

# Association Awareness

**\*\*Please note that throughout the document when “educational assistants” and “EAs” are mentioned, this also includes Youth Care Workers who fall under the EA umbrella\*\***

As an Association, the objectives are as follows:

- To assist in the promotion and advancement of education
- To safeguard and advance the interests of the educational assistant profession
- To promote and develop a fraternal spirit among educational assistants within the area served by this Association
- To cooperate with other educational assistants’ organizations having the same or like aims and objectives
- To help secure conditions for its members, which will make possible the best educational assistants services

## **DUES:**

*What they are, who pays them and why do we need them?*

Dues are regular payments that members of a group, organization, or association are required to pay. They help fund the operations, services, and benefits that the group provides.

The Association collects dues from current term and permanent educational assistants and youth care workers. Casual EAs do not pay dues.

The dues are \$10 bi-weekly. **There are no plans currently to increase the dues.** If there was a necessity to increase the dues, the process would start with a motion brought forward and discussions with the members at general meetings providing reasons for the increase. A vote by the members would then happen. We would never automatically increase dues without notice.

The Association uses these funds for the following:

- President’s salary (currently the working hours of this position are from 1pm-4pm Monday to Friday)
- Honorariums for the Executive positions
- Providing a professional development day for EAs. Eg: MTS-Day
- Providing a fund for EAs to access \$200 every two years for educational workshops or seminars directly related to our jobs. Eg: the Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children Conference
- Maintaining an office space to conduct the Association business. This is where the President works from everyday. It is also where the monthly Executive meetings are held. Member meetings with the President and/or legal representation are also held here.
- Paying for legal representation in Association matters. Eg: when the Association must file a grievance on behalf of an EA.
- Sending acknowledgements to EAs on life events. Eg: births, weddings, deaths

- Providing a substantial Recognition evening including a three course dinner and prizes for the members who attend. Acknowledgements include long service, retirements, contact reps and various committee members.
- Supporting two graduating high school students who are pursuing post-secondary studies, or students currently studying at a post-secondary institution (children or grandchildren) of current members every year with a \$500 scholarship each for post-secondary education.
- Providing detailed bi-monthly (every two months) reports at all general meetings. All expenses are broken down into different categories to maintain transparency and accountability. If a member wishes to see the financial records, they may make an appointment to see them at the office.

**It is important to note that 100% of the funds collected, stay in the Association accounts for its exclusive use.**

## **Legal Representation:**

*[Who is the lawyer and what does he do? How often are his services utilized? Can a new lawyer represent the Association?](#)*

The Association's current legal representative is Adrian Frost. His profile can be found at [tdslaw.com](http://tdslaw.com)

- practice is focused in the areas of labour, employment and human rights law.
- acts as counsel and provides advice on all aspects of employment and collective bargaining relationships, including employment agreements and employee manuals, terminations and wrongful dismissals.
- represents clients in collective bargaining negotiations, labour board proceedings, grievance arbitrations and human rights proceedings.
- Employed at TDS law firm
- has represented the Association for over 20 years
- files grievances when necessary on behalf of individual EAs in consultation with our President
- Provides additional advice for situations that individual EAs may be facing in their workplace through the help of the President
- Is the Association's professional negotiating partner when in negotiations with our division
- His services are utilized whenever the EA (with our President) and the employer (division) cannot come to an amicable solution that satisfies both parties. Because of this nature of individualism, it is impossible to predict how often in a year his services are needed. Funds are set aside every year to cover potential costs.
- He provides successful legal services for several EA Associations throughout the province, including negotiations
- Yes, the Association can change lawyers. Members can bring their inquiries about representation to the general meetings. Discussion would occur and a process of change can begin with member approval and a motion brought forth.

