



January 2011

OKANAGAN-SKAHA TEACHERS' UNION

Half Way Through Another School Year and.....

For many, it seems shocking that we are half way through another school year. Time has flown by for us in the office, however, when I looked back at the changes, developments, and headlines since September, I was stunned at the ever-changing landscape in BC. It is truly a wonder that we get things done when the constant state of upheaval prevails in the media and political sphere.

September—We were cautiously preparing for bargaining by surveying members, attending training and meetings, and asking a lot of questions. BCeSIS blew up and the schools here and around the province were in techno-limbo.

October—Class consultations had completed and teachers were asking for more resources for students. Inquiry groups were taking off and we started to hear more about the new direction BC's education system was going to take in the 21st Century. George Abbott replaced Margaret

Mcdiarmid as Minister of Education and many felt that the change was positive.

November—Premier Campbell told the province that every grade 4 student would be meeting expectations and then days later resigned. George Abbott entered the Liberal leadership race and stepped down as Minister of Education and, Mcdiarmid was re-appointed Minister. BCeSIS was 'bought' by Pearson and many were optimistic that change was coming.

December— the NDP party seemed to be in a state of flux as Carol James stepped down amidst unrest within the party caucus.

January—We returned from holidays to hear Kevin Falcon tout the merit pay idea out and get a massive amount of air play because of it.

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We hope to get to the local bargaining table and get some work done for our members and our students. Our focus has not wavered, although the events around us have tried to distract us. What else might be on the agenda for the next five months? Perhaps a provincial election? Another new Minister of Education? Funding announcements? Policy changes? We know that regardless of what happens teachers, OSTU members, will continue to work for kids and for a better education system.

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Check out OSTU.CA for ...

- Bargaining Information
- Our Calendar of events
- Frequently Used Documents
- And much, much more.....

Bargaining Talk: a monthly update on bargaining

**OSTU General Meeting
Feburary 16th, 2011
Penticton Lakeside Hotel
4pm**

At this general meeting OSTU members will be asked for input and to ratify our bargaining objectives for the next round of collective bargaining. These objectives will guide OSTU as we seek to negotiate a new contract.

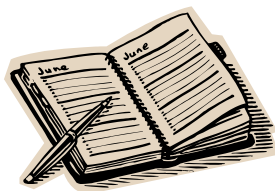
YOUR UNION-YOUR CONTRACT-YOUR VOICE

Bargaining Timeline!

Feb 16, 2011– OSTU sets its bargaining objectives.

March 1, 2011—Negotiations can open locally and provincially.

July 1, 2011— Current Collective Agreement ends.



Get to know your collective agreement

Did You Know? Article B.24: Positions of Special Responsibility—release days for curriculum management

Effective July 1, 1991 schools will receive release time for curriculum management as follows:

Penticton Senior Secondary 240 F.T.E. T.O.C. days

Princess Margaret Junior Secondary 80 F.T.E. T.O.C. days

McNicoll Park Junior Secondary 80 F.T.E. T.O.C. days

Summerland Secondary 120 F.T.E. T.O.C. days

The above release time may be used for:

- a. Teacher on Call release days
- b. payment for work beyond the regular work year, and/or
- c. increased staffing for the school to provide release time for department heads.

The decision on the above allocations shall be made by a Department Heads' Committee which

shall include all department heads and the administrative officer(s) of the school.

This article is clearly outdated since neither JUNIOR secondary school mentioned exist! Further, while some schools seem to use the days referred to in this article for department head release, are the remaining days, and their use, discussed?

**Kindergarten and High School Classes are larger now than any time
in the last five years!**

Today the Ministry of Education issued a news release misleadingly headlined: "New report shows classes still smaller." Nothing could be further from the truth.

"This release offers nothing more than numbers taken entirely out of context. It's highly manipulative of statistics that have a real impact in terms of children's learning conditions across BC," said BCTF President Susan Lambert.

"In Vancouver, some schools are reporting up to 30% of classes in violation of the government's own legislated class size and composition limits. In Langley, 735 out of 2,352 classes are either over 30 and/or have three or more students with special needs. In other words, about 31% of all Langley classes are in violation of the limits."

The ministry reports that 3,627 classes have more than 30 students, but it fails to report that this is an increase of 12.3% over last year's total of 3,229 oversized classes (see charts below).

The average class sizes both at the Kindergarten level and in secondary schools have gone up:

- This year the average Kindergarten class size is 18.3 students, up from 17.8 last year.
- This year the average size of classes in Grades 8 through 12 is 25.1, up from 24.8 last year.

Lambert noted that, in fact, the Kindergarten and secondary school class sizes are higher now than at any time in the last five years.

Perhaps more distressing news to teachers and parents will be the dramatic increase in the number of classes with more than three students with special needs. The legislation stipulates that no class should have more than three students whose special needs require them to have an Individual Education Plan. However, this year's report shows that 12,240 classes have four or more students with IEPs. This represents 18.9% of all classes in the province.

"How can these numbers possibly justify that headline?" Lambert asked. "It's extremely distressing to see the ministry spinning a story that is so fundamentally at odds with the difficult reality in large and complex classroom situations throughout BC."

Lambert called on the provincial government to restore the class size and composition limits that were stripped from the teachers' collective agreement and to rehire the roughly 1,300 learning specialist teachers lost to the system.

Local Statistics on class sizes and composition—according to the report made to the Ministry of Education, Okanagan-Skaha has 732 classes. 29 of those classes have more than 30 students and 279 of them have 4 or more students on IEPs. Approximately 38% of the classes in this district are over the limits in The School Act.

Member Milestones

Tom Doratti announced his retirement from SD67 after 30 years of teaching. Tom taught at Pen-High since 1983.

Tony Cristini announced his retirement from SD67 after 32 years of teaching. Tony taught at Pen-High for 32 of those years.

Nicki Tegart gave birth to a baby boy on January 12th. Welcome to baby Anderson Gronlund!

Cheryl McPherson became a grandma! Quentin was born on October 6th, 2010. Proud parents are Cheryl's son Allan and partner Kristen.

Interesting & Entertaining Links:

In Light of all the merit pay hoopla!!!

The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us— An economist debunks the myth that money is a motivator. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc>

Why all the rave reviews for Finland's Education

System? Finland's Education Success- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1YHWpRR4yc&NR=1>

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OKANAGAN-SKAHA TEACHERS'
UNION

Upcoming Dates.....

Jan 20th—

- Pro D Meeting @ OSTU
- Retirement Seminar @ KVR

Jan 25th—

- OSTU RA @ Days Inn

Jan 26th—

- TTOC Meeting @ OSTU

Feb 2 -

- PQT Workshops @ Pen Hi Library

Feb 3 -

- Living With Balance Program @ OSTU

Feb 8-

- Executive Meeting @ OSTU

Feb 9-

- Pro D Rep Training @ OSTU

Feb 16-

- **General Meeting @ Lakeside (4pm)**

