

Action Line

A Publication of the Vancouver Education Association

October 2010

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Tips for all employees

Learn to read your paycheck and check it every month.

- Were you paid for any additional hours?
- Are the accumulated sick leave and yearly sick leave totals correct?
- Do you have extra-curricular contracts?

Know your placement on the salary schedule and why.

- It's your responsibility and liability. If you are found to owe money, you do have to pay.
- Experience and credits count to increase your pay.

Learn about and track your contracted financial benefits.

- Accumulated leave
- Sick leave
- Class size remedies
- Extra days (for kindergarten, librarians, counselors, etc.)

Learn about contracted benefits and use them.

- Health insurance (Premera or Kaiser)
- Mandatory insurance (vision, dental, audio, LTD, and life)

Know the length of your workday and work expectations.

- Duty-free lunch means what it says.
- Planning time is for everyone.
- Start and end times (especially for part-time employees).
- Using leave: What are the restrictions on usage?

Know your particular certification rules and requirements.

- Do you need continuing credits or clock hours?
- Deadlines matter – they could affect your ability to teach!

Know the rules of your hiring condition.

- Do you have a continuing contract?
- Provisional?
- Non-continuing, one year only?
- Do you understand the distinctions?

Plan NOW for retirement.

- New employees have 90 days to choose between Plans 2 and 3.
- Look at investments beyond the state plan.
- Develop a goal and strategies to get there.
- Use the Department of Retirement Systems and other retirement tools.

Introduce yourself to your building rep.

- Get a second opinion on a concern or issue.
- Your profession extends beyond the classroom – ask what's going on.
- You have a right to representation.

Keep a file for your professional status at home.

- Employment contract.
- Timecards for extra time worked.
- Pay warrants.
- Observation & evaluation materials.
- Letters, notes, etc., pertaining to your employment.
- Tracking system for professional development.

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The VEA president asks: Should class size be in the contract?

This school year has been the most frustrating start in my 28 year career. The VEA/VSD overload meeting on September 27 lasted three and a half hours. During that meeting I found myself advocating for VEA members, but more importantly, advocating for our 21,000 students and their parents. I found myself repeatedly asking: How do you manage 26 five-year olds? How do you expect a teacher to develop personal relationships with 40 students at a time? What do you suppose the learning conditions are like in a primary class of 27?

The district had several interesting responses:

- They are adding some teaching FTE to the secondary schools.
- The elementary and secondary chiefs have deployed all the staffing they were given. (Why didn't their superiors give them more staffing? What good does it do to deploy all they have when what they have isn't enough?)
- We are down 200 students from **projections**. (But we are up 45 student FTEs from last September.)
- Building administrators told us that teachers say they have bonded with the students and don't want to give any up. (I'll get to this one later.)
- We have really small classes in the high schools that need to be collapsed.

The unfortunate reality is that the district is stalling until the October count date to fix the problems. I am livid that this much student instruction time has been wasted while the district stalls. There are HUGE numbers of overloaded classes at the secondary level. I believe the district is discounting the intent of the contract language (reasonable learning conditions and class size) and going straight to the remedy (overload pay) because it costs less than hiring the appropriate staffing.

Pages 91-96 of the contract (10.17—10.22) contain the bargained language for class size. VEA leadership works hard to enforce this language. We are asking you to become part of the team that enforces that language as well. When we try to enforce the language and then hear from the principals that you don't want us to enforce it, our language loses power.

Back to the title: **We need your feedback on class size language and the penalties or rewards (for you) if the district exceeds it. Share your feedback with the VEA officers or your building rep.**



Important notice!

Recently the district sent you their annual electronic document titled "What Every Employee Must Know."

Every employee was required to read and understand the information in the document. An electronic receipt confirmed that you read the document and all the school board policies that were included in the body of the document.

