

NEWSLETTER

September 2025

**Ideas to spark
curiosity and
inspire change.**

Please read and discuss
with your colleagues.

Important Dates

Sept 17th – Staff Rep meeting

Sept 18th – CDTA Picnic in
the Park event

September 30th - National
Day of Truth and
Reconciliation

Oct 1st - Exec meeting

Oct 6 - Staff Rep training

Oct 8th - Join Pro-D
Committee meeting



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**YOU ARE JUST
AMAZING**

Message from our President

Welcome back! I hope each of you had a restful, rejuvenating summer filled with time for family, friends, and well-deserved self-care. As we step into a new school year, I want to take a moment—on behalf of our entire union leadership—to express how deeply proud we are of your continued dedication, professionalism, and resilience.

Every school year brings new challenges, but also new opportunities to inspire, support, and shape the lives of our students. Whether you're returning to familiar routines or stepping into a new role, please know that your work matters. You make a difference every single day. Our union remains committed to standing beside you—advocating for fair working conditions, professional respect, and the resources you need to do your job safely and effectively. We know that when educators are supported, students thrive.

In the coming weeks, we'll be sharing updates on ongoing provincial bargaining, work around occupational fatigue, our efforts with dysregulated classrooms, upcoming professional development opportunities, and ways you can get involved in our collective efforts. Please stay connected with us, and don't hesitate to reach out with concerns, ideas, or needs. Your voice is essential to our strength.

Thank you for all you do. Here's to a school year filled with growth, collaboration, and meaningful victories—both in and out of the classroom.

For those of you wanting to gather at the end of this first week, Gladstones Brewing is hosting a special event for all educational staff (Friday at 4:00pm) – Teachers' Taproom – that will have happy hour pricing, specials, snacks, prizes, and live entertainment. Perhaps I will see a few of you there.

To all of you, I hope this first week went well and that you were able to enjoy the energy that comes with a new school year.

Reminder: Keep Your AMS Availability Up-to-Date

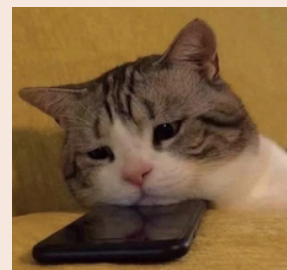
by: Jacqueline Symons (CDTA Vice-President)

As we head into a busy fall, it's important that all teachers, and especially TTOCs, keep their AMS availability up-to-date. This helps the system connect more quickly with teachers who are actually available for work, instead of spending time calling those who are not.

To change your availability, navigate to the "Home" page then select → Unavailability. Enter the date range for your unavailability and which days & times you are unavailable.

While in the system, also double-check that your teachable subjects are accurate and current. This can be viewed under the "My Info" tab and selecting "Dashboard."

If you notice that any of your subjects and levels need to be updated, please contact Gwynn Whyte at the Board Office to make those changes.



Class Size and Composition

by: Jacqueline Symons (CDTA Vice-President)

As we settle into the school year, it's important to review our rights and responsibilities around class size and composition. These provisions are central to ensuring that both students and teachers have the supports they need for meaningful teaching and learning.

Please take a moment to review Section IV of our Collective Agreement, which outlines language on class size and composition, as well as the included infographic that highlights the restored language specific to SD71.

While we see some shuffling of students in the first few weeks, classes need to be set by **September 30th**. If you notice concerns with your class size or composition, please connect with your school staff representative. If your school does not currently have a staff rep, you can reach out directly to myself or Shawn.

