

# The Advocate

*In consensus atque unitate stat potential - "There is strength in unity"*

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER (MAYBE)

ISSUE NO. 4 - SEPTEMBER 2015

## President's Message

I hope you had a glorious summer. On behalf of the Abbotsford District Teachers' Association Executive, welcome to the 2015-2016 school year.

Most likely you have already returned to your classroom to begin the restructuring and organization of the coming year, and are torn somewhat between trepidation and excitement over just what that might bring. I am hoping that as the year progresses you will have a wonderful and relaxing experience doing what you love, and encourage you to contact the ADTA Executive, myself, or Jennifer Brooks should there be anything we can help you with.

The ADTA will be sending out a newsletter shortly to fill you in on upcoming local events as well as some of the provincial information gleaned from the BCTF's recent summer conference. As always, when things unfold we will strive to keep you informed.

In the spirit of breaking away from summer slowly I have always hated to give out assignments in the first week of class, however, of particular concern to the ADTA is the need for teachers to select their staff representative(s) and pro-d representatives and submit those names to the us. Having this information will greatly assist us in processing future supports for all members ☺

Please remember to take care of yourself, enjoy this noble profession, and stop in to chat when the mood takes you.

Cheers,  
Doug Smuland



## Canada votes

As you know we are drawing ever closer to a Federal election, and many of the issues that will be of importance to the people of Canada are certainly connected to the lives of all of us as teachers. While the ADTA takes no particular position on how you vote, we do encourage all of our members to exercise their right to do so.

### What Can You Do?

1. **Register**—Go to the **Are You Registered to Vote?** page @ Elections Canada. The revised rules of the so-called *Fair Elections Act* mean that even people who have lived at the same address for many years and have been on the voters' list in the past may not be on the voters' list now. Also, make sure to read the **acceptable ID rules**, since the poll cards we receive in the mail can no longer be used as identification.

2. **Vote**—Commit to voting yourself, and to bringing family and friends to the polls. Canada's first-past-the-post electoral system means that a small number of votes can have a very significant impact.

3. **Talk** with co-workers, friends and family members about the issues that matter to you and to others in your community.



4. **Donate and volunteer**—Whether through direct financial contributions to a candidate or party, helping with a campaign, or working on behalf of your BCTF local or other groups on specific issues, nothing is more important to the success of a campaign than the efforts of the people who support it. In particular, getting out the vote at advance polls and on Election Day is crucial.

5. **Student Vote**—Where possible, involve your students in this excellent parallel election program. Details and registration

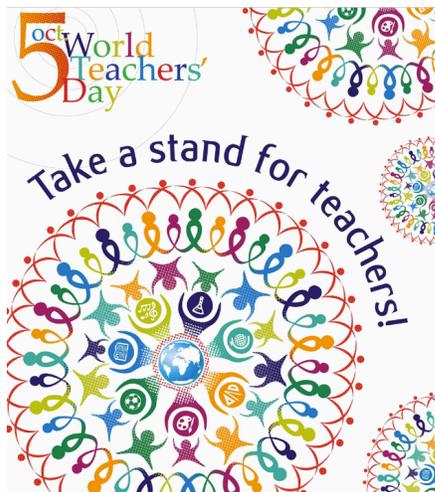
can be found on the BCTF [website](#). Not only does the program increase students' awareness of the issues and understanding of the democratic process, it also has been proven to raise the voting rates of their parents and other family members.

## BCTF Summer Conference



As in past years, the ADTA had a delegate at the annual BCTF Summer Conference. The purpose of the **BCTF Summer Leadership Conference** is to develop local leadership while focusing on BCTF priorities. Among other things, sessions covered issues of member privacy, professional development, medical accommodations, pension plan changes, creating gender inclusive school cultures, residential schools, and much more. Discussions of the challenges teachers face and questions of how teachers can engage with the broader social and labour movements to achieve our goals and bolster our collective strength were addressed in a number of the sessions. There was also great focus on how best we can engage ourselves within the federal election process and defend the professional development rights of teachers in BC. Additional information about the conference is available on the BCTF website.

## World Teachers' Day - October 5



Teachers around the province and in more than 100 countries celebrate World Teachers' Day on October 5. World Teachers' Day was proclaimed by UNESCO in 1994 to raise awareness and understanding of the challenges facing teachers every day. The [Education International website](#) features resource materials and suggestions for activities.

