



## President's Report



Dear Colleagues,

First, although it is a little late, I would like to say, "Happy New Year." I don't know about you, but January was packed and just flew by.

Next, as we move into Black History Month, I know many of you will look for ways to teach your students about the rich history and legacy of black Canadians and perhaps other people of African descent. It is also a time when many of us seek to have our students reflect on the history of Black enslavement, discrimination, and bigotry. Although we have seen much progress in our society, the crises of police brutality in some jurisdictions and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black and Indigenous communities highlight how much work still remains to be done.

I expect that many educators will have their students reflect on the

challenges many people of colour face. In doing so, you may introduce new resources and look to engage your students in meaningful conversation about privilege and the importance of being inclusive. I whole heartedly encourage this, but at the same time, ask that you proceed with caution. We have recently had a number of bumps in our district which caused me to write a letter to senior management, a portion of which is quoted below:

*I have serious concerns about the safety of any teacher in the district who wishes to attempt to discuss racism. My members have had no training on the district's policy on dealing with issues of race in the classroom, if indeed such a policy exists. I will let my members know that they must exercise caution in doing so as the district has shown no inclination to stand up for teachers doing their job and instead, has shown itself ready to cave*

into parent pressure and to discipline members based on vague allegations of behaviour which my members would have no way of knowing would be problematic.

Given these difficulties, I would encourage you to run potential resources by your admin (especially resources containing questionable language about race which should obviously be used cautiously if at all). If you suspect you may be having a controversial conversation in class, it's worth giving the parents a heads-up in advance.

Some teachers at LVR have already drafted a letter to go home to parents. If you would like to use it as a template to craft your own, please let me know and I will send you a copy.

~Carla Wilson

## Key Dates

Date Time	Event
Feb 8	EC Meeting
Feb 9	Board Meeting
Feb 12	School based Pro-d
Feb 14	Valentine's Day
Feb 15	Family Day
Feb 18	Facilities Meeting - Salmo
Feb 25	Facilities Meeting - Nelson

## FSA Testing Coming Soon

The Foundations Skills Assessments this year will run from February 15 to March 12 2021. Historically, these tests have been hotly opposed by the BCTF as the results are used by the Fraser Institute to rank schools without considering factors outside teacher performance that may affect student outcomes, factors such as socio economics or documented learning disabilities.

For those unfamiliar with the Fraser Institute, it receives huge donations to fund its efforts from big corporations and rich individuals (like the Koch brothers) seeking to change government policy to promote right wing ideology. The institute has been a long time proponent for the privatization of education and actively lobbies the government to decrease funding to public schools.

Aside from ranking schools, another primary concern is the lack of protection of school and student data in the Foundations Skills Assessment. The BC School Trustees' Association and the deans of SFU and UBC education faculties have joined the BCTF in expressing to the Ministry of Education that the government must act to prevent the unethical or unfair use of the FSA data.

### What are teachers doing? What are we not doing?

Teachers are required to admin-

ister the test. That said, **teachers do not mark FSA tests.**

### What about communicating with parents?

You are able to distribute information on FSA testing to parents, but should do so following the BCTF/BCPSEA protocol.

### Here is what you do?

- Inform your administrator that you plan to send/hand out the pamphlets.
- Use the BCTF pamphlets.
- Distribute the pamphlets directly to parents, or, if sending pamphlets home via students, all pamphlets must be in sealed envelopes clearly identifying that they are produced and distributed by the BCTF/NDTA.

### Staff reps and teachers who wish to send information to parents should contact the NDTA with the numbers of envelopes and pamphlets needed.

Remember, we as teachers use a wide range of assessment tools in our classrooms to support student learning. Overall, FSA tests interfere with valuable instructional time and do nothing to improve student achievement.

Parents have the right to ask schools to withdraw their children from FSA tests according to Ministry of Education exemption guidelines.

## Isolation Leave

After a year of us advocating, the employer (BCPSEA) has instructed school districts to accommodate or provide paid leave to teachers and support staff if they are directed to self-isolate due to a potential COVID-19 exposure. The leave that the employer is providing is quite limited and is only retro-active to February 1st. If you need to self-isolate, I advise you to contact the local union office or your staff rep to see if you qualify for this leave.

The BCTF continues to advocate for these provisions to be retroactive in order to restore lost pay or used sick days for those who have already been impacted by a self-isolation order.

To assist the BCTF in their advocacy they are asking for your help. They are conducting a survey to collect information about those who have had to self-isolate/quarantine. **The due date for the survey is Monday, February 15, 2021 at 3:00 pm and can be found [HERE](#).**

