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# THE WHISTLE

Newsletter of the Burnaby Teachers' Association

BCTF AGM  
MARCH 14-17  
2020

FEBRUARY 2020

## Coming Together, Raising Awareness: A Mark-In Reflection

By Morgan McKee



*BTA members participating in the Mark-In at Metrotown Centre*

Seeing teachers collect for the Mark-In showed the solidarity of our union coming together. There's something special about being able to relax in a non-educational setting, the casual environment in the food court felt different than being at school. It was nice talking with colleagues and among friends.

It was also nice to run into a couple familiar faces and to meet new teachers. As a new teacher I felt welcomed.



*BTA members participating in the Mark-In at Metrotown Centre*

To catch up and chat, even while marking, reminded me that we're not at it alone. As my colleague pointed out you gain perspective by looking around and observing the different pieces of student work, grade level and subjects being marked by others. Luckily the BTA brought some extra red shirts, and the distinct cohesion of a group of teachers in red brought some attention!

Hopefully next time we will see more lovely faces in red at the next event coming up!

**THURSDAY  
FEBRUARY 20, 2020**

**4pm—6pm**

**Lougheed Town  
Centre - Food Court**

**THURSDAY  
MARCH 5, 2020**

**4pm—6pm**

**Metrotown  
Food Court**

## Burnaby Teachers Support Free Transit for Youth

By Derek Cockram

At the BTAs last general meeting Tuesday January 21st, members overwhelmingly supported a motion calling for free transit for Burnaby's children.

With the Strike to End Climate change,

young people have clearly expressed a desire to see concrete action taken by political leaders. This is just one such action.

If BC governments are serious about achieving the environmental goals they have set for themselves, they must adopt extraordinary measures now to ensure children develop a lifelong habit of transit use. The easiest way to do that is to make transit more accessible for children and the least expensive option for families.

Other jurisdiction are already seizing the initiative. Since September, Victoria residents under the age of 18 have been able to ride transit for free. The city is paying for the initiative with an increase in the use and cost of metered parking. Back in the east, transit authorities in Kingston and Toronto have expanded their free transit for children initiatives after realizing a significant increase in ridership and revenues as a result of their programs.

Beyond the environmental benefits, removing fares for children makes life immediately more affordable for disadvantaged families. It might also lead to less congestion on our streets.

While many municipalities around the lower mainland, including Burnaby, have indicated their support for the idea of free transit for youth, by endorsing the #All on Board campaign, none have yet to take any concrete steps to make it a reality. We are hoping the Burnaby will take the lead and show children that governments are taking action and that political engagement can produce results.



## HEALTH & SAFETY - PRESENTEEISM

(Adapted from an Article by Kathleen Ladislaus of CUPE 454)

Do you ever go to work sick or injured, when you should stay home and recover? Is it because you are so passionate about your work? Is it a sense of loyalty to your students? Or are you fearful to miss a day because you worry that your absence won't be covered, and you will be putting your colleagues under increased pressure or be taking service away from our most vulnerable students?

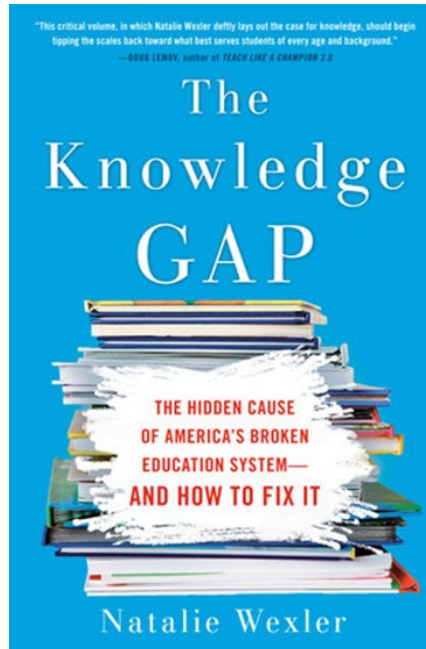
Enjoying teaching is wonderful; everyone should feel good about the work they do. Loyalty is also commendable, however, if you are injured, ill or experiencing physical or mental illness, you may be doing harm to yourself or others by going to work. Presenteeism, the opposite of absenteeism, is a workforce issue which has received little, or no attention.



Several studies have shown costs to overall productivity, increased worker error rates and even financial costs to the employer are significant with presenteeism. More importantly, from a health and safety perspective, it is irresponsible to go to work sick and spread illness to co-workers or the general public. Some of your co-workers or students may have compromised immune systems or may take the illness home to others more vulnerable, with dire consequences.