In concert with World Teacher Day, the ADTA will be hosting a welcome back event for members at the

**Phoenix Lounge from 3 – 5 PM on Friday, October 2.**

Further information to follow about how to RSVP

# Curriculum Change

## Background

Curriculum change has been a collaborative process involving teachers and Ministry of Education staff. Teams of teachers appointed by the BCTF, the Federation of Independent Schools, and the First Nations Schools Association have worked collaboratively, with Ministry staff facilitating, to update the K–9 curriculum. This curriculum change is an initiative of the Ministry and involves revision in every subject area across all grade levels.

## Why do we need new curriculum?

In general, the revisions are intended to make the curriculum more manageable for teachers, and to provide more opportunities for teachers and students to focus on particular topics of interest in their schools and communities. The learning outcomes in several subject areas have been reduced, thus providing more time and flexibility to explore topics in depth.

## Teachers need support

The BCTF continues to advocate for sufficient implementation funding to support the draft curriculum. Any funding committed to date falls far short of what we know is required to make implementation successful.

The Federation will use every opportunity to push for increased implementation funding, including in our next meeting with the new Minister of Education, Mike Bernier. PD Chairs should emphasize the important distinction between implementation funding and teachers' autonomous use of professional development funding, based on teacher choice.

## Distinguishing between curriculum and pedagogy

The changes in the curriculum do not necessitate any particular teaching method. The Ministry sets the curriculum, while individual teachers make pedagogical choices. Collective agreement autonomy clauses ensure that decisions pertaining to teaching methods are up to individual teachers. Teachers will make decisions based on the needs of their students, the supports available, and the working conditions in their classrooms.

# ProD

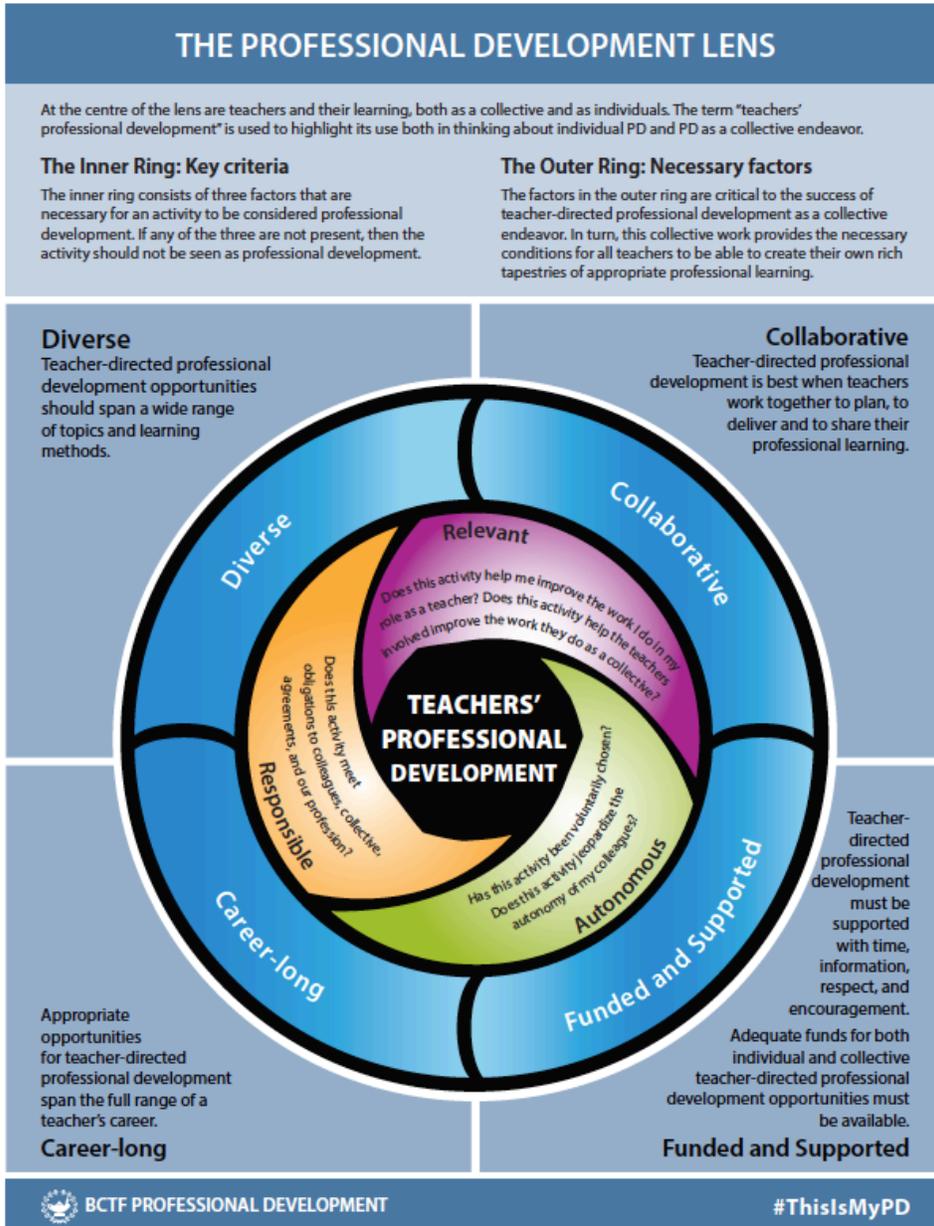
**BCTF Conference for New Teachers, New TTOCs, and Student Teachers.** The 2016 New Teachers, New TTOC's and Student Teachers Conference will take place in Richmond on February 26 and 27, 2016. For more information, please contact Marie-Claude Tremblay at [mctremblay@bctf.ca](mailto:mctremblay@bctf.ca), 604-871-1844 or toll-free at 1-800-663-9163 local 184

