

Editor: Carol Boyko
Gordon Bell High School
FAX: 783-9469

WTA Office - 831-7104/FAX - 837-9698
e-mail addresses: wta@wta.mb.ca
pres@wta.mb.ca — vpres@wta.mb.ca

The WTA NEWS

Coming Out of the Dark Ages

by: Dave Najdich, WTA President

If you have not heard, the WTA has once again initiated a web site (wta.mb.ca) to help better serve members of the Association.

This is our second attempt at going on-line. Many years ago the Association was one of the first locals to develop a web site and try to provide a range of information to the membership. It began with a lot of flourish and enthusiasm and ended with a site that was significantly out-of-date and lacked pizzazz. We took the site off-line and spent a great deal of time watching other local associations take a leadership role in the area of web site services.

Last year's Executive decided it was time for the WTA to venture into the 21st century and put the local on-line. The fact that many of our members now turn to the web first for information was one of the driving factors behind the rationale for this move. After much discussion and reviewing of other web sites, the content outline was finalized and a company was hired to develop the site.

What can you find at wta.mb.ca?

(Each of the bolded sections in the list below represents one of the areas you can visit on the site.)

- **Services** includes information about the Legal and Counselling programs.
- **WTA Documents** includes the Constitution, a policy book and reports.
- A copy of the current **Collective Agreement** (that includes salary information).
- **Forms:** many specific to the WTA, but probably the most important for individuals would be printable copies of the dental and extended health plan claim forms.
- A **Substitute Teacher** area that provides specific contract information for this group of members.
- **Benefits** information, including a printable Maternity/Parental/Adoptive Leave information package.
- The monthly **Newsletter**.
- An **FAQ** section that provides the answers to many of the most frequently asked questions.
- A **Links** section to a wide range of other important sites for members, including TRAF and Education and Certification in Russell, MB.
- A **Contact** area that provides information about the Association and the Executive.
- An Association **Calendar** that provides information about monthly meetings and events.

There are still a number of small changes to be made on the site, but all of the feedback to date has been very positive. Updating the site will become one of the on-going responsibilities of the Vice-President and will be done through our office.

This has been a large undertaking and I would like to thank the WTA Executive for their vision and feedback in the early planning stages. A special thank you needs to go to Joan, Glenda and Henry for their time and effort in working through the specific content and reviewing the various configurations of the site. A final thanks needs to be directed to the staff of "The FAQTORY" for their creativity and the development of the site.

Check out wta.mb.ca and tell us how we did!

Navigating the Collective Agreement

By: Joan Fransen, WTA Vice-President

The last while I have spent the majority of each day focusing on the provisions in our Collective Agreement. The Negotiations Committee is hard at work, considering proposal ideas you have submitted, debating issues and agreeing on wording that reflects the intent of addressing concerns in the best interest of WTA members. The efforts of the Committee have been what one might call “Front-end Loading.” We have worked frequently, in highly concentrated deliberations, early in the school year, to meet our deadlines. I appreciate the effort put forth by the Committee, as well as the members who have taken the time to call, e-mail, fax proposals and express their interests at school visits.

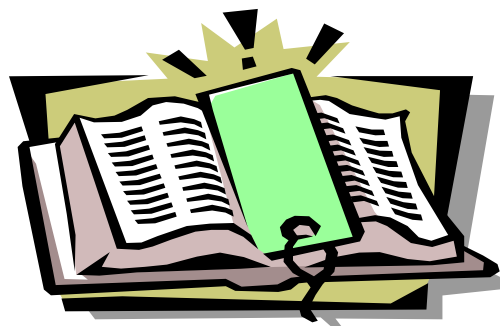
The Collective Agreement is a document that is important for each member to read. It can be read on-line at our website <http://www.wta.mb.ca> Each Council Representative also has a copy. Our Collective Agreement has evolved over time from a document that was written by lawyers (in “legalese”) to where it is now. The agreement has several parts. The main part has clauses or “articles” written in sections covering:

- A. Governance
- B. Determination of Salary/Rates
- C. Allowances and Rates
- D. Benefit Plans
- E. Working Conditions

Following the articles are several Memoranda of Agreements and Letters of Understanding. Finally, appended to the Collective Agreement is the Code of Rules and Regulations. All of these parts of the Collective Agreement have been negotiated and protect the interests of WTA members.

What follows in the physical document are some excerpted sections of The Winnipeg School Division Policy Manual. These are included for your convenience. They are NOT part of the Collective Agreement and have not been negotiated. The Board of Trustees develops policies. They are reviewed routinely and the Board makes changes. It is important to note the distinction between WSD Policy and the Collective Agreement. The policy does not require input or agreement by any employee group.

