

November 2017

Preparing for collective agreement negotiations in 2018-2019

“Hoping for the best, prepared for the worst, and unsurprised by anything in between.” *Maya Angelou*



What we want for our profession and the children we teach

Each of our students is different and it is our role as teachers to bring out their unique strengths. We want all young people to leave school equipped with the skills, confidence, values and knowledge that will allow them to make the most of every opportunity.

We need to have the time to focus one-on-one with each young person so we can develop the learning programme that works best for them.

Secondary teaching takes a special type of person, with great relational skills, a passion for their subject, and the cognitive skills to be able to communicate this passion to their students.

Why it's getting harder to achieve our professional goals

Unfortunately, it's becoming more and more difficult for secondary teachers.

In 2018 students around the country will be starting school without a science teacher or a tech teacher or a te reo Māori teacher – the list goes on.

Teachers will be forced to take classes outside their subject areas and principals will be scrambling to make timetables work with fewer teacher and fewer resources. Teachers will be covering for their colleagues in subjects they're not familiar with, using their precious non-contact time to keep schools running.

That's because successive Ministers of Education have put in place policies that have made teaching a less desirable career choice than it once was.

Their lack of workforce planning means not enough new teachers are entering the profession. That, combined with the government's decision to drive salaries down means teaching doesn't stack up against other career choices.

The constant stream of new initiatives and assessment requirement that have flowed from the ministry over the last decade means that teachers are burning out. Workloads are excessive and box-ticking and red tape is forcing teachers out of the classroom.

Advancing teaching and public education

We have worked with government, the ministry and other groups in the education sector to identify solutions. Report after report lay out the specific steps the government can take to make teaching the meaningful and respected career it should be.

We need teaching to be a meaningful and respected career that people are proud to pursue and we know how to do it.

As a union and professional association, we achieve our goals using the power of collective action.

In 2018 we start negotiations for our new collective agreement. The leverage we have as the largest group of secondary teachers in the country will be used to solve the problems in our sector and make those solutions legally enforceable.

We will take to the negotiating table the issues that PPTA members feel most strongly about. How successful we are in negotiations is up to all of us. Now is the time to get active in your branch.

What you can do

- Get a “super-majority” of teachers to join up as PPTA members in your branch! Talk to your non-PPTA colleagues about why it’s important we stand together and ask them to join us.
- Get involved in PPTA events in your branch and region
- Talk with older members about how PPTA collective agreement negotiations have gone in the past
- Look out for PPTA materials to share on social media, with your Board or other parents, with local MPs, and in comments and letters to media.
- Hope for the best and prepare for the worst!

The best case scenario

The best case scenario for our 2018 collective agreement negotiations goes like this:

- The bargaining team takes our claims to the negotiating table
- The team bargaining on behalf of the government negotiates with PPTA until both parties come to an agreement
- PPTA members vote on whether to accept the offer or not

The worst case (and last resort) scenario

- The negotiating team takes our claims to the negotiating table
- The team negotiating on behalf of the government rejects them all and even wants to take away some of our existing rights and conditions of work
- They won’t budge
- PPTA members vote on what they want to do about that – it could be something as simple as a media and letter writing campaign, it could be something like refusing to take extra-curricular activities, and it might even be to withdraw our labour altogether (strike). It’s doing these actions together that makes a real difference.
- PPTA members, acting collectively and in large numbers, encourage the government to come back to the negotiations

Preparing for the worst

Withdrawing our labour is a last resort. It means that PPTA members forgo pay during the time they are on strike.

It is important that together and individually we prepare early to support our colleagues who would feel the pressures of joining with us: beginning teachers with student loan repayments, single parent and single income families.

As a member of the PPTA you will have support. Your regions may establish a support fund, as may your own branch, and there is support available from the national organisation too.

But the first step is to prepare yourself now.

For detailed information about how to prepare for a strike, please contact your branch chair.