

## STA CONNECTION September 25-29, 2023



### **No Place for Hate: CUPE, DPAC, STA Joint Statement**

We are reaffirming our unwavering support and solidarity with 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff, and families in Surrey. We are deeply concerned about the alarming rise of homophobia and transphobia in our country, which has no place in our communities and our schools. We are particularly troubled by misguided campaigns that threaten the lives of trans youth by forcing them to disclose their identities. These movements are rooted in disinformation and right-wing conspiracy theories that seek to perpetuate hate for their own self-interests. [Read more](#)

### **Harassing our support staff when contacting the STA will not be tolerated**

As a union that has employees, we take seriously our legal and ethical obligation to ensure that our Support Staff experience a safe workplace. If members have concerns about any messages from the Surrey Teachers' Association, they may direct their concerns to the presidents:

**President, [Jatinder Bir](mailto:pres@surreyteachers.org) ([pres@surreyteachers.org](mailto:pres@surreyteachers.org))**

**1st Vice President, [Lizanne Foster](mailto:1vp@surreyteachers.org) ([1vp@surreyteachers.org](mailto:1vp@surreyteachers.org))**

**2nd Vice President, [Angela Marcakis](mailto:2vp@surreyteachers.org) ([2vp@surreyteachers.org](mailto:2vp@surreyteachers.org))**

### **Save the Date: Special General Meeting & Staff Rep Assembly**

On Wednesday, September 27, 2023, at 4:00pm, the STA will be holding a Special General Meeting and a Staff Representative Assembly (STARA) via Zoom. During the STARA there will be elections for STARA Steering Committee, Adult Educator's Committee and TTOC Advisory Committee. Register now for the [Special General Meeting](#) and [STARA](#).

## Expect Foundational Skills Assessments (FSA) letters this week

The BCTF FSA withdrawal letters to parents of students in Grades 4 and 7 will be arriving at your schools sometime this week. We are legally allowed to distribute the letters on school property and speak with parents about it. If materials are given directly to parents, no envelopes are needed. However, if you choose to send the brochure and letters home with students, they **MUST** be sent in the sealed envelope provided which clearly identifies they are union produced and addressed "to the parent". Should you require additional withdrawal letters, envelopes, or parent brochures (including in Punjabi, Mandarin, and French languages), or have any questions, please contact the STA at [sta@surreyteachers.org](mailto:sta@surreyteachers.org)

**Request that your child be excused from the FSA**  
BCTF Kids Matter Teachers Care

Dear Parents,

For many years, BC teachers have worked with education partners to find ways to ensure our public education system that best supports the foundation skills assessment (FSA).

These assessments established tools for students in Grades 4 and 7 that will be used to determine the school year. Teachers are asking you to request that your children be excused from these tests according to Ministry of Education and Child Care guidelines concerning exemptions.

Teachers believe that authentic and reliable assessments do not come in the form of standardized and standardized tests as they do not capture a complete picture of student learning.

The FSA will do not assess your children's unique abilities and they do not help students learn or become better. Teachers do not believe the FSA is an effective method of measuring individual progress.

Teachers are concerned with the release of data from these tests. FSA data may result in more testing or measures to limit our students' needs. Furthermore, the FSA has been found to be a data security and responsibility risk to schools.

We believe that parents who make an informed decision to test their children not write the tests should have their voices respected.

The best way to inform about your children's progress is their classroom teacher. Please take the opportunity to meet with us or any time with your questions or concerns. Your children's teachers will be happy to help.

Please fill out our form to request that our teachers or child be exempted on the assessment.

Dear Principals,

In accordance with Ministry of Education guidelines concerning exemptions, I understand that administrators may excuse a student in the event of a family emergency, lengthy illness, or other extenuating circumstances.

Please excuse my child, \_\_\_\_\_ from the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) tests.

Thank you for respecting my request.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

Principal/Question Signature

## Assist Your Colleagues as a Peer Support Consultant

The STA is currently looking for elementary and secondary teachers who are interested in sharing their professional expertise to support other teachers as a Peer Support Consultant. We currently have a higher need for secondary teachers in all curricular areas. Release time for work and training provided.

