

ECSSA News

Edmonton Catholic Support Staff Association

September/October 2007



Another summer has passed...another school year has begun. Another year filled with challenges, learning opportunities, new friendships, new adventures. ECSSA will have another busy year as well. We have a new executive and a new Collective Agreement. Always remember we are here to serve our members. If you need help interpreting the collective agreement, if you have a work conflict issue, if you need any information or guidance, please contact us. Please remember that we depend on you as well; for negotiations input, to keep us apprised if a member is ill or bereaved, but most of all to attend our meetings. We usually have two general meetings each year which last no longer than an hour or so. This is our venue to share information with you and more importantly, to hear your concerns. We need you there when we are having elections for our Executive, voting on By-Law changes, or ratification of agreements. In order to conduct the business of serving our members we must have quorum for our general meetings. We look forward to another year of service to our members. If you have any items you would like to see in this newsletter or articles you may want to share with other support staff, please contact ECSSA. We would be pleased to include them in our newsletter.

YAHOO!!! How COOL is this!!

ECSSA is always looking for ways to improve professional development opportunities for support staff so when Staff Development approached ECSSA with an innovative idea for a partnership to promote training and development for Support Staff, we were enthusiastic about the opportunity.

Creating this partnership means that we (ECSSA and Staff Development) are able to offer *Working with Children with Visual Impairments* – an introductory course for SNTAs who would like to develop foundation skills, knowledge and strategies in this area.

Creating this partnership also means:

Participating members don't need to utilize their education bursary because ECSSA has already made a significant financial contribution

Cost to the school is significantly reduced thanks to the financial contributions of ECSSA and Staff Development

Increased future opportunities for targeted training for other identified skill and knowledge needs (e.g., working with children with hearing impairments, strategies for working with students with autism, etc.)

We are all hopeful that this pilot partnership will lead to more, bigger and even better training and development opportunities for support staff. Stay tuned...

Thursday Early Dismissal

Many of our members have regularly scheduled time off on Thursday afternoons when there is an early dismissal at their school. When there is a Statutory holiday week, many schools extend the Thursday to a full day. If Thursday afternoon is your usual time off and you are requested to work that afternoon, you are to be paid for those additional hours or you can take time-in-lieu. The choice is yours whether you are paid or take time-in-lieu. In order to be paid for these additional hours you MUST submit time sheets. The district will cover the cost of the following dates, identified on the school calendar as district full days – no early dismissal (September 3rd, October 11, February 21 and May 22.). Any other occurrences will be charged to the site. An e-mail was sent to all school principals clarifying this practice.

September Pay

Starting September 1st there will be an additional 4% on your pay, due to the negotiated increase in our last round of negotiations. There will also be two additional days pay for August 29th and 30th. You may have also worked additional hours for school opening, and submitted time sheets. This makes your September pay a bit complicated. ECSSA advises that you check your pay advice every month, particularly when there is a change in your pay rate or you have submitted time sheets for additional hours worked.

Coffee Breaks and Hours of Work.

I was very happy to receive many calls with questions about the new language in our collective agreement regarding coffee breaks. This shows that our members are concerned about their rights and are willing to act on them. Article 7.2 of our collective agreement states:

“All employees shall be entitled to one (1) fifteen (15) minute paid rest period in each three and one half (3 1/2) hour daily shift worked. Employees working a daily shift of more than five (5) hours and up to seven (7) hours shall be entitled to two (2) fifteen (15) minute paid rest periods.”

These breaks are counted in your work time. It is up to your supervisor, with your input if appropriate, to schedule coverage for your breaks.

Hours of work are another area of concern. The easiest way to figure out your correct hours of work is to break your week and FTE (full time equivalency) into minutes.

1.0 FTE is based on 35 hours or 2100 minutes per week. If you are a 0.8 FTE it means that you must work 80% of those totals or 28 hours or 1680 minutes per week. Coffee breaks are included in those minutes, lunch breaks are not. Anytime spent supervising outside, waiting for the student's bus, staff meetings, doing paperwork, class clean-up, prep for the next day, or “any other duty as assigned” are counted in your minutes.



