

Participant Handouts



Organizing Strategies for work with ESP Members

UniServ Directors who represent ESP locals are responsible for identifying and developing leaders, organizing issue campaigns, and understanding and advocating for the unique needs of ESP members. Strong ESP affiliates have a high ratio of engaged leaders to rank and file members and structures that allow for rapid response, relationship development and collective action. This NEA Center for Organizing training is designed to build skills around ESP leadership identification and development. They will learn how to establish differentiated and innovative structures that can increase member engagement and union presence within and across worksites of the various job families within ESP.

Director

Kyle Serrette
kserrette@nea.org

Academy Coordinator

Ellen Holmes
eholmes@nea.org

Academy Logistics

Karla Medina
kmedina@nea.org

Community Agreements for Our Time

Awareness and Self-Knowledge

This requires self-knowledge and self-awareness. Self-knowledge allows you to see what causes you pain and conflict and enables you to embrace your contradictions and inconsistencies. It allows the space to work on things about yourself that you are not happy with. In turn, self-awareness helps to prevent you from projecting your negative aspects onto other people. Bringing your best self also requires that you have a positive attitude, are willing to deeply explore your perspectives and remain open to the perspectives and experiences of others. While engaging with peers and content, make space for others to engage as well.

Listening for Understanding

Be an active listener. Active listening involves paying full and careful attention to the other person, looking them in the eye, avoiding interruptions, reflecting your understanding, clarifying information, summarizing the other person's perspectives and sharing your own. Remember that most people need time to open up and might not be willing to immediately share their personal stories, hopes, fears and/or concerns.

Being Gracious

Being kind is a vital way of bringing meaning to our own lives, as well as the lives of others. Kindness is about caring genuinely for others around you, wanting the best for them and recognizing in them the same wants, needs, aspirations and even fears that you may have. Being kind and generous allows us to communicate better with others, to be more self-compassionate and to be a positive force in other people's lives. We are gracious when we accept and genuinely work to use the pronouns that others ask us to use. Being gracious includes following best practices to protect the health of this learning community (ex. handwashing, PPE, staying in your room if you are sick).

Staying Engaged

Staying engaged requires you to be morally, emotionally, intellectually and socially involved in the conversation. Staying engaged means that you are listening with curiosity and willing to deepen your understanding. Staying engaged might also require you to sustain the conversation even when it gets uncomfortable or diverted. This means a commitment to keeping your electronic communications to a minimum with folks not present in this learning community. This also means being present for all portions of the learning agenda.

Being Open and Suspending Judgment

Listening with an open mind includes being receptive to the influence of others. You can suspend judgment by becoming aware of preconceived notions and listening to everything someone has to say before jumping to conclusions. Most importantly, suspending judgment also means listening to what the speaker has to say for understanding, not just to determine whether the speaker is right or wrong. This means that we recognize each of us will make mistakes and that we have the capacity to grow. We should expect imperfections.

Saying "I" - tell your truth

Speaking your truth in authentic and courageous conversations about race and other issues where experiences/perspectives may differ widely from yours requires a willingness to take risks. It means that you will be absolutely honest and candid about your own thoughts, feelings, experiences and opinions and not just saying what you perceive others want to hear. Speaking your truth will require you to speak from the "first person" and use "I" statements.

Lean into Discomfort

Leaning into discomfort will require you to let go of understandings and stereotypes that you may be holding onto in order to move forward. Leaning in means that you will avoid pre-judgment and be open to the kernel of wisdom in each individual's experiences. Leaning into discomfort will require you to sit through moments of embarrassment, confusion, anxiety, and/or fear.

Reaching Empathy

Empathy and compassion allow you to understand the other person's point of view. When you are empathetic, you are more understanding, patient and kind. Expanding your capacity to feel empathy will also allow others to enter your circle of human concern. Sharing, using, and respecting pronouns is a very simple form of empathy.

Expecting Non-Resolution and Non-Closure

Expect and accept that there may not be closure. It is not likely that you will resolve your personal understanding about race or another person's racial experience in a single conversation. The more you talk about race or other issues with another person, the more you learn and the more they will learn. Authentic and productive conversations about race and other issues where experiences/perspectives may differ widely from yours are continuous and always evolving. This means that sometimes we will have unfinished, unexplored, and shortened conversations about some concepts.

**Adapted from "Embracing equity and inclusion", Annie E. Casey Foundation*

What questions do you want to ask about any of the ideas in these agreements?

What additional agreements do you need in order to be a fully participating member of our learning community?

Can you commit to these agreements? If not, what would it take for you to be able to commit?



To: National Education Association

Re: Findings and Recommendations from NEA Recruitment Research

INTRODUCTION:

The following memo contains key findings and recommendations from a multi-phase research project of potential NEA member ESPs from November 2022 to February 2023. The research was designed to help NEA and its affiliates develop messaging to recruit potential member ESPs more effectively. The research was conducted in three phases:

1. We began by conducting **in-depth interviews with on-the-ground ESP organizers** across the country and with a range of positions within NEA's state and local affiliates. Each interviewee was selected because they had been identified as particularly experienced in recruiting ESPs. The purpose of the interviews was 1) to determine what's working and not working for organizers; 2) to understand what obstacles needed to be addressed; and 3) to gather ideas for future testing.
2. We then kicked off our research among potential member ESPs themselves, with extensive **focus groups among potential member ESPs**. This included six 90-minute online focus groups, which were segmented by career families, the collective bargaining status of the respondents' home state, and race.
3. Building off the findings of the qualitative research, we conducted a **large-scale online survey of 1,038 potential member ESPs** from across the country to verify and hone the findings and attitudes that emerged in the qualitative research, understand attitudinal differences across job classifications and other demographic groups, and test updated messaging and positioning, including how and whether to address the cost of membership and the "freeloader" argument.

The recommendations from this research are being used to expand on the insights from previous research among certified potential members and develop communications campaign and collateral, such as flyers, leave-behind brochures for potential ESP members, and a conversation guide for member organizers. Those materials and campaign will be ready ahead of back-to-school in 2023.

Executive Summary:

In short, the research shows that:

- As we saw in the research with certified members, we must do more to educate potential members that NEA and its affiliates are unions – and that unions are legal. And further, we must show how, as members, they can increase their collective power through advocacy and / or bargaining.
- The pitch to education support professionals does require another educational step. We must also be clear that NEA is a union for them, as well as certified members. Many potential member ESPs are aware of the collective power of teachers' unions but are uncertain of their eligibility for membership or may not feel welcome as full and equal members of NEA.
- We need to convince potential members that NEA's affiliates will strengthen their voice and improve their daily lives especially by improving wages. Using past wins to demonstrate potential for future wins is critical – even small improvements on salary and day-to-day issues like facility repairs can go a long way.
- The focus on wages is of particular importance to ESPs, more so than with certified educators.
- Relatedly, there is a lot concern about the cost of dues. Many perceive that union dues are higher than they actually are, but conversations about dues can easily backfire. Therefore, we should not speak proactively about dues. But we SHOULD be ready to respond to questions about dues by focusing on the monthly cost of \$21 per month (or the lower local rate) and NOT the annual \$250 cost.

- Meanwhile, it is imperative to address concerns about cost implicitly by demonstrating the value of membership – primarily the ability to achieve higher wages and better benefits through collective power.
- Similarly, it is counterproductive to address the freeloader issue proactively. Our research finds that it simply reinforces the idea that freeloading is an option. Instead, we should address the issue implicitly with our message about the benefits of collective power.
- The actual words “education support professional” are not a widely used or well understood terms among potential members, who are more likely to identify themselves as “support staff.” These potential members also mostly do not consider themselves “educators.” Recruitment efforts should avoid using internal language until after potential members join the union and, instead, should use the term “support staff” and/or, better yet, talk about each potential recruit’s specific job classification.
- Many of the recommendations from the previous research with certified members are still applicable to ESPs. A transformational pitch that positions the union as member-driven vehicle for achieving collective power can significantly boost interest in joining, as opposed to a transactional approach that highlights how the union delivers services in exchange for dues.

