

PPTA Members and Extra-Curricular Activities: Guidelines

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The purpose of these guidelines is to clarify the obligations PPTA members have in relation to extra-curricular issues. As far as possible, the guidelines endeavour to support teachers who are willingly and actively engaged in extra-curricular activities and, as well, those who wish to have no part in it.

These guidelines outline teachers' rights but also suggest positive ways schools can encourage and support extra-curricular activities.

The long-term solution for extra-curricular demand is additional staffing and resourcing. However, in the interim, branches can encourage schools to establish supportive practice around extra-curricular activities.

PPTA represents the professional and industrial interests some 18,000 secondary teachers in state secondary, area, manual training and intermediate schools, as well as tutors in community education institutions, alternative education and activity centres, and principals in secondary and area schools. More than 95% of eligible teachers choose to belong to the Association.

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1. Introduction

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2. Background

Extra-curricular activities have always been regarded as part of the culture of secondary schools. Many teachers relish the opportunity to act as sports coaches, drama producers, international tour guides and musical directors and all teachers accept the benefits of being able to engage with students in less formal settings than the classroom.

If teachers appear less willing to contribute to extra curricular activities than in the past it is for good reason. The establishment of a competitive regime amongst secondary schools over the last decades has resulted in schools endeavouring to expand the range and extent of extra-curricular activities for marketing purposes as well as for other reasons. The result has been pressure on teachers to increase their extra-curricular participation at the same time as curriculum, administrative and assessment demands and staffing cuts have so increased the teaching workload that teachers find themselves with neither the time nor the energy for other activities.

3. Extra Curricular/Co-curricular

One example of the subtle transformation of voluntary extra-curricular activities into an imposed expectation, the phrase “applicants are expected to participate in the co-curricular activities of the school” began to appear in job advertisements.

For clarification, the distinction between the two is as follows:

Co-curricular:

Activities that arise from curriculum requirements that involve extension beyond the classroom.

Extra-curricular:

Optional activities that involve teacher participation outside of normal school hours.

4. Appointments

The practice of tagging advertisements with extra curricular obligations (as opposed to genuine co-curricular requirements in some subject areas) is a breach of the PPTA code of ethics which states:

“...it shall be held unethical for a teacher (a) to compel any other teacher to carry out extra-curricular activities”

However, teachers are vulnerable when applying for jobs and often not in a position to object to presumptions being made about their availability for additional work. This is particularly the case for beginning teachers who may not have the confidence to indicate that they feel they need to concentrate their energies on becoming effective in the classroom rather than on the sports field or the stage.

The strategy of using job advertisements to compel teachers to undertake extra-curricular activities may be counter-productive as shortages mean that teachers often have a choice of jobs. Schools that encourage teachers to find a work/life balance may find it easier to recruit teachers. At the same time, teachers who feel compelled to undertake extra-curricular activity are less likely to be happy in that school and more likely to leave.

Lastly, if an extra-curricular activity obligation is imposed as a condition of employment, such as the requirement to take a language class on an international trip in the holidays, the school is obliged to pay the teachers' costs. Costs incurred by teachers as a result of an extra-curricular activity that they have chosen to do (eg. A weekend ski-trip involving students) cannot normally be charged to the employer.¹

Branches may wish to monitor job advertisements, share this advice with BOTs and principals and if necessary raise this issue with school leadership.

5. Job Descriptions: Legal Responsibilities

5.1 The state does not fund schools for extra-curricular activity and these activities are not defined as part of the paid work.

PPTA policy has always been that teachers should not agree to the inclusion of extra-curricular activities in their job descriptions because they then cease to be voluntary. This is in contrast to co-curricular activities (ie the Head of Science may organise the Science Fair, the teacher in charge of Drama may produce a play every year as part of senior performance for assessment requirements; or the music teacher have a class performance with rehearsals and/or performances that may take place outside timetabled classes; and senior Geography teachers may be expected to organise and participate in field trips.)

The exception with respect to extra-curricular activities is if the teacher is paid (ie receives a unit) to undertake the activities.

¹ There are risks for teachers in arranging informal activities. See 4. Health and Safety

5.2 Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement

If an activity is done outside school hours and is unpaid then the employer cannot legitimately require teachers to do it. This position is reinforced by the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement which notes that (cl.5.1(d)):

"...the hours of work of individual teachers are influenced by factors such as: ...The extent to which individual teachers may participate in the extra-curricular programmes of the school."

The word 'may', in a legal sense, also implies 'may not' so indicates that participation is discretionary.

