

# STA Examiner

Surrey Teachers' Association

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## Dear Colleagues:

Last year we took a principled stand, refusing to administer the FSA. We received much publicity and gained support from the community, parents and other stakeholders. This year our campaign continues. The STA has created a local action plan which has 4 primary goals.

1. To encourage parents to withdraw their child from writing the FSA,
2. To educate the public about the problems with the FSA, provincial exams and other bureaucratic tests,
3. To call on the government to implement a two year moratorium on all standardized testing including the FSA and provincial exams, and to establish a Testing and Assessment Task Force, and
4. To support teachers' professional rights and autonomy.

It is very important that we continue our campaign.

## FSA's

We know the FSA is damaging to teaching and students' learning

- ◆ They take valuable time away from meaningful learning
- ◆ They are not a useful tool for teachers to assess student learning
- ◆ They are expensive to administer and divert essential funds from the classroom
- ◆ Results are misused to rank schools and promote privatization

Province wide, over 16% of all students were excused from writing the test. Some districts achieved a withdrawal rate of 33%. These districts, called "outliers" by the ministry, are being targeted by Superintendents of Achievement for increased participation. This means increased pressure on principals, teachers and parents to get every student to write this meaningless test. We must work together to educate parents on the harm this test brings to public education, and encourage them to demand their child be excused. However, we know there will be pressure on parents.

Last year, principals phoned some parents to try to pressure them to change their minds. We must support these parents when and if principals attempt to deny their right to withdraw their child.

We can do this by

- ◆ Informing parents about what they might expect
- ◆ Encouraging them to work with other parents for support
- ◆ Meeting with your school PAC
- ◆ Meeting with school administration to encourage them to support the wishes of parents

## Provincial Exams

We also know that provincial exams at secondary take up more and more classroom time. These exams narrow the curriculum as there is intense pressure on teachers to prepare students for the tests. This year we are expanding the campaign and calling for a moratorium on these exams in addition to the FSA. We encourage our secondary colleagues to meet with PACs to discuss these issues. Support materials will be sent to your school.

## Profession Rights and Autonomy

In support of teachers' professional rights we will be providing a half day workshop for all staff reps to promote school-based discussions on professional autonomy. The workshop "Conversations about teaching, testing and autonomy" will be offered in December and January. There will be additional support provided to assist reps in taking this conversation back to their schools. We are also planning a dinner speaker series. The first dinner event will feature this topic. Date and location will be announced.



Denise Moffatt

## Labour and the United Way

The connection between the United Way and the Labour movement extends more than 25 years. The Canadian Labour Congress, which we are a part of through the New West and District Labour Council, partners with the United Way to support programs that make a difference in the community. United Way campaigns seek to positively impact the lives of vulnerable children's families and seniors.

In Surrey schools, the United Way contributes by funding community schools, the success by six program, and other programs for school aged children.

To ensure the success of this partnership with labour groups, the United Way programs are guided by the following 10 principles:

1. Union members are first and foremost citizens of their community.
2. Union members have a responsibility to their community. They must co-operate with their fellow citizens in making the community a good place in which to live, work and raise children. They must be concerned about the availability of adequate health, educational, recreational and social services for the whole community.
3. Unions have a responsibility for the support of their members and their families, which extends beyond their place of employment. Their responsibility includes not only emergencies caused by unemployment or other disasters, but extends to helping meet personal or family needs.
4. The community has a responsibility to its citizens. It must be prepared to meet social and economic needs which individuals or families cannot meet adequately with their own resources.
5. The staff and facilities of existing social service agencies serve the whole community. Unions have chosen to support and participate in these agencies and have also established social services of their own. Unions are encouraged to continue this policy.
6. Unions, however, are totally committed to the concept that government has ultimate responsibility to provide basic levels of education, health care and social services, financed through a progressive tax structure, and that at no time are volunteers to be used to reduce the cost of that commitment.
7. Voluntary or non-profit social service agencies occupy an important position in meeting the needs of the community. Some major responsibilities falling within the scope of voluntary social services are the fields of child support, family counselling, youth and seniors' activities, as well as social service program development.
8. It is the responsibility of organized labour to co-operate with other community groups in improving the quality and quantity of social services, while at the same time educating union members about available health and social services and how to use them.
9. Assistance in whatever form should be given on the basis of need, regardless of the cause of the need and without regard to gender, age, religion, or ethnic origin.
10. We believe that prevention of social problems is preferred over the best treatment of social ills.

