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ISEA

ISEA NEWS

REPRESENTING TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

School Community Shocked by Unexpected Announcement

When the staff of Corran School in Auckland were told at the end of Term One that their school would be taken over by the St Kentigern Trust Board there was a sense of shock and disbelief. It was a shock announcement that was to anger parents and Old Girls of the school, and to cause particular anxiety to the current students in the secondary school who had been there for most of their school life.



Debt Unsustainable

It appears that over the past five years the Corran Trust Board has been getting deeper into debt, to a point where it had become unsustainable. The agreement is that the St Kentigern Trust Board will take over the operations, assets and liabilities of the Corran Trust Board. This has now taken place. Corran will continue in its present form as a year 1 to 13 school for girls until the end of 2009 after which it will change to become St Kentigern School for Girls at Corran, catering for girls up to year 8. In effect it will become the girls prep school feeding St Kentigern College at Pakuranga. For the next two years the senior girls who have already started on Cambridge will continue to be tutored. In the meantime all existing Corran staff are now employed by St Kentigern under their former Corran employment agreements until the end of the year. All staff have their positions guaranteed until then. ISEA have been able to ensure that their sick leave and years of service will continue to be recognised.

Traumatic Time

It has been a very traumatic few weeks for the Corran staff. Though the primary staff will continue to be employed under the new school format next year, many of the secondary staff are now looking at becoming redundant at the end of this year. Fortunately the Corran collective negotiated by ISEA has a good redundancy agreement. This however is of small comfort.

Feelings of Anger

There has been considerable anger expressed towards the Corran Trust Board by the parents and Old Girls who feel that they should have been consulted. Further, Corran has had a long association with the Anglican church, through the local church, St Aidan's, Remuera along the road, which has been for many years their centre of worship. The local parish has provided chaplaincy support over those years. The Diocese was not consulted in any way before the decision was made to change to Presbyterian. There is a strong feeling that the Board have not been transparent to the school community and that they have let down the school community by changing the nature and ethos of the school.

ISEA involved

ISEA became involved from the day the announcement was made. We have met with the school management as well as the staff. We acknowledge that the Corran Chair kept us informed of the change on the day the announcement was made. Over the next few months we will be busy advising those who are likely to be made redundant, and to be renegotiating the employment agreements for teaching and support staff who are remaining.

Again this all highlights the importance of being part of a union who can provide support when events take a turn for the worse.

Is Honorary Membership for YOU? - see page 6



From The Chief Executive Officer

This year is proving to be a difficult one for teaching and non-teaching staff, and indeed for all workers, as far as employment issues are concerned. This situation is not entirely unexpected given the pre-election stated policies of the new government, but it is still disappointing.

Specialist Subject Diploma

Earlier this month we were formally notified by the new minister of Independent schools that Ministry of Education officials have decided "...to not extend enrolment in the Diploma" (of Specialist Subjects) to independent school teachers. We had viewed the promised extension to our teachers as a major step forward in the state recognising the value of this education sector. We were hopeful that this insight would extend to the new government and are disappointed that once again the Ministry appears to highly value only state teachers. Any of our members who have now been disadvantaged by this decision should contact ISEA.

Support Staff

There might be good news for our support staff whose conditions have been frozen when national negotiations stalled. ISEA supports the SFWU and NZEI's actions to improve support workers' pay and conditions and introduce an improved pay scale and we look forward to a successful outcome. Currently ISEA is developing key objectives within the independent school sector including advocating for improved support staff pay rates and conditions.

Changes to ERA

ISEA has also been advised of apparent government proposals to amend the Employment Relations Act. We will be monitoring the proposed employment changes very carefully and will be communicating with ISEA staff representatives and members. It is certainly an important area for ISEA and individual submissions once the Bill is before a select committee.