## ADMIN Days This Year in Abbotsford

In respect to the 6<sup>th</sup> non-instructional day for the 2015-2016 school year, the District has confirmed that there will be a focus on Aboriginal Education as required by the Ministry. For all secondary schools this day will occur on April 29, 2016 (location TBA), and for all middle schools on September 25, 2015 (held at Chief Dan George Middle); elementary schools have not yet confirmed which of the 6 NI days is scheduled as the "admin day" as of yet. Teachers should plan for their use of the remaining PD days for the year ahead, and remember to submit ADTA self-directed plans where appropriate.

# BCTF Professional Development Lens

Created just this summer, the BCTF presented the following view of teacher professional development at the BCTF summer conference. In the coming months, the ADTA PD committee will be looking at the lens as a possible future guide for direction on some of our own local policy decisions.



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## THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LENS

At the centre of the lens are teachers and their learning, both as a collective and as individuals. The term "teachers' professional development" is used to highlight its use both in thinking about individual PD and PD as a collective endeavor.

**The Inner Ring: Key criteria**

The inner ring consists of three factors that are necessary for an activity to be considered professional development. If any of the three are not present, then the activity should not be seen as professional development.

- a. Relevant**  
Does this activity help me improve the work I do in my role as a teacher?  
Does this activity help the teachers involved improve the work they do as a collective?
- b. Autonomous**  
Has this activity been/voluntarily chosen?  
Does this activity jeopardize the autonomy of my colleagues?
- c. Responsible**  
Does this activity meet obligations to colleagues, collective agreements, and our profession?

**The Outer Ring: Necessary factors**

The factors in the outer ring are critical to the success of teacher-directed professional development as a collective endeavor. In turn, this collective work provides the necessary conditions for all teachers to be able to create their own rich tapestries of appropriate professional learning.

- a. Funded and Supported**  
Teacher-directed professional development must be supported with time, information, respect, and encouragement.  
Adequate funds for both individual and collective teacher-directed professional development opportunities must be available.
- b. Career-long**  
Appropriate opportunities for teacher-directed professional development span the full range of a teacher's career.
- c. Diverse**  
Teacher-directed professional development opportunities should span a wide range of topics and learning methods.
- d. Collaborative**  
Teacher-directed professional development is best when teachers work together to plan, to deliver, and to share their professional learning.



## Health and Safety News

All teachers are encouraged to use the BCTF website and find "For Teachers" to access information that can be helpful in many areas. Of particular note, the "Health and Safety" heading in the menu bar provides valuable information about many areas of concern regarding your work environment.

<http://bctf.ca/HealthAndSafety.aspx?id=19694> It would seem there may be inconsistencies throughout the district on how certain situations are handled. Many questions can be answered through this site. Everyone wants to work in a safe environment for the benefit of workers and students and there are regulations that everyone is required to follow.

Two thoughts as the year begins, Joint Health and Safety Committees should meet on a monthly basis and be involved in ensuring all staff members are aware of the processes that must be followed for reporting situations of concern. Also, regular inspections need to be done during regular school hours.

