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President’s Message

BY: Curtis Dison

Our union elections are coming up again. This is when we elect the union leaders. You know how people often say, “What is FTA going to do about this?” The ‘FTA’ people are referring to is, often, these very leaders. I’m going to keep it real and lay some truth on the table. I’ve run my share of site elections. I know very well that people usually vote by name recognition alone. I’m guilty of it, too. If I don’t know who to vote for, I’m looking for someone I might know. Failing that, I turn to the rep, or someone next to me and say, “Who do I vote for? I don’t know these people.”

It’s not so much a criticism as it is a reflection on how we choose our leaders. But, honestly, it’s an important question, far more important than we might think. What do these people do, anyway? They run the union. They lead the union. And, many times, they are the ones doing the work of the union. That last fact is not ideal. But, it is a fact. So, when you are voting, you are putting those people into a position to make choices about your job and your life. The candidates are official now. I urge you to get to know them so you can make informed choices. These last two years have taught me how important it is to have people who will work hard and in good faith in these positions. Your votes put them in those positions.

Also, consider the responsibilities for each position. What kinds of duties and powers do these people have?

The easiest for me to answer is President since that’s my position. The president is the chief executive officer of the Executive Board. I run the Executive Board meetings and the Representative Council meetings. I am the official spokesperson for the Association. I have to be familiar with the governance documents of the FTA, CTA, and NEA. I appoint chairpersons and members of the committees (with the approval of the Exec. Board), especially important because I choose the Chairs of the Negotiations and Grievance Teams, for example. On top of all of that, I confer with members daily on the issues they face, take meetings with district leaders daily, and visit school sites weekly if not more often.

Also, I need to have a good familiarity with the contract because I get so many questions about it.

As you can imagine, the President wields a considerable amount of power to steer the direction of the FTA. The President is fully released from the classroom, as well.

Vice President is very busy as well. First, of course, they assist the president in carrying out the duties of that office. If the President is absent, the Vice President assumes their powers and duties. The VP also needs a solid working knowledge of the contract. They coordinate the calendar of the Association, and they work extensively with the committees at the direction of the President. In many ways, when you elect the President and Vice President, you are choosing the people who will speak for you, for all of us, and who set the tone for the Association.

The Secretary must keep careful record of the proceedings of meetings (minutes), and are responsible for the distribution of minutes, notices, and agendas for meetings. They also keep an accurate roster of membership of the Association and committees. They also carry on the correspondence pertaining to the affairs of the Association as directed by the President. As well, a Secretary should know the contract so they can accurately refer to articles and sections in minutes and other correspondence.

The Treasurer keeps track of all of the FTA’s money. They receive all funds belonging to us, pay out funds as ordered by the President, and provide a written financial report to Rep Council and Exec Board. They are responsible for the annual audit of the Association, reporting the results to the members, and they must submit reports to CTA, NEA, and other agencies as required by law. A good treasurer would also have a firm grasp of the contract so they can make sure expenditures match Association goals, plus it helps assist members.

The Executive Board is comprised of the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, plus the Elementary, Middle School, and High School directors. Together, they coordinate the activities of the Association. They are the ones who decide what FTA is going to do about something. They act for the Rep Council when school is not in session, direct the Negotiations Team, approve member conference requests, approve social activities, approve office staff contracts, and member incentives. Directors are elected to represent members based on membership numbers. We have four Elementary School Directors and two each of Middle and High School Directors. Directors should be known to the people they represent. They should visit the sites and make contact with reps and members. They should communicate to the members via email or similar and they should be a point of contact for site representatives. Clearly, they should also know the contract so they can help others find the answers they need.

Your vote counts, here more than anywhere. There are almost 2000 members of the FTA and of that, half may vote. Your vote may make the difference. Make your choice carefully.
The other day I was talking with a colleague and I stated that this is my 23rd year of teaching. I have been a teacher in Fontana for 23 years. As I say it I am amazed.