OUR PITCH TO POTENTIAL MEMBERS:

What to tell them:	Why it works:
<u>1. Introduce and Educate</u> <i>In CB states:</i> The [STATE AFFILIATE] has the legally protected right in your state to negotiate on behalf of workers like you. They regularly fight for improved contracts that win workers higher wages and better benefits, while also advocating for changes that improve the daily lives of workers. <i>In non-CB states:</i> (You may have been told that unions aren’t allowed in your state, but that isn’t true.) The [STATE AFFILIATE] is a union that regularly negotiates on behalf of workers like you. They fight for improved contracts that win workers higher wages and better benefits, while also advocating for changes that improve the daily lives of workers.	▪ Highlights a state or local union in their area ▪ Clarifies unions are legal and/or active ▪ Talks about their daily life
<u>2. Demonstrate How The Union Will Get Results: Collective Power</u> <i>Workers like us are some of the most under-appreciated people in our schools. We’re rarely asked for our opinions or communicated with when big decisions are made. But when more members join the union and band together, administrators listen to us and we have a stronger voice to negotiate for better wages and benefits, along with changes that improve our daily lives.</i>	▪ Connects with their desire for respect ▪ Shows power in numbers, ideally locally
<u>3. Show Value: Improved Pay & Benefits</u> <i>Most people like us work in schools because we want to help kids. We’re not expecting to get rich, but far too often, people act like we’ve taken a vow of poverty. Banding together is the best way to get paid what we deserve. Our union has already successfully secured some increases in salaries and benefits, but it’s only a start because support staff deserve so much more. With more members, we’ll have an even stronger voice and be able to secure real pay increases, cost-of-living adjustments, and increases in retirement and healthcare benefits.</i>	▪ Points to past wins ▪ Shows you understand their goals (help students) and frustrations (not being able to connect with students) ▪ Name checks top priorities

CUSTOMIZING YOUR PITCH:

Collective Bargaining States

Short Pitch

We are a union that **has a legally protected right to negotiate** on behalf of support staff like you, so we can all get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives. When more people join the union, administrators listen to us. Our union has already secured wins, but it's only a start. With more members, like you, we'll have an even stronger voice and be able to secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Longer Pitch

We are a union that **has a legally protected right to negotiate** on behalf of support staff including paraprofessionals, transportation workers, librarians, food service workers [BE SURE TO LIST THE JOB OF THE PERSON YOU ARE RECRUITING] and teachers, so we can get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives.

Without a union, workers like us are underappreciated and often unheard. When more members join the union, administrators listen to us – giving us a stronger voice to negotiate.

We do this work because we want to help students. We're not expecting to get rich, but far too often our work is undervalued. Banding together is the best way to get paid what we deserve.

Our union has already won increases in salaries and benefits, but it's only a start because support staff deserve so much more. With more members, we'll have an even stronger voice and be able to secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Non-Collective Bargaining States

Short Pitch

Did you know you could be part of the union and that unions are allowed in [STATE]. We are a union that **regularly advocates** on behalf of support staff like you, so we can all get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives. When more people join the union, administrators listen to us. Our union has already secured wins, but it's only a start. With more members, like you, we'll have an even stronger voice and be able to secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Longer Pitch

You may have been told that unions aren't allowed in [STATE,] but that isn't true. We are a union that **regularly advocates** on behalf of support staff, including paraprofessionals, transportation workers, librarians, food service workers [BE SURE TO LIST THE JOB OF THE PERSON YOU ARE RECRUITING] and teachers, so we all can get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives.

Without a union, workers like us are underappreciated and often unheard. When members join the union and band together, administrators listen to us – giving us a stronger voice to advocate.

We do this work because we want to help kids. We're not expecting to get rich, but far too often our work is undervalued. Banding together is the best way to get paid what we deserve.

Our union has already won increases in salaries and benefits, but it's only a start because support staff deserve so much more. With more members, we'll have an even stronger voice and be able to secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Talking Points

These are the safest messages to use among any audience, regardless of the state's collective bargaining status or the ESP's job title.

- **We are a union** that regularly advocates on behalf of support staff.
- We advocate for **higher wages, better benefits**, and improvements to our daily lives.
- Our **voice is stronger** and more effective when we band together.
- Our union has a **proven track record of success**, but we need more members to amplify our voice so we can win higher salaries for workers like us.

Tailored Messaging

[non-collective bargaining states/collective bargaining states]

Paraeducators

Elevator Pitch

We are a union that [regularly advocates/has a legally protected right to negotiate] on behalf of paraeducators, so we all can get higher wages, safety from physical abuse, and improvements to our daily lives.

When more people join the union, administrators listen to us. As paraeducators, we're always looking out for others, but at a time when schools are overwhelmed, who is looking out for us? Our union has already secured wins, but we need more members so we can amplify our voice and secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Messaging Guidance

- Focus even more heavily on wages relative to other messages.
- Safety from physical abuse and other forms of bodily harm is complementary message that resonates.
- Use teachers as a validator, along with other paraeducators.

Clerical, Technical, and Health Services

Elevator Pitch

We are a union that [regularly advocates/has a legally protected right to negotiate] on behalf of support staff like you, so we all can get higher wages, better benefits, and professional development opportunities to support your career and improve your daily life.

Workers like us are rarely asked for our opinions or included when big decisions are made. But when more people join the union, administrators listen to us.

Our union has already secured wins, but we need more members so we can amplify our voice and secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Messaging Guidance

- Place a large emphasis on how the union can convince administrators to *listen* to workers like them.
- Highlight the union's work to provide professional development opportunities as a complementary message.
- It is even more important than with other classifications, to refer to these groups as "support staff." Do not use the term "ESP."

Custodial, Transportation, Skilled Trades, Security, and Food Service

Elevator Pitch

We are a union that [regularly advocates/has a legally protected right to negotiate] on behalf of support staff like you, so we all can get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives.

Our union has already secured wins, but we need more members so we can amplify our voice and secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

School boards across the country are trying to privatize our jobs, but when we have a strong union, we are able to get communities, parents, and teachers on our side to help save our jobs.

Messaging Guidance

- Emphasize the union's work to stop privatization.
- Educate them on their right to join the union, because many support staff don't know they can join.
- Emphasize your local affiliate is a union, not an association.
- Do not use the term "ESP" and be intentional about using teachers as validators.

Guidance on Customization

Do	Don't
Say "support staff" or the specific job title of the person you are recruiting	Don't Say "ESPs" or "educators"
Demonstrate that the union is a good investment by lifting up the value and benefits of membership	Don't proactively bring up the cost of dues
Respond to questions about dues by talking about the monthly cost (\$21/month or local average cost)	Don't respond to questions about dues by talking about the annual cost (\$250/year)
Make the argument that the union will be more powerful and better able to win higher wages and benefits with more members	Don't accuse people of "freeloading" or proactively bring it up

CB vs. Non-CB States

In States with Collective Bargaining:

- Emphasize you have a *legally protected right* to negotiate on their behalf.

In States without Collective Bargaining:

- As needed, make it clear that, yes, unions are legal.
- Emphasize you *regularly advocate* on their behalf.

Localizing Your Message

- Learn the issues facing support staff in your district and be prepared to showcase how the union will help address those issues.
- Highlight the union's past wins in your district / state.
- Use people's specific roles / classifications when you talk to them.

Universal Messages

- Start by educating them about the fact there is a union they can join that will advocate on their behalf.
- Focus on the union's work to secure wage increases and better benefits through collective power.

LANDSCAPE FINDINGS:

The survey and qualitative research with potential members painted a comprehensive, nuanced picture on what motivates ESPs, what they know and think about NEA and its affiliates, and how they react to recruitment communications and messaging. These findings have informed the messaging guidance included above.

Many have not even been recruited. Some report they've received no communications or were never formally asked to join. There is an untapped market out there if we can find the right message and help locals build up recruiting capacity.

Education Support Professionals need to see themselves in NEA's membership. When ESPs hear the word "educators," they don't necessarily think it is referring to them, which leaves them unsure of their eligibility. Likewise, it's important to have messages (and messengers) tailored to goals and results that impact ESPs.

Awareness of the union's existence and potential benefits for member ESPs are both low. Some ESPs are aware of a union in their school, and remember being asked to join, but others are entirely unfamiliar and claim that there is no union in their school at all. Among those familiar with NEA, they are almost entirely unaware of what the union could do for them or already does do for them. They value their benefits but are unaware of the efforts made by the union to win those benefits. They don't know about discounts and programs available to them through union membership. For these ESPs, without a clear understanding of how joining the union could directly benefit them, and direct outreach so they are made aware of the union's presence and efforts on behalf of ESPs specifically, there will be little incentive for them to join at all. This is especially important given the lack of understanding of the true cost of union dues.

ESPs want a union to work towards higher salaries, better benefits, and workplace protection. The most important accomplishments a union could win across job categories included winning higher salaries, providing a safe workplace and protecting ESPs from additional duties outside their core responsibilities, and ensuring that the benefits that drew many ESPs to their job in the first place remain strong.

ESPs will be harder to reach and persuade than teachers. Compared to teachers, ESPs have lower interest in joining the union and more middling ratings of their state affiliate. And while we can increase interest in joining among ESPs, we don't get as much movement as we did with teachers. Part of the reason is that membership dues are more of a barrier for ESPs than for teachers. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't be targeting ESPs – there are still plenty that are open to joining. It does mean that NEA should be deliberate in how it allocates its resources for recruitment between teachers and ESPs given that ESPs are tougher.

