

Scenario 1—How do We Build a Winning Bargaining Strategy?

I am currently working on a campaign to recertify our bargaining rights. I am confident that we will win the recertification election; however, I am concerned that we will default to a service-model bargaining strategy on the other side of the recertification vote. In our union the dominant thinking among our leadership is “preserve the relationship with the district, don’t challenge them for power.” In this vein, there is talk of using Interest Based Bargaining approach and no plans to provide members with a path to participate in the bargaining campaign. The IBB model of bargaining is also being promoted by the the state affiliate staff assigned to our union. Similarly, the leadership believes that the path to membership growth is winning a good contract “to use as a selling point,” rather than moving members into action. I am struggling with how to agitate my leadership team towards a winning bargaining strategy that will deliver the strength and growth we want.

Scenario 2—Help- Our Campaign is stuck!

I am a local president that launched a campaign for a full cost of living raise plus a salary schedule step. Although we meet monthly with our superintendent our union has not really made a demand before. At our campaign kick-off we had more people attend the meeting than we have in years! We launched campaign commitment cards to all staff and 75% of total staff have signed on. We have also started wearing buttons with our campaign slogan on them. Our superintendent takes everything personally and reacts very emotionally to all of our union's public actions. At each monthly meeting I am attacked for something. The superintendent sends me accusatory emails that I am "making problems" and that's there's "no money for what I'm asking for." Even though I bring the VP of the union with me, the superintendent continuously attacks me as an individual employee. We have asked to present our campaign to the school board and the superintendent intercepted the message saying a public forum was not appropriate for this. We tried to invite the board members to a dialogue to explain our campaign and the superintendent made sure that also did not happen. The superintendent has frequently asked me, "Don't you trust me to relay information to the board?" The board president has stated that they prefer to follow the chain of command and not hear from the union directly. How do we move our demand forward when it feels like there's nowhere to go?

Scenario 3—We could NEVER be like them! (AKA Building Power from Scratch)

My union has a few dedicated long-time members but overall we have pretty low membership numbers. I have been the president for about ten years and work closely with our state affiliated staff person. Whenever I have a problem they are quick to call me back and they work closely with the superintendent or principal to solve the issue. We have a good relationship with the district. We mainly focus on representing people when they have a problem. We like to talk about our union as insurance. Remember, you can't buy insurance after the car accident! Recently I was on an NEA webinar and heard about teachers winning a strike in California and found out one of the things they were fighting for was input on class size. Even though we have a good relationship with the district we have not had conversations about things like that. I'd love for us to have that kind of power but feel like we don't have enough members to ever do that and we live in a very red area.