It seems like it was just yesterday that I was recruited from Minnesota during class size reduction in 1996. Oops – sorry – Minnesoooo-ta. Oh yeah. Youbetcha. Dochaknow. One movie and everyone thinks we all talk like that.

We do not, but we do have a dialect. It is pop, not soda. It is a hot dish, not a casserole. And it is Duck, Duck, Gray Duck, not Duck, Duck, Goose.

Anyway, 23 years. I am a great teacher. I do not mind saying that because after 23 years I would certainly hope I am a great teacher. Do I need upgrades and improvements? Of course. I am continually seeking and finding ways to become better.

Being great is not the end of the line. And, I will admit that there is part of me that wishes I could say I am the only great teacher in Fontana. But that is not true. Not even close.

I have worked with and have met some great teachers. I have worked with and have met some amazing teachers. I continue to work with and continue to meet some utterly fantastic teachers.

I am constantly amazed at the different strengths each individual teacher brings with them. We each bring a variety of abilities to our job. We stand together so different, and yet we all have a common thread running through us. We care tremendously about each of our students. We want each and every one of them to be successful. Successful, not by the measurement of a test, but successful based on each individual students’ abilities.

We worry about them. We stress over them. We simply cannot turn it off. Each of us brings our strengths into the classroom to ensure success.

As my career continues, my goal is to continually grow – and never stop caring, because great is not the end of the line.

“The best thing about being a teacher is that it matters. The hardest thing about being a teacher is that it matters everyday.”

-Todd Whitaker
Tax Information
2018 Union Dues

Full Time: $1,293.80
Part Time: $646.90

I drank pop, not soda growing up
From a glass bottle, not a cup
Snow days, oh yes we had those
And temperatures in the negative as lows

Walked up hill to school both ways
Oh those where some great days
But now I am here in California’s sun
With warm weather and year round fun

Drinking soda, without fear
Of cold, snowy weather, it’s only near
Up the “hill” or mountain in my mind
Close enough to me now I find

So no snow days for us to get a break
But spring vacation is close, piece of cake
And then the end of the year right there
Well, around the corner, to be fair
FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION IS A CIVIL RIGHT
Moved Recently? Name Change?

Please email the F.T.A. office at: ftaoffice@fontanateachers.org

with your updated membership information.

Thank you!
FYI

TGIF DATES
March 8
April 12
May 3
Pancho Villa’s

REP COUNCIL
March 13
April 10
May 8
FTA Office

MOVIE TICKETS
$10.50
$9.00
$8.00
Cadillac
Regal Entertainment Group
Harkins Theatres

FTA OFFICE
HOURS
MONDAY-FRIDAY
8:30am-4:30pm

Fontana Teachers Association
16850 Seville Ave.
Fontana, CA 92335
ftaoffice@fontanateachers.org
Phone (909) 829-0940
A grievance is a process that is spelled out by our collective bargaining agreement (a.k.a. the contract) and is used when there is a misapplication, misinterpretation, or a violation of the contract. Grievance is covered in Article 17.

If you think you have a grievance, then the first thing you should do is get a copy of the contract and find the article that covers your issue. The very first step of the grievance process is to state the portion of the contract that was violated. Of course, you know that the FTA website (www.fontanateachers.org) has the entire contract available online and it’s broken down by article, so you don’t have to download the entire thing just to look something up. So cool!

If you don’t have a contract handy, or access to the Internet, then another way to think about it is to ask yourself a question. Is this directly related to my wages, benefits, work day, or work conditions? Those are the things that we can negotiate with the district. If it’s not directly related to those, then it probably can’t be grieved.

Examples of things that can be grieved:
- Money and time issues (Article 25 or 14)
- Loss of prep period (Article 14 Workday)
- Class sizes (Article 15)
- Leaves of absence (Article 12)
- Transfers and reassignments (Article 8)
- 1/6th positions or additional assignments (Article 14)
- Evaluation problems (Article 9)
- Discipline (Article 19 Just Cause)

A rep can certainly help you look-through the contract and read the articles, but there is honestly no substitute for reading the contract. You really should. People like to opine that “What you don’t know can’t hurt you.” If they are union members, not knowing the contract will hurt them one day.