5.3 The Professional Standards

The dimension in the professional standards which refers to the "contribution to wider school activities" needs to be seen in the same context. "Wider activities" cannot be extended to include unpaid activities in the teachers' own time. The Ministry of Education Guide to the application of the professional standards ([Teacher Performance Management](#), October, 1999) confirms this when it refers to co-curricular not extra-curricular activities in its indicators for contribution to wider school activities.

6. Health and Safety

Teachers responsible for students in situations outside the classroom need to familiarise themselves with health and safety requirements which may be read on the Ministry of Education website. (www.tki.org.nz/e/community/eotc) It notes that the legal framework requires boards to have a health and safety policy with a particular reference to EOTC. It states:

- Boards are required to ensure staff are competent, have appropriate safety training, and that adequate facilities and resources are available to meet the stated procedures.
- Staff must comply with policies set by the board. The clearest way to do this is for the board to approve procedures that comply with the policy.
- It is important that staff are aware of and understand the policies and adhere to the procedures.
- If a teacher deviates from school policy or procedures, they could be held responsible should anything go wrong.

If teachers feel pressured to participate in activities that they feel may not meet the health and safety requirements, especially in relation to teacher/student ratios and the use of adult supervisors who lack appropriate safety training, they should record their concerns in writing and give them to the principal. It would also be wise to contact the local field office.

Note: Teachers' responsibility for student safety and well-being does not end because the activity has been privately arranged. PPTA's advice to teachers is not to engage in activities with students that are not sanctioned by the school.

7. Good Practice Summary

The long-term solution for extra-curricular demand is additional staffing and resourcing. However, in the interim, branches can encourage schools to establish supportive practice around extra-curricular activities. Approaches used by schools include the following:

- (1) Providing units for those engaged in extra-curricular activities. (In some cases outside bodies like the Rugby Union will fund the cost of a unit).
- (2) Increasing the hours of paid sports and arts co-ordinators so they can take over the administrative tasks.
- (3) Ensuring units for extra-curricular activities are dispersed fairly across sports and cultural activities.
- (4) Providing time for teachers who take extra-curricular activities in their own time. For example a non-contact period prior to or after lunch for a teacher who takes choir, orchestra or sports practices at lunchtime. P.E. teachers also need recognition of the extra load they carry outside school hours.
- (5) Providing relief cover for school trips so other teachers are not prevailed upon.
- (6) Timetabling an "activity period" when teachers can organise practices and allowing students not engaged in activities to go home.
- (7) Using community volunteers for coaching.
- (8) Form a school/parent club for major activities so the workload is shared.
- (9) It is crucial that teachers are reimbursed for all costs associated with extra-curricular activities (travel, meals, etc) and that any equipment required is supplied in good condition. Branches have a key role in ensuring all members are aware of their entitlements as listed in the agreement (STCA part 7)
- (10) Releasing teachers who undertake extra-curricular activities from doing duty. Note: some schools employ adults to do duty so teachers are not required to do it at all.
- (11) Ensure that staff are able to renegotiate their commitment to extra-curricular activities on a regular basis (rather than assume that they will maintain that commitment in perpetuity).
- (12) Young and new teachers are supported in their roles by ensuring that they do not take on too great an extra-curricular load, which can contribute to burn-out.

8. Where to from here?

- a. PPTA branch

Make sure that members are familiar with these guidelines and use these to inform a branch discussion – ideally at the start of each year, to inform new

members and to ensure that the school continues to operate a system grounded in good practice.

Seek a meeting with the principal to clarify the branch's position about extra-curricular involvements and invite the school board and leadership to review practice on an annual basis, in collaboration with staff.

Monitor job advertisements to ensure they meet PPTA guidelines about good practice (see part 3 above)

9. Conclusion

Participation by teachers in extra-curricular activities has become a source of conflict in schools. Stress and workload are continually identified by secondary teachers as a major reason for their decision to leave teaching. For those that remain, constantly rising expectations in respect to extra-curricular activities without adequate recompense in either time or money may result in actions under the Health and Safety in Employment Act (2000).

These guidelines outline teachers' rights in the matter but also suggest positive ways schools can encourage and support extra-curricular activities.

Further information and advice:

- a. In the first instance, go to your branch officers for advice. Depending on the issue your branch may decide to meet, or there may be a discussion between branch officers and school leadership.
- b. PPTA field staff are the first point of contact should an issue to do with extra- or co-curricular responsibilities not be resolved satisfactorily within the school.
- c. Staff at PPTA national office are also available to respond to questions on matters of PPTA policy