Basic education about the union has tremendous value with ESPs, especially in non-collective bargaining states. As we saw in the teacher research, a significant minority of ESPs are unaware that there is a local union available to join. In non-collective bargaining states, just 41% know that there is a union to join. And just 49% of the ready to join – those that start out having significant interest in joining – know that there is (with 30% actively believing there is not). So, there are plenty of ESPs out there that would sign up right now if they knew that the union were an option. Moreover, we reach our apex of interest after a simple pitch that clarifies that unions are allowed (and have a legally protected right to bargain in CB states) and that the state affiliate is a union that advocates for higher wages, benefits, and changes that improve workers' daily lives.

Dues are a major obstacle for ESPs, and many believe they are higher than they really are. A monthly figure is much better for us than an annual figure, but any discussions that focus attention on dues COULD be counterproductive. As we saw in the focus groups, most ESPs believe the union is too expensive and that dues are significantly higher than they really are, though most are not willing to pay even that amount. The \$21 per month figure sounds much more reasonable to ESPs than the \$250 figure, but interest in joining the union declines after a discussion of either, because that discussion increases the salience of cost.

The perception that the union cares more about teachers is an obstacle, but teachers can also be good validators for the union – especially with paraeducators. There is a damaging perception among

ESPs that the union cares more about teachers than about ESPs. However, despite this perception, ESPs (especially our most important targets) have largely favorable views of teachers and generally say they would trust what teachers have to say about their local affiliate – with paraeducators especially showing trust in what teachers have to say.

Wages (and benefits) are relatively more important to ESPs than they were to teachers while items that impact their daily lives are relatively less important. Unsurprisingly, given what we saw in our focus groups, almost everything in this survey points to higher wages being of dominant importance to ESPs, with better benefits being not far behind. Meanwhile, day-to-day concerns like mandates for additional duties and reducing micro-managing are relatively less important for ESPs compared to teachers.

“Support staff” is the most unifying term for ESPs. As we heard when we spoke to ESP organizers, ESP is not a widely used term. Out of four potential identifiers, support staff rose to the top across job classifications. “Educator” was the least likely to be identified as best descriptor, with ESP second from the bottom (and “Classified Workers” in second).

This research confirms that labeling NEA (and each respective affiliate) as a “union” is a net positive. The reaction to the emphasis that these materials place on NEA’s and its affiliate’s status as a union is generally positive. This is consistent with both rounds of quantitative research which showed that there was limited negativity around the word ‘union.’ versus ‘association,’ even in non-CB states.

We need to prepare recruiters to demonstrate that NEA and their local union can achieve these kinds of wins. Many prospective member ESPs are drawn to the statements about higher salaries and better support and see these as relatively realistic things the union could accomplish. We knew going into this research that credentialing our message with examples of local wins would be important and that this would likely be a critical piece of the puzzle that recruiters and organizers would need to fill in around these pieces. This research confirmed these assumptions.

Based on both this and past research, we would recommend that state and local affiliates:

- Continue working to build up their lists of local wins, and arm their recruiters and organizers with this information.
- Where it makes sense, use small wins, like changes to a classroom AC unit or safety improvements, to build credibility that we can deliver bigger wins.
- Use certified teachers as validators to emphasize shared interests, cross occupational divides, and make ESPs feel welcome as union members

POSITIONING AND MESSAGING RECOMMENDATIONS:

These recommendations are based on our full body of research, including the organizer IDIs, potential member focus groups, and the survey, as well as our previous teacher join research.

Start by educating ESPs about the fact that there is a union that they can join that advocates on their behalf. There are a good number of ready to join to collect simply by letting ESPs know that, yes, there is a union they can join that advocates on their behalf (and in non-CB states that, yes, unions are legal). This is particularly important in non-CB states, with younger ESPs, and with Paraeducators.

Be mindful of the negative associations that certain people may have of unions. While some have less than positive views of unions, there’s real excitement about having a union with legally protected rights. Instead of shying away from the label, proactively assuage their concerns:

- **Concern:** unions are too political. → **Solution:** default to a more amicable tone and let people know that the union meets with lawmakers from *both* parties
 - That being said, a more confrontational tone can be more effective with some individuals. Reading the room and adjusting will be important. But amicable should be the default.
- **Concern:** unions don’t look out for students. → **Solution:** remind them how when educators feel good and have the resources they need, they can give students their best
- **Concern:** there might be negative social consequences for joining → **Solution:** remind them they have a legally protected right to join without retaliation, that you work with administrators, and possibly lean into the community of other local members as validation.

Demonstrate that the union is a good investment by lifting up the value of membership rather than proactively focusing on the cost of dues... Even though ESPs generally assume that the cost of membership is higher than it actually is, proactively trying to correct their mistaken assumption reduces interest in joining because it puts the focus on cost: regressions show that the back and forth over dues increases the salience of perceptions that the union is too expensive dramatically.

It IS very important to demonstrate that the union is a good investment as this is a strong driver of interest in joining the union both at the beginning and the end of the survey. Thankfully, our messaging about the value of the union does increase the belief that this is true among our most important target groups.

Our overarching message for potential members should be transformational, focusing on affiliates' potential to give educators a stronger voice, boost wages, and improve educators' daily lives.

Numerous independent tests in our research all point to an overarching message that is more transformational than transactional in nature and does NOT place legal protection at its center. Instead, it should focus on the potential of NEA and its affiliates to achieve real change that includes both higher wages and “smaller” day-to-day items, led by more defined hours and planning time. Working in increased respect from administrators can only help, though is not as essential.

Maximizing this argument requires also demonstrating that NEA and its affiliates can actually get results. To build credibility, stress that the union in their state or area:

- Has a legally protected right to negotiate (or ‘regularly negotiates’) on their behalf
- Regularly meets with lawmakers *from both parties*, to increase support for public education.
- Already has real wins, especially, if possible, local wins on wages – even while qualifying that the increases so far are not enough. (More on this below)
- Has strong membership.
 - To be clear, size is not nearly as good at conveying strength, but it can help. More localized membership numbers are better (50% in district > than 50% in state > largest union nationwide), and higher shares convey more strength (70% in state > 50% in district).
 - Telling potential members they are part of “the largest employee organization and labor union in the country” can work well in areas with lower membership.
 - Further, using membership to establish a sense of positive social pressure is something many organizers emphasize, and it likely plays a role that isn’t directly captured in research.

Liability and protection remain an important value-add for potential members (especially older ones), but they should be secondary, not the centerpiece of our messaging. Protection and liability have resonance with potential members, especially older teachers who have seen unfair accusations, and should remain part of our pitch. However, our regression analyses show that believing NEA and its affiliates “protect educators like me” does NOT drive interest in joining, and protection arguments are not as sticky as ones around a stronger voice and wages. All of this echoes our findings from qualitative research, which showed that relying on a liability message leaves us vulnerable to losing members to non-union alternatives offering competing liability protection. So, we should continue to include liability and protection in our pitch, but as a secondary value-add, not as the centerpiece. As a general rule of thumb, we should:

- Emphasize protection and liability MORE with non-classroom (special area) teachers and teachers who have actually seen a teacher tied up in unjustified accusations.
- Emphasize protection and liability insurance LESS with newer educators, as well as any educators of any experience level who have not seen unfair accusations made against someone they work with or themselves.

Other discrete benefits (professional development, financial counseling, discounts, etc.) can play a role as an add-on to our core pitch if they seem to be relevant to a specific audience or in written materials where space allows. These programs hold appeal with some, and in qualitative helped build some teachers’ sense of the range of value provided. But for the most part, they don’t persuade educators on the fundamental value proposition of the affiliates that we know drive the decision to join. Including the range of benefits in leave-behind materials can be useful, and connecting to educators’ personal experiences may be helpful as well. For example if an educator is speaking to a relatively younger teacher or recent college graduate, bringing up student loan assistance as part of a broader point on boosting wages could make sense. Or, as an educator is discussing difficulty planning lessons, bringing up relevant professional development opportunities could be helpful alongside a broader discussion on securing dedicated planning time and protection from after-hour mandates.

...While being ready to react to concerns about costs by focusing on the \$21/month figure. While we generally do not want to proactively bring up the cost of dues, we know that organizers are going to be asked about dues by potential members. When that happens, we should focus on the \$21/month figure. While this figure is more than 73% of ESPs say they are willing to pay, a majority say that it is reasonable, and it is closer to what they are willing to pay than a \$250/year figure and lower than what most ESPs think dues must be.