Responsibilities include:

- Working with teachers to support their professional practice
- Attending training in peer support and coaching

Deadline: **Friday, September 29**

Submit to STA: [Peer Support Volunteer Application](#)

Contact: [Pauline Veto](mailto:Pauline Veto) ([services@surreyteachers.org](mailto:services@surreyteachers.org))

## Truth and Reconciliation

### Truth and Reconciliation Week

We encourage members to check out the suggestions on the [District's Truth & Reconciliation website](#) as well as the resources on the [STA website](#). As we actively seek truth and take action toward reconciliation, our hearts ache at the recent news from the Sto:Lo nation identifying [158 child deaths](#). The revelation of these deaths serves as yet another reminder that as educators, we have a responsibility to build and uphold an education system in which every child truly matters.



### Teach: 2-Spirit Resource Guide

Ontario's "2-Spirit Resource Guide that spans Ontario and is intended to support the 2-Spirit community with a growing list of 2-Spirit safe programming and organizations that can be easily accessed using the directory search bar. We also have a list of [Additional Education Resources](#) that include videos, printable resources, and events."



### Decolonize with Global Gender Diversity

A [Map of Gender Diverse Cultures](#) states "On nearly every continent, and for all of recorded history, thriving cultures have recognized, revered, and integrated more than two genders. Terms such as transgender and gay are strictly new constructs that assume three things:

that there are only two sexes (male/female), as many as two sexualities (gay/straight), and only two genders (man/woman).”

---

## Staff Reps

### New Year, New Staff, New Email List!

Are you your school's STA staff representative for the year? Every week, you will be receiving the STA Connection in your inbox. You are responsible to forward these onto all STA members on your staff. An easy way to do this is to create an email list of all STA members at your school. STA members include all classroom teachers and non-enrolling members (e.g. LST, IST, librarians, counsellors, speech language pathologists, school psychologists) and members who are on leaves (e.g. illness or maternity).

If you accessed this memo elsewhere, and did NOT receive a copy to your @surreyschools.ca inbox, please take the time to find out who your STA staff representative is, and remind them to add you to their email list. TTOCs can contact [repsupport@surreyteachers.org](mailto:repsupport@surreyteachers.org) to be added to the TTOC mailing list.

### Register Now! – Staff Rep Training

Training days are completely free for staff reps – the STA will cover your Leave of Absence and provide breakfast snacks, coffee, and lunch. This is a great way to connect and learn with other staff reps!

Register from these options (new staff reps can select "Role of the Staff Rep" plus another):

- [Role of the Staff Rep](#) (October 3, 6)
- [Investigations and Discipline: Knowledge is Power](#) (October 11, 12)
- [Creating Inclusive Spaces: Applying an Equity and Inclusion Lens to Your Local, Schools, and Classrooms](#) (October 17, 19)
- [Education for Truth and Reconciliation: Using the Aboriginal Lens](#) (October 23)



---

## Support Information

### Overwhelmed? Join STA Peer Support Program

Early career teacher? Facing unfamiliar or unexpected challenges? Teaching a new grade? Returning teacher after a long hiatus? Use this situation as an opportunity for growth through participation in the [STA Peer Support Program](#). Our confidential consultants are all teachers who will support your goals in professional practice.



### Find a Mentor with Mentor36 (Open All Year)

New teachers, new to Surrey teachers, and new to position teachers - there is support and learning available through [Mentor36](#).

If you are interested in being mentored, and/or enjoy being part of a network of supportive professionals:

- For one-on-one mentorship as a classroom teacher

- To join a mentorship cohort if you are in the areas of [Core French](#), [Core Music](#), [Counselling](#), [Teacher-Librarian](#), [IST](#), [LST](#) or [Montessori](#)

### Experiencing Challenges in Resolving a Professional Conflict?

Assistance is available! The [STA Mediation Service](#) confidentially assists members to resolve professional issues that sometimes arise. The aim is to restore professional working relationships.

