

February 2012

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you are aware, the teachers of British Columbia have been on strike since the start of the current school year. As of January 20, 2012, there has been nothing put forward by the government to meet any of the objectives identified by teachers in our community and across the province.

The Nanaimo District Teachers' Association has the following objectives for the current negotiations:

1) Guaranteed Supports for Students/Class Size Limits

In 2002 through legislation, the government removed limits to the number of students in a class and guaranteed levels of support for students with special needs. Positions such as counsellors, student support teachers, and speech language pathologists have been cut or eliminated over the past decade. The Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District has the highest secondary class size averages in British Columbia and, according to Statistics Canada, BC has the highest student-educator ratio in the country.

The removal of class size limits and supports were deemed illegal by the BC Supreme Court in April 2011; however, the government refuses to negotiate working/learning conditions such as class size and student support.

2) Improvements to Wages and Benefits

For salary and benefits, teachers want to "keep up" and "catch up". What do we mean by that? We want to keep up with inflation, and we want to catch up with Canadians in other provinces. Teachers' salaries in BC lag behind seven other provinces in Canada despite the fact that our cost of living is the highest. Unfortunately, the government's position has and continues to be 'net zero'.

3) Local Solutions for Local Issues

The Nanaimo District Teachers' Association, with our local school board, spent four years working together to improve the process for hiring teachers into district positions. Unfortunately, the government will not allow our district to continue this process deeming it a "provincial issue." This has resulted in increased layoffs at the end of the school year and less stability in schools for teachers and students.

Every child in the province of British Columbia has a right to quality public education. Other provinces have made a commitment to strengthen public education, while in British Columbia students have witnessed a rapid erosion of services.

Teachers will not accept an agreement that further erodes learning conditions for our students. I have included a brochure outlining our vision for a quality public education system. Please feel free to contact our office to continue the conversation of how to best meet the needs of students in our community.

Thank you for your patience and support during this time.

Sincerely,



Derek DeGear, President
Nanaimo District Teachers' Association



For more information go to bctf.ca.

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TFEU CCD11-0178

BETTER SCHOOLS FOR BC



A Plan for
Quality
Public
Education



British Columbia
Teachers' Federation

Better Schools for BC: A Plan for Quality Public Education

Building blocks for positive change

- Class-size and composition guarantees
- A child poverty reduction plan
- Specialist teachers in every school
- Authentic student assessment
- Respect for diversity and equal opportunities for all
- Increased investment in public education
- Full-scope collective bargaining rights





Class size and composition:

Smaller classes for all students and better support for kids with special needs

- more personal attention for each child
- more time spent on instruction and learning
- fewer discipline problems
- greater access to teachers, both during class and after school hours
- an increased share of overall education resources for each student
- more physical space for movement.

Kids matter Teachers care

Increase investment in public education

Education funding as a percentage of the provincial budget has declined from 26% to 15%. BC's per-pupil funding has fallen dramatically behind that of other provinces. Costs of running the public education system continue to rise and the expectations of schools significantly increased.

- Reverse the trend that has resulted in a steady decline in K–12 spending as a percentage of the total provincial budget and as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, and develop a plan to restore education funding to 1991 levels.
- Fully fund the implementation of new curriculum and all new ministry initiatives.
- Fully fund mentoring and professional development programs requested by teachers to assist in supporting all students.

Full-scope collective bargaining rights

Collective bargaining has been an important tool in building our excellent public education system.

The BCTF and its locals are proud of the role we have played at the bargaining table in negotiating improvements for students' learning conditions and teachers' working conditions alike.

- Encourage, support, and fund school boards to enable them to work with teachers to successfully bargain a collective agreement and resolve issues locally.
- Restore full, free collective bargaining rights for teachers.



A child poverty reduction plan

A child's performance in school is strongly related to socio-economic status and that a good education is often the only means of breaking the cycle of poverty for poor children.

- Launch a comprehensive and accountable poverty reduction plan, with targets and timelines, aimed at eliminating child poverty in our province.
- Launch a comprehensive and accountable homelessness action plan, with targets and timelines, aimed at eliminating homelessness in our province.

Learning specialist teachers in every school

Specialist teachers bring additional expertise to the school community and support colleagues and students alike.

- Restore the learning specialist teacher positions lost over the last decade.
- Ensure that every school has a minimum standard of learning specialist teacher service, including the service of teacher-librarians, ESL teachers, learning assistance teachers, counsellors, special education teachers, and other teachers providing specialized curriculum and instruction.





Respect for diversity and equal opportunities for all

Teachers work hard to provide real equity of opportunity for all, but historical factors and systemic barriers mean equity remains a distant goal.

- Ensure access to a broad variety of educational opportunities in all schools that make learning relevant and keep students in school.
- Support employment equity initiatives for Aboriginal teachers, including recruitment and retention strategies.
- Ensure that all school districts adopt and implement codes of conduct that address racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of harassment and discrimination in schools.
- Develop and provide learning resources and curriculum that reflect students' diverse identities and those of their families and communities.

Authentic student assessment

The most effective assessment of student progress is the assessment that teachers do every day in the classroom.

- Adopt a scientific, structured sample approach to the administration of the FSAs.
- Support teachers' authentic assessment practices.
- Work with the BCTF to address ministry, teacher, and parent concerns related to both student and system-wide assessment.