Finally, it has been disappointing to note that some independent school employers have criticised ISEA for being too active. As an independent organisation in its own right ISEA reserves the right to make media comment as it chooses. ISEA is not setting itself up as if we represent independent schools, we do not purport to represent the governance of independent schools and never have. But, we are working hard to increase the benefits that we can offer our members and we have conducted a major effort in particularly developing our profession association side.

Our organisation works hard to be professional in its approach and to best represent the independent school movement from the point of view of teachers and support staff. The employers' negative comments are probably a reflection of our recent successes in this area. However, we feel that it is important for ISEA to work positively and constructively with the employers, whilst respecting the points of view of each other.

Grant Gillon
Chief Executive Officer



From the Employment Officer's Casebook

We are delighted to be able to report that all our Hill Top members have now finally received their outstanding salary payments, as well as full payment of the redundancy compensation they were entitled to under their collective agreement.

This is a most pleasing outcome of a protracted and at times frustrating struggle to get them their dues. We had recourse to legal action on their behalf, and we believe this was effective in bringing about the payments at the earliest possible date.

Some comments from members:

"Yes great news, we were paid overnight."

"Thanks for all your hard work on our behalf and now we can all move on."

"Just letting you know the money has been paid into our bank accounts. Thank goodness it is all over and we can all move on. Thank you for all your hard work and enjoy your break."

"Just want to let you know we've received our final payment from Hill Top."

"This all happened because of your personal efforts and support, which I'm very thankful for."

Mairi Ferguson
Employment Officer

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

At every staff meeting Jill Brookes, our Administrator expresses frustration at the lack of communication about members who have left. Many schools have very effective systems for advising Jill, but others do seem to rely on mental telepathy!!!! There is a three part process:-

1. Individual members should let Jill know that he/she is moving on.
2. The school rep should advise Jill just to make sure, as well as reminding the Bursar.
3. The school Bursar/payroll person should also let Jill know of the adjustment to sub deductions paid and who has left/joined.

Please keep us informed of staff leaving and new members joining... particularly where collectives are concerned. It will save a considerable amount of time.

Thank you.

Have you visited our website yet?
www.isea.org.nz

Teachers Council Complaints

We are currently supporting a member through a complaint to the Teachers Council. This complaint arose through a disgruntled parent, and we are hopeful that it will be speedily resolved without further action from the Council beyond the initial assessment.

However, we note again how vitally important it is to keep documented evidence of everything you deal with. In this case, the school had a most impressive amount of documentation clearly minuted and dated, which we have been able to call on as supporting evidence. The teacher had also kept detailed notes of all incidents.

Any complaint forwarded to the Council – and complaints must go through the principal first, unless there is a strong reason for bypassing the principal – will automatically be investigated.

Complaints go in the first instance to the Complaints Assessment Committee, which examines all the documentation and decides whether to dismiss the complaint, investigate it further, or pass it on for further action by the Tribunal of the Council. At this point it is essential to ensure that all possible supporting information has been submitted. If the case is taken further, then probably legal support will be needed.

Mandatory Reporting.

If a teacher resigns, principals are required to report to the Teachers Council any disciplinary or competency process which has taken place within the last 12 months. This is regardless of whether there has been an agreed resolution or not. Once again, therefore, it is vital to collect, and retain, all evidence relating to such processes. If there is a disciplinary matter, it is important to have written comments from witnesses as well as diary entries relating to any incidents.

Remember:

- 1. Always document fully any incident you are uncomfortable with. If there were witnesses, get them to write what they observed.**
- 2. Never attend any meeting with management to discuss such incidents without a support person.**

Call on the union immediately if things escalate beyond what you expect.

Rest and Meal Breaks

Now that this legislation is in force, please remember:

If you work for a whole day (regardless of whether you are part-time or full-time) you must have a minimum of a 10 minute break and a 30 minute lunch break **without duties**.

The question of interval and lunch duties must be discussed with staff, and a suitable arrangement agreed on, which allows all staff to have their breaks. The PPTA is taking a strong line about non-contact periods. Their position is that these are timetabled periods for preparation and other professional purposes, and not to be used for duties.