As an employee, you are responsible for the full content of "What Every Employee Must Know." Do not take this lightly. By confirming that you have knowledge of the contents of the document, the district has provided you with "notice," which is one of the steps of just cause found in our CPA in Article 9.22. This article states: **NOTICE:** Did the employee have forewarning or foreknowledge of the possible or probable disciplinary consequences of the employee's behavior?

We know that it is time consuming to read the document and all the policies that are included. Your bargaining team will be addressing this issue for fair compensation at the bargaining table later this year.

Do you need an attorney?



WEA provides members with attorney services at a discounted hourly rate for personal legal matters that are not employment related.

Participating attorneys will provide each member with two 30-minute consultation sessions during each school year period. These two free consultations are taken separately and deal with two different questions.

This benefit allows you to discuss your problem with an attorney to determine whether you need additional legal services. (Some restrictions may apply.)

If you need additional services and your problem falls within any of the areas listed below, the attorney's fees are discounted 30 percent:

- Real estate matters
- Wills and estates
- Domestic relations
- Consumer protection
- Traffic violations (including DUI)

The participating attorney in our area is **Grant Broer, 8904 N.E. Hazel Dell Ave., 576-7947**. When calling, please identify yourself as a VEA member.

Calendar items



October 5
Rep Council

October 8-9
Pre-retirement
seminar

October 12
Executive Board

October 15
VEA Minority
Event

October 26
Executive board

November 2
Rep Council

November 9
Executive Board

November 11
Veterans' Day

November 23
Executive Board

November 24-26
Thanksgiving
break

Hispanic Heritage Month

National Hispanic Heritage Month, observed each year from September 15 to October 15, honors the histories, cultures, and contributions of U.S. citizens who trace their ancestry to Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America. Visit the [NEA website](#) for celebration details and lesson ideas.

Have you changed your name or address?

If you had a change of address or your name changed over the summer, please take a moment to notify us. We try to keep our membership system as up to date as possible. Just [e-mail Bonnie](#) at the VEA office with your changes.



VEA minority event

On October 15, VEA will host its 3rd annual gathering of minority members and building reps. In addition to socializing, members will learn about opportunities within VEA and WEA to enhance their careers and involvement in the association. Minority members who have not received their invitations should contact Lynn Maiorca, Robert Salazar, or John Fujita.

Pre-retirement seminar

There are still a few spaces left in the October 8-9 pre-retirement workshop. This workshop covers retirement information for certificated employees on Plans 1, 2, and 3. It's appropriate for teachers who are anywhere from one to 10 or more years from retirement.

Call the VEA office, 695-3397, or [e-mail the VEA office](#) to request a registration form. Or go to the [VEA website](#) and download the form.

Supermen and Superwomen are already here

The film *Waiting for Superman* is now in theaters. The [VEA website](#) has some interesting responses to the film. National media has placed public education squarely in the crosshairs. Unions are being blamed for protecting bad teachers and the public is being led to believe that there are many bad teachers.

Here are a few talking points about how this plays out in Vancouver.

- Building administrators are required by law to evaluate certificated staff annually.
- Before someone is fired, there must be a reason (cause). There must be documentation and an opportunity to improve. If the teacher doesn't improve, he/she leaves the district.
- VEA's role in this is to make sure that the district has reasonable expectations and hasn't set the educator up to fail.
- The union is not the employer and therefore doesn't have the authority to hire or fire.
- It does take work on the part of an administrator to fire an educator. It should.
- Most VEA/WEA/NEA members care deeply about the students we serve. We want every student to have an excellent teacher. That is why we support reasonable certification requirements and well-rounded teacher preparation programs.
- VEA has bargained professional development funds because we believe in supporting life-long learners.

Unions support positive learning conditions. In Vancouver, class size and the proper materials to teach are part of the bargained agreement. Making sure that you have the tools to make a difference for your students is one of the primary jobs of the VEA president.

The members of the teachers' union are the supermen and superwomen who have been working tirelessly for students. Now if we could get the kryptonite out of our schools, we could get back to the job of educating our students.
