

Grievance Bulletin

This publication is intended only for the information and use of STA members, and should not be used for any other purpose.

Autonomy is the Key to Professionalism

Within the bounds of effective educational practice and prescribed provincial and locally-developed curricula, teachers shall have individual professional autonomy and responsibility in the planning and presentation of course materials in the classes to which they are assigned. Article 6.11

In any profession, having professional autonomy reduces stress and illness, and increases job satisfaction. But especially in teaching, having professional autonomy allows us to do our complex, highly interpersonal jobs in a way which suits our personality, strengths, and values. Professional autonomy allows a path to self-actualization. Moreover, it demonstrates autonomy and free-thinking to our students.

As a group, teachers having professional autonomy makes for a more effective public education system, and more respect for us as professionals.

School Pro-D Reps are attending union workshops on autonomy. If you feel your professional autonomy is being encroached upon. Please contact your Staff Rep, Pro-D Rep, or the STA office.

Grade Group Meetings and Discussion Groups

Some elementary schools provide time for Grade Group meeting. The STA recommends that topics for discussion at Grade Group meetings be decided by consensus among the participants. If a teacher does not find it useful to attend the Grade Group meeting, he or she can choose to be able to do another professional learning activity, or continue to teach their class.

At Secondary, some schools have discussion groups outside of the school day. Secondary teachers are not required to join a discussion group or be at school during this time, nor can discussion groups be directed as to how to function or report, or what topics can be considered.

At both Grade Group Meetings and Discussion Groups, veteran teachers should be aware that sharing instructional ideas with new teachers is often welcome, but new teachers should not feel pressured to teach a certain way.

Departments in Secondary Schools

The duties of Department Heads are recorded in Article 37. Department Heads can be expected to use their knowledge of curriculum and instruction to guide and orient new teachers, to support the professional development of department members, and help department members implement curriculum changes. However, AOs cannot use Department Heads as agents to tell teachers how to teach, nor direct Department Heads to do administrative duties not outlined in the Collective Agreement.

Data-driven Education

An education system seeking to impose top-down control through data collection usually requires that the data allow for comparison. This results in pressure to move towards standardized testing, and standardized teaching methods, and away from individuality and autonomy both for students and for teachers.

Moves towards data-driven education may be having a significant large-scale political effect which disempowers teachers and advocates of public education. Critics of American public education have pointed out that over-testing and data collection are reducing not just the effectiveness of public education, they are reducing the voice of teachers in society. The more teachers are seen as cogs in a mechanistic system, the less the public respects their opinion in educational and political issues, and the less the public is willing to listen to their concerns over worsening working conditions and falling real incomes. Most tellingly, increasing numbers of middle-class Americans no longer see teaching as a reasonable career choice, as it no longer offers the degree of autonomy and respect which is required to maintain the status of being a profession. The right to Professional Autonomy is perhaps the most valuable right of teachers, and lately, one of the most frequently challenged. It is worth defending.

All Teachers are Entitled to Prep Time

Every member should check that he/she is receiving adequate prep time as outlined in article 25 of the Collective Agreement. This is especially important for non-enrolling and/or itinerant teachers who may have complex schedules. Remember that prep time must be taken in periods of at least twenty (20) minutes. **If you are not receiving the prep time to which you are entitled then please notify your administrator and a staff rep.**

Furthermore, all teachers are entitled to their prep time during the first week of the school year. This applies regardless of who is providing the prep time. In past years, several administrators have decided to give all or most of the week's prep time in the afternoon of the first day of school early dismissal. If this was the case in your school, be aware that the time must be free of any other duties or obligations such as meetings. If you did not get prep time in the first week, it must be made up. See Article 25.60.