The recent measles outbreak is a good example of how a dangerous, infectious virus can spread to vulnerable members in

society, babies and children not fully vaccinated. According to WorkSafe BC an employer must protect workers from all work-related hazards, including exposure to infectious diseases (Workers Compensation Act, Division 3, Section 115). You should not be coming to work if you are ill and administrators should send home anyone showing up to work presenting signs of illness. If you're not well, you owe it to yourself, your students and your co-workers to stay home and get some rest.



### The Knowledge Gap By Derek Cockram

The Knowledge Gap is sure to cause controversy among educators on both sides of the 49th parallel.

Natalie Wexler believes that much of the blame for declining educational outcomes in America can be traced to the progressive education pedagogy that was adopted prior to the turn of the century.

According to Wexler, progressive education views the teaching of discrete skills such as finding the main idea, making inferences, and drawing conclusions as the primary goal of instruction. At first, content knowledge is secondary or incidental to the process. Essentially, students must spend their time

“learning to read” before “reading to learn”.

Wexler claims that cognitive psychology has discovered the opposite is true. Knowledge is the basic building block upon which education rests. She points out that a sentence like “Clarke clinically cut and drove 10 fours” is meaningless to even the best readers unless they have a familiarity with the sport of cricket.

For her, the best way to boost reading comprehension (and educational outcomes) is not to focus on discrete skills but to teach students, as early as possible, history, science, and other content through a systematic progression that could build the knowledge and vocabulary they need to understand both written texts and the world around them.

She consistently challenges the orthodoxy that “education should be a natural, pleasurable process and that learning facts or memorizing them is inherently boring and soul-destroying.” She believes that the direct teaching of subject content in schools is a matter of fundamental justice, pointing out that students with less educated parents are unlikely to have opportunities to acquire a broad base of knowledge outside of the classroom. Furthermore, she rejects the current practice of encouraging teachers to be the “guide on the side” claiming it undermines content knowledge and devalues the expertise of teachers.

However, she recognizes that mandating the teaching of particular content in a pluralistic, multicultural society is fraught with political danger. Who decides what knowledge is vital and which is trivial? It is not an easy question to answer and she does a much better job of pointing out the problem than proposing a solution.

The book is a short, enjoyable read. Interspersing the history of educational reform and pedagogical theory with first-person accounts of modern classrooms keeps the writing light but consistently challenging and thought provoking. Whether you ultimately find her argument persuasive or not, by the end of the book you will have re-evaluated your own teaching practice in a much more critical light.

# District Pro-D Day at Burnaby North

## February 28, 2020

### Valentine's Day Writing Winners

Thanks to all those who entered our Valentine's Day Writing Contest. The winner of a \$100 Gift Certificate is Jonathan MacDonald at BCSD, Burnaby South. We have also awarded two \$50 gift certificates to our runners up: Elisa-Maria Chong of Douglas Road Elementary School and Shelley Dubé of Burnaby South.



### Jonathan MacDonald BCSD at Burnaby South

The day I felt the calling to be a teacher took place in Guatemala back in April 2006 on a missionary trip held by St. Thomas' Church in St. John's, Newfoundland. We collected donated items from the city for students attending the Arms of Jesus school. We planned to build four houses for families who were well below poverty line there. About two weeks before the trip, I learned there were two Deaf brothers attending school. I thought it was coincidental since I am Deaf. It was a challenging two weeks figuring what I should do. Should I teach them American Sign Language? Guatemalan Sign Language? I didn't know Guatemala Sign Language. I figured we would get by through gesturing, rather than signing. When we met for the first time, their eyes sparkled after seeing another Deaf person, perhaps for the first time in their lives. They taught me homemade signs that I will never forget – their sign for BATHROOM reminds me of DEPRESSION in American Sign

Language. The idea of connecting with another Deaf person in another country overwhelmed me with excitement. Time flew before I realized our trip came to an end. The mother of the kids asked for a farewell meeting. She had only one question for me. She wanted to know how to sign I LOVE YOU. I showed her the sign. She turned to her kids and signed I-LOVE-YOU. It was her first time telling her children that she loved them. What an emotional moment.