You don’t have to get the exact Article, section, and subsection that was violated, but you do need to know what was violated. It may seem obvious to some, but if you can’t find it in the contract, then you probably can’t grieve it. For example, if it is already against the law, it probably isn’t going to be a grievance. While there are articles covering Safety and Non-Discrimination, most issues teachers face like that are probably better handled through the courts or other legal proceedings.

Your site or building union representative would be the first person you talk to about a grievances. They can help you find the article violated and advise you how to move further. Additionally, a site rep can even hold the first meeting of the grievance process by requesting to meet with admin to discuss the issue with you present. This may be seen as an informal grievance meeting. (If that happens, be aware you only have 5 (five) business days to proceed to the 1st Level of the Grievance so get in contact with the Grievance Team immediately if you do this!)

Otherwise, the site rep can help you contact the Grievance Team, or the FTA Office, to move forward. Important! Please note that the contract states we only have 20 (twenty) business days to begin the grievance process once a violation has occurred. Do not hesitate to make contact if you know the contract has been violated. Missing the timeline means the grievance cannot be pursued. It’s not negotiable.

In order to prepare for your meeting with the Grievance Team, gather evidence. Grievance are won by facts, not feelings. Documents that memorialize conversations, emails, memos, and similar are very helpful. Notes taken at the time can also often be used. But, remember that we have to prove the facts of the grievance in order to win.

Know your contract. At very least, pick it up and flip through an article and skim it to become familiar with some parts of it. I’d start with Article 14. It’s the longest, by far, but that’s because Workday defines so many parts of our employment. So, it’s a good place to start. We are all the union, so by knowing the contract, you become a better union member and may even be able to help out some of your fellow members! Which is really what being a union member is all about.
UNION CODE OF CONDUCT

• I will not criticize any union colleague except to the individual directly.
• If any union colleague is being criticized in my presence, I will confront the criticism and ask that it stop.
• I will not participate in any conversations with management that criticize, or negativity speculate about any union colleague.
• I will settle my differences with colleagues within the union.
• I will engage in debate, offer others every opportunity for debate and respect the minority viewpoints, but I will observe and support the majority mandate of the union.

GRIEVANCE HOTLINE

Think you have experienced a contract violation? You can text the Grievance Hotline to get more information!

Just text: 909.278.7130 with your name, school site, position, and your question. A Grievance Team member will respond as soon as possible.
Member Benefits

LEARN ABOUT YOUR MEMBER BENEFITS at www.CTAMemberBenefits.org

Save Money while traveling, dining out, purchasing apparel, or buying school supplies, at over 350,000 discounts nationwide through the Access to Savings Program.

www.CTAMemberBenefits.org/Access

Auto and Home/Renters Insurance
Provided by California Casualty
Preferred Rates, Educator Benefits, Exceptional Service, Generous Discounts
For your quick quote, visit:
www.CTAMemberBenefits.org/calcas

Protect Your Loved Ones and Income With Life & Disability Insurance From The Standard
www.CTAMemberBenefits.org/Standard

Your Federal Student Loan Forgiveness Resource
www.CTAMemberBenefits.org/studentloans

We want you to have a long and happy retirement
CTA-endorsed 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan:
Low fees and fiduciary standards 650.552.5200
www.CTAMemberBenefits.org/rsp

CTA Credit Union
New $150 Account Bonus & Auto/Home Loan Discounts
www.CTAMemberBenefits.org/Provident

This is a brief description of the CTA and NEA Member Benefit Programs. All benefits and eligibility requirements are subject to the terms of the plan certificates, Summary Plan Descriptions, or custodial account agreement. The benefits described herein may be modified or terminated by CTA and NEA Member Benefits at any time.