A reminder that remedy does not come into effect until after the September 30th date as administrators have until this date to make best efforts to bring classes into compliance with the class size and composition limits

CDTA 71 Restored Language At A Glance

Class Size

Class/Subject	Class Size	# of Students with Special Needs
Kindergarten	20	2*
Grades 1-3	22	2*
Split Primary	22	2*
Split	24	2*
Primary/Intermediate	29	2*
Grades 4-7	29	2*
Split Intermediate	27	2*
Grades 8-9	30	2*
Grade 10-12	30	*(includes classes at students)
Shop/Home Ec	24	*
Secondary	28	*
Science/English	12	No limit
Special – Resource Room	12	No limit
Life Skills	10	No limit

* K-12 classes which include a student with special needs will always be kept under the class size maximums (no flex)

1- The District must make Best Efforts to ensure that classes created for September end that exceed maximums and that they are in compliance with Section 30 or 31 or 21 days after the start of a new class

2- Remedy must be initiated within 30 days of 1st maximum are exceeded and the district must make best effort to be in compliance by Sept 30

Class size cannot be exceeded by 12 to before remedy is given (there are no designated students in the class) Example: we have a class with 22 students per year per year (if we do) Students in various classes = a student

Class Composition

Who Are "Students with Special Needs"?

Ministry Designated Students – Low Incidence

- A – Physically dependent
- B – Deaf and Blind
- C – Moderate to Severe Profound Intellectual Disability
- D – Physical Disabilities or Chronic Health Impair
- E – Visual Impairment
- F – Deaf / Hard of Hearing
- G – Autism Spectrum Disorder
- H – Intensive Behaviour
- I – Severe Communication Impairment – severe speech, expressive language or receptive language impairment as determined by SLP in conjunction with a school psychologist and district team – usually applies to primary students
- *CDTA/SD71 are going to arbitration in June 2019 on use of SGI designation*
- Who is NOT included? (for class composition numbers)**
- K – Mild Intellectual Disability
- P – Gifted
- L – Learning Disability
- M – Moderate Behaviour Support / Mental Illness

How are students identified?

- ☐ Referral to School Based Team

Referral for further assessment as determined by the SBT

* The district shall provide in-service on an ongoing basis on the function and responsibilities of the SBT.

* This document is only a snapshot of the restored language. See the collective agreement for detailed information. You can find it at www.cdta71.org.

Contact your staff rep if you have concerns about the size or composition of your class

Non – Enrolling Staffing Formula

	District Ratios
Teacher Librarian	1:700 students
Counsellors	1:463 students
Learning Assistance	1:504 students
Special Ed Resource	1:333 students
ESL / ELL	1:58.5 students

- ☐ Teacher such as Psychologists, SLP's, Teachers of hearing and visually impaired do not fit into any of these categories

Districts can combine categories for posting jobs to determine if they have hired enough FTE (e.g. LST's)

This number is not a classed number. It is only used to determine how much FTE needs to be hired district wide in each category. For example, a school with 3000 students does not get 1.3 FTE librarians because they have more than 700 students.

Prior to placement of students with special needs:

1. There must be a consultation process including district staff, parents / guardians, teachers and administrators.
2. Training and in-service during regular school hours

Learnmore

Staff Representatives

by: Shawn Holland (CDTA President)

We're looking forward to our first Staff Rep meeting of the school year which is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18th, at 4 PM on Zoom. If your site has not elected their site-based Staff Rep(s) yet, please consider stepping into this important role yourself.

As always, the start of the school year brings a range of issues, and we welcome you to bring these forward as school concerns so we can address them together.

Also, please save the date (October 6th, 2025) for a collaborative training opportunity with Principals/Vice principals around Difficult Conversations. More details will be given at the Staff Rep Meeting.

Main duties of the staff rep:

- Attend local staff rep meetings and liaise between local & school staff
- Hold meetings to report on local/BCTF activities and concerns
- Post information & policies
- Represent members in meetings with administration

A Staff Rep will not be expected to know all the answers -- help is always available from the CDTA office.

Bargaining Update

by: Shawn Holland (CDTA President)

Hopefully all teachers are aware that we are in the midst of provincial bargaining. The BCTF started negotiations with BCPSEA in March and had 18 dates prior to the end of June. No bargaining occurred in the summer, and 11 more dates are scheduled for September and October.

In short, bargaining is not going well. Progress has been slow for a number of reasons – the government did not provide a funding envelope for financial discussions until June 14th, BCPSEA's lead negotiator is from out of province and has no experience with BC's education system, and a large number of concessions are being brought to the table.

