

# NOTEBOOK

Issue #1 September 8, 2020



## NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, September 30, 2020  
4:00 pm

*A meeting link will be emailed to you via NVTA Communications email. The link will also be provided to your school's CSR.*

Proposed motions for consideration at the General Meeting –

1. That the NVTA fee for the 2020-2021 school year be set at 0.80% of a teacher's salary.
2. That the NVTA Executive Committee Compensation Policy 2020-2021 be adopted.
3. That Executive Committee members (other than table officers) who attended the Summer Planning Session receive compensation equivalent to one day at the cost of a TTOC.
4. That the Chief Staff Rep Compensation Policy be determined by the Rep Assembly and be within a budget amount set by the General Meeting.
5. That the Professional Development Chair be released at 0.4 FTE for the 2020-2021 school year.
6. That the proposed budget 2020-2021 be adopted.
7. That the proposed NVTA Goals & Priorities for 2020-2021 be adopted.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE NVTA PRESIDENT

### ***Welcome Back!***

Welcome back to a school year unlike any other. Whether you count your time as a teacher in decades or you are stepping into a classroom as a new teacher, this school year will bring challenges and changes that none of us have experienced before. Compounding that is the uncertainty surrounding all the issues facing us. The one certainty is that we are all facing more stress and anxiety than normal and we must work together and support each other as colleagues in order to make the best of this extraordinary year. Although I can't provide answers at this time to all the most pressing questions that I know you all have, there are five important things to keep in mind to help you through this year.

First, understand that everyone returning to schools is experiencing stress differently and we should approach all interactions with the assumption that people are doing the best they can. This is often natural in our approach to students, and rightly so, but we need to expand that to all of the adults that we work with as well. So if people react in an abrupt or otherwise rude manner, be forgiving and keep working to find a solution. In particular, the principal and vice principal(s) at your school have been under an unprecedented level of stress since early August. So, if you experience an unexpectedly abrupt or curt answer, be firm and clear in expressing your concern but don't take their reaction personally. This doesn't mean you have to blindly follow unsafe or unreasonable requests or demands by administrators, just recognize that everyone is human and under additional stress this year. Our CUPE colleagues have also had additional uncertainty in their employment related to COVID and how their work will look going forward, so be extra understanding in all your interactions with your CUPE colleagues.

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**The first NVTA Representative Assembly of the school year is Wednesday, September 16. The meeting Agenda and Minutes will be sent to schools via the milkrun. A meeting link will be emailed to CSRs.**

Second, just as you are cutting your students and your colleagues a break, be sure to look after yourself as well. Take care of your own mental and physical wellbeing as a priority. Don't work all hours of the day and night, that is not sustainable or reasonable. The system needs to work in such a way that teachers can function for the long haul. That will only happen if teachers are clear about what is a reasonable level of expectation. Take your lunch times to go for a walk, listen to some relaxing music, socialize with colleagues (at a safe distance), hold regular staff committee meetings or get ahead on some tasks so you can leave earlier to spend some time with your family and friends. Don't let work take over your weekends either. Getting a break from school and enjoying some downtime will make you more productive. You have probably heard this many times and maybe even given your colleagues this same advice but everyone needs to take a serious look at their work life balance this year. With many of our usual activities closed or curtailed, it will be even easier to let work eat up even more time than in a regular year.

Third, we are all in this for the long haul and we don't want to set up unsustainable expectations for ourselves, our students or families. Start out small, see how much you can accomplish in the new reality and then build in more as you see how it goes. Starting with high expectations for yourself and your students might lead to changes feeling like a failure. Start with plans and goals that can easily be achieved and everyone will feel better adding more, as they get used to the new reality.

Fourth, the situation in schools is currently undergoing change and this is likely to continue all year long. For many teachers, careful long-term planning is how we make our work more manageable and our lives easier. But this year, it may be difficult to plan for unknown circumstances and, at secondary specifically, for a new schedule that few people have any experience with. We can still plan but our plans need to be flexible and might need extensive revisions as we gain experience and the situation changes over the year.

Finally, remember that the curriculum is not written in stone and this is one of the areas where teachers will need to use their individual professional judgement in addressing the most important curricular areas first and seeing how much other content can be covered effectively in the time available. Teachers already know that we will be spending more time than ever addressing the mental health of our students, building a safe classroom community - both physically and emotionally - and washing our hands more than ever before. With these priorities in mind, of course the curriculum needs to be flexed to fit in the time left. There is an important role for collaboration and discussion about curriculum between teachers but ultimately each teacher will need to make decisions based on the students in their class(es).

We hope to fill future *Notebooks* with more concrete information that we know all our members are eager for, but in the meantime, work together with your staff committee to address and solve issues at your school and never hesitate to contact us at the NVTa office for support. Joining Katrina Russell and me at the office this year, we have two new released officers sharing the role of Second Vice President: Alexa Bennett Fox and Charlene Wilson. You can find all of our contact information on the website ([nvtta.ca](http://nvtta.ca)) and for a faster response, please email both Katrina and me, at least. One of us will get back to you as soon as we can. As always, you can phone the office for immediate support and Beth Triggs, our Office Manager, will ensure you get through to one of us as soon as possible.

We will also be providing more timely updates and information to members through our NVTa Communications emails. If you are not already receiving these emails, with this *Notebook* going directly to your personal email account, please sign up right away on our website ([nvtta.ca](http://nvtta.ca)) with your personal email address. We will not be sending NVTa Communications to school district email addresses so be sure to use a personal email address.

Alexa, Charlene, Katrina and I are here to help you all work together to make the best of this most unusual school year.

Carolyn Pena  
President  
North Vancouver Teachers' Association