Teachers can make a United Way contribution directly from their paycheque, contact payroll if you are interested.



## December 6<sup>th</sup>, National Day to End Violence Against Women

**December 6, 1989**, these 14 women were killed in an act of targeted violence against women at l'École Polytechnique, Montréal.

Geneviève Bergeron, 21

Nathalie Croteau, 23

Anne-Marie Edward, 21

Barbara Maria Kluczniak, 31

Maryse Leclair, 23

Sonia Pelletier, 23

Annie St-Arneault, 23

Hélène Colgan, 23

Barbara Daigneault, 22

Maud Haviernick, 29

Maryse Laganière, 25

Anne-Marie Lemay, 27

Michèle Richard, 21

Annie Turcotte, 21

**D**ecember 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on violence against women. Please take some time to remember these and other women who have been victims of violence and to take action in your community to ensure that violence against women is eliminated.



## 2009 Summer Institute on Union Women University of California, Los Angeles UCLA DeNeve Plaza - August 11 - 15, 2009

“Designed by a committee of labour educators, the institute brings together rank and file women workers, officers and staff to strengthen their knowledge of the labour movement and develop skills which will enable them to become more active and influential in their unions. The institutes are a place where women unionists can share experiences and give one another support.”

The Opening Plenary and Reception was opened with Kent Wont, UCLA Labour Centre Director. There was a panel discussion group that consisted of 5 women from various American Labour Councils.

My 4 day morning workshop was called "Leadership in your Union" from 9:00 to noon. The facilitators were Lynn Feekin, LERC, University of Oregon and Dayna Sykes, the Director of Human Rights and Young Workers at the BC Federation of Labour.

My 2 day workshop was called "Communications" with Carol Adams, BCGEU. The second evening plenary was a Women's Work Book Release and Reception and performance by Lynn Marie Smith. The afternoon of Thursday, August 13, was an International Solidarity Plenary.

In my 4 day morning class: I learned various definitions of leadership, styles of leadership and how one can learn to be a leader. I learned about power and participation. We discussed stepping up and how to identify opportunities and obstacles. There were discussions on effective meeting/group processes and how to use them to move people into action. The workshop culminated with each participant developing their own leadership plan.

**The next institute will be Tuesday, July 6 to Saturday, July 10, 2010 at Reed College Campus, Portland, Oregon.**

I would like to thank the Labour Affairs Committee for allowing me this opportunity to attend this conference as a delegate from the Surrey Teachers' Association.

Cheryl Child, Hjorth Road Elementary

## White Ribbon Campaign

Staff reps have been sent an envelope of white ribbons. The white ribbon is a symbol of a commitment to work to end violence against women and girls. The STA Status of Women Committee would like to ask all teachers to wear a white ribbon on December 6<sup>th</sup> and to tell their classes the purpose of the ribbon and to explain to them why we need to take a stand to end violence. In Canada, the campaign is run from November 25 (the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women) until



December 6, Canada's [National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women](#).

## South Asian Students Advocacy by Teachers (SASAT)

Four years ago, a group of Surrey and Delta teachers formed an Ad Hoc Committee to address various issues impacting South Asian students in their respective districts. The goals included empowering students, and parents to reach their full potential and try to overcome barriers to educational goals. This committee is now a standing committee of the STA. Our mission is, “To educate students, teachers, parents, and the wider school community in order to support South Asian youth in becoming positive, contributing citizens”. The initial goals of the SASAT committee include:

- ◆ cultivate awareness and sensitivity towards the cultural beliefs/values of South Asian youth
- ◆ recognize/encourage positive aspects of South Asian culture by identifying positive role models for exposure
- ◆ educate members of the school community on issues challenging South Asian youth
- ◆ develop resources and programs in collaboration with the school community and district
- ◆ support integration of South Asian students and their families within society

An integral component of our work is to present to our teacher colleagues, organized workshops for elementary and secondary STA Conventions each May. These workshops were very successfully attended in past years!

