

LAST BUT NOT LEAST...

As we officially move into the enforcement phase of negotiations, it is absolutely essential that we remain vigilant in the defense of our Collective Agreement and demand that the Board honour what was negotiated in good faith. Far too often administrators refer to the document as “your Collective Agreement” when dealing with members. It is not just the Union’s Collective Agreement it is in fact “our” Collective Agreement and it must be upheld by both the Union and the Board. You are entitled to every right within the Collective Agreement and it is up to every member to ensure that no clauses are violated or ignored. If you are aware of any Collective Agreement violation it must be reported to the Federation Office so that we can properly deal with the situation.

Over the course of the next few Chalk Talk articles, I am going to go over key sections of the Collective Agreement and explain what these sections mean to you as a Teacher. My sincere hope is that I will be able to clarify the mixed messages you may be receiving from your administration and be able to make informed decisions.

29.05 Regular Staff Meetings

Regular staff meetings shall be scheduled by the Principal in consultation with the teaching staff and upon consensus whenever possible. Regularly scheduled staff meetings shall be held no more than once per month on average. Each meeting shall be no more than 75 minutes in length. The dates of the regular staff meetings shall be set within the first month of the school year and communicated to all Teachers. Regularly scheduled staff meetings may include administrative/organizational issues, professional development, training and other matters aligned with school and board goals. Teachers are *expected* to attend regularly scheduled staff meetings. Teachers may submit agenda items to the Principal for consideration.

So what does Article 29.05 mean to a Teacher in the classroom?

- It means you have one regular staff meet -

ing per month which you are *expected* to attend. Your principal may schedule division meetings and PLC meetings and any other type of meeting they wish but they are strictly voluntary and you do not have to attend any of them.

- It means the dates for each monthly staff meeting (for the entire school year) must have been shared with all staff in September. There should have been some pre-planning into the times of these meetings so the dates should not be changing.



Mark Buff
Chief Negotiator

- It means all the scheduled staff meetings must end 75 minutes after they start, no exceptions. It is also our expectation that all staff meetings should be scheduled to begin soon (very soon) after the end of the instructional day and that all staff meetings would be over by 5:00 p.m., at the latest.

• It means Professional Development may occur at staff meetings. In fact your administrator can schedule anything they deem necessary, important or relevant during their 75 minute, monthly meeting.

- It means, while you may submit agenda items it in no way guarantees they will be considered or make it on the agenda for the meeting.

• It means you are *expected* (but not required) to attend. The word *expected* is the key to the entire clause and the greatest area of misunderstanding between Federation and the Board.

It is our belief, that if you as a professional have another obligation that you deem more important, more relevant or more pressing than what will be discussed, shared, or presented at a staff meeting then you have the right to not attend. You have the right to go over the agenda and decide if what is being discussed or presented is of any relevance to you. If you think it is useful then attend. If you do not see the usefulness of it then you are not forced to attend. The Board believes that *expected* is the same as required and that every teacher will be at every staff meeting, regardless of the relevance of what will be discussed.

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chalk talk

Vol. XII, No.1
NOVEMBER
2009

Editing/Layout
Joy Kovacs

Photography
SCETF
Executive

Printing -
SCETF Office



chalk talk

is a
publication of the

Simcoe County
Elementary
Teachers'
Federation

249 Saunders Rd.
Unit #3
Barrie, ON
L4N 9A3

Tel: (705) 728-2888
Fax: (705) 739-1269

contact@scetf.org
(re: *chalk talk*)

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The bottom line is that we have polar opposite views as to what the word *expected* means and that this disagreement goes beyond our Local and the Board. This is a fundamental disagreement between OPSBA and ETFO and one which will be solved through arbitration. That means a Teacher somewhere in the province will be disciplined over not attending a staff meeting and ETFO will fight the discipline and ultimately an arbitrator will rule on the meaning of the word *expected*. ETFO firmly

believes we are correct and will provide all the necessary support to any disciplined member.

If you as a professional decide that you will not be attending a staff meeting, then I would advise you to notify your administrator via email and in a very professional and polite manner, that you will not be attending the staff meeting and ask that you be provided with any information you may miss. You do not need to explain your absence but you are required to find out anything you may have missed.