While we agree there should be some 'give and take' in maintaining

appropriate supervision, we believe members should guard against this being all give and no take! There is already an ongoing problem of keeping those non-contacts free when the school would like to use them for relief when needed. Again, in our view one relief per teaching cycle might be acceptable, but no more.

Where staff do duties during lunch or morning tea, they must have an alternative time available for their break, which is within the range of morning tea or lunch time. Alternatively these duties may be split to allow breaks as well as duties, or else use made of non-teaching employees in this role. Management must treat this as a serious issue and come up with a way of dealing with it which is within the law.

Management can not call meetings in the lunch hour, unless staff have some time provided for their 30 minute break.

Staff may themselves decide to call a meeting with students for some purpose – that is their choice. However, don't forget students also need their break and time to eat!

Facilities for breastfeeding

I am sure it will be up to those wanting such facilities to raise the issue! The law now says that employers must provide suitable facilities for those who wish to breastfeed or express milk during their working day. We assume suitable will mean privacy and access to a washroom at the very least. We are keen to hear from anyone who has tested this requirement!

Mairi Ferguson

Education Amendment Bill 2009

An amendment bill is currently before the Education and Science Committee. The purpose is stated to amend the Education Act 1989 (the Act) to: introduce information matching between the New Zealand Teachers Council and the Ministry of Education to identify individuals teaching in schools without registration; and to reduce compliance costs relating to police vetting. It also has a small section that provides that the frequency of reviews of private schools by the Education Review Office will be on the same basis as reviews of State schools, rather than every 3 years (Part 1, Clause 15 amending Section 53A of the Education Act 1989, substituting subsection [9]).

Please access the relevant documents, including a copy of the Bill through our website [www.isea.org.nz] if you would like to make a submission or contact the Committee Secretariat, Education and Science, Parliament Buildings, Wellington, Phone: +64 4 817 9560, Fax: +64 4 499 0486. The committee requires 2 copies of each submission if made in writing. The closing date is 10th June 2009.

ISEA will be making a submission. If you wish to have your views considered for inclusion in the association's submission please contact the Chief Executive officer at ggillon@isea.org.nz before 1st June.

Have you visited our website yet?
www.isea.org.nz

International Symposium on Assessment for Learning, Queenstown, March 2009

ISEA sponsored Mel Ackerman of Medbury School to attend this conference. She found it very worthwhile and a summary of her impressions follows. The keynote speakers who were invited from Australia, Canada, UK, US, Europe as well as New Zealand covered a range of topics:-

- ◆ *How can curriculum goals and standards best be communicated and promoted through assessment practices?*
- ◆ *How can students best be encouraged to take personal responsibility for their learning?*
- ◆ *How can teachers promote positive learning experiences through their guidance and feedback?*
- ◆ *How can the learning power of assessment be promoted through pre service and in service educational experiences?*
- ◆ *How can national or state education policies best support and guide the use of assessment to promote learning?*

Mel has summarised the common themes as follows:

To be exposed to 'quality' work and to formative, evaluative experiences based on quality work. We need to turn students into assessors too. We also need to acknowledge the emotional dynamic of assessment.

Teachers need profound understanding of curriculum and assessment models. Teachers' assessment competence is the key. Teachers need:

Time

Challenge

Support

Principals who understand;

Principals who are 'permissive' rather than prescriptive.

For profound understanding priority must be placed upon professional development for teachers.

There are new modes of assessment with increased levels of complexity. We need to provide a success factor for teachers relating to new assessment methods, they need to believe they can do it. They need to be given time to practise following professional development.

Teachers' assessment competence is the key. Teachers need time, challenge, support and principals who understand the demands and nature of new assessment practices. Assessment literacy needs to be promoted through the system!

Good assessment conditions and systems need to exist in classrooms for formative assessment to work. It is not practical to eliminate systems all together so students' perceptions towards the

systems are important.