In addition, the SASAT Committee has hosted parent and student information dinner galas at the Grand Taj Banquet Hall. The committee has also organized education fairs. Both of these events have yielded positive feedback from parents who felt they learned how to better support their children's education.

In order to support our established goals and intended action plan, we are inviting any interested teachers to join our committee to meet once a month, as well as keep informed with our email listserve. To receive more information about upcoming meetings and to join our list-serve, please contact Harpreet Gill on First Class: [gill\\_harpreet@sd36.bc.ca](mailto:gill_harpreet@sd36.bc.ca)

## Support BC Paramedics CUPE 873

In light of the heavy-handed legislation imposed on paramedics in CUPE 873 to end negotiations and impose a collective agreement, delegates to the BC Federation of Labour Convention unanimously passed the following motion:

The Federation will

- 1) condemn the Campbell government's continuing interference in the collective bargaining process and abuse of the rights of workers; and
- 2) support CUPE British Columbia and its affiliated local 873's campaign for a negotiated collective agreement or the use of a neutral third party arbitrator, with solidarity actions and demonstrations, and if required, organize local, regional, and province-wide job action; and
- 3) convene a conference to develop an ongoing strategy to fight the undermining of the collective bargaining process and the abuse of the rights of workers.

For more information and to provide support please visit [www.saveourparamedics.com](http://www.saveourparamedics.com) or [www.cupe.bc.ca](http://www.cupe.bc.ca)

## STARA Meeting

Wednesday, December 16th, 2009  
4:00 p.m., District Conference Centre  
Holiday Refreshments to follow  
All members welcome to attend  
(only staff reps can vote)

"I am organic and delicious, approx. 8Kgs (17lbs). Come out to the STARA meeting and enter your name for a chance to take me home."



**STA's Labour Affairs Committee members win it all at the New Westminster & District Labour Council's 7th Annual Chili Cook-off on Saturday, November 7th!** Led by master chef Tammy Neuman (Boundary Park Elem.), the STA Labour Affairs Committee which includes: Eric Bonfield (STA 1st VP), Cheryl Child (Hjorth Road Elem.), Derek Imai (W.E. Kinvig Elem.), Karen Kilbride (Laronde Elem.) and Phyllis Minsky (Queen Elizabeth Sec.), managed to sweep away with the coveted NWDLC's 1st Place Apron. After several attempts at attaining this highly prized apron, the team has done it with Tammy's secret vegetarian chili recipe. This year, the team's theme was "Cuts Hurt".

The NWDLC Chili Cook-off is a fun-filled family event for labour activists. It is also a fundraising event for our civic leaders. This year's event was well attended by local labour-friendly MP's, MLA's, elected civic leaders and school trustees.

Special thanks for this year's win go to family and STA members who came out to support us, other teacher colleagues and the dozens of other participants who let "The Best Chili" win! It should also be noted that the STA's LAC was the only teachers' association participating in this great event.

*We are the Champions!!*



### Upcoming Dates:

<i>Deadline for Pension Consultation 2009 survey submission</i>	<i>December 4, 2009</i>
<i>Staff Rep Training – half day workshop</i>	
<i>“Conversations about teaching, testing and autonomy”</i>	<i>December 10, 11, 2009, January 8, 13, 2010</i>
<i>STARA Meeting ( Social &amp; Turkey Draw)</i>	<i>December 16, 2009</i>
<i>STA New Teachers' Conference (for teachers in their 1st or 2nd year)</i>	<i>January 14, 2009</i>
<i>Special General Meeting (Election of BCTF AGM Delegates)</i>	<i>January 20, 2010</i>
<i>Staff Rep Training</i>	<i>February 15 -19, 2010</i>

## It's time to think about the BCTF's 2010 Annual General Meeting

Every year for the first four days of Spring Break, almost 700 teacher delegates from around the province come together at the BCTF Annual General Meeting. They debate education issues, hear reports from the Executive Committee and other BCTF Committees, set the annual fee and BCTF goals for 2010-2011, debate resolutions from local associations and elect the members of the BCTF Executive Committee. We also have a lot of fun getting to know other teachers from around the district and around the province.