Beyond this, there has been no real discussion around some of the BCTF's central concerns – recruitment and retention, class size and composition, and a wage increase that recognizes our work, allows us to keep up with inflation, and will attract people to the profession. The government offer of 3.5% over two years is standard among all of the groups currently bargaining but is largely seen as insufficient.

What does this mean for you as a classroom teacher? First, it is imperative that you login to the BCTF website and ensure your contact information is correct. Stay up to date with the bargaining information that is posted (it is secured so the only way to view is by logging in – if you cannot login please contact the BCTF). Don't be surprised if you hear increased talk about a strike vote. What I had heard over the summer was that this may be a ways off, but last week I did see BCTF president Carol Gordon on the news cite the possibility of a vote and I have heard our bargaining team is becoming increasingly frustrated over the lack of progress at the table.

While the idea of a strike is concerning to many, it is the greatest power we have as workers for encouraging our employer to come to the table and work with us to achieve a deal. Just look at what the Air Canada flight attendants were able to achieve. It is a negotiating tactic we have not had to utilize for over a decade, but it is something that we may now need to consider.

We will certainly inform you of any significant developments as they become available.

Join the Social Justice Collective

by: Peter Lorian (Social Justice Chair)

Teachers in the Comox Valley are invited to join the Social Justice Collective. Together we work toward equity, fairness, and solidarity: supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ members, racialized members, and members with disabilities, while also strengthening connections with the broader labour movement.

Meeting times will be set collectively once the group is formed.

If you'd like to learn more or get involved, contact Peter Lorian at sj@cdta71.org

The logo consists of the words "SOCIAL JUSTICE COLLECTIVE" stacked vertically in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below this stack, the letters "CDTA" are displayed in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a light blue rectangular background.

**SOCIAL
JUSTICE
COLLECTIVE
CDTA**

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

by: Natasha Rainkie (Indigenous Education Chair)

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was established as a federal holiday in 2021 to enact Call to Action #80 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This day honours Survivors, their families, and communities, and while September 30th is an important step, true reconciliation requires ongoing, meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities throughout the entire year.

Each year, our community comes together to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with a Spirit Walk. The walk is a time to gather in reflection, remembrance, and solidarity. The 5th Annual Comox Valley Spirit Walk will be held on September 23rd and will begin at Harmston Park. To make the event possible, volunteers are needed to help with set-up and take-down at both parks. Please spread the word and sign up here: <https://signup.com/go/UnjAZHm>

We encourage members to attend the Spirit Walk, wear orange in recognition of Orange Shirt Day, and reflect on how we can each carry this work forward in our classrooms, schools, and union spaces.



Opportunities for BIPOC Members

by: Jacqueline Symons (CDTA Vice-President)

Zone meetings are gatherings of union representatives from all over the island to discuss issues and receive training in specific areas connected to union work. For too long, Indigenous, Black, and other teachers of colour were underrepresented in these spaces.

This is changing. The BCTF is making intentional efforts to ensure that IBPOC educators are present, heard, and leading at conferences. To make this possible, the Federation is asking for IBPOC members to put their names forward to join their locals. The BCTF aims to remove some barriers to participation for all by covering the costs of travel, meals, hotels, and childcare.

When IBPOC members attend, the entire Federation grows stronger, wiser, and more reflective of the communities we serve. That being said, there is no expectation around how you would like to participate; come and observe or jump in when you feel called.

Upcoming opportunities:

Fall Zones in Victoria - Oct 17-18th

Federal Leadership Institute in Kelowna - Nov 28-29th

Spring Zones – April 17-18th

If you are interested in joining for either of the upcoming event or would like to be notified of future opportunities, please email the office at office71@cdta71.org

Social Justice Reading Group – November Session

by: Peter Lorian (Social Justice Chair)

Join us on **Thursday, November 6, from 4 to 6 pm** for a special CDTA Social Justice Reading Group featuring SpitFire Press Volume 2: a grassroots pamphlet series that invites us into reflection, connection, and collective action for justice. In Volume 2, we explore the harder emotions that so often show up in this work: Defensiveness, Denial, and Perfectionism. These responses create barriers to listening, friendship, and undoing the violence of white supremacy culture.