We should avoid explicitly addressing freeloading and, instead, combat it implicitly using a collective power message. Freeloading is certainly a problem. A belief that the union “already advocates on my behalf, so it’s not worth it for me to pay to be a member” is a strongly correlated in a negative way with interest in joining the union in our regression analysis. However, not only did our “freeloader” message earn the weakest ratings of any message, but the split that saw message saw about half the increase in interest after our positive message battery than the split that did not.

But that doesn’t mean we should not address the issue. We should just do it implicitly with our collective power message. The belief that the union would be more powerful with more members and that it “gives workers like me a stronger voice” are both drivers of interest in joining and by large margins and we make good gains on both with persuasion targets (especially the latter). Moreover, when we force ESPs to choose, persuasion targets are inclined to agree that more members will make the union more powerful rather than that it doesn’t matter if they join. So, it’s not a surprise that our “collective power” messaging performs well with those targets.

Our most important messaging imperative is connecting that collective power to higher wages (and benefits). Our “wages” message was the top testing message both overall and with key target groups and, more important, dominated the post-messaging open end as the most convincing argument to join. Its strength was also reflected in the strong gains we make in perceptions that the state affiliate “could help me get better pay and benefits” AND the fact that the messaging significantly increases the salience of that metric. Meanwhile, while “winning higher salaries for workers like me” is easily the #1 priority for ESPs, “providing better benefits for workers like me, including retirement benefits and affordable healthcare” was a strong #2. Our larger “benefits” message did not perform terribly well outside of the ready to join, but we think it makes sense to simply incorporate these benefits into our core “wages” message.

Privatization is a solid secondary message with custodial, transportation, and food workers. Our “privatization” message joined our “wages” message as the top testing with persuasion targets, though it didn’t really pop in the post-messaging open-end. However, it was especially strong (relative to other messages) with custodial, transportation, and food workers where it was easily the strongest-testing message with this group of classifications – even higher than wages. This echoes what we saw in the groups where ESPs from these classifications showed strong concern about the prospect of privatization.

A message on the union helping ESPs deal with administrators to improve their daily lives could also be useful, but it is not the kind of imperative that it is for teachers. Our “daily lives” message performed only so-so and ESPs do not rate things like protecting workers from mandates for more duties or reducing micro-management as terribly high priorities. However, regressions show that “could improve my daily life” is one of the strongest drivers of interest in joining and we make some of the largest gains over the course of the survey with persuadable ESPs on this metric. We have recommended some updated language to use as a secondary message, though we do not consider this as important as any of the messaging discussed above.

We need to do more to demonstrate that the union cares about ESPs as much as teachers – including using other ESPs with the same job as validators... As we’ve noted, the perception that the union cares more about teachers than ESPs is a real barrier to joining. The messaging that we’ve discussed above should help on the front, but we need to do more on a tactical level to change this perception as well – things like making sure the union has ESP-specific (and classification-specific) materials and forms. And, where we can, we should use other ESPs who have the same role as our targets as validators for the union as these are easily the most trusted of the potential validators we’ve tested.

Finally, we should also use teachers as a validator, at least when recruiting paraeducators. Teachers aren’t in the same league as a validator as “people who have the same jobs as me.” But, as we’ve noted, our targets view teachers favorably and do have a solid level of trust in what they would have to say about the union. This is especially true of paraeducators, though a bit less true of non-paraeducators.

TARGETING RECOMMENDATIONS:

Our targets who are disproportionately “ready to join” are Democrats and Independents, people of color (especially men), and ESPs under age 55.

Our persuasion targets are Democrats, ESPs under age 45, Black ESPs, paraeducators and food service workers, ESPs in non-collective bargaining states, those in the Midwest, and those who have not previously been members.

Financialization Created Chicago Public Schools' Fiscal Crisis

BY

STEPHANIE FARMER

Chicago Public Schools has constantly found itself in fiscal crises in recent years, crises that then justify brutal austerity. But those crises didn't come from nowhere: they were the logical outcome of turning to Wall Street for funding on credit instead of taxing the rich.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is in a deep and enduring fiscal crisis. After decades of budget cuts, Chicago's public K–12 schools have been hollowed out, magnifying the hardships of stagnant wages, rising housing prices, and more faced by the city's working class. Pundits have predictably blamed CPS's fiscal crisis on either the greedy teachers' union (Republicans' and a few austerity-minded Democrats' scapegoat) or on conservative suburban and rural "downstate" politicians in Illinois hostile to urban children's plight (most Democrats' scapegoat).

But Chicago is a one-party city, controlled by the Democrats, in a solidly blue state, where Democrats usually control the state government. In reality, CPS's endless fiscal crises and austerity are consequences of a ruling-class project to chip away at Chicago public education. This has involved a two-pronged strategy of school-choice policies and education financialization carried out by successive Democratic mayors with the backing and active encouragement of key elements of Chicago capital. School-choice policies seek to remake public education in the image of a competitive market, where schools compete for education consumers (children and their parents). Education financialization expanded the role of financial instruments, actors, and markets in public education's operations.

Together, these policies have reconfigured Chicago Public Schools. The district's funding streams now function as a rent extraction machine, channeling revenue out of the CPS classrooms that serve black, brown, and immigrant working-class neighborhoods and into the pockets of Wall Street.

A Marketplace of Schools

Public K–12 education has many uses. It provides hard and soft skills in preparation for the labor force; socialization in civic, cultural, and political norms; and acts as de facto childcare centers for younger children, reducing the cost of living for parents. Radicals and reformers have demanded tuition-free public education since the late eighteenth century. Universally accessible, tuition-free, public, K–12 education contributes to the social wage, the mix of publicly provided goods and services that add to the normative standard of living. Universal access to tuition-free public K–12 education was rolled out alongside other New Deal reforms of the 1930s and '40s — taxing the rich, the expansion of unions, and regulation of finance and industry — associated with the Keynesian period in the development of US capitalism.

By the 1970s, the Keynesian phase of US capitalism was in crisis as competitor economies in Europe and the Pacific Rim rebuilt following World War II, and high wages and high fixed costs cut into the corporate profit rate. In the 1980s and 1990s, an ideologically committed and organized capitalist class rolled back Keynesian capitalism and rolled out a more cutthroat neoliberal capitalism.

By the 1990s, an anti-tax, anti-union, anti-regulation, and anti-public-sector ideological conventional wisdom had taken root among Republicans and Democrats alike. Taxation was characterized as rent-seeking by the “parasitic state” with its inherently “inefficient” public sector. In contrast, free enterprise capitalism with open markets and light regulation was held up as the ideal institutional arrangement for organizing the production and distribution of nearly all goods and services.

In this context, the meaning of public education shifted. Public education became less about cultural enrichment and civic engagement. Under neoliberalism, the emphasis in public education was placed, first and foremost, on providing individuals with the skills and habits appropriate for the marketplace. Anyone could overcome the hardship of their circumstances so long as they were willing to work hard, first in school and later in the labor force.

Public schools were expected to operate akin to businesses and adapt to the new era of iterative austerity, doing more with less. Public education was expected to reflect and advance the same norms and practices as the prevailing neoliberal capitalism it was embedded in.

In Chicago, Mayor Richard M. Daley and his business-elite organization backers (like the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club) were ahead of the national trend in implementing neoliberal reforms of the school system. In order to make schools function more like businesses, CPS adopted school-choice reform policies (like the 1996 Illinois Charter School Law and the Renaissance 2010 plan of 2004) that would create a simulated “marketplace” of schools. Parents were encouraged to approach education like consumers and choose the best school product for their children, comparing metrics of success like shopping for toothpaste in the grocery store.



Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley in May 2010 (Chris Eaves / Wikimedia Commons)

To create this school marketplace, CPS closed putatively low-performing public schools and rolled out a portfolio of high-performing public schools (like gifted elementary, magnet, and selective enrollment high schools) with competitive admission criteria, primarily in high-value real estate markets.

CPS also privatized the school system through charter schools, schools that are privately operated but still publicly funded. These less transparent, less democratically accountable, and initially nonunionized charter schools were overwhelmingly placed in black and Latino working-class communities.

According to the Chicago Public Schools Comprehensive Annual Financial Report from 1995 to 2018 (our data source throughout), between those years, CPS opened 230 new schools, while closing 123 schools, for a net gain of 107 schools. Over half of CPS's 230 new schools were charter schools. Charter school expansion privileged the interests of charter operators, seeking a foothold for their business enterprises in the city, over what was best for the public school system as

a whole. As the CPS system was growing dramatically with a wave of charter expansion, Chicago's population of school-aged children actually declined from over 435,000 students in 2005 to 371,000 students (64,000 fewer kids) in the CPS system in 2018.