CTA MEMBER BENEFITS
1785 Murchison Drive
Burlingame, CA 94010
(650) 552-5200
www.CTAMemberBenefits.org
member_benefits@cta.org

MBPOST0618

NEA MEMBER BENEFITS
900 Clopper Road, Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878-1356
(800) 637-4636
www.neamb.com
ask_us@neamb.com

This is a brief description of the CTA and NEA Member Benefit Programs. All benefits and eligibility requirements are subject to the terms of the plan certificates, Summary Plan Descriptions, or custodial account agreement. The benefits described herein may be modified or terminated by CTA and NEA Member Benefits at any time.

CTA MEMBER BENEFITS
1785 Murchison Drive
Burlingame, CA 94010
(650) 552-5200
www.CTAMemberBenefits.org
member_benefits@cta.org

MBPOST0618

NEA MEMBER BENEFITS
900 Clopper Road, Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878-1356
(800) 637-4636
www.neamb.com
ask_us@neamb.com
F.T.A. ELECTION TIMELINE

BALLOTS DUE BY 4PM ON 2/27/19
AT THE F.T.A. OFFICE

REPS: PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN THE OUTER ENVELOPE

CAMPAIGNING................................. 2/4/19-2/27/19

PREPARATION OF BALLOTS.............. 2/4/19-2/8/19

DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS...... 2/13/19

VOTING.................................................. 2/14/19-2/27/19

COUNTING OF BALLOTS................. 2/27/19

ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS...... 2/28/19

CHALLENGE DEADLINE............... 3/14/19
FONTANA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Professional Improvement Grant

These mini grants can be used for the following:

• Help towards paying current tuition
• One month of your school loan payment
• Attending an educational conference/workshop/training/class (in person or online)
• Professional improvement materials, such as professional books, subscriptions to educational journals or institutions
• Other: detailed explanation and documentation will be needed to demonstrate relevancy to professional growth

F.T.A will be awarding small grants for F.T.A. members to subsidize their professional improvement.

Please go to FONTANATEACHERS.ORG to download the application and requirements.

Grant monies will not be paid directly to member. They will be paid to the company or institution.

All required information/documentation and/or copies must be attached to application in order for your application to be considered.

Limited number of grants available.

$$_$$$$$$_
ADVERTISE IN THE FONTANAN

OPTION 1 $50
ONE MONTH
(MARCH, APRIL, OR MAY)
HALF PAGE IN FONTANAN
FIVE FACEBOOK POSTS
GRAPHIC DESIGN INCLUDED

OPTION 2 $100
ONE MONTH
(MARCH, APRIL, OR MAY)
FULL PAGE IN FONTANAN
FIVE FACEBOOK POSTS
GRAPHIC DESIGN INCLUDED

OPTION 3 $150
THREE MONTHS
(MARCH, APRIL, & MAY)
HALF PAGE IN FONTANAN
TWELVE FACEBOOK POSTS
GRAPHIC DESIGN INCLUDED

OPTION 4 $300
THREE MONTHS
(MARCH, APRIL, & MAY)
FULL PAGE IN FONTANAN
TWENTY-FIVE FACEBOOK POSTS
GRAPHIC DESIGN INCLUDED

THE FONTANAN NEWSLETTER REACHES APPROXIMATELY 1900 FONTANA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION MEMBERS EACH MONTH.

PLEASE CONTACT SOCIAL@FONTANATEACHERS.ORG

SAMPLE

SEND A SPECIAL MESSAGE, BIRTHDAY GREETING, OR CONGRATULATIONS SHOUT OUT IN THE FONTANAN!

$25 FOR ONE MONTH
(MARCH, APRIL, OR MAY)
QUARTER PAGE IN FONTANAN
ONE FACEBOOK POST
GRAPHIC DESIGN INCLUDED

CUSTOM DESIGNS AND WORDING AVAILABLE.

HAPPY RETIREMENT!
JANE DOE

As you move forward into the retired life, remember the legacy of achievement you left behind! You have encouraged us all to work harder and be valuable members of the team.

FROM YOUR CO-WORKERS AT ABC SCHOOL

1/4 PAGE