## Teacher Wellness

What is the Health and Wellness Program? **The Health and Wellness Program**, operated through the Salary Indemnity Plan, is a rehabilitation program to assist members who have medical conditions or disabilities to return to work as early as possible. The program is also available to members who are having difficulty maintaining their teaching assignment because of medical conditions. Support for individual members is available on a voluntary basis, through the Health and Wellness Program. The BCTF has rehabilitation consultants throughout the province who provide these support services to members which includes the following:

- working with teachers in their own communities
- co-ordinating and plan individualized treatment and wellness interventions in consultation with health care providers
- working with employers and unions to support a return to work that is durable and sustainable
- knowledge of the work that teachers do and the workplace environment.

### When/why would I access the Health and Wellness Program?

Members who contribute to the SIP are eligible to receive the support of the Health and Wellness program when they are dealing with medical conditions that impact their ability to work or sustain their work. To discuss participation in the program or have other questions answered, members should contact their local president or the Income Security Division of the BCTF at 1-800-663-9163 or by e-mail to [benefits@bctf.ca](mailto:benefits@bctf.ca).

#### [Starling Minds—an online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Program](#)

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a proven treatment for depression and anxiety. Participants will learn skills to manage stress and be given practical strategies for dealing effectively with emotions, thoughts and behaviours.

**Note:** For best results, use Firefox or Chrome to access the Starling Minds website as there may be some issues if you use Internet Explorer 10 or less.

## Teachers' Pension Plan Changes

At the 2015 BCTF AGM, recommendation 27 was passed as:

“That the Federation undertake a thorough consultation with members regarding possible plan design changes to the Teachers' Pension Plan in the 2015–16 school year, with recommendations to be brought to the 2016 AGM.”

Any pension plan design change is a crucial paradigm shift that will impact members' retirement decisions and their financial security in retirement. Some of the things under consideration include the way pension values accrue and linkage to the CPP. Plan change which involves the most open and transparent consultation with the widest number of plan members is the most successful. An ancillary benefit of this process will be more members pay attention to their pension and have a fuller understanding of why it is such a good plan.

All previous significant changes to the pension plan design were done when the plan was under the unilateral control of the government. This is the first time members will have input regarding the actual pension plan calculation formula and is truly a joint management of the pension plan in action.

**BCTF Pension Consultations meetings are planned in Abbotsford at the ADTA Hall for Wednesday, October 28, 2015 at 4:00 PM. All plan members (including administrators are welcome to attend).**

## ADTA Executive 2015-2016

At our May ADTA AGM, the following members let their names stand and were elected to be your 2015-2016 ADTA Executive. Please feel free to contact any of us that might be able to help answer your questions.

President:	Doug Smuland
Vice President:	Jennifer Brooks
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President:	Liane Loeppky
Local Assoc. Rep:	Jef Baerg
Secretary Treasurer:	Casey Lindquist
Pro D Chair:	Ken Ambrose
Health & Safety Chair:	Pat Smith
Social Justice Chair:	Teresa Hootz
Aboriginal Ed. Chair:	Vacant
Elementary School Rep:	Charlotte Tommy
Middle School Rep:	Craig Hemmerich
High School Rep:	Debra Varnes
TTOC Rep:	Sylvia Rempel
Members At Large:	Sharon Kehoe Angeline Mushumanski Sophie Rosen Dyanne Schreiner

## Strike Fund Levy

Members are reminded that the Annual General Meeting passed a motion designed to restore our much depleted strike fund account. Members will see a \$10 deduction on their pay stubs beginning in September that works to replenish the account to the levels outlined in the ADTA Constitution.

## Important Dates

September 25 <sup>th</sup>	PD Day #1
October 02 <sup>nd</sup>	ADTA Welcome back event at the Pheonix Lounge 4 – 6 PM
October 05 <sup>th</sup>	World Teacher Day
October 12 <sup>th</sup>	Thanksgiving Day (No School)
October 23 <sup>th</sup>	PD Day (#2)
October 26 <sup>th</sup>	Staff Rep Training
October 28 <sup>th</sup>	BCTF Pension Meeting
Nov 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Health and Safety Rep Training

## ADTA Hours

The ADTA is open from 8:30 to 4:30 Monday to Friday  
Phone: 604-854-1946  
2570 Cyril Street