In some exceptional circumstances, the Board has found it difficult to fill one leftover Secondary block in a specialty area and wishes to assign it to a full time teacher already on staff, who foregoes a prep. **The 114 Agreement between the STA and District specifies a process that must be followed before a teacher can be assigned to teach 8 out of 8 blocks.** It basically involves specific requirements for first posting the block externally, informing the STA, and then giving all teachers at the school notice of any unfilled extra block before assigning it to a willing qualified. Staff Reps are encouraged to be vigilant that Secondary teachers are not assigned 8 teaching blocks out of 8 unless the process has been

followed correctly and completely. The 114 Agreement can be found under Resolutions on the STA Website.

The 114 agreement does not apply to teachers hired into a single semester assignment, which is covered by Article 25.30.

When teaching kitchens offer lunch, it usually requires the teaching chef to work the block before, making it difficult to consistently take a prep within the usual block rotation. In addition, teaching chefs miss the right to a lunch break. **The Teaching Chef agreement** specifies that the principal and chef must discuss a plan to recover lost lunch and prep time. In most schools, this has resulted in chefs having their recovery time in the last block of each day. Typically, students report to the last block, are dismissed so the chef can take prep time, and then during lunch recovery, the chef is free to leave the school. The STA is currently grieving that the process was not followed properly last year, and that some chefs did not receive appropriate recovery time for lost lunch and prep time.

In some **specialist programs**, teachers plan their own timetables. Please be aware that you should schedule appropriate prep time. If you have difficulty doing so, please inform the principal and the STA. Please note that if you have any responsibility to supervise students during a period, it cannot be considered a prep period.

If a teacher is reassigned away from a prep period, they have a **right to recover** that time. See Article 25.60, and the TOC and Prep Time agreement under Resolutions on the STA website.

Harassment-free Workplace: Procedures to reach Early Resolution

Teachers and other employee groups in the Surrey School District have the right to a harassment free workplace pursuant to Collective Agreement Articles 21.71-21.80, including Appendix L.

Please note that if harassing behaviour is severe, or is repeated, it can result in discipline or transfers.

In recognition of the utility of resolving harassment complaints early, both the District and the STA provide procedures for early resolution.

The resolution procedure in Article 21.73 encourages the complainant to solve the concern directly with the respondent, or alternately, approach an administrator, staff rep, or other contact person, such as an STA officer, to request assistance.

If an administrative officer is involved, the first step should be an attempt to mediate the complaint, with discussions being off the record, no discipline imposed, and if a resolution is reached, written copies can be kept only by the complainant and the respondent. The administrative officer may write a memo to the respondent, but it will be non-disciplinary, and not form part of any record. Only the respondent will retain a copy of the memo.

The STA and the BCTF also provide mediation services, which can be accessed by contacting the STA office.

Joint District-STA workshops are held every year for principals and staff reps to promote awareness of harassment issues, and educate employees about standards and procedures.

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Setting the Stage for Cuts to Teaching Positions?

Concerns are growing about Blurring of Specialist Teacher Job Descriptions, Downloading Responsibilities, and Losing Teacher Work.

We continue to see the Job Descriptions of specialist teachers being blurred by transferring duties from one type of specialist teacher to another, for example by promoting a 'team' concept at the school, or by asking Counsellors or LST teachers to do work usually done by other specialists.

In addition, there are no longer any Aboriginal LST teachers or elementary cultural enhancement teachers. We have become aware of the creation of new CUPE positions which may have the potential to impact Integration Teachers and Speech and Language specialists. Most recently, Elementary principals have been informed that regular classroom teachers, rather than the specialist teachers, should write IEPs for Gifted Students.

All of these moves seem to fly in the face of the sophisticated system of specialist and support teacher services which has been developed by the District in cooperation with the STA, and is reflected in the Job Description Handbook.

When there have been significant funding cuts in recent years, some of the main impacts in Surrey included significant reductions in specialist teachers.

In one instance, responsibility for Intermediate and Advanced ESL students was largely transferred from ESL specialists onto classroom teachers, and scores

of ESL teaching positions were eliminated. In another instance, separate Resource Room, ESL, and Learning Assistance teaching positions were eliminated, and those teachers were turned into Learner Support Teachers, many of whom lost their

specialist positions and moved into regular classroom positions. In both cases, the District saved money by reducing the number of specialist teaching positions, while still expecting the same amount of work to be done, either by the fewer remaining specialist teachers, or by classroom teachers.