## Professional Development

### Register Now! - Professional Development Representative Training

Register now for [Rookie Pro-D Rep Training](#) (October 5) or [Experienced Pro-D Rep Training](#) (September 26, 27, 28 and October 4, 10, 16). All training will be in-person at the STA office from 8:30 to 3:00 pm and lunch will be provided.



### Professional Development Dates for 2023-2024

- **September 25:** Possible admin day (admin can choose ONE day for the year).
- **October 20:** PSA Day. A list of conferences can be found on the [BCTF website](#).
- **November 10:** STA Indigenous Committee holds their annual conference. Info on this will be coming soon to the STA website and the STAC.
- **February 23:** Focus Day and is planned jointly between the STA and SD36.
- **May 3:** STA Convention Day. Watch for registration information closer to the date.
- **May 27:** Possible admin day (admin can choose ONE day for the year).

### What if Staff Meetings Are Scheduled on Pro-D Days?

On Monday, September 25, if it is a teacher-directed Pro-D day and you have a staff meeting scheduled, please note that the meeting cannot take place during instructional hours because a staff meeting is admin-directed, not teacher-directed. Pro-D funds cannot be used if the staff meeting coincides with the school day. Additionally, teachers are not obligated to be present at the school on teacher-directed PD days, and not obligated to return to school site for a staff meeting at the end of the day, so some principals change the monthly meeting date if necessary.

## Collective Agreement Notes

### Did Your Leave Request Get Denied?

The STA has a grievance regarding the employer's differential treatment towards teachers who are pregnant and who request sick leave. **We are looking for any information from teachers who are/were pregnant and who requested sick leave and were denied sick leave by the employer.** Please forward that information as soon as possible because we have a mediation scheduled on **October 13, 2023**.



Contact: [Amrit Sanghe](#) ([grieve1@surreyteachers.org](mailto:grieve1@surreyteachers.org))

### Elementary Teachers – Prep Time Blocks Under 30 Minutes?

Our Collective Agreement contains the following provision for prep in elementary schools:

*\*a. Full-time elementary teachers shall be entitled to a minimum of one hundred twenty (120) minutes per week for purposes of preparation.*

*\*b. Normally, such time shall be allocated in blocks of thirty (30) minutes duration but shall be no less than twenty (20) minutes duration.*

*\*c. Part-time teachers working forty percent (40%) or more of full-time shall receive preparation time pro-rated according to their FTE (Full Time Equivalent) status and assignment*

If you have been scheduled to receive prep in blocks of less than 30 minutes, please bring this to the attention of your staff rep and/or staff committee. If unable to reach a resolution, contact: [Amrit Sanghe \(grieve1@surreyteachers.org\)](mailto:grieve1@surreyteachers.org)

## **Everyone Has the Right to Washrooms**

There have been some questions and concerns regarding access to staff bathrooms for teachers and staff. Section 4.85 (1) of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation states:

*The employer must ensure that sufficient number of plumbed washroom facilities are readily available for workers. Recommendations for sufficient plumbed washroom facilities include the following:*

- *Where there are more than 9 workers, separate washroom clearly signed for male and female workers.*
- *In each female and male washroom, one toilet for 9 or fewer workers, two toilets for 10-24 workers, plus one more toilet for each additional 25 workers.*

***As a union committed to supporting members from diverse backgrounds, we also encourage school sites to utilize Health and Safety Committee and/or Staff Committee to ensure that our trans and gender non-conforming colleagues have access to gender inclusive bathrooms.***

Please reach out to your Health and Safety Committee if your school site is not meeting these guidelines. Contact: [Manjit Dulla \(hs@surreyteachers.org\)](mailto:hs@surreyteachers.org)

---

## **Social Justice**

### **2SLGBTQIA+ Solidarity: “Ally” Edition**

We have heard from many, many 2SLGBTQIA+ staff and students that they are extremely exhausted from having to spearhead inclusive movements. As professional educators, not only do we need to educate our students about the world they live in, we also need to educate ourselves on how best to show up for our students and our colleagues. Review [Tips on How to Practice 2SLGBTQIA+ Allship](#) with Egale.