The Negotiations Committee looks forward to completing its first draft in the near future. At that point, it will be presented to the Executive for approval. It will be introduced to members in a Special Negotiations meeting prior to the February Council meeting. All members are encouraged to attend. More information will follow. Finally, Council Representatives will vote on the opening package at the March Council meeting.



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2009/2010 WTA EXECUTIVE ELECTION

The Executive Nominating & Elections Committee is calling for nominations for the 2009/2010 WTA Executive. If you are interested in running for a position on the Executive please contact the Association office at 831-7104 or Dee Smith, Chair of the Executive Nominating & Elections Committee at Principal Sparling School.

What is the WTA? The Winnipeg Teachers' Association represents all teachers, including substitutes, clinicians and lab assistants in The Winnipeg School Division. The Association negotiates for its members with the Winnipeg School Board. The WTA actively supports the well-being of all members through various committees such as Teacher Welfare, Professional Development and Public Relations.

Who can be an Executive member? Any member who indicates their willingness to run for election to the Executive when the call for nominations goes out. Candidates may be asked to speak at the Election Forum during the March WTA Council meeting. The new Executive year begins on June 15th.

What will I do if elected? All Executive members attend a retreat/workshop to become familiar with current issues and to determine (based on interest and experience) which committee they will Chair and/or sit on. There are committees which require less time and are ideal starting points for new members.

What is the time commitment for an Executive member? There are two Executive meetings per month. The meetings start at 4:30 PM and run between two to four hours (supper is served.) There is one Council meeting per month commencing at 6:30 PM. Committees meet at times determined by their mandate, or need, and can vary from two to three times per year to once a month.

What do I get out of it? Some rewards are extrinsic. Members are reimbursed for travel to Executive meetings and for dependent care. The opportunities for Professional Development are many and all are encouraged to take advantage of them. Substitutes are paid for by the Association when individuals attend PD opportunities.

Some rewards are intrinsic. Members of the Executive play an important role in achieving improvements in the working lives of teachers. They gain an insider's view of the politics; negotiations and goals of those involved in education throughout the Province. Executive members know that they have helped all their colleagues by serving their Professional Association.

Is that all? No. You will get to work with a group of fun-loving, hard-working, supportive people who may soon become a group of trusted friends.

For further information please contact either the Association office or Dee Smith.

WTA 2008/2009 Pre-Retirement Seminar REGISTRATION FORM

Applicant Data

First Name-----
Initial-----
Last NameSocial Insurance Number: ----- (*required to obtain data for you from TRAF*)

Home Address: ----- Postal Code: -----

Home Phone: ----- Work Phone: -----

Spouse or Partner (Full Name) -----

His/Her date of birth - Note: this information is required. -----
Month - Date - Year

Will your spouse/partner be attending? Yes [] No []

There is a charge of \$15.00 *per attendee* for materials, coffee, dinner, etc.***Please indicate below if you have any dietary restrictions or allergies:***Specify type of dietary restriction/allergy: -----
-----The seminars will take place on (please check ONE):

January 20, 2009 [] March 17, 2009 []

at McMaster House Arnett Auditorium, 191 Harcourt Street commencing at 5:00 PM

T.R.A.F. will provide you with a maximum of TWO printouts of retirement information based on possible retirement dates that you designate. Retirement dates may be milestones (e.g. age 65), or specific dates (e.g. June 2011). ***PLEASE NOTE: estimates will not be provided to anyone but the pension plan member.***-----
Retirement Date #1-----
Retirement Date #2

Confirmations will be sent to applicants. Please note that enrollment is limited (maximum of 80). Please apply early.

Cheques are payable to **The Winnipeg Teachers' Association**, payment (\$15.00 per attendee) is due with **the application**. Mail the application and cheques to the WTA office, 202-2639 Portage Avenue R3J 0P7. **Deadline for applications is one month prior to the date of the pre-retirement seminar.** If you have any questions please contact Glenda Shepherd, 831-7104.

Workplace Safety & Health

By: Melinda Guenther-Balodis, Chair, WTA Workplace Safety & Health Committee

I recently attended a Workplace Safety & Health (WSH) Committee training session hosted by The Winnipeg School Division (WSD). At the session there were a number of reminders and points made that I believe could be beneficial to you, our members.

Each building has a committee or individuals who are responsible for regular checks for safety and health concerns and these people report to the Central WSH Committee. You should know who these designated individuals are as they are the people you would report your concerns to. All WSH information should be posted on a bulletin board designated for WSH and it should be readily visible.

