



WITU NEWSLETTER

For The Teachers by The Teachers

March/April 2013

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It is indeed a distinct pleasure to address the members of the Windward Islands Teachers' Union once more at the end of yet another term. This term was marked with a lot of struggles and challenges for the WITU in defending the rights and basic privileges of the teachers. The accomplishments over the past term were also very rewarding.

only be possible by the broad support of our members.

I would hereby like to thank all the teachers who have supported me, placed their trust and also encouraged me all through my term. It was not an easy task, but with your words of encouragement and blessing, God helped me through this term and with his help I am proud to have been able to be serving all for almost 20 years. I made myself available to run for the post of president for this organization, and was extremely pleased and grateful to get your votes that resulted in my re-election for the term 2013-2016.

We need to continue the social dialogue to enhance and to strengthen the position of our teachers as past experiences have led us to the conclusion that there is still way too much victimization of teachers in St. Maarten. We would need to ensure that the president and board members of the WITU can continue to receive training and upgrade their skills in e.g. Collective bargaining, conflict resolution and other areas of trade union movement via our regional affiliation with CJT and international affiliation with Educational International (EI).

**I was extremely
pleased and grateful
to get your votes that
resulted in my
re-election for the term
2013-2016.**

Under my tenure, I will continue to work tirelessly to enhance the WITU and move towards more effective and efficient service to the members. My priority is seeking and looking after the welfare of the members. My experience, dedication and strong commitment are some of what I have to offer. I am therefore humbly thanking you for your vote of continued confidence in me for another term.

Setting standards and achieving the recommendations on the status of teachers in higher education and in the teaching profession will

work and loyalty to WITU'S goals and objectives.

Mrs. Claire Elshot-Aventurin

A Note from the Vice President.

Happy 2013, dear WITU Members! I am once again happy to have this opportunity to inform and serve you. WITU had its board elections January 31, 2013, and I was once again elected to the Board. The Board then decided that I would remain in the Vice President's position.

The Vice President's position is an interesting one. In case of the President's absence or inability to "do her job," I would fill her shoes until she is able to fulfill her duties again. However, being VP allows me much

flexibility. I am able to coordinate such things as our website (www.witu.info), manage our recently added Facebook page (Windward Islands Teachers Union – WITU) and create this newsletter on a yearly or twice-yearly basis.

In addition, I help out with other duties and try to make things a bit easier for our President. I don't mind. I quite enjoy it. I enjoy being able (in some small way) to make the job of my President and the Board in general, easier.

So to you, dear WITU member, I say:

Make our jobs easier. Have a problem at work? Put it in writing to the relevant authorities and Copy Confirm (CC) to WITU. Know a teacher who's a non-member? Invite them to join WITU. There are so many small ways, you, as member, can make the jobs of the WITU Board just a bit easier. All it requires is that you take initiative. Don't wait for the Board to contact you – contact us!

Corinne Lejuez-VanPutten

FYI

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Person in charge of
this newsletter:
Corinne Lejuez

The board meeting:
1st Thursday of every
month.
Time: 5:30pm.

Legal Matters :
Financial contribution
of WITU will be
100%, 50% or 30%
depending on the
type of case or
representation
needed.

Contributions to
newsletter can be
made via C. Lejuez
or any other board
member.

WITU's message on World Teachers Day

(Published in The Daily Herald – October 5, 2012)

"The theme for this year's World Teachers' Day is: "Take a stand for teachers".

This is a clear call to all stakeholders to acknowledge teachers' crucial role in transforming the lives of learners at all levels of education. Moreover, the Day should be a time to reflect on the difficult economic and social context in which teachers work and find ways of improving their professional status and work-

ing conditions and those of all education personnel.

Governments worldwide claim to support the values and principles in the Recommendations (on the Status of Teachers). However, many do not actually demonstrate respect for the rights enshrined in them, nor do they implement policies that comply with them."

(Taken from http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2249)



WATCH OUT FOR THOSE SOCIAL NETWORKS!

By Robert Rawlins

The internet is filled with quite a number of social networks.

The major social networks such as Twitter and Facebook are frequented by teachers and students alike.

While there are many good uses that can be made at all times, be very careful that you do not engage in any activity that may compromise your profession. Never engage yourself in adult

conversations with students. It is a known fact that Principals monitor the activities of their students and teachers through the social networks. The teaching profession is indeed a noble profession and teachers must at all times work towards the development of high standards of behaviour.