Despite this pattern of population decline, nearly 85 percent of the new charter schools were opened after 2005. By 2018, charter school proliferation consumed 11 percent of CPS's budget, up from just 3 percent in 2006.

The Financialization of Chicago Public Schools

Due to the prevailing neoliberal anti-tax conventional wisdom, the state and city governments were unwilling to raise taxes to fund CPS. So, in order to carry out these school choice reforms, CPS turned to credit markets, paving the way for education financialization. Local education administrators, financiers, and politicians partnered up to devise frameworks and investment instruments that insinuated finance capital into the funding and operation of public education as the needs and well-being of children were monetized for rent-seeking investors.

Finance capital was attracted to public education because it provided new sites for capturing profits. By the 1990s, due to overaccumulation in other markets and government deregulation of finance, capital flooded into US finance and real estate markets. Moreover, dollar-denominated US municipal bonds were comparatively safer and provided steadier returns (albeit at a lower rate of return) than other, more traditional private-sector investment instruments.

With this new, expanded access to credit markets, CPS leveraged \$8.5 billion in debt to finance its oversupply of choice schools. By 2018, CPS was dedicating \$651 million of its budget (or 10 percent of its operations budget) to make payments on its debt, up from \$133 million, or 3.5 percent of its operations budget in 1998 (adjusted for 2018 inflation).

Predictably, charter schools carved out their own niche in the financialization game. Since their finances are considered proprietary, researchers could only find data for 27 percent of all CPS charter schools in 2015 through audits filed with the Illinois State Board of Education. The combined outstanding debt from bond issuances for these Chicago charter schools totaled \$225 million. Ultimately, charter school debt becomes taxpayer debt, since charter schools receive a per-pupil stipend from CPS to cover their facility and operations expenses.



The Chicago Public Schools logo. (WBEZ)

As the debt obligations of CPS grew, the district pursued financial fixes to address debt-driven budget shortfalls. CPS leadership contracted with banks to develop new, higher-risk speculative instruments around CPS debt, including variable rate bonds, auction rate bonds, credit swaps, and options. CPS officials were hoping to deliver a financial windfall for the public sector via these high-risk, high-reward instruments.

CPS made an unprecedented \$1.5 billion bet on bonds with high-risk floating interest rates. Traditional municipal bonds have a fixed interest rate for the term of the bond. In contrast, bonds with floating interest rates have rates of interest that rise or fall in relation to some agreed reference rate (frequently the LIBOR rate at which banks lend to one another). If interest rates fell below the traditional fixed interest rate bonds, CPS would capture significant savings. Yet if interest rates rose above that fixed interest rate, CPS would be obligated to pay more for their bonds than traditional bonds.

Then, in a gambit to protect CPS from the impact of interest rates falling, the district “hedged” their risk by buying \$1 billion worth of interest-rate swap derivatives from Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch, and Lehman Brothers.

When the 2007 financial crisis hit, the Federal Reserve reduced interest rates to 0.5 percent. CPS’s interest-rate swap agreements mandated the school district pay a higher fixed interest rate on their variable rate bonds to the investment banks holding the swaps, which only had to pay a little over 0.5 percent interest rate on the variable bond. The investment banks pocketed the difference between what CPS paid them and what they owed on the bond. The *Chicago Tribune* has shown that the variable rate bonds may have cost Chicago taxpayers \$100 million more than if the schools had borrowed the debt with more traditional fixed interest rate bonds.

Meanwhile, the same banks that were reaping windfall profits from CPS’s interest-rate swap disaster were also receiving federal bailout dollars. There was no bailout for CPS. The district had to pay a total of \$254 million in penalties to terminate all their associated swap contracts in order to refinance their underlying debt at the lower interest rates now

on offer. Since CPS revenues nose-dived during the crisis, they had to turn once again to the credit markets, to borrow money (at interest) from banks awash in government bailout dollars to pay those penalties.

CPS also sold option derivatives to the Royal Bank of Canada and Bank of America on its bonds, where the contract compelled CPS to issue debt if certain conditions occurred, like credit rating devaluations. In the wake of the financial crisis, CPS's bond rating fell below the rating needed to be in good standing for those options. In turn, the banks exercised their rights to make CPS issue another \$263 million in new debt in order to protect their investments.

Altogether, CPS's fling with exotic debt instruments cost the school system at least \$617 million. Since these payments were themselves largely debt financed, the people of Chicago, via the taxes paid to CPS, will end up paying Wall Street nearly \$1 billion on these losses.

Public Education Dispossession

Chicago Public Schools' school choice reform and financializing strategies have entrenched the public schools in a cycle of austerity. Tax cuts for the rich and retrenchment of federal and state government forced local governments into footing the bill for public goods and services under conditions of fiscal austerity. CPS overbuilt public schools through a high debt leverage funding strategy. This debt-driven oversupply of schools in an era of austerity pushed CPS to use risky financial instruments that then increased the debt burden of CPS.

The rising costs associated with building and operating redundant schools, growing debt service obligations, and the fling with high-risk exotic financial instruments produced recurrent fiscal crises. The response from the mayor and CPS leaders has been to embrace more austerity for the public schools, dispossessing Chicago residents of essential public education services.

“Chicago Public Schools’ school choice reform and financializing strategies have entrenched the public schools in a cycle of austerity.”

By the mid-2010s, the school system was anticipating annual half-billion-dollar deficits. With raising taxes off the table, CPS again cut its expenditures to close budget gaps. Since 10 percent of the district's general operations budget is locked into servicing debt, this portion of the budget is off-limits to cuts, requiring CPS to make even deeper cuts to the parts of the budget associated with frontline teaching and learning.

The district cut teaching and other student-facing education professional positions. Between 2010 and 2018, CPS reduced spending on teachers' salaries by \$421 million. In that same period, CPS's debt service payments increased by \$264 million, from \$387 million in 2010 to \$651 million in 2018. Ballooning debt service payments consumed the "savings" from downsizing the teaching labor force, effectively transferring revenue from Chicago's teachers to the investor class.

CPS starved school budgets, forcing individual schools to make repeated \$1 million cuts from their budgets. Things got so bad that schools held toilet paper drives to supply their schools. Other schools have packed forty kindergarteners into single classrooms and slashed arts, language, and other enriching but noncore curriculum. The most vulnerable students with learning disabilities were not spared, as \$40 million in supports was pulled out from under them.

Dispossession was largely racialized. In 2013, under the directive of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, CPS closed forty-nine schools with low enrollments, nearly 90 percent of which were in mostly black communities.



Protesters march in the Loop on March 27, 2013 during a rally to protest the proposed closing of 54 Chicago public schools. (WBEZ / Robin Amer via Flickr)

In contrast, the affluent (and mostly white) families who sent their kids to CPS were largely insulated from dispossession, thanks to activist parents' fundraising activities. According to CPS's Internal Accounts data, CPS schools raised a combined \$33 million from parent groups and "friends of" committees that hosted whimsical holiday craft markets, teacher bartender nights, and school spirit stores in 2018.

You can't blame wealthier parents for plugging the holes in their kids' budgets. But schools in poorer communities could not equally tap into parents' or charitable community members' pockets.

When cuts and closures proved insufficient to fill in the holes in the budget, CPS doubled down on its financialization strategy and issued another \$725 million bond to pay off one year's worth of debt service and short-term operation expenses in 2016. The district was forced to borrow at an onerous 8.5 percent interest rate, since its debt burden drove down its credit rating. The dependence on debt to pay for operating expenses sealed the conversion of CPS into a rent extraction machine for finance capital.

A New Era of Education Inequality

The two-prong strategy of market-based school choice reforms and education financialization pursued by CPS has created a new era of education inequality. Compelling public education to mimic a marketplace of competition has privileged the interests of elites and the affluent over and against the interests of the working-class majority, hollowing out mostly black and Latino communities' schools so that the district could roll out exclusive enrollment schools (disproportionately serving white professional-class families) and a wave of privately operated charter schools.

Education financialization is transforming the distributive role of public schools, from taxing the rich to fund public education, to borrowing money from the rich to pay for schools. CPS's strategy of education financialization turns schools into income streams for rent-seeking finance capital, which siphons public dollars out of classrooms and communities. Those dollars are then channeled into investors' portfolios. As the burden of debt grows, debt overhang is used by austerians as an alibi to further shrink the public sector by inflicting cuts on frontline teaching and learning.

Political leaders can continue to debt finance and grind public education into dust. Or they can change course and tax the rich to raise the revenue necessary to fund public K–12 education. Clearly, taxing the asset-owning rich is the better option than borrowing money from them (through the bond market) and paying them back with interest.