### Elisa-Maria Chong Douglas Road Elementary School

When I walked into my first grade two classroom to volunteer, I saw all 26 faces looking at me inquisitively, I had been in the class no longer than 5 seconds before one young boy bursting with energy yelled across the classroom "Who are you?" It was in that moment that once of my greatest learning experiences thus far, had begun. Together we ventured off to the learning assistance room. This would become our new home every Tuesday afternoon for the next three months. During our sessions Cody could not sit at the desk with me for more than five minutes! I was new to teaching and all I was certain of was that I could not force Cody to concentrate on one activity for long periods of time. I knew I would need to really focus on making our lessons student centered to fit the specific needs of Cody. I started breaking up our session into five minute fragments. The instruction differentiated utilizing various avenues for learning. We would work five minutes on one activity, like a reading a book together, then try another that incorporated body movements, for example we would get up and try to act out what had just happened in the story which would exercise his reading comprehension. When we would get a lot accomplished I would give him free time at the end of our sessions. I quickly

discovered that Cody enjoyed being helpful. He was also handy with repairing things. "I can fix that" he would say pointing to chairs with loose legs and the carpet which had been fraying. He would tighten screws, trim the carpets and he would even help me tidy when he was done. I saw a side of Cody that wanted to be helpful and useful not seen as helpless or reckless. Cody taught me that I had the patience and the ability to view children and see the contributing contexts that make up their life. It was then I was affirmed in my love for teaching.

### Shelley Dubé. Burnaby South

I met him when I was in Grade 11. Stepping into his Musical Theatre class was life changing. I was immediately entranced by his sense of humour, his amazing laugh and his talent for embedding curriculum within his storytelling. He made personal connections with all of his students. He made us feel supported and respected. Having him as a teacher made me realize the profound impact that a truly amazing teacher can have in the lives of the young people they teach. I knew I wanted to become a teacher because of him. I wanted to do my best to have students feel as accepted, safe and positive as he always made me feel. His teaching style has so inspired mine. When my own students tell me that they love learning through the stories I tell and that they love how much they laugh in my class, I know it's his influence on my practice. I saw him at a BCTF rally in 2005; he had been diagnosed with cancer by then. He was so proud that I'd become a teacher and that I was there, alongside him. He passed away in 2006. The 650-person theatre at our old high school didn't come close to fitting the number of people, mostly past students, who came to his memorial service. I fell in love with teaching because of him and he continues to inspire my practice. I miss him terribly.



## Gains Made in Bargaining

### Aug. 2001: Bill 18

New Liberal gov't passes essential service legislation, reducing teachers' full and free collective bargaining rights including the right to strike.

### Oct. 2005: Bill 12 and strike

Liberals impose a contract to end teachers' job action, which rolls over existing contract for 3 years until June 30, 2006. In response, teachers:

- vote 90.5% in favour to begin a province-wide strike
- defy a return to work order and commence an illegal strike
- emphasize class size and composition as their main issue

After 10 days, Vince Reedy is brought in to mediate an end to the dispute.

### March 2012: Three-day strike

Teachers strike province-wide for three days after a year of fruitless bargaining and months of limited job action in the face of government's "net zero" mandate.

### May 2014: Rotating strikes begin

After over a year of fruitless bargaining, rotating strikes begin and then escalate to a full-scale strike in June. BCPSEA partially locks out teachers and reduces salary. Strike continues into September.

### Nov. 2016: Supreme Court win

After teachers fight for 15 years in the courts, the Supreme Court of Canada restores language stripped from collective agreements in 2002. This includes local class size and class composition limits and ratios for non-enrolling teachers.

2019.11.05/DM.bp  
Special Workshops-2019 Wshp for LFs  
Gains Made in Barg  
TSJzfhz

2001

2002

### Jan. 2002: Bills 27 and 28

Legislation imposes a 3-year collective agreement on teachers that strips:

- all class size and workload provisions
- specialist teacher ratios and guaranteed support for students with special needs
- school-based team provisions
- vaporizes 15 collective agreements in amalgamated districts

2003

2004

2005

2006

### June 2006: 5-year agreement reached

After an illegal strike and a mediator's report, teachers ratify a new 5-year agreement that includes:

- up to a 17% salary increase
- grid harmonization, remote allowances, and SIP allowance
- improvements to prep time
- improvements to benefits
- a \$4000 signing bonus

2007

2008

2009

2010

### June 2012: Retroactive deal

A retroactive deal for 2011-13 is reached despite the government's "net zero" mandate. It includes:

- improvements to leaves
  - a provincial extended health benefit plan
  - no employer concessions
- 20 locals also negotiate local matters agreements.

2011

2012

2013

2014

### Sept. 2014: Deal finally reached

A 6-year deal is reached which includes:

- a 7.25% salary increase
- improvements to extended health and dental benefits, elementary prep time, and TTOC pay
- \$105 million to compensate outstanding class size and composition grievances

2015

2016

Employer proposal E.80 is withdrawn before deal is reached (would negate any potential win at Supreme Court of Canada)

2017

2018

2019

### Mar. 2019: Concessions tabled

The government tables proposals to replace newly restored class size and composition language with admin discretion over staffing.  
To be continued...