There are lot of Haters out there, be aware!

Letter to the Editor of The Daily Herald

(Printed in the February 11, 2013 issue)

"Minister Tuitt, you only need NAf. 6 million to index teachers' salaries."

There are approximately 1,500 civil servants and 600 teachers whose salaries need to be indexed to the tune of NAf. 20 million, according to Minister Tuitt of Finance.

The Honourable Minister Tuitt is asking WITU to find NAf. 20 million to index those salaries.

A simple calculation will show that only NAf. 6 million is needed to index the teachers' salaries. With all due respect for civil servants, but WITU is fighting tooth and nail to have teachers' salaries indexed.

On many Caribbean Islands, Teachers Unions who are Unit

members of the Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT), only Teachers Union negotiate for teachers salaries.

On St. Maarten, a different scale range is used for teachers' salaries to compare with those for civil servants, who also use the same salary scale. The scale range for civil servants is much higher than that for teachers.

The failure to adequately compensate teachers has the potential of paving the way for "Human Capital Flight." We do have great shortage of our own teachers here on St. Maarten, Minister Tuitt.

Robert Rawlins
Boardmember of WITU



The above statement taken from the Education International (EI) website couldn't be truer here in St. Maarten. Teachers need so many things to effectively educate our future generations. Not just classroom supplies, smaller class sizes, teaching material and other physical things, but teachers need emotional support from the community. They need to be respected, and need to be looked upon as human beings who, every day, go above and beyond what is expected of them.

Too often though, teachers are blamed: for a student's failing grades, for a school's poor performance on certain tests. In fact, sometimes teachers are the first to be blamed should something goes wrong with a student or within the school. A failing educational system? Blame the teachers. No books to teach the children? What are we paying school fees for? Teachers make too much money and have too many "free" days. That is the general perception of teachers nowadays. Nothing could be further from the truth.

World Teachers Day serves as a reminder to reflect on the job our teachers do all over the world, sometimes under terrible circumstances. Reflect on this year's theme: "Take a stand for teachers." Take a good hard look to your teachers. What time do they arrive at school in the morning? What time do they leave? Are they at school on a weekend? Do they sometimes reach into their own pockets to give to a less fortunate child? Do they volunteer when no one else wants to? Are they always ready with a word of encouragement to give you the push that you sometimes need? Yes.

To the parents, we say: Look to

your child's teacher and say "thank you." Thank you for the late nights you spent over lesson plans, trying to figure out how to help that special child; thank you for staying late at school to work with a child at need; thank you for arriving early to school to get some "more" work done; thank you for talking to me honestly about what I can do to help my child; thank you for taking a call that pulls you away from your own family; thank you for your financial help; thank you for your words of encouragement; and thank you for the pride you show when a student (present or former) succeeds and remembers you.

To Education stakeholders, we say: Take a look at the way you view teachers and change that. Make resources available to teachers who are suffering financially and emotionally. Be teacher-friendly. Don't just speak words of appreciation. Show it! How? Make sure teachers' wages are paid on time; make sure teachers' work permits are processed in a timely fashion so they don't fear getting "picked up" by police because their papers are not in order. Recognize them for their years of service starting at 10 years and up; recognize their need for professional development by encouraging it; Think about the teachers' work load, before adding more "tasks". Seriously start looking at rewarding teachers with sabbaticals to avoid brain-drain and job-related stress. In short, no lip service please! Actions speak louder than words!

Teachers are influential in the lives of the children they teach. They encourage them to learn and to discover new worlds. How much more positive of an influence could a teacher be if someone, anyone, would seriously "Take a stand for Teachers."



In Review

February 2012:

February 20, 2012 is World Day of Social Justice

Meeting with Minister of Education Rhoda Arrindell, Wednesday, February 29th, 2012@ 4:00pm

The Pelican Resort Saga continues

WIFOL (The Windward Islands Federation Of Labour) again won the case against Simpson Bay Resort, which had appealed the last court decision. WIFOL now has to enforce the CLA on behalf of the former employees. To this date the workers had not been paid and the Resort continues to appeal the verdict, despite a fine levied on them for not following the court order. WITU is in solidarity with them.