There is no quick fix. Policy makers need to invest in a long-term vision for change in assessment practices.

We need to help our communities understand that the nature of assessment has changed.

Communication is the key for change to take place. Communication to teachers, students, parents and the wider community.

Policy makers need to invest in a 'long term' vision for change in assessment practices.



Mel Ackerman

PROFESSIONAL GRANT - report from Michelle Colley, Wellesley College

My Account:

Who would be crazy enough to willingly go to a country where the temperatures can be -32 in winter and +32 in summer? Well that's exactly what I did last year – experiencing one of the worst winters on record.

With the support of staff and the Wellesley College Board of Trustees I took part in an International Teacher Exchange programme to Ottawa, Canada, swapping jobs, houses and even cars with Jessica Currie. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to meet with Jessica when I arrived in Ottawa and knew at once we were a good match and that she would fit in well at Wellesley.

The school year in Canada runs from September to July, which meant that I had the pleasure of teaching two different classes, the first a split Grade 2/3 class and then a Grade 2 class. Jack Donohue Public School was a dual track school, meaning students choose either English or French as their main instructional language. It was a large co-ed school with over 900 students.

One of the big changes for me was the concept of a "balanced school day", whereby rather than having a morning tea and lunch break they have two 45 minute breaks during the day, broken up into a 15 minute nutritional break and 30 minute recess. It was a "late start" school so the day began at 9.15 am and ended at 3.45 pm.

The students and staff adapted well to my accent – although my pronunciation of words with short vowels often got me into some interesting situations. The students got used to putting their rubbish in the bin and now know what jandals and togs are!

It was a truly memorable year. Canada is a beautiful country to travel around with an abundance of things to see and do, the people were friendly and more than welcoming. Not only has it helped me grow professionally, but it was a unique opportunity to experience another education system.

I would also like to thank ISEA for their support in accepting my application for a travel grant.

Jessica Currie's Account:

A change and a challenge with the opportunity to experience a

(Continued on page 5)

FROM THE PRESIDENT



The first part of this year has been exceptionally busy for the ISEA team. The busyness continues to show that members really do get value for money. So much has happened. Hill Top staff have been supported to the point that they have now been paid out in full; Corran School staff have been supported; several quite complex and time consuming employment issues have, or are in the process of, being dealt with, including a complaint to the Teachers Council by a parent; the Minister responsible for private school education has been visited; schools have been visited; to say nothing of the day to day organisation and administration.

Union Support Important

Belonging to a union is very much like taking out an insurance policy. You do it for peace of mind. If you don't you take a risk. Hardly a week goes by when we don't have an inquiry from a non member who has suddenly found that things have gone terribly wrong. They need advice, and very often legal advice and support. Yes you can save yourself from a few dollars a week subscription, but you just never know when you find yourself in a disciplinary situation, or find that your position has been restructured. We are here to provide that support but our duty is to our paid up members first, which means that our support to non members is very limited. If you are not a member we do encourage you to join. See your school representative or go on line to isea.org.nz to get further details

ISEA Staff Meetings

It would be great if you could all sit in on one of our staff meetings. I would like to think you would be impressed and surprised at the volume of work we cover. I meet regularly with the staff team, Grant, Mairi and Jill. The meetings chaired by Grant usually take a couple of hours. We review and discuss all the current issues and activities, review income and expenditure and plan ahead. We have become very effective and efficient.

ISEA Challenged

ISEA has been challenged by some in the independent school movement for speaking to the media, challenging our right to make comments. This attempt to control us is of concern. We will continue to speak to the media as is our right and we will continue to make comment as and where we see issues affect our members. The issue we were taken to task about was a response to a media inquiry to us about the impact of the economic situation on private schools.

NCEA Results

I applaud the NZQA for its new format in publishing NCEA results for schools. It is clear that the new format has met with general approval and provides a better way of measuring success rates from year to year. We would welcome any feedback on this issue.

