



The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you likely know, there has been significant media interest and public commentary regarding our district's recent advertising for candidates to our Teachers Teaching on Call (TTOC) list. The recent recruitment efforts included an invitation to appropriate candidates with a post-secondary degree, but no teaching certificate. This is not a new situation. BC schools have employed non-certified staff via "letters of permission" for many years, particularly in specialty subject areas that are difficult to recruit. There is also a more general provision for non-certified staff to teach for a period of fewer than 20 days which has been activated by many districts across the province in previous years in times of need, including this one.

While this strategy may not be unique to our district, it is being considered more broadly given the current circumstances. Here are the facts that have led to us to where we are:

- The restoration of BCTF class size language and non-enrolling roles and ratios has led to a massive increase in the number of teachers who have secured regular positions in school districts. This has resulted in a significant decrease in our list of qualified teachers teaching on call – both in our district and in all other Districts in BC;
- Our school district has worked extremely hard to expand our recruiting efforts to fill regular postings as well as to replenish the Teacher on Call list. Those efforts continue in a competitive market where there continues to be greater demand than there is supply;
- When a classroom teacher is absent due to illness, leave or professional development, it has become more challenging to find a replacement to fulfill that teacher's duties; and,
- If a replacement teacher can't be placed, internal reassignments have to happen in the school. Principals, when not already assigned to an enrolling class, are covering other classes and assignments regularly. Some specialist teachers, including those who support children with special needs, are asked to supervise regular classes. That leaves students on their case load without the services they need. In other situations, discretionary leaves may be rescinded or professional development sessions cancelled.

We continue to be committed to providing high quality learning to all our students and we are proud of the efforts of our teachers, certified education assistants, and administrators to achieve that goal every day. In supplementing our Teacher on Call list, here is what we hope to achieve:

- Less disruption in schools on a daily basis. We all want teachers to be able to fulfill their regular duties and not be reassigned due to staffing shortages;
- More consistent support for students with special needs. Their learning plan shouldn't be disrupted because a specialist teacher who is working with them has been assigned to a regular classroom in place of an absent teacher; and,

- Fewer staff coming to work when they are sick because they know how disruptive their absence would be. With the virulent flu and cold bugs that are becoming more frequent, it is better to rest and recover than to go to work, spread the germs and extend the recovery period.

What are our expectations of any non-certified candidates who are hired to be part of our list?

- A post-secondary degree;
- A strong and positive history in working with young people;
- An indication, through the interview process, that they have the capacity to contribute to school routines, address classroom management challenges, and provide students with quality learning experiences. Please note that anyone newly hired to our TTOC list, whether certified or not, is supervised and supported by school administrators; and,
- A clean criminal record check and incident free discipline record.

You will be pleased to know that our posting has generated the interest we had hoped it would. As of Friday we had received ninety-four applications from non-certified candidates, and from this list, we are now ready to activate eight to our TTOC roster. Four of these candidates are trained as teachers but have been engaged in other professions, two have been university instructors, and two have science degrees and extensive experience working with young people in a leadership capacity. We will also be considering more candidates from our application pool in the coming weeks and months, which, thanks in part to the extensive media coverage, now includes an additional thirty-six trained teachers from across the country.

Where are we going from here?

- We are pleased to receive the news from the province regarding increased funding for teacher training and recruitment and we anticipate that will lead to some long-term relief;
- We will continue our recruitment efforts for certified teachers in BC and in other parts of Canada. There were additional resources assigned to this task last summer and through the fall and that area remains a focus for our Human Resources staff;
- We will continue to reach out to retired teachers to explore their interest in TTOC assignments during this period of peak demand; and
- We anticipate that some of the non-certified personnel hired will pursue certification as a result of their positive experiences working in classrooms in our district.

Sincerely,



Peter Jory
Superintendent of Schools/CEO

PJ/cp