

B.C. Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

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The BCTF strike and its negative impact on public schools

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The BCTF is conducting a strike in BC's public schools. So far, the media has portrayed this as "job action" and the public has not been vocal in reporting a great difference in the activities of schools. Some parents probably believe that student progress continues unfettered.

Those of us within the system, and many parents, know otherwise. Phase one of the BCTF strike is having an impact on many students and families in this province and the effects of this may be difficult to calculate.

Schools are vibrant communities of new ideas and activities. Currently, many successful school initiatives are on hold and new strategies are not coming forward as they would otherwise.

The school is a community and the rapport between principals, vice-principals and teachers is key in supporting students and ensuring that their school experiences are positive and productive. The usual communication that would occur in schools is not now occurring.

Teachers have been instructed to not 'provide or accept any routine, printed, written or electronic communication to or from principals or vice-principals.' As such, many student issues are not being adequately dealt with or brought to the attention of principals and vice-principals.

Interventions for students who are not achieving their best may not have happened in many schools as teachers are not sharing with principals and vice-principals information about which students are falling behind and which are on the cusp of failure.

Principals and vice-principals, in conjunction with classroom teachers, often work with parents to create structures to support struggling students and identify the challenges that those students may be facing.

The end of semester may be the first time that many parents and principals and vice-principals learn of the challenges that a student may have been facing.

As the semester comes to an end in many of our secondary schools, the issue of not giving marks formally and within schools will mean that many important activities will not

be completed. *Passport to Education*, which 'recognizes and rewards student achievement in Grades 10 to 12 in a broad range of academic and non-academic areas' bases its scholarship awards on marks. Principals and vice-principals cannot award these *Passports* without formal and final mark reports. Scholarship applications and awards within district, province, nationally and internationally rely on formal and final marks.

Phase one of the BCTF strike also means that many teachers are not participating in formal school activities which are held outside the school day. Planning for school graduation has begun and will go on with or without the participation of teachers but will it have the same value and meaning to students and families without the teachers present?

Finally, principals and vice-principals at the school and district levels have important and specific roles. They are educational leaders with overall responsibility for school culture, the learning environment and community engagement. Having principals and vice-principals take on supervision, invigilating and marking undermines their ability to focus on what matters most, creating the best possible learning environment for students to succeed.

As the Association representing BC's public school principals and vice-principals, the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association has heard from the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils that the volume of calls and emails they have received this school year from concerned parents is fivefold the normal volume. This speaks to the fact that many parents, while not protesting in front of schools or at the BC Legislature, are noticing and living with the problems created by phase one of this strike.

While the BCTF and BCPSEA have every right to extended negotiations, it's spin to say students are not suffering. We believe that until the strike is resolved, schools will struggle to maintain their place as the best possible learning environment for students. [bcpvpa](#)