In the meantime the days are shortening, the weather has taken a decided cooler position and the winter coughs and sneezes are upon us. All the best for the rest of the term. Remember that we are here to provide support. Encourage others to join us.

Bruce Owen

Jessica Currie's account *(Continued from page 4)*

different culture were the reasons I decided to embark on an international teaching exchange.

I'd heard lovely stories of New Zealand – the wonderful weather, friendly people, amazing scenery and a first rate education. When the opportunity arose to swap classrooms, cars and homes with Michelle Colley, I was thrilled. It was exactly what I'd wanted – a change from a co-educational public school to an independent boy's school and the challenge of uprooting myself for a year on my own.

I visited the Wellesley website, and after some exploring, knew I was meant to be there. It didn't take me long to fall in love with the city of Wellington, and Wellesley itself. The staff made me feel at home right away, inviting me for dinner, taking me to my first rugby game (the Sevens!) or teasing me about my ability to drive a manual car, on the 'wrong' side of the steep and often quite narrow roads.

The Junior team immediately took me on as one of their own and supported me the entire year through, especially as I complained about how cold I was all winter. Yes, I am Canadian, and yes it does get much colder over there, but seeing my breath indoors was quite foreign to me. Central heating is probably what I missed most!

It was great for me to come to a school that had such a wonderfully embedded philosophy and ran programmes that I'd not experienced, such as Inquiry Learning and Habits of the Mind. Working was only one part of the experience as I spent my holidays touring around this beautiful country. Each trip brought something more beautiful than the last.

This experience has been everything I'd hoped for and more, friendly people, amazing scenery, first rate education - and the weather, well, like they say, "Wellington's beautiful on a good day".

The members of ISEA are all covered by a \$1500 AD&D plus the option of an additional \$10,000 ADB for just \$2.



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INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Continuing our occasional series on news from the many international teachers organisations ISEA has links with.

Fiji

In our last issue, we mentioned how the Fijian president of the Council of Pacific Education and president of the Fijian Teachers Association, Mr Tevita Koroi, had been suspended from his job as a school principal because he had called for elections in his country and criticised the interim regime there. Now, Tevita has been sacked as school principal. Also in that unfortunate country, all civil servants over 55, including teachers, have had to retire as part of the government's 10% cut in civil service costs. It has been announced by the government that no "retired" teachers will be reappointed, but they claim this will not affect the quality of education being offered.

Iran

Iranian teachers have gone on strike over the failure of the government to implement the Pay Parity Bill, passed by parliament in 2007. This would guarantee improved pay and working conditions for teachers currently facing delays in payment of wages and pensions and declining working conditions. Striking in Iran is a dangerous activity with harassment, repression and imprisonment for unionists who have taken part in protests before.

Colombia

Colombian teachers, apart from dealing with the usual difficulties of education in third world countries, also face life-threatening challenges from the regular violence in their country. According to government figures, over half the unionists murdered in Colombia have been teachers. In February alone, two teachers were killed and another severely injured in targeted attacks.

HIV/AIDS

Education International [EI], the world organization for teachers to which ISEA is affiliated, has been working with the World Health Organisation to help fight HIV/AIDS and its affects in the education system in poorer countries. For example, in the Caprivi region of Namibia, which has an HIV rate of 32% of the population, EI supported the government and the Namibian National Teachers

Union in holding an Edu-Sector Health Day to help education sector employees to deal with HIV both for themselves and for their students.

England

The annual census of schools has shown a slight increase in numbers of students enrolled in England's independent schools, in spite of the recession. The percentage of students in private schools rose from 7.16% to 7.21%. while average fees increased nearly 6%.

Mark Cleaver



HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

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or retiring this year?**

**Don't forget to change your
membership category to that of
Honorary Member to keep your
benefits alive.**

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**Notify Jill Brookes, Administration
Officer today to ensure continuation of
access to all benefits.**

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