The STA is currently grieving what we see as violations of the Collective Agreement, including Job Descriptions and Scope of the Bargaining Unit, and also engaging in discussions with management and CUPE regarding the respective roles of teachers and non-teachers in providing specialist services to students.

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All teachers, including specialist and classroom teachers, should make themselves aware of the duties of specialist teachers. You can view the Job Description Handbook on the District website by clicking on Staff, and then Human Resources. Please contact the STA at 604-594-5353 or at grieve@surreyteachers.org if you have new information or questions.

Teachers Forced to Sign Away Rights?

It recently came to light that the District had been requiring STA members working part-time at Surrey Connect to sign Terms of Agreement. The STA has serious concerns regarding the District's use of these agreements and with the content which appears to infringe on Collective Agreement rights. The STA has grieved, as well as proposed formal negotiations to settle some of the issues.

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Prevents Disruption, Disappointments, and Hard Feelings by correctly Identifying Educational Needs before a Vacancy is posted.

Schools not properly identifying educational needs before posting vacancies have caused a number of difficulties for teachers, including teachers not being assigned the courses which were listed in the vacancies they applied for and were awarded, and teachers already at a school finding that courses they wished to teach were posted and filled by applicants in the transfer rounds.

The STA is currently grieving that a high school did not properly consult before deciding whether to post Physics blocks as part of a vacancy, and that at another high school, a block of Geography 12 was included in a posting awarded to an applicant from another school, and then afterwards assigned to a different teacher who was already on staff.

Recent grievance resolutions have resulted in improperly posted positions being reposted.

Please ensure that your school follows the process outlined in 31.20, and that administration consults Staff Committee, Departments, and teacher preference forms, and offers vacancies for internal reassignment before vacancies at your school are posted in the Transfer Rounds.

➤ **Staff Reps will receive specific training in February, but all teachers can assist by raising questions at Staff Committee and in their Departments regarding any changes in the educational needs of the school, including the blocks, courses, and grade levels for which the principal has identified a need to find teachers.**

Discussions regarding Improved Harassment Awareness Training

One of the most difficult and trying experiences for teachers can be involvement as a party in a harassment complaint. In many cases, attention to a problem at an early stage can solve the problem before it escalates.

The STA is committed to ensuring that we all work in a harassment free environment.

Therefore, we are promoting a pro-active approach of education, and early mediation. Mediation is available through the STA, the BCTF, and through school principals pursuant to Appendix L of the Collective Agreement.

Unfortunately, only 35 teachers and administrators attended the Harassment Awareness Training on December 8, and reports indicate that in previous years, the training was not passed on consistently to all schools. The STA is engaging in discussions with the District to improve and update the training required by the Collective Agreement, and is advocating that all teachers and administrators receive the training next year.

STA Continuing to Oppose District Cap on FTE

The District has imposed a cap of FTE of 1.25 on teacher work. This affects a number of our members, including those with part time hourly paid teaching assignments at Surrey Connect or Adult Education. The STA is compiling information on the number and types of teachers affected.

We hope to convince the District to remove the Cap altogether. We hope that District recognizes that **many members have successfully taught hourly part time assignments in addition to their continuing contract work.**

In any case, we will strive to ensure that if the District does maintain a limit, that it is fair, reasonable, clearly explained, and equitably applied.

Deadlines for Qualifications - January 31

Applications to have your qualifications evaluated for inclusion in the list of Teachers Qualified for Specialist Positions in the Job Description Handbook, or for the Threshold Agreement for Generic classroom positions, are due at Human Resources on January 31. See the District Website.

Reminder—Take your prep!!!

Secondary Teachers please ensure you are scheduled to receive 12.5% of your instructional time as prep. This includes non-enrolling teachers.

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Principals are Required to Consult at Staff Committee Meetings regarding Educational Program Needs

Postings are created after considering Educational Program Needs.

Educational Program Needs which are not expected to be met by teachers with continuing contracts at the school cause vacancies, which are filled through the posting process. These unmet needs must be identified and reported to Human Resources by April 15, so that the vacancies can be posted in Round 1 as continuing positions at the school.

In Downsizing, Educational Program Needs affect Teacher Assignments.

When a school is downsizing, meaning there are more continuing teachers at the school than are needed to meet the Educational Program Needs, those needs are matched to the qualifications and seniority of continuing teachers at the school. This generally results in senior teachers staying at the school, and junior teachers being force transferred. Some exceptions are if a senior teacher volunteers to be transferred, or if a junior teacher must remain to teach courses or grades that a senior teacher is not qualified for.

Consultation with Staff Committee helps the Transfer Process work properly.

Principals must consult with Staff Committee about Educational Program needs both in preparation for posting, and in preparation for forced transfers. This consultation process is crucial to the functioning of the transfer process, and is designed **to prevent errors such as posting a vacancy in error, which could result in selecting a teacher who does not meet the Educational Program Needs, or failing to post when an additional continuing teacher is needed.** Selection criteria should be part of the consultations, as any selection criterion which doesn't directly address the Educational Program Needs, and only those needs, could lead to the selection of the wrong applicant. **Another type of error could be identifying the wrong teacher for forced transfer when a school is downsizing.**

Consultation must Encourage Participation and Consider all Input

Principals cannot disregard any input in the consultation process. In order for them to make reasonable decisions, they must carefully consider all teacher input, and if they are in disagreement, they must be able to explain why they disagree. In the case of a Staff Committee recommendation, this must be in writing. Principals must also supply enough information for teachers and Staff Committees to give informed input. Arbitrator James Dorsey, in a recent ruling regarding the consultation process under Bill 33, considered that principals must provide information, and time for teachers to consider that information. Then principals have to consider any teacher's views that were provided. Moreover, he considered that **consultation must not limit sharing of information that should be the basis of a professional dialogue, nor should it diminish teacher involvement and participation, or generate cynicism about the consultation process.**

Teachers Need to Participate at Staff Committee

The District may persist in downplaying the importance of consultation at Staff Committee, or the range of input which principals are required to consider, in what we see as a misguided attempt to preserve what they call 'Management Rights'. The STA believes that consultation is in fact designed to help administrators make good decisions. Staff Reps have been provided with packages which include explanations and checklists. **All members are urged to inform themselves regarding the issues, and to support efforts to promote effective consultation including teacher input at Staff Committees.**

STA Transfers and Interviews Workshop

Including Overview of Transfer Process and Information on Applying and Interviewing.

Thursday, March 25, 2010

3:30- 5:00

**Conference Centre
Snacks provided**

Recent Grievance Resolutions

Return from Pregnancy or Parental Leave

The District agreed that a teacher on Parental Leave whose courses were changed while she was on leave should have been returned to the courses she had been originally scheduled to teach.

Letter of Direction

The District agreed that a Letter of Direction sent to a teacher contained inappropriate allegations, and agreed to rewrite it as a Letter of Expectations, without the allegations.

Note: If you receive a Letter of Expectations which includes specific descriptions of alleged behaviour, or appears to single you out, please contact the STA. Letters of Expectations are intended to be neutral and circumspect reminders of the general expectations of all teachers.

Round 1 Opens April 20

Transfer Information is available on the Surrey School District Website, <http://www.sd36.bc.ca/sites/HumanR/Recruitment/vacancy-info.htm>

Or click on Staff – Human Resources – Transfer Information

The latest Buzz Words

- Descriptive Feedback
- Metacognition
- Outcomes Based Assessment
- Quality Achievement Evidence
- Vision for the School

Transfer Timelines For 2010 — 2011

Round 1

April 20, Tuesday	Catalogue available online
April 27, Tuesday	Applications close at 4:00 p.m.
May 04, Tuesday	Positions awarded
May 17, Monday	Closed Report available online
May 20, Thursday	Closed Report to schools