This year the BCTF AGM will be held in downtown Vancouver at the Hyatt Hotel. Your expenses will be covered. The STA will help you prepare for the event by previewing the recommendations and resolutions. Surrey traditionally has a delegation that arrives well prepared. Members of the Surrey delegation should be available to attend all or most of the pre-AGM delegation meetings. The pre-AGM meetings **must** be fun, since many people return as delegates year after year!

### The Pre-AGM meetings are scheduled for:

**February 4 & 8**                    **3:30-6:30-District Conference Centre**  
**February 23**                    **8:30-3:30-District Conference Centre**  
**Rookie training -**            **Jan. 29 (STA office usually 1/2 day release)**  
**A post-AGM debrief meeting is scheduled for March 31 (3:30-6:30, District Conference Centre)**

Surrey sends almost 60 delegates to the AGM. Some of the Surrey delegates have already been chosen as a result of an office they hold in the Association, but there are more than 40 positions yet to be elected. You could be one of the lucky delegates!

### ....Read on....

If you want to run for election as a delegate, please submit a brief statement of no more than 50 words. Statements will be pruned mercilessly for length. Statements must be submitted to the STA office, no later than January 13. They can be submitted by email to Lorna Sheh via First Class. (lsheh@sd36.bc.ca)

## STA Sunshine Fund Policy

Throughout our teaching careers, teachers celebrate births and sometimes suffer tragedies, illnesses, injuries and deaths in their families. The STA has responded with flowers, fruit baskets or a donation whenever we have been informed of celebrations or hardships. These gifts have always been received by the recipients with gratitude. Often in times of sadness we feel alone and our spirits are lifted when we hear from our colleagues. To help make this more fair and equitable throughout the district, the STA has reviewed the Sunshine Fund Policy and has revised the policy as follows. We are asking only the Staff Reps at the school site to contact the STA in writing. Please provide all the important information required so that we are able to respond quickly. We hope in times of need, we can be of some support to our members.

The Sunshine Fund Spending Guidelines: THAT the following procedures be in place for processing applications to the STA Sunshine Fund:

**THAT a staff rep or the STA President or designate make a written request.**

THAT the spending guidelines include:  
**Injury at work** (hospital stay) – flowers/fruit/gift basket up to \$50;  
**Maternity/paternity/extended medical leave** – up to \$50 gift card;  
**Death of active member** – up to \$75 donation to charity (or gift);  
**Death of active member's spouse/child** – up to \$50 donation to charity (or gift).

**AGM Delegate Elections at the  
 STA General Meeting  
 Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> 2010  
 4:00 p.m. at District Conference Centre  
 9260 - 140 Street, Surrey  
 Plan to be there!**

**Please car pool if possible (construction on site)**

## Parental Leave

Our district will not consider a teacher to be on parental leave (and therefore not eligible for top-up) during times when working as a teacher for the school district even if it is only part-time or summer work.

# Teachers on Call

## Did You Know?

Number of Teachers-on-Call currently employed in Surrey:	1,000
Number of Teachers-on-Call who do not have part time jobs with the district:	700
Average number of daily work assignments available in Surrey:	330

### ADS + Qualifications

The STA is currently working with the Surrey School District to address concerns raised by TOCs and teachers about the allocation and distribution of TOC work. One area we have discussed is the new ADS call out system and the challenges that many members have faced. The ADS system calls out teachers randomly subject to qualification (if a teacher does not indicate a preference). TOCs are called out based on availability first from Category A (trained and experienced), then Category B (some experience or background), and finally Category C (able to supervise).

