative means such as portfolio, and other

qualitative measures to provide a fuller, more accurate view of a student's learning.

The FSA tests are expensive; they do not help students to learn, nor teachers to teach; they take valuable time away from richer and more meaningful opportunities for learning; the FSA tests deflect valuable resources away from the classroom; and finally, the FSA test results are misused to rank schools and to promote private, not public, education. Despite claims to the contrary, FSA's do not provide real help to students, reliable information to parents, or meaningful support to schools.

Teachers have a critical role to play in speaking with parents about the issue of student testing. Parents can be reassured that all the information they need concerning the academic and social success of their daughters and sons, is already available – through their child's teachers – at school. Encourage parents to call the school to make an appointment.

The DTA Staff Representative Assembly will be debating the DTA's local plan of action concerning this year's FSA tests at its meeting on November 30th. The DTA will be eliciting the involvement and support of members in our effort to raise the level of debate around the over-use and misuse of standardized tests.

BCTF Advantage / Ellis Mortgages Canada Mortgage Discount Program

Several years ago, the BCTF initiated BCTF Advantage, an affinity program for BCTF members and retired BCTF members. Accompanying this newsletter is a circular provided by Ellis Mortgages Canada who are eager to meet with BCTF/DTA members concerning the volume discounts which may be available to them. The DTA has cooperated with Ellis Mortgages and the BCTF in arranging a meeting between interested BCTF members and EMC. The meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 20th, 2010 at the Delta Manor Education Centre, 4750 57th St., Ladner. Teachers interested in attending are asked to pre-register with Ellis Mortgages. Email lisas@emcmortgages.ca.



Well, as a first time Pro D Co-Chair, that was interesting....

I've been on the PD Committee for four years now, but getting an opportunity to see the inner financial workings of the biggest Pro D day of the year was quite enlightening. Here are some statistics:

- 363** The number of applications approved for October 23 that were sent in on time with appropriate information.
- 6.2%** The percentage of applications not funded. We have had 24 applications sent in AFTER October 23 that were not approved beforehand. These late applications are not funded.
- 40%** We have about 985 members, so approximately 40% of our members were supported financially for October 23 Pro D Day.
- 99** As of November 26, the number of applications that have been approved for October 23 but receipts have not been submitted for reimbursement.



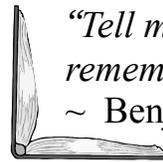
New Teachers and Teachers on Call

BCTF New Teachers' Conference 2010

The 2010 conference will take place on March 26-27 at the Radisson Hotel in Richmond. Conference registration will be available online starting December 2009.

TTOC Meeting

4:00 pm
Thursday, December 3, 2009
North Delta Secondary



"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."
~ Benjamin Franklin

Discretionary Day and Personal Leave Day

Although the discretionary day and personal leave day has been part of the collective agreement for several years, questions do arise from time to time.

Discretionary Day:

- Every continuing teacher (full-time or part-time) is entitled to one discretionary day per year.
- These days do not accumulate from one year to the next.
- The discretionary day can be taken for **any** purpose and can be taken at **any** time during the year.
- You do not need to apply for the discretionary day. Use the same process you would use if you were calling in sick, except key into the SEM System the reason for your absence is your discretionary day (reason #2). (It is helpful to the Board if you give as much advance notice as possible).
- You receive full salary and benefits when you take your discretionary day.

Personal Leave Day:

- You must apply to the Human Resources Office for this day. Application forms are in your school. Make your application as far in advance as possible.
- You receive your full salary less the cost of a teacher-on-call for the day.
- This day **cannot** be attached to Christmas Break or Spring break. Also, it **cannot** be attached to a discretionary day, which is attached to Christmas break or Spring break.
- SEM System Reason: #7 - Leave at TOC cost.