### **Know how to recognize hate speech**

We invite members to review an explanation of [what hate speech is from B.C's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner](#). Unlike the United States, [Canada has laws against hate speech](#). Much of the anti-SOGI rhetoric is based on what exists in the United States and demonstrates unfamiliarity with B.C's education curricula, Canada's hate speech laws, the [B.C's Human Rights Code](#), and with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As citizens and educators, we are bound to uphold these laws in our schools and classrooms. Thank you for helping us to create safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments for all students in our community.

### **Anti-Racism: “Woke” Edition**

Recently, the term “woke ideology” has been dominating certain circles of social media. As professional educators, it is our duty to delve into the roots and the trajectory of this term, and especially when our profession is being attacked in the name of fighting against “woke ideology”. [Read more](#)

## Anti-Racism: Speak Up!

"The BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) is holding engagement sessions to support the Government of BC's Anti-Racism consultations, which will inform the upcoming Anti-Racism Act. The engagement sessions are for any union members who identify as Indigenous, Black, Racialized, or as a person of colour, and their family members." [Read more](#)

---

## BCTF Information

### Have a Teacher Inquiry Project? Let BCTF Help!

Teacher inquiry has become a well-established model of self-directed professional development throughout the province, and the BCTF is pleased to offer teachers the opportunity to be part of one of 18 joint local/district [inquiry projects](#).

STA Deadline: **Tuesday, September 26** (need time to secure funding)

Submit applications to STA, attention: Erin Coleman

BCTF Deadline: Monday, October 16

Contact: [Erin Coleman](#) ([pd@surreyteachers.org](mailto:pd@surreyteachers.org))

### Update Your BCTF Portal Login Information

Please ensure that your email, mailing address, and phone number on record at the BCTF website are up to date to access the latest news.

- Can't remember your password? Request for a [Password Reset](#) and a password reset link will be sent to your email.
- Logging in for the first time? Register to create a [New BCTF Membership Account](#). The email address linked to your BCTF account is where you will receive BCTF News communications.
- Need assistance? Submit the [BCTF Login Support Request Form](#).



---

## Upcoming Events

### STA Events

#### September 25

Non-Instructional Day

#### September 26

[Pro-D Rep Training](#)

Executive Committee

#### September 27

SGM/STARA Meeting

#### September 28

[Pro-D Rep Training](#)

#### September 30

Orange Shirt Day

National Day for Truth & Reconciliation

#### October 3

[Rookie Staff Rep Training](#)

Environmental Justice Committee

#### October 4

[Pro-D Rep Training](#)

Members of the Global Majority Committee

#### October 5

[Pro-D Rep Training](#)

World Teachers' Day

#### October 6

[Rookie Staff Rep Training](#)

**October 2**  
Observed holiday for National Day for  
Truth & Reconciliation

### **Other Important Dates**

**September 21**  
[UN International Day of Peace](#)

**September 24-25**  
[Yom Kippur](#)

**September 25-29**  
[Truth and Reconciliation Week](#)

**October 1**  
[International Day of Older Persons](#)

**October 2**  
[World Habitat Day](#)  
[International Day of Non-Violence](#)

**October 5**  
[World Teachers' Day](#)

**October 10**  
[World Mental Health Day](#)

For more, visit [United Nations](#)  
[International awareness dates](#)

We acknowledge with gratitude and respect that STA members have the privilege of working on the unceded ancestral territory of the Coast Salish peoples, the q'w'a:ná'əh' (Kwantlen), q'ic'əy' (Katzie), qiqéyt (Qayqayt) and səmi'á:mu: (Semiahmoo) who have cared for this land for thousands of years, and who continue to care for this land. As educators, we are committed to actions aimed at healing the broken relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples.