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ISEA

ISEA NEWS

REPRESENTING TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

From the Membership Support Officer's Casebook



Attending difficult meetings

At present, many of our schools are going through difficult times, possibly losing some students, and needing to take unwelcome measures to resolve the problems arising from reduced funds.

It seems important therefore to remind you of the process, if you are called to a meeting for any reason.

- 1 Often you will simply get a message – “the principal would like to see you for a few minutes.” You **MUST** ask “may I ask what it is about?” You do not have to attend any meeting unprepared or without knowledge of its purpose.
- 2 If you find yourself in this situation, and the meeting is about your employment in some way – **you are entitled to stop the meeting**, and ask to return with a support person. “Look, I’m really not comfortable discussing this on my own. May we stop the meeting for now, and reschedule when I can have a support person with me.”
- 3 **Never** attend any meeting which is employment-related without a support person. Where there is any risk of your employment being affected – even by disciplinary measures, or competency concerns, this rule applies.

Some possible reasons for such a meeting:

- There are possible redundancies and you may be one of those affected.
- Your hours (or timetable) are to be changed (in a fairly major way)
- There has been a complaint about you either from a student or a parent. *Such a complaint could be about teaching style/content/ delivery, or it could be about the way you have dealt with a student in a particular situation. It could be about whether you are covering the course content fully and within an appropriate time-frame.*

Support person

Who should it be?

- Most likely a colleague or friend from within the school
- Your union rep can help here
- A friend from outside if you are uncomfortable asking a colleague
- If the issue is serious, your union officer is always ready to come in and support you.

What do they do?

- An extra pair of ears to hear exactly what is said.
- Take notes if it seems a good idea.
- Observe general tone and body language!
- Intervene with a comment if there is clear misunderstanding between the two parties.

A support person’s presence often has a calming effect on all – comments are usually much more reasonable and considered.

Summary:

ASK what the meeting is about.

Take a **SUPPORT PERSON** to employment-related meetings.

STOP the meeting if you are uncomfortable on your own.

CHECK with your union officer if you are not sure how to handle things.

Mairi Ferguson
Membership Support

[Email mferguson@isea.org.nz]

FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



As is the case with working in a busy school environment the same can be said for life as an ISEA worker!

This term has seen us visiting members and prospective members in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch as well as being in contact with members in other parts of the country whether by phone or email. It was also good to see some new schools represented at our August AGM with a couple of members expressing an interest in becoming more involved at Executive level. We look forward to welcoming them as observers at our October meeting.

Thanks to Medbury School of Christchurch!



It was decided to host a gathering to which all Christchurch ISEA members and independent staff and management would be invited as a way of showing our collective support. It was refreshing and enlightening to meet members and management who have worked together through challenging times in order to improve outcomes for their students and communities. We extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to Peter Kay, Head of Medbury, for making his school available as the venue and to his PA, Kerry McNeill, for assisting with organisation for the occasion. It was wonderful to meet former ISEA members who have enjoyed a long history with ISEA and it was great to hear some of their stories. As you will appreciate, many independent school principals and management have been associated with ISEA over the years and although they are not eligible for membership once taking on some management roles, we do appreciate the opportunity to continue to work with them, especially as we aim to enhance conditions and pay for our members.

Teachers Council Elections

By time of going to press you will have received e-bulletins notifying you of our support for Kevin Boyce, Principal of Saint Michael's Church School, Christchurch. We wish Kevin all the best and remain assured that if he is successful in being elected to Council that we, at ISEA, shall have a voice along with a superb advocate.

NZCTU Biennial Conference

Mairi Ferguson and I attended the 12th Biennial Conference organised by the NZCTU held in Wellington over two days in August. The theme was "Workers' Rights in the 21st Century" and although we are a very small union in the scale of attendees it was interesting to note that common challenges emerged. One such challenge is being able to connect with our young people. It was reported that there has been some success with the NZEI poster



campaign which merely gives a number for prospective members to text and they are then contacted by NZEI and given information on how to join and more importantly, why to join.