TOCs either receive offers of work by phone or by job shopping online. The

job shopping feature only allows TOCs to pick up jobs in their "A" qualifications area. Absences are filled according to the date they are received. Teacher absences can be booked by phone or on-line. If you use the on-line function, you can log in to see if the assignment has been filled.

At our request, the District has altered the qualification categories as the new system previously only recognized two categories. It now recognizes three categories. This should assist in ensuring that TOCs receive calls for work for which they are qualified and comfortable teaching.

### Preferential Callout:

**It is BCTF policy that locals "work to eliminate the practice of contract teachers calling out,**

**selecting, or expressing a preference for a particular TOC to fill a teacher absence." We request that teachers consider this policy before they book an absence.**

### Continuing as a TOC after getting a Part-Time Contract

TOCs who are awarded part time contracts, and wish to continue to TOC during the rest of the time, should contact Dispatch and inform them of the times they are available to TOC.

A similar reminder will now appear at the bottom of an e-mail informing TOCs that they have been awarded a Part-time contract position.

## Health and Safety

Site-based Health and Safety Committees have been meeting to formalize the terms of reference for their meetings. Thank you for your commitment to Health and Safety. It is hard work and the union continues to request the district provide some release time for these committees. If your committee has been successful in finding creative ways to meet, please share your ideas with the STA. If your committee has not met this year, please call the STA as soon as possible, as it is against the regulations.

This year, the STA has been successful in getting a review of the district's Asbestos Exposure Control Plan, the district's Fire Safety Plan, and Pandemic Response Plan. If you teach in a portable, we have also got a plan for portables without handwashing facilities. Please contact me if you do not have approved hand sanitizer for your portable.

Health and Safety training is back on. It is important that your committee signs up for 8 hours of training as required. If you need more information contact Lori Wilson at 604-592-8391.

## Flu /H1N1 Vaccine

The district is hoping to have the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine available by the second week in December. Teachers who are not in the high risk category for H1N1 vaccines should be watching for the District dates and sites. Anyone who is concerned about their health, should see their doctor and have a plan in place. Flu up dates will be posted on the STA website.



## Benefits

### Pacific Blue Cross ID number have changed

Please remember that on November 7th Pacific Blue Cross ID numbers changed to your Payroll Employee ID number. For further information please view the Group Benefit ID Numbers document in the Human Resources Conference in First Class. When you get your pay statements always check your sick bank to see if it is accurate. If you have made some changes to your salary or benefits, check to see if the pay increase or deductions are being made. When inquiring about information from payroll always keep a paper trail. Follow every telephone conversation with a follow up email. Keep a copy of all documents. If you are unsure of the district's response, please check our collective agreement or contact the STA.



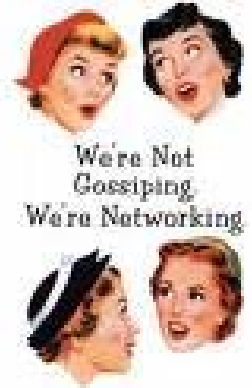
# I Heard it On the Grapevine: Gossip in Schools

Eric Bonfield, STA First Vice President

“There is only one thing worse than being gossiped about, and that is not being gossiped about,” noted Oscar Wilde. Everyone gossips. Adults sometimes gossip to bring someone with power down a notch or two, while some children usually gossip about their marginalized peers. Rather than bring someone down, some children feel more powerful by raising themselves above the less fortunate and associating with the most popular kids. Gossip is so prevalent that TV shows are devoted to the concept and Cybergossip venues such as Facebook and Twitter are frequently used to facilitate gossip. It seems that scooping has become a cultural obsession and our schools are no safe haven from gossip.

Workplace gossip reveals the informal organization of the school and can be defined as informal and evaluative talk usually among no more than a few individuals, about another teacher or member of the school staff who is not present. Such talk can be beneficial when the job performance, career progress, relationships and general behavior at school are referenced in positive terms. When the gossip is negative, the consequences are often destructive. This piece focuses on the how to effectively deal with negative gossip.