March 2012:

International Women's Day

April 2012:

Easter Greetings

Meeting on Monday, April 16, 2012 held by (former) Minister of Education Rhoda Arrindell on Teacher Absenteeism and the Sick Leave Policy. This was one of the last meetings called by the Minister before she left office the following month.

Training of Young Leaders workshop was held in Antigua, April 19-21. Attended by Pantophlet and Lejuez.

APS Presentation at GOA: WIFOL, ASEWI, WITU, WICSU and St. Maarten Telecommunications Union were in attendance at the presentation.

May 2012:

Labour Day celebration by Ministry of Labour on May 1. Elshot and Ravenberg attended.

"Carnival Coupe:"

During the Carnival celebrations, Government fell when UPP (United People's Party) member Romain Laville withdrew his support for his party and joined two independents, putting that party in the opposition, and causing several ministers to lose their positions, including the present Minister of Education Rhoda Arrindell, who was replaced by Silveria Jacobs.

Elshot returned to Geneva, Switzerland for the 101st session from May 27-June 12, 2012. The theme this year was "Social Protection."

WITU called St. Maarten Academy teachers to a meeting and instructed them not to use the so-called biometric machine (fingerprinting), after detailing their rights and responsibilities. Teachers at that school were being threatened with pay cuts and other punitive measures if they refused to use the machine. WITU sent a strongly worded letter asking the Board to cease and desist in this practice, as it was a violation of their human rights. The Board did not respond.

July 2012:

Elshot attends CUT Executive and CUT games in Jamaica.

WITU against changing Cost of Living (COLA) system and increase in pension age. WITU met with the Minister of Finance Roland Tuitt where several issues were discussed. One of the points of the discussion was the COLA payments. Elshot made clear that the WITU is not in favor of government's proposal to change the COLA structure because it was created by a well known firm on St. Maarten, Deloitte & Touche and this system has only been in place for the past four to five years. Elshot said

that government would have to bring more evidence to convince her board that the COLA is not feasible for St. Maarten. Elshot said she disagreed with the Minister because the salary scales were upgraded back to 2007.

August 2012:

Lecture on Labour Law by David Kock, on August 30, 2012 at Divi Little Bay at 5:30pm. Elshot and Rawlins attended.

GOA meeting on Friday, August 31 from 9am-12pm.

WITU meeting with Head of Division of Exams Yvette Halley. RE: Evaluation of teacher diplomas. Meeting was scheduled for Thursday, August 30, 2012 at 9am.

September 2012:

Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth Affairs Silveria Jacobs announced during a Council of Ministers' press briefing that approximately 52 teachers were not paid during the month of August. She said her Ministry is busy working on regulating the matter. This non-payment of teachers is a repeat and her Ministry is looking for ways to avoid future recurrences. According to the Minister, procedures were not finalized on time. She said there were cases where teachers' contracts were up and had to be renewed while others were scheduled to go into permanent service and since their paperwork was not submitted for the payment of their salaries, they were thrown out of the system.

Investigation into Public Education launched.

October 2012:

Panel discussion October 18

@ Claude Wathey Legislative Hall 7-9pm. Topic: "Why aren't qualified people becoming teachers?" Lejuez presented.

SITEK elections took place in Curacao. Plantijn is new Union President

October 20th, 2012: **Fraternal greetings sent to** The Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) on the occasion of their 33rd annual Conference of Delegates

November 2012:

General Membership meeting November 9, 2012

Letters were sent to all school boards. RE: Two motions put forth by WITU (Motion 1 – Increase of vacation allowance from 6%-8%; Motion 2 – Recognition of years of service. E.g. 10, 15, 20 years). The motions were presented to Education Minister S. Jacobs in a meeting with 400 teacher signatures.

Meeting with FAVE November 13, 2012. Key issues were: Leave of absence; working hours for full time teachers; School management issues; CLA for cleaning staff; Introduction of new board members

December 2012:



ILO Reporting Workshop @ Sonesta Great Bay Hotel. Tuesday, December 4-Thursday, December 6, 2012; 8am to 12pm. Attended by Lejuez

Elshot attended Grenada Executive meeting and Conference where she had to present on the education situation in St. Maarten (Nov25-Dec 6).

