

FTA VOICE

A Publication of the Frontier Teacher's Association

April 2006

President's Message

Erin Williams

I hope the New Year has been kind to everyone. Spring Break is quickly approaching, as is the FTA election for the 2006/2007 school year. I strongly encourage those individuals that may have an interest in working on the Executive of the FTA to put their names forward.

As you may have read, the FTA passed a motion on December 3, 2005 to amend the Constitution, which would result in the realignment of the current Electoral Districts. Currently the FTA is composed of six Tables Officers including the President, Past President, President Designate, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer as well as ten Electoral District representatives. The schools that compose the current Electoral Districts are listed in Article 4.03 of the Constitution of the Frontier Teachers' Association.

The FTA is proposing to reduce the number of Electoral Districts from 10 to 5 and increase the number of persons elected in each Electoral District from 1 to 2. Should the amendment pass; the new Electoral Districts would be in line with the Area model currently existing in Frontier School Division. Therefore all schools in Area 1 would compose Electoral District 1, all schools in Area 2 would compose Electoral District 2 and so on.

The membership has expressed concern regarding the composition of the current

Electoral Districts due to the fact that they do not always feel connected with their Electoral District representatives. This is the rationale for the amendment. The FTA Executive felt that having Electoral District representatives who work in the same area of Frontier School Division as the individuals they represent might help to alleviate the aforementioned concern. In addition to this, there would be increased opportunities for the membership to communicate with their representatives face to face, at Area Professional Development Conferences, for example.

A change to the Constitution would first have to be passed by the membership of the Association and then approved by the Provincial Executive of the Manitoba Teachers' Society before going into effect. More detailed information regarding the proposed Constitutional changes will be sent to each worksite and the vote will be held on May 1, 2006. If you have any further questions regarding this issue please feel free to contact any member of the FTA Executive.

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The FTA Voice is a quarterly publication designed to inform and enlighten! Questions, concerns, comments and editorials should be directed to FTAVoice@hotmail.com

Important Workplace Health and Safety Reminders

Linda Smerch, WPHS Rep

1. All schools are required by legislation to have an active Workplace Health and Safety Committee. The make up of the committee is written up in the WPHS Handbook which was circulated to schools last year. This handbook has the most recent legislations and procedures for schools to follow.
2. Once the committee is established in the school, a listing of the members is to be posted in the staffroom, along with minutes of the regularly held meetings.
3. A minimum of four meetings must be held each year, and during working hours of the school day so all members can attend.
4. There shall be chairpersons on the committee, one from the employer's side and one from the worker's side.
5. Procedures to resolve concerns must be adhered to. Workers have specific responsibilities as described in the WPHS Act.

If schools did not get the most recent handbook sent out last year, please contact me.

Manitoba Teachers Society

Immediately Contact a MTS staff officer for advice if you are faced with allegation of abuse of assault.

1-800-262-8803 or 1-204-888-7961

Conference for Women

On January 26 & 27, 2006 a two day Conference for Women was held in Winnipeg. The opening session was focused around achieving your true potential and being the ultimate you. Two themes with four mini sessions were held.

Day One

The Empowered Woman

- Professional Assertiveness
- Tongue-Tied? Tips for Thinking on Your Feet
- Ten Ways to Finesse Your Communication Style
- How to Handle People Who Drive You Crazy

The Energized Woman

- Secrets to Keep Your Emotions in Check
- Ten Ways to Reignite Your Passion for Your Work
- Buried in Clutter? How to Dig Out
- How to Stay Up When Work Gets You Down

Day Two – Two Sessions were held:

- Taking the Dread Out of Conflict and Confrontation
- Guilt-Free Guide to Balancing Your Personal and Professional Priorities

Excellent strategies are suggested for each topic of the two day conference. **For copies of the complete conference package please feel free to call Edie at 357-2225 or fax to 357-2178.**

From the Collective Bargaining Chair

Scott Miller

Hello members, and to those that have completed the survey, thank you very much; for those that have not there is still time.

A few facts have developed from the survey to date: first, many teachers feel that the FTA executive is overloaded with administrators. As a personal note I would have to agree with that statement. When I became a member of the FTA executive I was a teacher. At that time, as now, many of the members of the executive were administrators, so I joined to make sure teachers had a voice.