Taxing the rich to spend on universal, tuition-free, public K–12 education funds quality education for all children; reduces economic inequality, channeling revenue away from the rich and raising the social wage for the working class; and demonstrates the efficacy of providing goods and services via the more transparent, more accountable, and democratically planned public sector. If we don't tax the rich to pay for public goods and services, we'll be stuck in endless waves of austerity — and working-class students, parents, and educators will pay the price.

The author thanks Rachel Weber for her contributions to this piece.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephanie Farmer is a professor of sociology at Roosevelt University.

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Analyzing Everyday Oppressions in Union Work

Angel is a newly hired Educational Support Professional (ESP) at Rolling Seas Elementary School – a school that they attended as a child. They are an instructional aide in the special education resource room. This school is known for high poverty, large class sizes, and a high number of English language learners. Angel was the first person in their family to get a degree from the community college. Several generations of Angel's family are all from this community. Angel wanted to continue on at state college to become a certified teacher of students with special needs, but the cost of school was too much. They are a parent who works a second job to earn enough money to eventually move out of their mother's apartment. They are grateful for their family's overall support but wants their own place. Compounding the household budget issues, Angel's child fell off their trike a few years ago resulting in huge, uninsured medical bills. Despite working to pay them off, several are in collection, which is affecting Angel's applications for rental agreements.

Upon meeting the Lead Teacher, Phyllis, Angel is immediately complimented on how well they speak and their lovely, long hair. Phyllis makes sure to discuss how supportive they are of undocumented families and how Angel should feel comfortable in this room with them. As Angel helps Phyllis set up the room for the first day of school, they notice that for any child who has a "different" sounding name, Phyllis puts a bright yellow name sign on the child's desk. Curious, Angel asks about this. Phyllis lets Angel know that these students probably don't speak English and will always come to class without lunch money. All the teachers in the special education program use this as a signal for the lunch accountability tally. "It is just easier that way," says Phyllis.

Later in the day, the conversation turns to getting to know one another and Phyllis asks Angel, "What made you want to be an instructional aide?" Angel shares their story and their aspirations to get a teaching certificate. Phyllis does not have the heart to tell Angel that this dream will likely never come true. There are no reimbursements for professional development for ESP members in the district, and most of the courses required for the full certification program are at the state college in the evening. Phyllis just knows that people like Angel would never be able to overcome the issues of child-care, transportation and added debt, so they don't mention it. "It wouldn't be nice to get their hopes up," thinks Phyllis.

Angel is approached by Carol, the Union's Building Representative (a classroom teacher), and Carol asks them to join the local union. Angel asked about the cost, and Carol responded by saying, "Support staff don't pay much considering all that we have to do for you people. We used to be separate organizations. Now, I think we're more focused on professional issues instead of what matters. The dues are described in this flyer." Carol left a folder of information and a business card of a man that she said worked for the Union. He would help Angel when they got into trouble. Angel asked, "Are there any programs for getting a teaching certification?" "I'll check," says Carol. Angel took the information, but no one ever came to talk to them from the union again. They would have loved to know how to get professional development. Angel called the union office once, and when they asked for information was immediately told they had to be a member first and that they needed to contact the building rep or UniServ Director. "All I wanted was information," they thought, "and all I got was sent back to the people that did not contact me. I guess they really don't want people like me."

As the year went on, and Angel got to know more classroom teachers and instructional aides, they noticed that most of the classroom teachers were people who did not live in the neighborhood around the school, and that most of the instructional aides lived in the school's neighborhood or very close by. At lunch one day Angel shared with their co-worker and neighbor, Elise, their aspirations for becoming a classroom teacher. Overhearing their conversation, Becky, a new classroom teacher, shared her story. "I started here on a conditional certification with only a two-year degree. All I had to do was agree to get my four-year degree in the next three years. I love the state college, my colleagues in the second-grade wing watch my classroom so I can make the evening classes, and we have a babysitter who watches my son in the evenings while I am at class. It is an upfront investment, and the district reimburses up to nine credits a year. I just don't know why more of you don't take advantage of this!"

Analyzing Everyday Oppression in Union Work

Answer the five questions below.

Problems: What inequities is Angel experiencing? What are the specific impacts on Angel and their colleagues? Who benefits most and who is hurt most?	Causes: What institutions, policies, or practices are causing or contributing to the inequities? What social norms, popular myths, or cultural biases may be contributing?
Leadership: Who are the stakeholders most affected by the inequities in this story? Are they involved in naming the issues and solutions? What kinds of active leadership roles could they take to advance the proposed solution?	Solutions: What solutions could address the root causes and eliminate the inequities? How would different racial groups be impacted by the proposed solutions?

5. What race, class, or gender is Angel? What evidence from the story leads you to these conclusions?

CROSS-CLASS CAPACITY TOOL

<https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/cross-class-capacity-tool.html>

This living document was created by the SURJ (Stand Up for Racial Justice) poor and working-class group as an act of love and commitment to our common desire, across the class spectrum, to bring white folks into action, dismantle white supremacy and engage with the complex struggle and beauty of collective liberation.

Some framing: White people working together to dismantle racism is critical work. Attempting to do this work without acknowledgment and thoughtfulness to how class affects folks' experience of race limits a true understanding of what is racism and what is classism. Working to dismantle white supremacy and to end structural and interpersonal racism doesn't mean we can avoid talking about issues of class privilege. On the contrary, if we don't become bold about what cross-class solidarity work means as white folks yearning for racial justice, our work will be less effective and our wins short-lived.

With this in mind here are some examples of common sticky spots that class privileged whites come upon when working across class:

- **Conflating Race and Class.** Assuming that all white people have access to wealth erases white poor and working class people. Referring to communities of color with an assumption of poverty erases the Black middle class and other class privileged people of color. These two systems of oppression use similar tactics and have always been intimately linked, however they are not interchangeable.
- **Scapegoating.** Through subtle or direct means, operating with a bias that assumes working class whites are somehow more racist than white folks with money reinforces classism. This scapegoating takes responsibility away from middle and upper class families who have often accrued wealth through exploitation and takes emphasis away from the damaging policies and practices put in place by wealthy whites that structurally reinforce both racism and classism.
- **Discomfort around conflict.** Recognition of conflict and figuring out disagreement is very different across cultures and classes. White, class privileged cultures often carry a value that avoiding conflict or being 'nice' and 'polite' are the better/only ways to talk about difficult things. This value is not universal and can sometimes stifle needed dialogues.
- **Outcome over Process.** Sometimes the desire to create action can override the process of thoughtful and intentional planning. When intentionality breaks down, group norms will almost always default to those with the most privilege/power calling the shots.
- **One right (controlling) way.** As is true with whiteness in general, within class privileged circles there can be an attachment to things happening in a particular way. The sense of what is the right way is informed by folks' class background and status. Attempts to control or micromanage the details can push out poor and working class involvement/leadership.

- **Attempting to homogenize.** Just as whiteness can attempt to subsume everything into a false perception of sameness, class privileged cultures often do the same. Creating cultural norms around language, dress, actions etc that cater to middle and upper class comfort. Bringing working class folks to the table without changing the class culture of the table in question will often be short lived.
- **Palatability.** Choosing only working class folks who are college educated or otherwise assimilated into middle/upper class norms to be a spokesperson/reference point around class.
- **Convenience.** Recognizing class dynamics when it's convenient but treating it as off topic when brought up in a way that challenges power or requires long term investment in our lives and communities.
- **Masking/False Scarcity.** Presenting as though stressed about money from a false sense of scarcity, not a lived experience of not having access to enough. This can be done in an attempt to relate to working class people or to assuage guilt, confusion, a lack of exposure to cross class learning spaces, or a combination of them all.

Examples of things that can be alienating to welfare/working poor, low income and working class whites:

- Speaking for and about working poor, low income and working class whites without the necessary leadership or adequate representation from these communities.
- Introductions that pivot on education/employment status and lineage or political resume and credentials. This holds true within emails, on conference calls and in person.
- Giving advice or asking questions about people's struggle; our impairments/health, lack of money, employment or anything that might be intrusive, patronizing or blaming.
- Presuming shared experience about activities that are dependent on middle class lifestyle and values of some sort, examples: college, out of state / country travel for pleasure, rejuvenation or political actions
- Using acronyms without explanation
- Not using class identifiers (see below)
- Defensive reactions to questions and feedback about barriers and assumptions that hinder our involvement.
- Inaccessible language and jargon (academic and non-profit speak)
- Making fun of, dismissing, or shaming working, welfare class, and rural cultures and equating our communities with ignorance and bigotry.
- Cultures of perfection, 'professionalism', and respectability politics (meaning messaging, language, formatting, and campaign demands have to be always appear 'respectable' to middle and upper class people in order to be legitimate)
- Commodifying our lived experiences to add credibility without an implemented commitment to alter the material conditions of instability and poverty we often are living through within our practice of white anti-racism.