Other successful examples of engaging young people are through **Stand Up**, a movement for young people which works out of the Waikato Young Workers' Resource Centre. Look out for Education Kits which may be available for use in the classroom in 2012! **Together** was launched in May 2011 and aims to connect workers in un-unionised work places with the union movement. It brought to mind a couple of jobs my 15 year old daughter has done for which no union exists and from an adult viewpoint was a great deal of effort and work for very little pay and no conditions! For more information Visit www.together.org.nz or phone 0800 MY UNION (0800 698 6466).

At the conference our colleagues from NZEI and PPTA were well organised and spoke on many issues relating to the conference theme. One such quote I would like to share is "Working conditions of our teachers are the learning conditions of our students."

As with all conferences one of the most valuable components was the opportunity to network with and continue to forge on-going working relationships with larger organisations. Once again, our larger state sector cousins, PPTA and NZEI have committed to supporting ISEA on a number of levels which you will see reflected in increased benefits for ISEA members as the details are worked through.

Finally, the message I keep hearing loud and clear is that we must all find ways of engaging our young people. By the very nature of our work in schools and with students, we should be experts in being able to find ways of making ISEA membership relevant to all! Have **you** asked a new member on your staff if they have joined ISEA yet?

ISEA Website

Have you visited www.isea.org.nz lately? We are continuing to update and refresh information although this is still very much under construction, any assistance and/or suggestions are most welcome! We thank Kevin Bunker, PPTA General Secretary, for allowing us to provide PPTA twitter feed for your use.

ISEA Supports the Fiji Democracy & Freedom Movement NZ

On September 7th I joined other CTU affiliates outside the Sky City Convention Centre, Auckland, where the Pacific Islands Forum leaders were meeting. It was a peaceful and poignant reminder of the value of a democratic society and that our



neighbours in Fiji have not been able to exercise their democratic rights for a number of years as they continue to be controlled by a military regime led by Frank Bainimarama. I was horrified to learn of some of the atrocities experienced by the people I met that day and I shall continue to hold my own personal protest, that being to not travel to Fiji as a tourist until there are free and democratic elections held.

[These photographs are reproduced with permission]

Deborah Rattray
Chief Executive Officer

FROM THE ACTING PRESIDENT



Involvement

I feel something of a fraud labelling myself Acting President when I am actually the Acting, Acting President with our current Acting President, Malcolm Walker, on a well-earned trip to Europe. And, to be honest, I haven't done a lot of acting in this presidential role. Our very active and enthusiastic new CEO, Deb Rattray, has clearly been mindful of my temporary status and has carefully avoided passing much my way. But my title does draw attention to the difficulty ISEA has had renewing itself at the executive level. Malcolm and our former President, Bruce Owen, have been trying to extricate themselves from such full involvement in ISEA for some time since they have both now retired from full-time teaching; while most other executive members (including yours truly) are in the later stages of their careers. But a combination of the increased work load that teachers and support staff have today plus increasingly busy personal lives, means that few are willing to put themselves forward to assist in such things as union activity.

So I make this plea for members to be a little more involved in our organisation. ISEA provides a fantastic range of benefits as well as offering that insurance policy of knowing you will have support if you ever get into some sort of employment difficulty. But if we don't have people to run the union we simply can't continue. Our three part-time paid employees, Deborah, Mairi and Jill, all do a fantastic job and complete the vast majority of what must be done. But we still need people in a governance role. It would be great if more members could get involved at a branch level and a few more would be willing to look at assisting us in the national executive. A healthy association should have a fairly regular turnover of executive officers. We welcome members to attend meetings as observers (next meeting Oct. 29th at Dilworth School in Auckland) so contact our CEO or Administrator for details.

Christchurch

In the July newsletter, Malcolm gave an account of the difficulties many Christchurch independent schools were facing in the aftermath of the quakes. Now, some staff may have to face the prospect of redundancy with rolls at many schools likely to be down next year. Our thoughts are with our Christchurch members. If redundancies are in the offing, ISEA will do what it can to assist in the process to ensure no member is unfairly treated.

RWC and Exams

At this time of the year (Sept. 19th as I write) our school would normally be just starting our September holiday. Instead, we still have three weeks of the term to run. Trying to work out where we should be with our senior classes knowing there will be only a few days of term four before they go on study leave, is difficult enough without worrying about whether the students are doing any studying with all the rugby on television plus the entertainment in the city. Certainly, Auckland is alive with flags and smiling visitors and I gather other cities, too, are well into the spirit of the Rugby World Cup. It's great to see and I'm looking forward to getting along to one of the games myself soon. But will there be any consequences for our supposedly-studying students? Certainly, with the Cup final not until late October, those independent schools doing the CIE or IB exams, could have students sitting papers in the first week of term, while NCEA starts soon after. With rugby being mainly a

male pursuit and with many boys always happy to find excuses not to study, will this exacerbate the growing gap between the exam performance of girls and boys this year? Just a thought.

Meanwhile, enjoy the rugby viewing and associated entertainment or, if you're already sick of the whole thing, I hope you can find a tranquil flag-less spot to quietly enjoy your own pursuits. Have a good holiday and may the year end well for you.

Mark Cleaver

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Going on Parental or long term leave, or retiring this year?

Don't forget to change your membership category to that of Honorary Member to keep your EBS and other benefits alive

Only \$30.00 per year.

Notify Jill Brookes, Administration Officer today to ensure continuation of access to all benefits. admin@isea.org.nz

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

World Teachers Day this year falls on Wednesday 5 October. The theme for the day this year is "Teachers for Gender Equality"

Recently the New Zealand Herald published an article about gender pay parity in New Zealand. The article included a table covering various professions for male and female graduates four years after graduating. In all categories women were shown to receive lower salaries than men. Even though there are supposed to be equal opportunities in teaching the differences between the male and the female was about \$2400. It is small comfort that this is below the overall average difference of \$4380.

Globally there are still significant differences in career opportunities between men and women in teaching. Statistics show that men are more likely to be chosen for positions of responsibility. This still remains the case within the New Zealand context. Boards of Trustees are more likely to appoint a male teacher for the position of school principal. This trend is in spite of fewer men choosing teaching as a career than ever before.

The theme of gender equality does raise an important issue for the teaching profession globally. Whilst equal pay and equal opportunities remain important priorities there is a global shortage of men choosing teaching as a career. Research shows that good male role modelling in teaching is an important aspect of boys' education. It is important therefore for the teaching profession to recruit and retain men and women of quality and that they have equal opportunities for career advancement.

So we join the profession around the world in celebrating the work our teachers do. Teaching is a vitally important career. The future of our young people depends on them. Let us celebrate that.

Bruce Owen
Immediate Past President



INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

Individual employment agreement.

This is an agreement between the employer and one employee. It must be in writing.

An individual agreement must include:

- ⇒ Names of employer and employee.
- ⇒ Description of the work to be performed by the employee.
- ⇒ Indication of place and hours of work.
- ⇒ Salary or wages to be paid
- ⇒ Plain language explanation of the procedures for resolving employment relationship problems, and a description of the services available (Employment Relations Service). Details must be included – time frame for raising personal grievance issues, for example.

There are conditions which apply to any individual agreement, and it is important that all are aware of these.

- ⇒ A new employee can not be required to sign any agreement on the spot, but must be given sufficient time to consider the terms being offered and to seek advice if they wish.
- ⇒ An individual agreement can be considered invalid if it has been agreed by an employee after having advice only from the employer or their agent. This is considered to be unfair bargaining practice.
- ⇒ If there is a collective agreement in the school, whether it applies to all or some of the existing staff, a new employee must be informed of it, told which union is involved, and given information about how to join the union.
- ⇒ **NOTE:** ISEA is very happy to provide advice for members on individual agreements who are negotiating a new agreement, or an updated and changed one. Contact Mairi Ferguson (Membership Support) at mferguson@isea.org.nz to take advantage of this service.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

Applications are invited from members for the Professional Development Grant. The grant allows for support in any area of professional development that is not fully funded by other sources. Criteria for the award of the grant are on the website - www.isea.org.nz and click on Publications and Forms. Applications can also be made through the administrator Jill Brookes at admin@isea.org.nz.

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