## **GENERAL MEETINGS:**

*[How often are they held, what is the purpose, who can attend, why are they currently only available in-person style?](#)*

- General meetings are held on the last Wednesday of the months of September, November, January, March and May (AGM meeting)

- Currently they start at 4:30pm and generally do not go past 6:00pm.
- Every member is always invited to attend to assist in the democratic process of having voice and choice. The agenda is sent to all EAs through email two weeks prior to the meetings.
- The purpose is to share information about what is happening in the division in relation to EA roles. The agenda is split into categories including but not limited to: the President's report, Treasurer's report, old business, new business and all the various committees.
- Motions that need to be discussed with the members are brought forth at these meetings.
- Any expenditures that are over \$300 are brought to the meetings for member approval.
- Currently the meetings are held in a school library. The messaging from our members that they would like an on-line option available. Different formats are being researched to reach more of the members.

## **EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

*Who are they, how are they appointed? How can we contact them?*

- Every Executive member is an active dues-paying member of our Association. They are in schools working the same jobs as other EAs. The only position that is half time EA is that of the President.
- The minimum time required to be elected or appointed into a position is two years working as an EA in the division.
- Each position is a two-year term. There currently is no limit on how many terms an EA can serve.
- The President's and Treasurer's positions require two consecutive years on the Executive before they can be considered for these positions.
- **All positions are elected by RETSD members.** If a position is appointed by acclamation, it means that there were no other nominees for that position. To qualify as a ballot election, there must be at least two people nominated for the same position.
- Elections are held every year in May at the AGM meeting. Calls for nominations are sent out at least one month prior to the meeting.
- In the rare event that an Executive member leaves their position, the Executive appoints a replacement for the duration of the current school year. The changes are announced to the membership, and that position will be elected again at the AGM regardless of when the original term ended.
- The duties of each executive member can be found at [reteaa.ca](http://reteaa.ca)
- Every year the President and the Vice President (with member approval) have the opportunity to attend the Mel Meyers conference. This conference's topics include a wide variety of individual topics that have to do with labour laws.
- There may also be other training opportunities that come up throughout the year for our Executive members to attend.
- Executive members have the same divisional email access as every other EA. The RETEAA office maintains a separate email address to send inquiries to. **Note that it is only the President that receives paid release time to conduct Association business which includes answering emails.** The other members would be responding outside of their working hours.

## **THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION**

*What is the role, what is the availability, how to contact them? Can it be a full-time position?*

- Plays an active role in advocating with divisional HR personnel on the membership's behalf
- Provides assistance and guidance to individual members facing conflicts within their school and at the divisional level
- Consults the lawyer when necessary
- Presides over all Executive and general meetings
- Works from the office from 1pm-4pm Monday to Friday
- Meets with members in schools, at Board Office or the office to discuss professional matters
- Is obligated to "keep current records of the President work hours" (as written in our Constitution)
- The President has access to email and a telephone and is expected to communicate with members needing assistance in a timely manner. Members may choose to connect with our President through either of these means.
- Researches and speaks with various insurance companies to find the best policies possible
- The potential to increase time in the office has been considered at general meetings. One option is to be split into two half-time positions (subject to division approval and member approval) to allow both the President and Vice-President to keep current with Association business. This method allows the Vice-President to step in seamlessly into the President's position, if necessary.

## **ADVOCATING FOR OUR MEMBERS**

*How is this done? What is the future of the Association? What do the contact reps do?*

- The members of the Executive have the same roles and responsibilities as their fellow EAs. We understand at the base level what the jobs entail and what members face everyday.
- Two representatives attend the divisional Workplace Health and Safety meetings.
- Liaison committee consists of three EAs. This committee meets with personnel from the division to assess, recommend, describe, discuss many situations that members face while working. Eg: Staff safety continues to affect the EAs everyday. We acknowledge that staff safety is at the top of the priority list for all EAs. At every meeting, examples of violent incidents are discussed. This is a slow process as difficulties are presented by the Association, HR must discuss it at their level, messaging must be passed to administrators and resource personnel and every case is different. The Association will continue to advocate for safer environments for all of EAs regardless of their assignments in the division. **Incident reports and emailing the President are two ways to keep the Executive and Liaison committee aware of what is happening in the schools.** Therefore specific examples of incidents can be discussed during the meetings.
- Negotiations committee consists of six EAs and the lawyer. This committee meets to discuss member needs and how they can be incorporated into the contract. Information is usually gathered through surveys and general meetings. Priorities are then tabulated and discussed with the lawyer as to how best present them to the division. The Association understands the frustration of not knowing what exactly is being negotiated. This could potentially change with new representation.
- Many changes have been made to protocols. One major change was to ensure that things like filing incident reports, evaluations, meetings with administrators, etc all happen within the paid workday of the EA.
- The Association pays for the President's half time salary to advocate on its behalf.