Did You Know? Overtime

Any overtime hours that you work must be authorized, in writing, by the supervisor, prior to being worked. You must exceed 35 hours per week to be eligible for time and one half pay for overtime. If a part time employee works extra hours, they would be paid at straight time unless they exceed 35 hours. It is the **employee's** choice whether they are paid or take time-in-lieu for overtime worked. You do not have to take time-in-lieu if you would prefer to be paid. If you do take time-in-lieu it should also be at time and one half for hours worked over 35 per week. For further information on overtime please see Article 8 of the ECSSA Collective Agreement.

Caring Report

We extend our sympathies and prayers to Norma Kloos of St. Mark on the loss of her sister. Donna Horne of Louis St. Laurent on the loss of her mother. Addy Dumanski of Holy Trinity on the passing of her mother-in-law. Patricia Lamash of St. Matthew on the passing of her husband. Joann Biron of J.H. Picard on the passing of her mother –in-law. Judy Levancic of St. Mark on the loss of her mother.

Elaine Adkin of Mother Teresa on the passing of her father-in-law.

Flowers and wishes for a speedy recovery were sent to Kathryn Hughes of St. Joe's, Joanne Howell of A.O.B., Lea Stefanyk of St. Brendan, Lynn Shaw-Frobel of St. Elizabeth and Colleen Pasay of the Service Centre.

Please remember to contact ECSSA whenever a support staff co-worker is ill or bereaved. The Caring Form is on our website in the newsletters folder at the bottom. We need all of the information filled out and then faxed to the contact information provided. We depend on our members to pass along this information.

Your New Executive

President—Cheryl Andrews

Vice President– Elaine Cardinal

Secretary—Maria Tronchin

Treasurer—Janice Bowman

Employer Liaison Officer—Danny Burrell

Your executive welcomes your comments and questions and invites you to visit our Board of Directors Meeting held the first Wednesday of every month. Please contact ECSSA at ecssa@shaw.ca for details.

Next Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, November 7

5:00 St. Joes High School

Something New this Year!

Watch for ECSSA coming to you this fall. We are going to set up four informal meetings around the city to give you information and to give you a chance to talk to us.

Details to be announced.

Grievances

Any time we have people working together, we might have conflict. When these conflicts are about issues covered by the collective agreement, we can call these conflicts “grievances”. Step one of the grievance procedure (Article 23) states: “the employee shall first seek to settle the dispute through discussion with the immediate supervisor within ten (10) working days following the date the employee first became aware of or reasonably should have become aware of the occurrence of the act causing the dispute.” This means the first, and best, step is to go to your supervisor and discuss the issue. Often we are uncomfortable going to our supervisor with a conflict, and that is where ECSSA can help you. Please do not hesitate to phone (456 ECSS) or email (ecssa@shaw.ca) with **any** questions or concerns that you may have. We can provide you with the knowledge and help you find the proper words to use when we need to educate our supervisors. Of the many phone calls and emails that ECSSA has received this school year, fourteen could be called grievances, and of those fourteen all were solved at the first step. And all were based on a lack of either communication between the employee and the supervisor, or a lack of knowledge of the collective agreement and its interpretation.

If you were one of those fourteen members, thank you for taking the time to be a responsible employee and protecting your rights.

Please remember that it is inappropriate to discuss union business during work hours or to use the school board’s ecsd email. Please direct your inquiries to 456 3277 or ecssa@shaw.ca and leave a home phone number or home email address.

Website Crashing.

Yikes! When moving the website from one service provider to another, glitches occurred. This resulted in the website (www.ecssa.ca) to stop working for some time. Thank you for all that notified me and thank you everyone for your continued patience.

With the many changes to ECSSA, there will be many changes to the information posted on the website. Again I ask for your patience as I, and the very patient people on help desks around the world, struggle to bring the website up to date.

Edmonton Catholic Support Staff Association

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Support Staff

The glue that holds it all together!!