We discussed working alone conditions. Do you have a protocol that you are aware of for individuals working alone in your building? Someone in your building should be aware that you are in the building and a method of communicating to that person should be readily available.

All buildings have first aid kits and eye wash stations. Are you aware of the locations of the kits and stations?

The subject of ergonomics also came up. The Division is focusing presently on office staff, but this is an area that needs to be looked at for all staff, as WTA members do more of our work on computers.

Currently, the Division is targeting Science labs regarding safe storage of substances through WHMS training. I began to wonder what substances I should be looking at in our old Art room as well. The correct procedure to report any WSH concern is to go to your immediate supervisor first. If the concern is not addressed in a timely fashion, report to your building committee members. If the concern is not addressed then, in a timely fashion you can report it to the WSH officer, April Mell at amell@wsd1.org. The concern will be reported to the Central Committee and recommendations will be made to the appropriate departments.

The Division is currently putting their policy on-line. Some sections of the manual are currently available and the full document should be available within a few weeks. A safety manual will also be available on-line.

Please address any comments and concerns regarding WSH to the WTA office and they will forward them to the WTA WSH Committee.

BE SAFE!





Manulife Claim Forms etc.

Please be advised that if you require ManuLife claim forms they are available from:

- (a) for active and retired teachers - you can access a claim form from the Manulife web site
www.manulife.ca
- (b) for active teachers - your school office and/or the Division (775-0231)
- (c) for retired teachers - the WTA office, 202-2639 Portage Ave., R3J 0P7 (831-7104)
- (d) Manulife will send a claim form with their reimbursement

ManuLife requires you to put your address on ALL claim forms. If you have a change of address, please highlight it with an asterisk to draw attention to your new address.

Name changes:

- (a) for active teachers - inform Sue Lee, WSD Benefits Department (775-0231)
- (b) for retired teachers - inform Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund (TRAF - 949-0048)

Change in status i.e. single to family and vice versa: (Note: once you are enrolled in FAMILY coverage all dependents are automatically added to your history with ManuLife and adjudicated accordingly.)

- (a) for active teachers - inform Sue Lee c/o WSD Benefits Department
- (b) for retired teachers - **you may not change your status**, except in the event of the death of a spouse

DENTAL CLAIMS...

WTA members are reminded that **dental claims** are to be sent to the dental plan carrier - **Great-West Life Assurance**, **NOT** Manulife Financial. Manulife is the Extended Health Plan carrier **ONLY**.

Maternity/Parental Leave and the Dental Plan...

Please be advised that individuals who go on (or are currently on) Maternity/Parental Leave are now covered for the length of the leave 54 weeks.

The following electoral units were absent from the October 21, 2008 WTA Council meeting:

Champlain, COTE, Garden Grove, Gladstone, General Wolfe, Interdivisional Student Services, Isaac Brock, J.B. Mitchell, John M. King, King Edward, Lab Assistants, LaVerendrye, Luxton, Montrose, Mulvey, Niji Mahkawa, Norquay, Ralph Brown, Robert H. Smith, Sisler, Special Ed.—700 Elgin Ave., Stanley Knowles, Substitutes, Support Services, Tyndall Park, William Whyte, WAEC-700 Elgin Ave.

Quote of the Month

Discussion is an exchange of knowledge; argument an exchange of ignorance.

The views expressed in all articles in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Association.

Deadline for articles for the December Newsletter:

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

The Winnipeg Teachers' Association
is sponsoring a

PRIZE DRAW

For

The Manitoba Teachers' Society
Growing Minds Conference

Student, Citizenship, Community—Beyond the 3Rs Conference
(Citizenship & Character Education)

April 8th & 9th, 2009, Victoria Inn, Winnipeg, MB

The WTA is giving away twelve (12) free registrations to this conference. The Association WILL NOT cover the cost of registration if the winner of the draw has already paid for a spot.

- (a) *The draw is open to ALL WTA members (in good standing at the time of the draw.)*
- (b) *ONLY ONE application per member will be accepted.*
- (c) *The WTA will ONLY cover the cost of the conference registration; any other costs will be the responsibility of the individual.*
- (d) *Winners of the draw MUST attend the conference. They CANNOT give their registrations to other members. If you win a registration and then find that you are unable to attend the conference, call the WTA office immediately (831-7104) so we can arrange for an alternate to attend.*
- (e) ***Registrants must use this form!***

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF REGISTRATIONS IS
December 5, 2008—12:00 PM (Noon)

Please fill out the application below and FAX (837-9698) to the WTA office. The Draw will take place at the December 8, 2008 Council meeting. Draw winners will be notified via FAX after the December 8th draw.

Name: _____ School: _____

School Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____

School FAX: _____