Round 2

May 25, Tuesday	Catalogue available online
June 1, Tuesday	Applications close at 4:00 p.m.
June 8, Tuesday	Positions awarded
June 21, Monday	Closed Report available online
June 25, Friday	Closed Report to schools

Reminders about TOC Call-out, Timetable Consultations

Teachers should inform their TOC if the school has an altered timetable for the day. TOCs at one secondary school have been showing up at the usual start time, instead of the delayed start time which occurs every two weeks to facilitate voluntary teacher discussions. TOCs should also be reminded that participation in these discussions is totally voluntary.

Consultations regarding issues which affect all teachers at a school, such as possible timetable changes for next year, should take place at Staff Committee, or sub-committees that report to Staff Committee. Otherwise, the opinions of individual teachers or small groups may be misinterpreted by the principal as representative of the feelings of teachers as a whole. After one school implemented a new timetable last fall, teachers disagreed and voted overwhelmingly to return to the previous timetable. The principal refused to change the timetable back, claiming that he had asked for input from teachers in the spring, and even though only a handful of teachers gave input, he considered this to be ‘consultation’, and therefore his decision was reasonable.

Succeed at Your Interview

- **Study the posting - brainstorm questions and answers.**
- **Prepare and rehearse answers to likely questions- visualize success.**
- **Show enthusiasm for teaching, and the specific job.**
- **Take brief, orderly notes of questions and answers.**
- **Pause to consider. Clarify question as needed.**
- **Provide real-life examples - respond to probing questions.**
- **Establish consideration of supporting material.**
- **Study criteria - expand answers.**
- **Write complete notes after the interview.**
- **If you are not selected, check the Closed Report, and if you are the senior candidate, contact the STA to discuss grieving.**

Distance Learning Training

Surrey Connect is offering WebCT inservices sessions after school on April 8th and 9th.

Each session is limited to 10 teachers.

To register, teachers can call Lori at Surrey Connect (604.592.4263).

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Tips for Succeeding at your Transfer Interview

1. Study the posting. Brainstorm questions and answers.
2. Prepare and rehearse answers to likely questions. Visualize success.
3. From the start of your interview, show your enthusiasm for teaching, and the specific job.
4. Take brief, orderly notes of interview questions and your answers.
5. Pause to consider and formulate your answers. Clarify questions as needed.
6. Provide real-life examples. Some interviewers are trained to ask probing questions to elicit more information. Make sure you give it to them.
7. Establish consideration of supporting material. For example, hand over a reference letter, or a sample of student work to help answer a specific point. If you have a helpful report, letter, project summary, or Master's thesis, give a copy to the interviewer and ask them to consider it. Note what you give them.
8. Ask for the selection criteria when you get the e-mailed interview offer. If the principal does not supply the selection criteria until the interview, note when you get it. **Take time to compare the criteria to your brief interview notes, and expand your interview answers to address specific points. Also, refer to parts of your application which address parts of the criteria, especially training, workshops, and experience.** If the principal gives you a paper copy of the criteria, take it with you. If the principal reads it out, ask him or her to read slowly, so you can copy it down.
9. Write complete notes after the interview, and compare your application form and what you said in the interview to the criteria.
10. E-mail additional information to the principal on First Class if you find or think of information that meets the criteria which you didn't provide at the interview, or if you would like to clarify how parts of your application or the materials you supplied meet the selection criteria.

Jargon Shift Alert

You may have exemplary practice in the area of assessment and evaluation, but do you know the latest words to describe it? To be sure, check the STA website to see the District's Assessment Position Paper. The STA ad hoc committee is still studying the paper, but some principals appear to be adopting the language already.

Last Year's Criteria Available

The STA has a collection of Selection Criteria used in Round 1 last year for most schools. In many cases, criteria appear to be similar from year to year. If you wish to get a copy for a specific school or list of schools, please contact the STA at 604-594-5353.

Were you discouraged from participating in Bill 33 Consultation?