Examples of some things that create room to be, breathe, and engage as welfare, working-poor and working-class whites:

- Provide food and childcare at meeting spaces/events. Ensure that meeting spaces are child friendly and have reasonable start and finish times
- Use class identifiers – be transparent and honest about your class background when getting to know each other and when starting to work together. Often class is not mentioned, and therefore, class experiences and differences are erased, even though they strongly inform everything we do!
- Practice creative ways to redistribute wealth. Examples include: prioritizing (whenever possible) resourcing of poor, welfare and working class leaders, as well as local leaders in under-resourced areas, over well resourced, urban career consultants. Work on building a presence within our communities that provides support for ordinary needs. Resource and staff regular food banks, provide basic advocacy for folks navigating government benefits. Help with access to childcare, healthcare and housing. Commit to stay - reduce the impact economic fragility and exploitation has upon our vulnerability to the race bribe. Build up local leadership within these spaces.
- Move at an accessible pace! Keep in mind that poverty and instability can be debilitating and at times completely preoccupying. Modeling a schedule, leadership or decision making structure based on class privileged and able bodied capacity can be a deterrent to poor and working class involvement.
- Engage in campaigns that are relevant to welfare and working class whites, ideally that are developed by and for low-income white folks. Includes relevancy in approach, demands, and language.
- Reflect on what type of culture is being created and in what ways it's centered around middle/upper class norms and comfort. What would it look like to center it around working class participation instead? Practice moving back from the front of the room and decision-making positions - embrace the value of being middle class / upper working class supporters and allies of working poor and low income leadership and direction.
- Support meeting spaces (in person, phone, online, etc.) for welfare and working class whites to strategize, share and develop resources, develop peer mentorship relationships, and support each other!
- Prioritize resourcing of leadership development and training for poor, welfare, and working class organizers
- Provide fundraising support for poor and working-class led projects (fundraising training as well as sharing resources)
- Provide travel support – metro cards / rides . Know where the local food stamp / HUD/ social security/ food banks office and shelters are.
- Find other class privileged people to sort thru things with. Challenge one another to dive deeper with your understandings and self reflection. Understand that less privileged folks get to move away from situations, without explanation, that they simply don't

want to have to deal with... again. Remember it is not the responsibility of welfare and working class folks to be supportive of a middle/upper class learning moment when those with less power are being hurt, alienated, offended, oppressed, triggered, and insulted.

Shifts of Consciousness for the Anti-Classist Activist

By Paul C. Gorski
 (gorski@edchange.org)
<http://www.EdChange.org>

1. Charity is Not Activism

Charity, when not coupled with an insistence on and movement toward systemic change, only reaffirms the power hierarchy. It does not—*can not*—lead to real sociopolitical reform because it fails to challenge existing power structures. Moreover, a benchmark of authentic activism is personal vulnerability. Charity does not make me or my privilege vulnerable. In fact, it allows me to maintain a comfortable distance. Therefore, seeing charity as activism is a demonstration in privilege.

2. “Culture of Poverty” or “Culture of Classism”?

Dozens of studies conducted since the early 1970s refutes Oscar Lewis's (and more recently, Ruby Payne's) construction of a “culture of poverty.” The poor Somali immigrants arriving in Minnesota this year are *not* the same culturally as poor families who have lived for generations in Appalachian West Virginia, for instance. And again, focusing on the supposed cultures of oppressed people is an expression of privilege, as it diverts attention from the gross and systemic class inequities (such as inequitable access to high-quality schooling) that pervade the U.S. and the world. It is this culture—the culture of *classism*—that I, as an anti-classist activist, must work to eliminate.

3. Capitalism Is Not Democracy

The consciousness of the anti-classist activist refuses binaries and false correlations by challenging most vigorously those notions that are defended most vigorously by the power structure. Chief among these is the unquestioned rightness and fairness of capitalism. Despite the propaganda, there is nothing inherent about capitalism that aligns it with democracy or freedom or justice. But somebody benefits from the notion that these concepts are synonymous. Who might that be? Other notions, systems, and conditions for critical reconsideration: consumer culture, globalization, and corporate welfare.

4. The De-demonization of Socialism

It's odd, don't you think, that while everybody seems to agree that a public (meaning *socialist*) education system is an essential part of democracy, a public healthcare system is inherently evil. And again, who exactly benefits from this demonization?

5. With Whom Lies the Deficit?

Deficit theorists such as Ruby Payne essentially blame poor people for their poverty by pointing to supposed deficits in their characters, spiritualities, and world views. Deficit theory helps to justify what Herbert Gans calls “the war against the poor”: the process of linking nearly every social ill to people in poverty in order to justify the elimination of social programs and policies meant to help them. If we see the poor as “undeserving,” then we needn’t waste our energies questioning skyrocketing healthcare and housing costs, the dissolution of labor unions, the disproportionate amounts of water and air pollution in high-poverty neighborhoods, or the fact that tens of thousands of people die all over the world each day from preventable poverty-related illnesses. The *real* deficit is a moral one and it lies with people who perpetuate classism, not with those who bear the brunt of that classism.

6. The Un-Meritocratic Meritocracy

The ideal of meritocracy assumes a level of equity and social justice that simply doesn’t exist, either in the U.S. or most (if not all) other societies. The education system is a good example. Economically disadvantaged students are much more likely than their wealthier peers to be assigned to schools with an abundance of unlicensed and inexperienced teachers, dilapidated buildings, inadequate educational materials, lower-order thinking curricula, over-crowded classrooms, and high teacher turnover rates. These conditions are wholly unrelated to individual students’ intelligence, ability, motivation, or “merit.” But they have an enormous impact on the quality of education students receive and, as a result, on their future opportunities. We might say we have a *wealthocracy*, wherein access and opportunity are granted on the basis of one’s existing levels of access and opportunity. Where’s the “merit” in that?

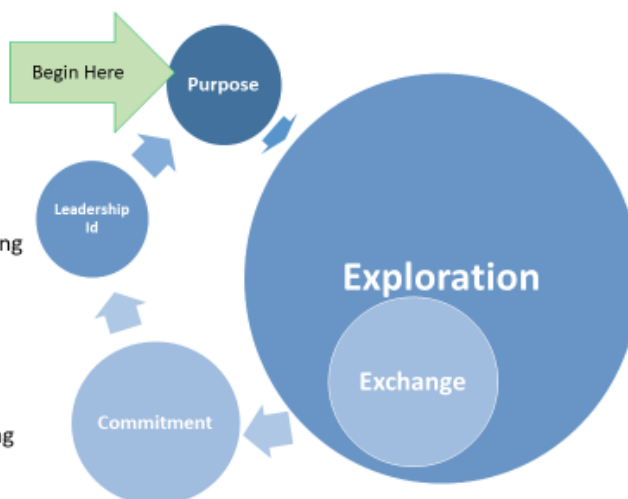
7. Everything’s an Intersection

One cannot understand classism or poverty, whether locally, nationally, or globally, without understanding its intersectionality with a plethora of other oppressions. In the U.S., for instance, classism is inextricably linked to racism. Slavery, Jim Crow, housing discrimination, Manifest Destiny—these are examples of racism institutionalized for the purpose of economic exploitation. Only about 4% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women. People with disabilities are much more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities. Much of the undocumented immigration that some people rail against today is at least in part the result of U.S. and European colonization, imperialism, and economic exploitation of Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. So any attempt to study or act against poverty and classism without a deep understanding of these intersections cannot succeed. And I cannot be an authentic anti-classist activist without also being a committed anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-every-kind-of-oppression activist.

Developing Your Script for One on One Conversations

Conversation Wheel

- **Purpose**
 - Let them know why you are meeting even before you get there.
- **Exploration and Exchange**
 - Most of the 1 on 1 is devoted to asking probing questions
 - So that we can exchange resources, stories, information, support, insight
- **Commitment**
 - We end with a commitment to start working together or continue working together.
- **Leadership ID**
 - Who here is trusted and respected



Example of a Relationship Building Script (Based on 25 Minutes)

Purpose VERY BRIEF 1 minutes:

Hello my name is _____. I am with the _____. I am excited that we could meet today to talk about _____. We scheduled (amount of time) so I want to jump right in. (In your Script think about 2 or 3 BRIEF sentences about you that allow you to be more relatable – for example what are your values related to this conversation, purpose for your work, who you are working with.)

Exploration and Exchange 80% OF THE CONVERSATION 20 Minutes:

Exploration -Ask probing questions to learn about the other person's values and interests, as well as resources they might hold. In response, it's up to you to share enough about your own values, interests, and resources so that it can be a reciprocal exchange – relatable. But remember the focus is on them.

