

Structure Tests

From Jane McAlevey’s *A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing, and the Fight for Democracy* (2020). Reprinted with permission from the author. (See Inouye, p. 252 and Schirmer, p. 227.)

UNIONWIDE STRUCTURE TEST	DATE	IMPLEMENTATION OF STRUCTURE TEST
Each of these was done by hand, face-to-face, across 900 schools. They were carried out by teacher leaders under the guidance of staff organizers. Each test helps the leadership understand where they are strong and where they are weak, which helps to prioritize their efforts.		
Regional rallies in the contract that had expired in 2011	November 2014	Used an “I’ll be there” sign-up sheet in the weeks before these smaller regional rallies, as they planned their first big citywide rally set for early 2015. This was the contract the new leadership inherited: the people who lost the election had been negotiating it for more than three years.
Organizing for February 2016 Stand Up citywide rally for the 2011 contract	January 2015	Launched a campaign-commitment card with check boxes of what people were willing to do: school-site picketing, parent outreach, attend a downtown rally in February 2015, boycott faculty meetings, protest testing, and strike if necessary.
Stand Up rally at Grand Park, escalating to citywide	February 2015	15,000 union members attended, making it the largest action since the 1989 strike

The teachers win big, a 10 percent raise (the first raise in 10 years), finally settling the 2011 contract and demonstrating to members that the new methods of organizing work.

UNIONWIDE STRUCTURE TEST

DATE

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRUCTURE TEST

Launch I'll Vote Yes to Build the Future, Fund the Fight

Fall 2015

More than half of the members of the union signed a public petition saying they would vote yes to increase their dues, which they framed as Build the Future, Fund the Fight.

Membership-wide union election to allow the rank-and-file members to vote to increase dues

February 2016

A majority of members actually participate in the ballot, with 83 percent voting yes. Like most union elections, as with most American elections, traditionally only a minority vote. But UTLA was determined to have real union democracy, with an important question going to the members, and they achieved more than 50 percent turnout.

School site-based rallies for health insurance

Fall 2017

Health benefit negotiations took place parallel to the overall contract bargaining (with a coalition of LAUSD unions), because nonteachers and teachers alike negotiate insurance benefits at the same time.

All In launches and ratification of healthcare contract

February 2018

Because the union anticipated that the right wing would prevail in the *Janus* Supreme Court case, it planned ahead and had the entire membership sign new cards with language the court would stipulate.

4 Questions petition launch

April 2018

This petition asked members about their willingness to take four actions, indicated by hand checks on boxes and their signature.

All-In for Respect rally

May 2018

12,000 members turn out at Grand Park rally

Strike vote

August 2018

84 percent turn out and participate, 98 percent vote yes.

I Will Strike petition

Fall 2018

More than 75 percent sign.