

About Plates and Professionalism



LCRSS Directors:

Kevin Hutchinson
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Gerrit Bos
Vicechair

Joanie Vis
Treasurer

Sharon Van Sydenborgh
Corresponding Secretary

Henrietta VanderLaan

Recording Clerk:

Rose Woudenberg

League Coordinator:

Jason Heemsker

In my family we rarely use plates on Sunday. There are no plates for the raisin bread in the morning, or the usual boiled egg sandwiches that make up our evening meal. We use bowls at lunchtime for soup (it's hard to eat that off the table), but still, no plates for the buns. Even when we have real guests, i.e. people who are not our children's friends, we don't use plates. Sometimes I wonder if people think our family is unrefined. And then I wonder if I need to care.

What might be considered simply unrefined in a family, would be considered ridiculous in a restaurant. Imagine going to The Keg and getting that beautiful blue-rare steak slapped directly onto the table. Then, plunked down beside it, the gravy-slathered mashed potatoes with the little parsley garnish poised on top. More than likely you would have a few things to say to the management; it is not acceptable practice for a restaurant. It is not professional.

League schools are often close-knit communities. They are like families, in a way. Typically, board members know each other socially. Many go to the same church, have similar interests, similar convictions, and, at times, similar grandparents. Teachers in a school have comparable attachments, both amongst themselves and amongst those in the board. This has its advantages. It also holds its dangers.

There is the danger of being so comfortable with the school that you treat it more like your home and less like an organization. In your home you should be able to eat off the table if you want. It is your home and you are free to shape your home's customs as you see fit. However, when you are dealing with an organization like a school, the home rules don't apply. A school is an organization, and it needs to be run professionally.

What it means to be a professional was briefly introduced here last year alongside the Professional Development Committee's publication: *A Model for Professional Development*. In that article a professional

was described as a person who embodies selflessness, skill, trustworthiness, and the discipline it takes to follow procedures and interact well with others. A professional organization should reflect these as well.

The school as an organization should have a vested interest in promoting a professional standard of practice. This goes beyond simply setting out rules of conduct and behaviour. The very culture of the school and its community should reflect a professional standard of practice. To promote that culture, everyone involved in the school needs to understand and uphold common expectations.

The hard part, the part that requires discipline, is being as strict with that standard of practice as a five-star restaurant is about food presentation. At the same time, schools don't want to lose the sense of family that binds them together in a community. How does a school work at that?

Due to the complexity of running a school, the danger is that we become myopic, keeping our focus inside our own walls. That can lead us to see certain attitudes as normative that don't fit with being professional. It might be in student behaviour, a teacher's willingness to share the load, or a Board's skill at managing personnel. That is when it is valuable to have worked through some of these professional norms with other school communities. It's like the use of plates at a meal time. My children would never know that that might not be the norm in other homes if they only ever experienced ours.

This is also part of what membership in the League provides. It is an organization where people understand, uphold, and work in the same school model. This model looks at being professional not as an end in and of itself, but as a reflection of thankfulness to the Lord for blessing our work. It is also a place where schools can ask questions about best practices and proper procedures. It is a place where a broader community learns together about how to flourish as a professional organization. It is a real blessing to be at the table with other schools – with, or without plates.

Jason Heemsker

LCRSS Annual Directors' Report

LCRSS Committees:

Assistance for the Special Child (ASC)

Compensation Committee (CC)

Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Educators (CARE)

Government Contact Committee (GCC)

Pension Committee (PC)

Professional Development Committee (PDC)

It is with pleasure and thankfulness to the Lord that we, as Directors, submit the 2016-2017 Annual Report to the LCRSS Membership. We acknowledge that all that we have accomplished is because the Lord provides us what we need, and we look to His strength and guidance for the future as well.

There have been many changes over the past year. This is not surprising at all because the LCRSS is in its infancy, having just incorporated in 2015. Most notably for the Directors was the turnover of individuals on the Board of Directors itself. Retiring was our former Chairman Gerald Boot, Vice-Chairman John Van Iperen and Director-at-Large, Calvin Kapteyn. We added to the Board, Chairman Kevin Hutchinson, Vice Chairman Gerrit Bos, Secretary Sharon Van Sydenborgh, and Director-at-Large Henrietta VanderLaan.

Over the past year we also have had the pleasure of welcoming two new Class A members, Bellstone Christian School and Hope Christian Academy.

Given the significant turnover that was experienced on the board, all those new faces quite naturally took up their tasks by focusing on what the purpose of the League is and how we could best fulfill our mandates as board members - what needed to get done to keep the ship afloat, and what needed to change to ensure we provide the best service possible to our Membership. As such, a number of initiatives were kicked off, but

nothing more important than clarifying the expectations of what good service for our Membership looks like and how this could be best achieved in a prioritized fashion. Utilizing the input that was gathered through our Membership Meetings and League Day, the Board with the League Coordinator and the various League Committees are working on short- and long-term objectives that we are synchronizing with the most pressing needs of the Membership.

Looking forward to the upcoming year, it is our desire to keep the communication channels open with the Membership, working transparently, providing regular updates and/or changes to our plans to ensure that the momentum that was begun over the past several months continues. Please continue to review our reports and status updates, and send us letters to help us ensure we provide excellent service to the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies.

Lastly, personally, I want to take the opportunity to thank the many volunteers on our committees, the League Coordinator, my fellow Directors and our Member Representatives for the tireless work that each of you has put in to the League toward the worthy objective of quality Reformed Parental Christian Education for the children the Lord has entrusted us with.

Respectfully submitted, on behalf of the LCRSS Board of Directors,
Kevin Hutchinson, Chairman

Preparing for
Ontario Bill 148
Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act 2017

Parental Leave: New Rules

On November 27, 2017, the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act* became law in Ontario resulting in a number of changes to the Employment Standards Act (ESA). These changes provided the Government Contact Committee (GCC) with an opportunity to review the law, particularly with regard to pregnancy and parental leave as it applies to employees of our League schools in Ontario.

Pregnancy and parental provisions for employees in Ontario are governed by two pieces of legislation, the Employment Standards Act (ESA) and the Employment Insurance Act (EIA). The ESA is a provincial Act that governs the right of an employee to take unpaid time off of work for pregnancy or parental leave. The EIA is a federal Act which administers financial benefits associated with pregnancy or parental leave. Basically, the right to take parental related leave from work comes from the province, whereas the payment while on leave comes from the federal government.

The EIA provides maternity benefits to mothers for a maximum of 17 weeks at 55% of the employee's average weekly insurable earnings up to a maximum amount.

For parental benefits (mother and/or father), there are now two options available. In the first option the parent can be paid for up to 35 weeks at 55% of his/her average weekly insurable earnings - up to a certain cap. In the second option, new parents can elect to have extended benefits, which would be paid up to a maximum of 61 weeks, at 33% of his/her average weekly insurable earnings (which is limited by the same cap as those taking 35 weeks). It is noteworthy that parents can share both benefit options.

It should also be noted that the employee is not required to take leave at all, nor are parents required to choose between 35 and 63 weeks. They may plan the leave to be what works best for them. However, once it has started it must be taken all at once.

For a full report on the changes brought by the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*, and how it relates to your schools, see the GCC report published on the League's website:

<http://lcrss.ca/document/item.aspx?id=3630>