

In addition to the FAQs below, I have asked Human Resources to post further background on their website about specific legal aspects of the matter for anyone interested.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Why has it been stated that the 2007 agreement is not in effect?**

BCPSEA, the legislated bargaining agent for the District has instructed the District that it had no authority to negotiate the change to the contract without BCPSEA's and BCTF's approval and BCPSEA would not support the change.

While we understand that the GVTA may have a different position, this would be a matter to be determined by an arbitrator. A Superintendent cannot go against the instruction of the bargaining agent of the District on a matter such as this.

### **How did this change come about? Who initiated it?**

BCPSEA first became aware of the agreement as a result of the GVTA requesting that the District have the language melded into the collective agreement. In fact, this is a step the District should have taken some time ago. The District then asked for advice on the interpretation of the agreement and at that time BCPSEA issued the letter indicating that it did not support the mid-contract modification and informed the BCTF of the matter.

### **Even if the agreement isn't in effect, couldn't the District just use the agreement as the basis for our ongoing practice?**

This would not be consistent with the collective agreement which sets out two District and Union jointly-organized and funded days and three school based days with Staff Committee. The sixth day is a Ministry day that has been treated as a school based day but we are open to discussing the organization of that day with the Union and our Principal and Vice-principal's Association.

### **What will the process be going forward?**

While we continue to be hopeful that the District and the Union will be able to have positive discussions with respect to our practice, the District sees the following process applying on a go-forward basis:

1. There will be two District and Union jointly organized and funded days. We would expect these to coincide with the Provincial LSA day and the Tapestry day. The difference will be that they will be jointly organized and funded. The District would expect that all teachers will take part in an activity that day. We are very open to discuss with the GVTA on what the accountability mechanism for teachers seeking self-directed activities on those days would look like.
2. There would be four school based days. In this scenario, the Ministry day would be a school based day. As noted, however, we are open to considering a different practice if the GVTA, and the VPVPA desire such a discussion.

The days would be organized in consultation and collaboration with the staff committee or pro-d committees as they always have been. The difference would be that teachers wishing to seek self-directed professional development activities on those days would seek approval. The District understands that often teachers will wish to seek different opportunities and will continue to support alternate activities.

### **What will happen if we do not attend and do not get approval?**

For this November, Principals will be asking all teachers what their activities will be for that day. Assuming that the activity is appropriate professional development, teachers will be able to pursue their chosen self-directed option. We understand that a number of interesting and valuable activities are being organized around the District and in schools and those events should proceed as organized.

For schools with school-based professional development in January or later, teachers wishing to pursue self-directed options will require approval from their principal. Failure to get approval will mean that the teacher is absent without leave and will not be paid for the day.

We understand that teachers will respect the action plan of the Union and have no intention of disciplining a teacher who does not attend professional development without approval. While we also understand that the District and the Union have a different perspective on BCPSEA's actions, this is an appropriate situation for an employee to "work now and grieve later".

For the February pro-d day and all subsequent pro-d days, we are hoping to work with the GVTA to ensure that opportunities are available to all teachers. We will expect that teachers will get approval to pursue self-directed opportunities on those days. We hope to use the feedback for individuals to assist in joint planning and funding for future District days.

### **What happens if I have a self-directed professional development activity that I would like to pursue on a school based day?**

The District would expect that some of the time the principal would be able to support such an activity. There will be occasions, however, where the school event will take priority over the self-directed activity. We are contemplating making funds available to principals to support teachers utilize these opportunities when such scheduling issues arise.

### **I am a specialist teacher and the school is not offering an appropriate opportunity for me. How is that supporting my professional growth?**

There will be situations where self-directed or alternate activities are better suited for a teacher and we would expect that the professional discussion would occur with their principal and the alternate activity may be appropriate. These conversations also help assist us in determining where further support for professional development opportunities may be made available.

### **Will the District be providing any additional resources to support improved professional development and accountability?**

We are aware that teachers are professionals and are in the best position to determine what professional development will assist them in their goals. Teachers, however, are part of a larger school and District who also have goals with which professional development needs to align.

Further, many teachers have raised the issue of accountability. We are all part of a highly accountable profession and the current professional development set-up does not ensure that the District is accountable. For instance, the Superintendent could not confirm where teachers or even principals were on the October professional development day. While the vast majority of individuals are pursuing valuable professional development activities, it is not clear how those activities align to the individual, school or District goals.

We have provided the GVTA an increased \$200,000 for individual professional development opportunities this year. We have provided schools with \$475,000 to support teacher learning with our Tech for Learning Strategy. The Board has approved \$500,000 for learning resources. We will continue to have Learning Grants, we are currently contemplating how to allocate nearly \$500,000 in the Superintendent's Education Plan Fund, a minimum \$70,000 to support French and ELL opportunities in addition to the \$94,000 we provide as a result of the collective agreement. This is in addition to the support provided by the Learning Team.

**Given this structure, where will the opportunities for individualized professional learning be?**

We envision at least three areas where the District foresees opportunities for individualized professional learning.

First, on the jointly organized and funded days, the District envisions teachers will have flexibility in their choices. Again, while we will strive to ensure as many world class choices for professional development and they may be times where approval for alternative activities is not approved, the expectation would be flexibility on those days.

Second, teachers may still request access to individualized professional development opportunities on school based days. The District understands that some opportunities may not be focused on a teachers' specialty, interest or area of professional growth. Such requests for individualized opportunities shall not be unreasonably denied.

Third, we are hopeful that where teachers are seeking individualized opportunities that conflict with an important school based professional development event, that principals and we as a District will be able to support teachers through release at a later time to pursue individualized opportunities.