- It is impossible to predict what will happen in 10 years (as a member asked) due to fluctuating provincial funding, divisional mandates and the needs as EAs. It can be stated that when the Executive is fully committed to providing for their members, it only makes the Association stronger and more able to fulfill its roles and responsibilities.
- Each school is asked to provide an EA to be the contact person for all EAs in that building. Traditionally, it is someone who is familiar with the building and with the EA role. This person is willing to accept communication on behalf of the Association—Eg: Recognition Dinner information-- and provide a sort of mentorship to EAs new to their role. They can also be the liaison between the EA and the Association. They provide support in difficult situations and answer questions about procedures and fill out forms for acknowledgements. They also provide guidance and knowledge on how their school works: Eg—processes and procedures unique to their school or environment.

## **TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

### *What is available?*

- The Association provides a full day of professional development for our EAs on the same day that the teachers in the province have their MTS-PD day. This is planned by a committee of EAs from our division. Ideas come from the EAs themselves. Everyone is always welcome to join and contribute their time, talents and ideas.
- EAs are welcome to attend independent professional development opportunities (subject to approval from their administrator) and the Association will reimburse up to \$200 every two years.
- The division provides specific opportunities for professional development for EAs on in-service days. These days were designed for EAs to broaden their knowledge on various subjects.
- Student specific planning may include training in lifts and transfers, low arousal, CPR, Floor Time, device training, NVI, etc
- Other division based opportunities can be found under “Workshops” in Employee Connect.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### *Why transfers and layoffs happen, the diversity of the Executive*

- A number of factors determine the amount of EAs in each school: needs of students, funding available for each school, school administrator choice on how to utilize their funding
- Provincial funding continues to have a big impact on funding student needs.
- The Association understand how difficult it is to move schools when the transfer is not initiated by the EA. It is important to remember that even though an administrator at the school level has likely hired the EA, all staff are still employed by the division, regardless of what role they play in the division.
- The diversity of the Executive is based entirely on who accepts being nominated for any given position and then elected/acclaimed to their position. Over the years representation has come from Early, Middle and Senior Years as well as specialized positions such as Speech and Language and Life Skills. This diversity helps the Executive understand the different needs of each level. Experiences range from being an EA with only a few years in the job, to over 20 years, having different genders and different life experiences. All EAs who meet the criteria for nominee are welcome to put forth their own name for elections.

## **SUMMARY**

- All monies from dues STAY IN OUR ASSOCIATION FOR OUR MEMBERS
- Dues won't be raised without membership approval
- Members have a voice about Association finances. Every September, the proposed yearly budget is brought forth at the general meeting for discussion, amendment and approval.
- Contacting the Association is as simple as sending an email or phoning the office
- Provide a Recognition Dinner and acknowledgements throughout the year
- Provide a meaningful professional development day at no additional cost to members
- The Executive members work as EAs therefore are knowledgeable in the roles.
- The President's position exists to work **exclusively for our members**
- The Association strives to work alongside the division to help improve job satisfaction at the schools
- One specific lawyer represents the Association as needed to provide legal services. There is no rotating bank of unfamiliar lawyers.
- Provide bi-monthly meetings for members to attend
- The Executive is always working from the office and from home. Continued work examples include but certainly not limited to information (online meeting formats, finding better insurance, etc) build connections with other associations (multi-association meetings) and have monthly Executive meetings to address Association needs.