

NOTEBOOK

Issue #11 February 20, 2019



LEAVES DEADLINES 2019

- **March 15** – Long-Service Part-Time Leave, Article G.40
- **March 15** – Educational Improvement Leave, Article G.29
- **March 31** – General/Personal Leave of Absence, Self-funded Leave, Article G.38
- **March 31** – Teachers on leave to June 30 must notify Board of their intentions for the following school year.
- **March 31** – Self-funded Leave Plan, Article G.39
- **May 1** – Intra-District exchange request, Article E.23.2.b
- **May 14** – Part-time/Increase to FTE requests, Article C.24
- **May 14** – Job Share Requests, Article C.24. For teachers in full time and part-time assignments, including those currently in Job Shares.
- **May 31** – Committee Transfer Requests Article, E.23.2.d. For teacher resignation/retirement planned for 2018/2019, 30 days notice for resignations, and as much notice as possible for retirements in order to aid in staffing.

NVTA PRESIDENT'S SPEECH AT ILLUMINATE PRO D CONFERENCE

The Top Ten Ways to Improve Mental Health as a Teacher in North Vancouver

Moments like these are indeed a celebration of the collective desire of educators to always strive to be better, to seek ways that improve the art of teaching, but also ways to improve ourselves. Illuminate. That is the theme of today. Illuminate the power within all of us to be the best we can be. But for that to happen, we need to be healthy, both physically and mentally, and with the reality of being an educator in 2019, that is indeed a challenge.

For too long we have neglected to engage in a conversation about mental health. All too often, these mental challenges are hushed voices where those suffering from mental health issues that are as significant as any physical ailment, are guilted into keeping it to themselves, hiding it from even friends, so that treatment is neglected and help is never found.

I am here today to tell you that the time has come to knock down such walls. In 2019, we should no longer sweep mental health under the rug. Life is hard and we need each other to get through it. No one should feel the stigma of suffering from a failure to find balance in life and the burden of mental illness. But more than just acknowledge, we must do more, we all must do more, to support and guide and help each other, our colleagues, to ease the pain of mental illness.

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Pro D Conference 2019, Illuminate – Thank you!

What an incredibly successful Pro D conference it was, with over 900 educators participating. The secret to success is the amazing Professional Development Conference Committee headed up by the tireless Carolyn Pena. Thank you to Milan Boljuncic, Tammy Daley, Cheryl Darling, Hermila Gallaher, Owen Howell, Meagan Stoker and Dean Yeo for all the extra time and effort you put into ensuring all the details were in place. And thank you to our Office Manger, Beth Triggs, who is a huge part of why these days are so successful.

The Carson Graham student volunteers were outstanding, as was the generosity of the entire Carson staff in allowing the conference to take place in their fine location. Special thanks to Owen Howell who has always played an integral part in managing everything on the ground. Thank you to our Keynote Speaker, Dr. Andrew Miki, who demonstrated what a powerful advocate he is for mental health and how well he understands the teaching profession. A special thank you to Carson students Evan Skye and Shana George from the Squamish Nation for sharing a welcome song and dance with the participants. Also, thank you to Pius Ryan for his opening remarks and the gifting of the blanket. Thank you to all the caterers, Barbara Goelst, S'wich Café, and Continental Coffee, for keeping everyone well fed and all coffeed up. Finally, a big thank you to all the presenters who provided such a wide variety of workshops that were appreciated by all.

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Now I am not so naive that I would suggest that there is some quick fix to this. I will leave it to the experts such as Dr. Andrew Miki, to get to the heart and soul of what a person needs to reach mental wellness. But... But, I do think my 52 years on this planet and my 30 years in the world of education give me some experience as to what can help bring balance to life. And so I give you my own, completely unscientific, top ten list, on ways to bring balance to life in a world of social media, climate change, Donald Trump, MyEd, North Vancouver traffic...

THE TOP TEN WAYS TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH AS A TEACHER IN NORTH VANCOUVER

10. Teaching is a lonely business but don't be alone

No other profession is done in such isolation, where a whole day can go by and you had no interaction with colleagues. Seek out your colleagues and connect. Look out especially for many of the new teachers. Support them and guide them. Check in on each other no matter how long your colleagues have taught. We all need a little TLC once in a while.

9. Ignore the online callers and the twitter trolls. If you hear one caller on a phone-in talk show who whines that teachers are overpaid and get summers off, or if you read one inane 140 character comment on Twitter, know that there are ten people for that one caller and a thousand people for that one troll who think that teachers are the greatest gift to society, that teachers are the foundation of democracy and the insurance plan for creating a next generation that is inclusive and compassionate, creative and critical, democratic and independent.

8. Remember: They're only report cards. You can fulfill your professional duties as a teacher without creating massive documents that are almost as long as a copy of *War and Peace*. Review the Reporting Order and you will realize that you can write a lot less than you do. And parents will thank you for it!

7. The work will never be done. A teacher can stay at work till midnight every night and still the job would not be done. You're never done. Learn to accept that. So, go home. Once in a while, go home early and do something for yourself. See live music. Laugh. Reconnect with old hobbies or find a new one. Get a bird feeder. Chat with friends. Treat yourself to a mid-week night out for dinner or a movie. Go bowling. Watch that guilty pleasure on Netflix. Dance. Triage starts with you.

6. Don't try to be like someone else. Be yourself. The great thing about teaching is that you can approach it from so many ways and with so many personality types and the end product will still be wonderful and will still be amazing. Make your lessons and curriculum delivery match who you are. Any time I have tried to emulate a colleague's lesson in the exact manner that they delivered it, I have fallen hard on my face. I have always been happy when I have taught in a style that is true to myself.

5. Breathe. I can't say enough about the power of breathing, meditating, calmness. Take five minutes every day to feel the air inhale and exhale through your body. You will feel the difference.

4. Put down the phone at night. Emails can wait. Facebook will survive without you.

3. Exercise. It doesn't have to be big, but find the time in your day to exercise. The impact on mental health is scientifically proven and life enhancing. A walk at lunch, a run along the seawall, a cross-country ski trek on a glorious Vancouver winter day.

2. Cherish the Moments. Life is short and we are nothing without moments. There is a moment I often return to when my stress is rising and I am feeling overwhelmed. Five-and-a-half-years ago, my son graduated from Argyle and it was a time in both our lives where we just needed a change. I was coming off of a divorce and for those of you who have been there, you know what a strain on your mental health that can be. So I took a leave and the two of us decided to go backpacking through Southeast Asia for three months. There is a moment I often return to from that trip that really grounds me. We were travelling through Indonesia, on the train from Banyuwangi to Surabaya and I looked over at my 18-year-old son, Joshua, who was sound asleep. It will never be like this again, I thought to myself. That was my moment to capture. This baby who had become a man would soon be off to university and this moment would be my reminder of slowing things down. We must all remember to slow things down.

Finally, the number one way to find balance in this world involves a word that we are often so afraid of using. Maybe it is because I was born in 1966, the height of Beatlemania I like to say, a year before Woodstock, flower power and hippies, peace and understanding. Maybe I just smelled something in the air but something from that time has stayed with me ever since. And that is the power of the word *love*. Don't be afraid of the word *love*. If we use that word to frame our interactions, to guide us and to sustain us, we truly can make the world a better place. Call me naive, I do not care.

So to conclude, my four Ls are Live, Love and Laugh but most importantly, Look out for each other. It truly is my honour and my privilege to serve you all. Thank you.

Martin Stuible