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ISTANZ
The Independent Schools Teachers'
Association of New Zealand Incorporated

ISTANZ NEWS

From the

Employment Officer's Casebook



PITFALLS FOR PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

A member recently contacted us for advice, when he received his timetable for the new year with no classes shown on it at all. He had been a part-time teacher in the school for some eight or nine years, with hours varying from year to year, but always an adequate timetable. Nothing was said to him about the apparent lack of classes for the following year, and so it was a considerable shock to receive a blank timetable.

We advised him that as he had been employed without break for so many years, he was a permanent employee. He therefore has the choice to take redundancy if no classes are forthcoming. The big risk is that maybe the school will find a class, but the hours would be so limited that it would not be worth accepting it. In this case the school might well argue that the job is still there, and he has chosen not to accept it.

This particular school has a good redundancy provision in its employment agreement, which provides adequate notice, and a compensation payment according to the years of service. It was therefore much more beneficial in this case to take

the redundancy, giving him time to look for an alternative position.

Part-time employees are considered to be permanent if they have been doing the same job (even with varying hours) for two years or more, even if the original appointment stated that it was a fixed term appointment. Unfortunately the negative part for part-timers is that there is usually no guarantee of hours from year to year. Some older letters of appointment may well contain a reference to particular hours, because they date from the time when all part-time positions were automatically fixed term positions and so whatever was in the letter of appointment referred only to the one year. Newer letters are likely to state that there is no guarantee of hours from year to year. However, if specific hours have been stated, then a change to this would be a change of appointment conditions, and in that case redundancy would be a possible alternative. Not all schools have good redundancy provisions though!

Mairi Ferguson
Employment Officer

CHANGE OF NAME SURVEY

Last year the National Executive resolved to proceed to change the name of the association to a more inclusive name. The proposal is that the title *Independent Schools Teachers' Association of New Zealand* be replaced with *Independent Schools Education Association [ISEA]*.

In recent years ISTANZ has been doing an increasing amount of union work with independent school employees who are support staff and not teachers. These people have no union to call on, are very often on much lower pay, and are therefore much more vulnerable. These employees include office staff, teachers' aides, lab technicians, grounds-people, librarians, matrons and other boarding house staff. We are not seeking to include cover for employees who have access to their own unions e.g. kitchen staff etc.

The reality is that ISTANZ is no longer just a union for teachers, though that will continue to be a primary focus for us. It is only fair and reasonable that our name reflects the diversity of membership.

If there is general agreement from members the National Executive will propose a change to the Rules at the 2008 AGM. Assuming the motion to change the name is passed there will be a transition period in 2008 with the new name being in full use in 2009.

The National Executive believes this to be an appropriate move to ensure that all employees in independent schools, who do not have access to another union, feel included.

By now members will have received a survey by email. Thanks to those who have already replied. Your Executive welcomes as many responses as possible so as to make an informed proposal. If you have not received a survey but wish to participate please email Jill Brookes - admin@istanz.org.nz.



FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

I have several goals that I am targeting this year, the most important for ISTANZ is to keep our membership rate increasing at a steady pace. Late last year, your Executive approved a plan for 2008 and we are starting to implement that already. I am aiming to visit as many schools as possible as part of this plan.

INFORMATION PACKS

You will recall that the 2007 review identified that ISTANZ had good communication with its members but there was a feeling that we had a lower than desired profile. In addition, union research has shown us that our members are great advocates of ISTANZ and are better placed to sign up new members. To assist this promotion, a small range of pamphlets has been produced and posted to each member inside a folder. Hopefully, you will have received your pack by now. I believe that if each member is fully aware of the benefits that ISTANZ has to offer then they are better informed advocates when approaching potential members. We have also posted packs to each principal at our schools and requested them to pass one on to each new employee. Employers at schools with collective contracts have legal obligations that employers at non-collective schools do not. However, I am hoping that all principals will recognise the benefits of their staff being fully informed of their right to join ISTANZ, and pass on the information. Already, we have seen positive responses from members and principals, including requests for additional packs.

I have also had a query about the cost of the membership information packs. There was no doubt that the existing ISTANZ publications needed revamping and we were lacking pamphlets in some important areas. My initial approach was to only provide membership packs to potential members and principals and schools. However, I became more and more convinced about the necessity for our existing members to be able to sell our message to new staff at schools. They can only feel confident about doing this if they are fully informed. The extra cost was almost negligible (apart from the postage) as the main cost was in the initial printing set up. Already, the benefits are proving its worth.

STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

Part of the publication programme was the development of a staff representative leaflet. Again, this pamphlet was designed to assist staff representatives in their tasks as well as inform members of the help staff representatives can provide. I also hope that this increased awareness will encourage more of our members to take on the role to help their colleagues. In addition, the Executive has approved an incentive package (a scaled membership fee rebate) for staff

representatives to try and compensate them for their time and commitment.

SCHOOL VISITS

Although, the membership packs have been posted to each member I am planning to continue with the school visits. I recognise that having queries addressed during a visit can be far more productive for members and potential members than them having to resort to written material or the web. I have developed a schedule that initially takes me to Auckland schools in term one and then other centres as the year progresses. This plan is flexible and, I can weave these into members' AGMs where possible or visit as separate meetings. But, the initial focus is on those schools where our numbers are smaller and the members might require extra support. It can be uncomfortable being a lone member or part of a small group at some schools. I want to ensure that these members have access to the same support as members at larger schools. That is not to say that the larger groups will be neglected but we are implementing a schedule to ensure that support can be provided in ways that best suit our members' positions. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like me to visit your school; gjillon@istanz.org.nz

LOBBYING

Of course, part of our profile raising activity includes professional liaison and political lobbying. This year we will build on our successful relationships with the PPTA, NZEI and CTU as well as professional education relationships. Already this year I have had one successful meeting with the new Minister of Education, Chris Carter. The Minister was interested in the briefing that I delivered on ISTANZ and our members' particular issues. I feel positive in developing the issues that I raised with him, particularly in the area of access to the Diploma of Specialist Subjects and Technology Teachers' Scholarships. The Minister recognised the interest of ISTANZ members in industrial and education policy issues and asked us to "*feel free to make contact with me on any issues you need assistance with*". I am confident that despite the Ministry of Education not having a bargaining relationship with us, unlike the state teacher unions, we will develop a positive relationship in areas of mutual interest.

PROFESSIONAL GRANT

On a final note, I am delighted to advise members that your Executive approved a professional grant to Michelle Colley of Wellesley College. Michelle is using the grant to assist with the travel costs of her exchange to Ottawa. I wish Michelle all the very best with the exchange and look forward to her sharing her experiences upon return next year.

I wish everyone all the very best for a successful and productive 2008 and I hope to meet you or renew acquaintances over the year.

Grant Gillon
Executive Officer



FROM THE PRESIDENT

A new year has begun. Already election politics suggest that it is going to be an interesting one. If you are a teacher or support staff person new to the independent school movement, welcome. If you are a teacher or support staff person who is not an ISTANZ member we invite you to join us. The benefits of doing so are worth it. To our existing members I pass on my best wishes for a positive and rewarding year.

RECRUITMENT OF MALE TEACHERS

There has been a call for an increase in the recruitment of 'real men' into the teaching profession. Whilst there will be much debate about what was intended by the statement 'real men', there is no question that there is a pressing need to find a way to encourage the recruitment of men into the teaching profession. I have been arguing and lobbying for some years on this issue. In fact a motion was passed to this effect at our 2007 AGM.

Research shows that students place their priority on good teachers and that it does not matter whether they are men or women. There is equally compelling research that shows that good male role models are important in our schools. Boys particularly need to be able to identify with good male role models.

ISTANZ will continue to lobby for the recruitment and retention of quality teachers in independent schools including male teachers and for safe conditions for them to work in.

ELECTION POLICIES

The mid teen years have become the target for election promises. Both major leaders have put forward plans to provide better support for the mid to late teen years. We will watch with interest as each party explains how their policies will be put in place, particularly if all students are to remain in some form of education until the age of 18.

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AND RECRUITMENT

ISTANZ is looking forward to a good year with continued membership growth. More schools are embracing collective agreements, some schools formerly, with their own in-house union, have resolved to join ISTANZ, and more support staff are taking advantage of what ISTANZ membership offers.

During the past few weeks our membership and information packs have been distributed to all our schools to members and non members alike and to support staff as well as teachers. Already this initiative has resulted in increased membership.