Times change, people change and jobs change. For one reason or another I became a vice-principal. Did my belief in unionism change? NO! If anything, my opinions of unions have become stronger. The FTA executive is here to protect the rights of teachers. Will there be a time when we must protect a teacher and an administrator at the same time? Yes! Will this stop us from doing our job? NO! Teachers' rights must always be protected, and administrators are teachers.

Of course you could decide to run for the FTA executive and get rid of a few of these administrators. Most of the time, we have to ask people to join the executive because we have more positions than people.

“I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.”

“The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination”

- Albert Einstein

The second point goes along with the first point, why have unions? The FTA and the Collective Bargaining Committee are here to protect the rights of teachers and to develop more rights, improved wages, allowances and working conditions. Yes, most of these are protected by the laws of the day; however, without unions, when an employee sues the employer for mistreatment the employee must pay the bills, and lawyers are not cheap. Just like in health care, it is cheaper to have many paying the bill than one person paying the bill. The last point on this issue is simple; do you trust the employer to always protect your rights? I am a union man – the only person I trust to protect my rights is myself. My fathers line was simple but true, “respect is given; trust is earned.”

Another major point is the issue that some teachers in the FTA are paid more than other teachers. Sad but the statement is true. This of course was because of amalgamations, during the last round of negotiations with the 6 new schools entering the division. The Collective Bargaining Committee tried to make sure that all teachers received the same salaries, allowances and benefits. The division and the committee were able to agree to almost all salaries, allowances and benefits. The problem was the different classes – the committee was able to get \$500.00 added on to these classes along with the 3% for each year. However, this still means that some teachers in these amalgamated schools are receiving more pay than other teachers in the same schools. Yes, the committee will continue to work to make sure that all teachers in the division receive the same salaries, allowances and benefits.

Another more recent question was if other provincial employees receive the same isolation allowance as Frontier Teachers. The short answer is that I do not know. Working in Gillam, I know that Hydro employees receive better benefits for working in a northern community. However, for other employees I have no knowledge. The simple way to find out is to ask the person and check their isolation allowance with ours in the Collective Agreement. Does

our isolation allowance need an increase? The answer is yes.

There are many issues the committee will have to address in these negotiations, although I cannot address each issue in open forum please feel free to contact me. I am at school between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, 204-652 2193. At home I can be reached at 204-652 2316 or e-mail me your questions or concerns.

Important Reminder about Resignation Deadlines

As you were informed in our last FTA Voice, Manitoba Education changed the name of and some of details included in, both permanent and term teacher contracts. These changes will impact teachers newly hired after **December 18, 2004**. These teachers will be placed on one of two contracts:

- General contract
- Limited Term contract

These relate to the previous Form 2 and Form 2A contracts respectively. The primary change relates to the **notice period**. When teachers are resigning, notice must be received no later than April 30th, when the resignation is effective June 30. This is different from the

May 31st date which is expected from teachers hired previous to December 18, 2004.

It is very likely that there will be two applicable resignation dates within Frontier schools depending on when individual teachers have been hired. Please be aware of the type of contract you are on and when you must resign by if you wish to terminate your contract.

If you were hired AFTER Dec. 18th, 2004, your resignation deadline is APRIL 30th.

If you were hired BEFORE Dec. 18th, 2004, your resignation deadline is MAY 31st.

A Chemistry class is taking a chapter test, when a student raises his hand. The following discussion ensued:

Teacher: "Yes, You have a question?"

Student: "Yes, Could you come show me how to work out this problem...?"

Teacher: *laughs* "I'm sorry, but that would be cheating."

Student: "Well I am doing the same thing as her," Student points to the girl sitting next to him, "But I keep getting a different answer."

Teacher: "Huh. . . *sigh*." Walks to the student's desk, pulls out a red marker, and draws a large zero on the student's paper.

Student: "Hey! What's that for?"

Teacher: "You were cheating, and it just got you that zero."

Student: "I was not cheating!"

Teacher: "You just said that you were looking off her paper. That's cheating."

Student: "How was that cheating?! I was only checking my work!!"