The STA has grieved that a form used in many schools to invite teachers to consult regarding their class size and composition unreasonably discouraged and interfered with teachers' rights to consultation. These forms put the onus on teachers rather than principals to access student files to identify and bring all relevant information to the consultation meeting. This appears to be a clear violation of Arbitrator Dorsey's Decision of September 11, 2009 regarding the Definition of Consult.

In addition, these forms indicated that the teacher had only two choices, either attend the meeting at the time and date set by the administrator, or decline to consult. This is unreasonable, and could have led to teachers being unable to consult and seek remedy for overloaded classes because they could not attend at the specified time.

If you were given such a form, and especially if you still have a copy, please contact the STA by phone at 604-594-5353 or else by e-mail to grieve@surreyteachers.org.

Consider Grieving if you are not Awarded a Posted Position

If you feel you were well qualified, but weren't awarded the position, check the Closed Report, available online or in schools within two weeks of the positions being awarded, for the seniority date of the successful candidate. If you are the senior candidate, contact the STA at grieve@surreyteachers.org or at 604-594-5353 to discuss grieving.

The Collective Agreement specifies that the senior candidate will be appointed with the exception of cases where a junior candidate is demonstrably more suitable. We believe these cases should be rare. A senior teacher not getting a transfer he or she deserves is a serious matter, and the STA will examine the process and outcome to see if there are errors of flaws which could show the principal's decision was incorrect. These are some of the considerations:

- ◆ Did you receive the selection criteria ahead of the interview?
- ◆ If not, did you get it in your hand before or during the interview?
- ◆ Were you encouraged to take time in the interview to study the selection criteria and provide additional information to address all of the criteria?
- ◆ Did the principal discourage you from recording notes during the interview, especially about the interview questions and your answers?
- ◆ Did the principal discourage you from keeping a copy of the selection criteria?
- ◆ Did the principal read your first class e-mail sending additional information to address the criteria the same day? (Check history in first class)
- ◆ Did the selection criteria contain topics other than those addressed in the interview questions?
- ◆ Did the selection criteria or interview questions encroach upon professional autonomy or the voluntary nature of extra-curricular activities?
- ◆ Did the selection criteria contain too much content to reasonably address?
- ◆ Did the interviewer disregard supporting materials which you brought to the interview?
- ◆ Did you feel pressured or rushed at any time in the interview?
- ◆ Were you refused an alternate interview time?
- ◆ Did the principal's rationale for selection provided to the STA fail to clearly demonstrate that a junior candidate was demonstrably more suitable?

Check Round 1 Postings to see if Internal Reassignments were Offered

Some schools may have rushed through the internal reassignment process, or posted positions or parts of positions that continuing teachers at the school would have liked to teach. If you see a Round 1 posting for your school that contains grades or blocks that could have been taught by a continuing teacher already at your school, please contact the STA.

If your school did not have a staff committee meeting in March or April to discuss Educational Program Needs, or if you are at a secondary school and your department did not discuss teaching assignments, please let us know.

Failure to Post in Round 1 Affects Teachers

The District has stated its intention to delay Elementary Counselling postings until after Round 1. In addition, some schools appear to have posted only 1.0 positions in Round 1 and no part time positions. Also, some schools appear to have delayed postings based on excuses such as they don't know what the new V.P. will want to teach, or they didn't get time to go through the proper procedure to identify Educational Program Needs. **Please contact the STA if you feel you have been affected by a failure to post, or if you believe your school may have improperly delayed a posting to after Round 1.**

Officer Contacts

Learning Support Team, Librarian Transfers

Denise Moffatt 604-592-8398 pres@surreyteachers.org

Regular, Specialist, and Surrey Connect Postings

Steve Ranta 604-592-8397 grieve@surreyteachers.org

Forced Transfer, Internal Reassignment

John Wyndham 604-594-8588 grv-spt@surreyteachers.org

Layoff and Recall, Job Shares, Mat and Medical Leaves

Lori Wilson 604-592-8391 grv-hs@surreyteachers.org