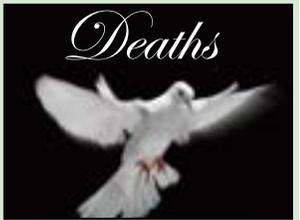
January 2013:



WITU Meeting with Education Minister S. Jacobs. Agenda included vacation allowance increase from 6 to 8% proposal, and situation at Prins Willem Alexander school.



Elshot to CUT/EI Roundtable in Haiti Board Elections January 31. Elshot was re-elected President for the 2013-2016 term.



Condolences to Assistant Treasurer D. Windefelde on the passing of her nephew, and to President Elshot on the passing of her Great-Aunt. RIP

THE LIGHTER SIDE

of Teaching....

Birthday Corner

Happy belated and advance birthday greetings go out to the following members. If you would like to contribute to this column let us know by contacting us via email or phone. Save some cake for us! Hope your day was blessed!

Katie Hassel – January 1
 Anadeen Matthew - January 16
 Sandra Mathew – January 25
 Van Samson – January 26
 Pamela Fox – January 27
 Roxsana Pantophlet – February 2
 Silvy Ravenverg – February 4
 Lucia Kroon - February 4
 Marita Lagadeau - February 8
 Norina Penijn – February 18
 Valerie Eights – February 19
 Maricia Ellis – February 22
 Miranda Lake – February 22
 Michael Teixeira – February 25
 Esther Jeffers – February 25
 Carlyle Cadogan – March 2
 Rufina de Lain - March 3
 Daphne Richardson – March 4
 Vincent Grey – March 6
 Joel Pinas - March 9
 Maura Bute – March 9
 Sharon Warner – March 10
 Shirley Wigley – March 12
 Henry Thomas – March 17
 Judy Ann Davis – March 18
 Judy Gittens - March 23
 Macie Pantophlet – March 24
 Frances Rovelet – March 30

Enid Gregory – April 3
 Everette Gumbs – April 4
 Natalie Peterson – April 9
 Sidonia Hodge – April 16
 Esther Blackman - May 4
 Barbara Nicholls – May 5
 Anita Bishop - May 10
 Hester Philbert – May 14
 Lea Rozenblad – May 26
 Muriel Pinas – May 28
 Sharon Gibson – May 31
 William Barry – June 8
 Judy Bell – June 13
 Yvonne Johns – June 13
 Iris Derrick – June 13
 Armand Teunis – June 13
 Juliet Gibson – June 13
 Valinda Alleyne – June 18
 Juliana Alexander - June 29
 Claire Elshot – July 9
 Maria Crichlow – July 13 (honorary member)
 Rosemarie Wyatt – July 17
 Rose Coram – July 20
 Amanda President – July 20
 Shareen Lake – July 24
 Edna Letang – July 27



Things You'll Never Hear a Teacher Say

1. "Thank goodness for these evaluations. They keep me focused."
2. "I can't BELIEVE I get paid for this!!!!"
3. "Gosh, the bathroom smells so fresh and clean!"
4. "I think the discipline around here is just a LITTLE too strict!!"
5. "It's Friday already???????"
6. "We'd be able educate our children if they would let us teach through July, too."

You Might Be a Schoolteacher if...

- You have no time for a life from August to June.
- You want to slap the next person who says, "Must be nice to work from 8 to 3 and have your summers free!"
- When out in public you feel the urge to talk to strange children and correct their behavior.
- You've ever had your profession slammed by someone who would never dream of doing your job.
- Meeting a child's parents instantly answers the question, "Why is this kid like this?"
- You believe "extremely annoying" should have its own box on the report card.
- You know a hundred good reasons for being late.
- You might be a teacher if you think people should have a government permit before being allowed to reproduce.
- You might be a teacher if you wonder how some parents MANAGED to reproduce.

Some drink at the fountain of knowledge...others just gargle.

These are actual comments made on students' report cards by teachers in the New York City public school system.

1. Since my last report, your child has reached rock bottom and has started to dig.
2. I would not allow this student to breed.
3. Your child has delusions of adequacy.
4. Your son is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.
5. Your son sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.
6. This child has been working with glue too much.
7. The gates are down, the lights are flashing, but the train isn't coming.
8. It's impossible to believe the sperm that created this child beat out 1,000,000 others.
9. The wheel is turning but the hamster is definitely dead.

Alphabet taught to kids nowadays