What’s the big deal with negative gossip you might ask? Left unattended, negative gossip can weaken school morale and make going to school dreadful and teaching during the day a drag. School gossip whether in the staff room, the parking lot, or in a classroom before or after school and in the administrative office, breeds resentment and becomes a roadblock to effective communication and collaboration. By triangulating with a third person, instead of communicating directly with the teacher you need to talk with, nothing usually gets solved or understood and assumptions go untested. The negative feedback loop sustains and even nurtures the dysfunctional communication pattern instead of dealing directly or if necessary with the help of a neutral third party mediator.



Since no one benefits from negative gossip, the following steps can guide you to avoid this destructive behavior and thus generate a healthy school.

1. **Don't negatively gossip yourself.**  
If you really want to help someone, talk to them directly.
2. **When someone at school tries to negatively gossip with you, you should:**  
Walk away  
Change the subject.  
Directly state, “I don’t like talking about other people because I don’t like them talking about me.” That should end that conversation in favor of another topic.
3. **When someone at school is gossiping about you, you can:**  
Go directly to that person ask for a time and place to have a conversation and say something like, “I heard that you’ve been saying the following about me.” Then briefly summarize what you’ve heard. Next, say, “While I wasn’t there to hear you, I would appreciate it if you came to me directly with any questions or comments rather than talking with our colleagues.”  
Go with an indirect approach. Say something like, “I don’t know if you’ve heard the rumors circulating about me or not, but they’re really disturbing. If you hear of anyone talking about me, I would appreciate it if you would ask them to stop.”
4. **Staff Reps or Staff Committee can schedule a meeting to talk about how to end negative gossip at school.**  
Define negative gossip. Some teachers may not realize they are gossips. Some simply see it as chatting and exchanging information. Discuss a motion that does not tolerate negative gossip at school and pass it as a school policy through your Staff Committee.
5. **Encourage a climate of open communication that helps to stifle rumors and misinformation.**  
Any effort you use to stop negative gossip at school is worthwhile.

# Surrey Teachers' Association - December 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
BCTF Ad hoc Committee on Benefits 4:00 Executive Committee Meeting-STA BCTF Trustees Reception						
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women</b> 4:00 STA Health & Safety Committee meeting - STA 4:00 Communication Audit Committee Meeting - STA	4:15 STA / Board Liaison Meeting (Board Office) 8:30-11:30 SD#36 Harassment Awareness Training- Conference Centre	8:45-3:30 Assessment Review Ad hoc Committee- STA 4:00 Grievance Committee Meeting 4:00 Bargaining Committee Meeting - STA 4:00 STARA Steering Committee Meeting - STA	12:45-STARA Training-Conf. Centre <b>Conversations about teaching, testing and autonomy.</b> 3:30 District H/S Committee Meeting 4:00 STA Convention Committee Meeting	12:45 STARA Training-Conf. Centre <b>Conversations about teaching, testing and autonomy</b>		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
2:30 Mediation - STA 4:00 STA Professional Development Committee Meeting - STA Arbitration Hearing	4:00 Executive Committee Meeting-STA Arbitration Hearing	4:00 Executive Committee Meeting-STA Arbitration Hearing	<b>4:00 STARA Meeting Conference Centre (turkey draw)</b>	12:00 Lunch with Surrey MLAs 3:30 District Health & Safety Committee Meeting		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>School close for Winter Vacation December 21, 2009 to January 1, 2010</b></p>						
27	28	29	30	31	JANUARY 1	2
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>School close for Winter Vacation December 21, 2009 to January 1, 2010</b></p>						
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Schools reopen after Winter Vacation</b>	4:00 Executive Committee Meeting-STA	3:45 Mentorship 4:00 STA Convention Committee Meeting - STA			12:45 STARA Training-Conf. Centre "Conversations about teaching, testing and autonomy" Metro Presidents Meeting— Chilliwack	