

SECTA Convention 2011

Evaluation Comments and Responses

The following document evolved through the 94 evaluation forms that were handed in at the end of Convention 2011. The Convention Planning Committee and SECTA President developed the document in hopes of “shedding some light on” perceptions SECTA members have regarding SECTA ‘s annual convention.

Points to Ponder regarding “Comments” from the Convention 2011 Evaluation form.....

a) Prefer a Thursday/Friday for convention

Neither dates nor days of the week for convention are set in stone; the dates/days for convention are left up to the discretion of the convention planning committee and are supported by the Board. In the past few years we have moved to fall dates as it was suggested by our membership to move away from February dates - a fall convention allows teachers to implement what they gain at convention early in the year and avoids winter driving conditions. October & November dates are a juggling act to try to avoid report cards, v-ball tournaments and playoffs along with Agribition, Middle Years and other conferences that conflict with dates and facilities we may want to book in Regina. Convention planning often begins two years in advance in order to be able to book desired facilities and speakers, as well as to give more advance notice to the division and its stakeholders for planning.

b) Move convention to a school within the division

Holding our convention within our own division does have numerous benefits such as lower costs for renting facilities, supporting the economies of our own communities, and reduced driving distances, time, and reduction in personal expenses for many – but not for all - teachers. However it becomes unfair to expect teachers who come from regions too small to host convention to always have to pay additional expenses every year for attending convention while others have minimal costs. As well, planning convention is a daunting task and expecting one small regional group to host every two or three years may not be reasonable. Even if staff from our more rural schools do much of the planning, the staff at the host site is still left with much of the actual setup and management of the convention (room assignments, set-up and clean-up of tables, chairs, AV, meals, coffee and juice for breaks, general maintenance, bathroom facilities, etc.). The availability of hotels in or near the host city also must be considered and large blocks of rooms cannot always be guaranteed. The survey results following the Weyburn convention in 2010 were very positive; yet other teachers prefer a Regina location. Allowing the host committee to make the decision as to whether to host locally or in a city, with the location rotating through different venues, seems to be the best compromise. SECTA members preferring local hosting must be ready to step forward and assist their regional convention committee.

c) Muffins? / No breakfast/snacks? I missed the access to fruit juice and pop that Weyburn offered last year

Every year the convention committee sends out numerous announcements and updates regarding convention planning, including the availability, or not, of coffee and other break refreshments. All communications are sent to school SSLs, who then convey that information to

the rest of the school staff. As well, information is posted on the SECTA website & convention (<http://www.cornerstoneteachers.ca>).

The cost of providing additional amenities such as snack breaks and/or beverages are always a factor in convention planning, and the committee always strives to find a balance between cost and providing refreshments. Samples of costs at a Regina venue such as the Conexus Arts Centre:

- Muffins - \$2.00 each. Total cost for one muffin each 600 teachers with GST and 15% Service Charge - \$1450.00
- Juice in addition to coffee – adds \$0.50 to the daily cost per teacher. For the two days of convention, this would increase the cost by an additional \$300 + GST and service charge.
- Cookies - \$13.00 per dozen for a one day cost, with GST & service charge, of \$785.00
- Concession - \$20.00 per hour to staff the concession booth, totaling \$240.00 per 6-hr day

Refreshment costs are cheaper when the convention is hosted locally, but providing refreshments adds to the workload and would need to be handled by a separate committee or offered by a local group as a fundraiser. Regina facilities do not generally permit renters to provide their own refreshments.

d) No time to visit displays

Viewing the displays is something to work into your schedule either as a session, at lunch or after the sessions are done. A teacher does not need to feel guilty about viewing displays as a session; the displays provide professional support to a teacher just as a session would. Displayers are typically at their displays until 3:45-4:00 on convention days.

e) Poor attendance by some teachers – do we need to take attendance or registration?

This problem has existed for years but continues to grow. Many SECTA teachers have been expressing concern that their colleagues are not attending or being unprofessional and unengaged during convention and division PD. If we value being professionals then we must demonstrate that we are professionals. Convention is like any other day of work; you should be there if you expect to be paid. It would be a shame to think that the only way to fix the problem is to take attendance at 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM. We must work among ourselves to change the opinions of a few vocal and unhappy convention attendees in favour of seeing the positive aspects of convention (developing professional networks, teacher-driven topics/ideas for sessions, STF information opportunities). Convention is only as good as the teachers of SECS make it. The event is planned with the input of the teachers, by teachers. If individuals are unhappy with the process/planning then they may influence change in two ways - find

presenters or present themselves- teacher driven sessions are always the best - and/or take an active interest in convention planning by attending a convention planning committee meeting, emailing the committee, or becoming a committee member.

- f) We used to be allowed some driving time. Can we again?

Both parties (SECTA and SECSO) have allowed time for driving. Monday's events did not begin until 10 AM and on Tuesday the day was done by 3:15. With such large geographic area it is impossible to include all driving time needed between 9:00 AM & 3:30 PM or the day would not be worth holding.

- g) Please offer First Aid/CPR again. Maybe a session could be time for division PLCs to meet

Session topics such as these need to be submitted to the convention planning committee when a "Call for Proposals" is sent out to the SECTA members. The more sessions the committee has to put forth to the members of SECTA the better it is for the membership. Convention offerings are typically decided upon through membership voting a few months prior to convention. Keep in mind, the idea for a proposal is great but there must also be an individual who would be responsible for organizing and making sure the session takes place.

- h) Would love to see some expenses reimbursed such as hotel, mileage, etc., because no other profession works this way. Convention is another way teachers are devalued.

This statement is correct in that teachers are not reimbursed expenses for convention but each teacher should keep all of his/her receipts related to attendance at convention (hotel, meals, mileage) to claim on their annual income tax return. The costs related to convention are all applicable as "Professional Fees". Convention is driven by teachers, thus paid for by SECTA fees. If we want compensation for mileage or hotels we have to raise the convention fees. Other options do get considered by the convention committee such as single day conventions that would not require the added costs of hotels, requesting additional days of division-provided PD, although teachers may lose control of what is offered, or requesting LINC to negotiate to have convention expenses (some or all) be included in our SECTA LINC Agreement.

- i) Didn't receive all the info needed long enough before deadlines, in particular STF retirement session

This past year convention communiqués regarding session offerings, information and/or notification of the STF Retirement session were sent out June 13 (interest survey), September 2, September 6, and September 28 to each school SSL and posted on the convention website. SSLs are the communication conduit between the STF, SECTA, and our membership.

j) More water available to drink would have been better/ Water should have been available!

There should have been jugs of water and drinking glasses available at each coffee/tea station as well as in every session's room. The lack of water at the coffee stations was not noted by our planning committee, apologies.

k) New curriculum needs in-service for implementation

New curriculum in-service from the Ministry was not possible this year due to the provincial election. The Ministry of Learning is not allowed to provide any in-services within the six weeks leading up to an election. As a side note, there were three social studies curriculum related sessions put forth to the membership in the survey sent out in June. Interest in these three sessions was poor and therefore offering the sessions was not pursued by the planning committee. The 2012 Convention Committee will look into how the Ministry and our teachers can provide curriculum in-service and/or share units/ resources for next year. And another reminder that convention is teacher-driven – if there are sessions you would like to see take place, you must indicate your interest to a convention committee member or through the convention surveys.

l) New teacher induction service

This event was embarrassing. The names of teachers new to the STF and new to SECSO were requested and received from the division in mid-September. Unfortunately, we have no control over the accuracy of this list as the division is the only one that knows everyone who works for them. Next year we will email this list to all SSLs for verification.