What to expect:

Short, accessible articles designed to spark conversation

No requirement to finish the reading before attending

A welcoming circle where we unlearn together: it's kind in here

Pick up your free copy of Volume 2 at the CDTA office before the event, or simply come with an open heart and willingness to share.

Come sit in circle, sip tea, and build solidarity with fellow educators who care about justice.

For details on how to get involved with the Social Justice Committee, contact sj@cdta71.org

Setting Boundaries:

Understanding Appropriate Physical Contact with Students

by: Shawn Holland (CDTA President)

As educators, we build strong, positive relationships with our students—rooted in trust, care, and mutual respect. A supportive touch on the shoulder or a comforting hug may feel like natural expressions of compassion, but in today's educational and legal environment, it is essential that we maintain strict professional boundaries when it comes to physical contact.

It is highly recommended that the only acceptable forms of physical contact between staff and students are high fives, fist bumps and elbow bumps.

Why This Matters

This guideline is not about limiting the care we show our students—it's about protecting both students and staff. Here's why this policy is recommended:

1. **Student Safety and Comfort:** Every student comes from a unique background. Some may have experienced trauma, abuse, or cultural norms where physical contact is not appropriate or welcome. Even a well-intentioned hug can trigger discomfort or distress.
2. **Professional Boundaries:** Maintaining clear physical boundaries helps establish and reinforce a professional environment. It ensures that all interactions are above reproach and that students feel emotionally and physically safe in our care.

3. Legal Protection: In today's climate, even innocent gestures can be misinterpreted. By limiting physical contact to high fives and fist bumps, we reduce the risk of allegations or misunderstandings that could have serious consequences for staff and the school. The past year saw numerous investigations that centred around contact with students. To protect yourself it is highly recommended that you limit this contact.

What's Allowed:

✓ High fives ✓ Fist bumps ✓ Elbow bumps

These brief, open, and public gestures are positive ways to celebrate student effort and achievement, while maintaining a clear boundary.

What's Not Allowed:

✗ Hugs (even side hugs) ✗ Touching hair or face ✗ Sitting students on laps
✗ Back rubs or patting ✗ Any other form of prolonged or private physical contact

Responding with Care—Without Physical Contact

There are many ways to support a student emotionally without physical touch:

- Use encouraging words or notes
- Offer active listening and empathy
- Create space for students to share in a safe, supervised environment
- Celebrate their efforts with class-wide recognition

Moving Forward Together

We know that every educator enters this profession with a deep sense of compassion. These guidelines do not diminish that—they reinforce it. By committing to clear, respectful boundaries, we show students that they can trust us to always act in their best interest. Let's continue to lead with professionalism, empathy, and care. If you have questions or need support navigating a situation, don't hesitate to reach out to your administrator or union representative.

**Comox Valley Teachers' Association stands in solidarity
with the BCGEU and PEA**

by: Peter Lorian (Social Justice Chair)

The Comox Valley Teachers' Association stands with the BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU) and the Professional Employees Association (PEA) members taking strike action. Their fight is our fight.

We know the labour movement is strongest when we have each other's backs. Whether under the Eby BC NDP or the Carney Liberals, governments continue to impose austerity on working people. The only real counterweight is organized workers willing to act together. Building fighting unions means showing up for one another, coordinating across sectors, and being ready to withhold our labour when respect, fair pay, and decent working conditions are denied.

Although they do not have picket local picket lines, consider checking in with and supporting community members who are currently on job action.

CDTA at Comox Valley Pride 🌈

by: Jacqueline Symons (CDTA Vice-President)

Walking in the Comox Valley Pride parade with CDTA members was an absolute blast. There was colour everywhere, big smiles, and a whole lot of love and support for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. There's just something about being out there together, dressed in every shade imaginable, that makes you think, yeah, this is what community looks like.

Thanks to everyone who showed up and joined the party. It was a fun to march alongside you, hand out swag to the crowd, and just soak up the joy of the day. Let's do it again next year with louder music and freezies!