THE SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE

The school representative is a vital link in our communication chain. This year has seen the beginning of more

accountability from the school representative and as a consequence they have been given some membership fee concessions. By now your staff should have elected the school representative for the year. Do you know who yours is???? They should have distributed the membership packs to all staff and encouraged people to join. Many work hard distributing information including the membership packs to all staff and encourage people to join. Please let us know how we can assist your school representative provide a good service.

As the association continues to grow and embrace support staff as well as well as teachers there is a proposal on the table to change the name from ISTANZ to ISEA [The Independent Schools Education Association]. By the time you read this Newsletter a survey of members will have been distributed.

We look forward to a positive year. We will do our best to provide a good service to our members. We will keep you informed of professional issues as they arise. In the meantime remember that the staff of ISTANZ are at the end of a phone call or email to provide you with support or advice.

With best wishes.
Bruce Owen

CALTEX CARDPLUS – 'It's more than just a Fuelcard'

Over the last few months Cardplus have been working on adding value to its Fuelcard and are pleased to announce that the new 'Branded' Fuelcard includes a retail barcode that will allow members to access a range of discounts from selected nationwide retailers - these retailers will be announced as and when arrangements are finalised.

Effective from 1st March 2008 Cardplus Fuelcards can be used for all purchases at any Caltex / Challenge service station - previously the cards could only purchase fuel / diesel.

In addition to our discount voucher pack that is sent to all new Fuel Card customers we have confirmed a long term contract with The Listener Magazine... Each new Fuel Card customer will also receive 8 Free issues of The Listener magazine valued at \$31.00.

All ISTANZ members can apply via the Fuelcard website www.membercard.co.nz by logging on as an ISTANZ member.



KATHERINE RICH

Most readers will be aware that Katherine Rich has decided not to stand for Parliament for another session, putting her young family first. If National were to win the election Ms Rich would have been the most likely candidate for the position of Minister of Education.

In her role as Opposition Spokesperson for Education she has held a moderate role and rightly or wrongly depending on one's view, has resisted the call for bulk funding. She has been a very hardworking MP with a very sharp mind. People of her calibre and integrity are sorely needed in Parliament and she will be missed.

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Check our website - www.istanz.org.nz

Here you will find useful information about your Association, including employment advice. You will also find back copies of our Newsletters.

A subscription form for membership of ISTANZ is available for prospective members [teaching and support staff] to print, complete and post to the Administrator.

HAVE A LOOK and JOIN YOUR UNION!

PARENTS & EMAILS

There has been publicity in recent weeks concerning the access that parents have to teachers' emails. There is no question that emails can be a very quick, convenient and efficient means of communication when used appropriately. However, it is open to abuse and it is clear that some parents have exceeded reasonable boundaries in communication.

ISTANZ would advise that all schools should have a clear policy on the protocols for parents contacting teachers. Our strong advice is that parents should not be given the teachers' email contacts. Most schools have a phone in system for absences and appointments. Parents of primary and even intermediate school age, are frequently in contact with teachers as children are picked up and dropped off. Complaints should be referred to deans and senior staff to investigate and follow up.

ISTANZ believes that it is appropriate for schools to give clear instructions to parents on how to handle any problems or complaints. This should include advice on handling a 'cooling off' period. Teachers, particularly beginning teachers, should be given advice and support, on how to handle difficult parents. No teacher should be left in a situation of having to deal with an angry parent on their own.

Emails sent to a teacher in the heat of the moment by an angry parent should not be responded to immediately. In such a situation the email should be passed on to a senior staff member for action.

SECRETARY- TREASURER

According to the new Rules of the Association the former positions of Treasurer and National Secretary have been combined to form one position, that of **Secretary-Treasurer**. With the appointment of an Executive Officer to manage the affairs of our organisation the two positions in their former role have become redundant. The Secretary-Treasurer becomes more of a governance role, with the responsibility of Executive oversight of the day to day management of the Association.

The Executive at its November meeting confirmed the appointment of Malcolm Walker. Malcolm has been National Secretary for over 20 years now and with a membership of the Association which spans over thirty years. He is head of Biology at St Andrew's College, Christchurch. He has been a loyal and very supportive National Secretary representing the interests of our members on many occasions.

Eric Cockerton steps down from his now redundant role as Treasurer a position he has held for the past seven or more years. We thank him for his services and his particular attention to detail. He will continue as a member of the Executive. He is Assistant Principal, Director of Boarding at Dilworth School.