Start by asking questions like:

- "Why is this issue important enough for you to act?"
- "Can you remember the first time you stood up for something you believed in?"
- "Did you always feel strongly about this issue? Why / why not and what changed that?"

Exchange -once you have an understanding of their story and motivations, briefly share yours. Wherever you find similarities between their story and yours, make a connection.

Commitment 3 Minutes:

A good one on one meeting ends with a commitment to work together. This commitment is best secured through a direct ask:

- Stress the urgency of the commitment you are asking for:
"Your colleagues need more people like you to join them in making this school a better place to work"
- Emphasize the values you have in common:
"To achieve a better place to work we both know it is going to take hard work and standing together."
- Frame it so that it seems the person you're asking is the solution to the problem:
"Would you join the union today to help your colleagues make this a better place to work?"
- Be specific, make sure they understand what it is you are asking them. Provide time and space for them to ask questions until they're clear.
- End the meeting with an understanding of next steps – that is, they should leave knowing the next time you will meet or how and when they will hear from you

Leadership Identification 1 Minute: Who here is trusted and respected?

Building Relationships

Key Concepts

- The **1:1 meeting** is a key tool for establishing and maintaining relationships; there are three types of 1:1s – recruitment, maintenance, and escalation.
- A **“hard ask”** is an effective way to ask for a commitment to establish a relationship.
- **Recruitment and retention best practices** can significantly increase the rate at which new people join and stay on your team.

Why Build Relationships?

Again, we define organizing as leadership that enables people to turn the resources they have into the power they need to make the change they want. Power comes from our **commitment** to work together to achieve common purpose, and commitment is developed through relationships.

“Organizing is a fancy word for relationship-building.”

– Mary Beth Rogers

Building Intentional Relationships

Relationships are rooted in shared values. We can identify values that we share by learning each other’s stories, especially “choice points” in our life journeys. The key is asking each other “why?”

Relationships are long term. Organizing relationships are not simply transactional. We’re not simply looking for someone to meet our ask at the end of a 1:1 meeting (read on for what this means) or house meeting. We’re looking for people to join with us in sustained, long-term growth and action.

Relationships are created by mutual commitment. An exchange becomes a relationship only when each party commits a portion of their most valuable resource to it: time. Because we can all grow and change, the purposes that led us to form the relationship may change as well, offering possibilities for deeper relationships or more enriched exchange. The relationship itself becomes a valued resource.

Relationships involve consistent attention and work. When nurtured over time, relationships sustain motivation and inspiration and become an important source of continual learning and development for the individuals and communities that make up your organizing campaigns.

The 1:1 Meeting

The 1:1 meeting is a tool to establish, maintain, and grow relationships in organizing. Each 1:1 meeting has four key pieces:

Purpose – Be up front in establishing why you are meeting in order to make sure you are both on the same page. If you plan to ask the person you're meeting with to make a commitment at the end of your 1:1, it is appropriate to let them know when you set up the meeting and remind them at the beginning of your meeting, so that they aren't caught off guard.

Exploration – Most of the 1:1 is devoted to exploration by asking probing questions. If you are meeting a person for the first time, ask questions that help you understand their story, values, and resources that may be relevant to your shared purpose (e.g. knowledge or skills they may have). If you already have a relationship, ask questions that help you understand what's going on in their life, or the challenges or success they are experiencing in their organizing.

Exchange – We exchange resources in the meeting such as information, support, and insight; you may connect your stories or provide coaching on a challenge. This creates the foundation for future exchanges.

Commitment – A successful 1:1 meeting ends with a commitment to start working together or continue working together.

Three Types of 1:1 Meetings

There are three types of 1:1s that you will use or engage in in your organizing relationships.

1. Recruitment 1:1

These meetings happen at the start of a relationship to connect you and a new organizer and establish a connection based on shared goals and values. The goals of the recruitment 1:1 are to make a personal connection, use your personal story to identify and gauge potential and interests, probe for a shared experience and connect on values, and lastly, pivot to engagement – that is, move the volunteer to action based on what you've discussed. Think about the volunteer's aptitude, skills, and connections when considering how to best engage them.

See page 18 later in this section for a sample recruitment 1:1 meeting agenda.

2. Maintenance 1:1

These meetings should occur regularly between you and each of your organizers (assuming that you are in a leadership role in your team or snowflake). This is an opportunity to catch up on a personal level, debrief recent actions taken by the organizer and their team, and offer coaching. Maintenance 1:1s should be scheduled regularly and proactively: do not wait for a problem to occur to schedule one. A good guideline is to schedule a maintenance 1:1 every two weeks.

3. Escalation 1:1

These meetings are for organizers who are ready to take the next step on the "ladder of engagement" in assuming more responsibility and taking on ownership of goals (see the Structuring Teams section for more information on the "ladder of engagement"). First, recognize the accomplishments the organizer has already made, then propose the idea of taking on this new leadership role. If all goes as planned and the organizer accepts, take the time to clearly lay out the responsibilities and expectations for this new role.

Because every organizer has a limited amount of time, and maintenance 1:1s need to happen regularly, each organizer has a limit to how many relationships they can maintain. See the Structuring Teams section for information on "sustainable relationship ratios."

Maintenance 1:1s are the primary opportunity to coach an organizer. See the Coaching section for more information on how to approach coaching.

Hard Asks

When you ask someone to make a commitment – for instance, attend an event or take on a new role – it's important to make an effective ask, or what we call a "hard ask." A hard ask is an ask that results in a commitment to a specific action. Here are some best practices for a hard ask:

- Ask in **concise, plain, and specific language**.
 - » Example of an effective hard ask:
"Can you come to our team meeting next Wednesday at 6pm at Alisha's house?"
 - » Example of an ineffective ask:
"Would you be interested in coming to a meeting at some point to meet the team and talk about how you might want to get involved?"
- Never apologize for asking: organizing is an opportunity, not a favour. Sometimes we feel badly for asking someone to take action because we feel it is an inconvenience, when really, we're providing the person we're asking with an **opportunity** to take action.
- Don't ask them to commit to something general; instead, **have a specific event or role in mind**. If it's an event (e.g. a canvassing event or house meeting), include the date, time, and location in your ask.
- **Convey urgency**: Describe an urgent problem and how the person you are asking is the solution to the problem.

Three Types of No

When securing commitment, it's inevitable that our hard asks will sometimes be met with "no." In organizing, there are **three types of "nos"** that you will encounter – "**not now**," "**not that**," and "**not ever**" – and being attuned to the difference will dictate how you proceed with the person you're asking.

If someone says "no" they might mean "not that time," so try offering another time or date. For example:

"Can you come to our next team meeting on Monday at 5PM?"

"No, I have to work then."

"No problem, we have another meeting next Sunday at 1PM, can you come to that?"

If someone says "No, I don't want to do that," it probably means "not that." Try asking them to commit to something else. For example:

"Can you come door-to-door canvassing with us on Tuesday at 5PM?"

"I don't know if I feel comfortable going door-to-door, I've tried it before and found it really intimidating."

"That's okay! We are also planning an event to recruit new volunteers for the end of the month. Will you come to the planning meeting for that on Sunday at 1PM?"

If someone says definitively “No, I’m not interested in doing more” or “No, I don’t want to join the team,” then don’t worry about it! Thank them and move on. For example:

“Can you come door-to-door canvassing with us on Tuesday at 5pm?”

“No, I am too busy right now to take on anything else, I’m sorry!”

“That’s okay, thanks for taking some time to talk with me. Have a great day!”

Sample Recruitment 1:1 Agenda

The following is a sample recruitment 1:1 meeting agenda. Reminder here that this is a framework you can follow, not an exact formula for what you must do in a 1:1.

Purpose (2 minutes) – Be up front about your purpose for the meeting (e.g. “Our team needs a new canvass lead.”), but that first, you’d like to take a few moments to get acquainted.

Exploration, Connection, and Exchange (20 minutes) – Most of the 1:1 is devoted to exploration by asking probing questions to learn about the other person’s values and interests, as well as resources they might hold. In response, it’s up to you to share enough about your own values, interests, and resources so that it can be a reciprocal exchange. Start by asking questions like:

“Why is this issue important enough for you to act?”

“Can you remember the first time you stood up for something you believed in?”

“Did you always feel strongly about this issue? Why / why not and what changed that?”

Once you have an understanding of their story and motivations, share yours. Wherever you find similarities between their story and yours, make a connection.

Commitment: A Hard Ask (10 minutes) – A successful 1:1 meeting ends with a commitment to work together. This commitment is best secured through a hard ask:

- Stress the urgency of the commitment you are asking for:
“We need another canvass lead to enable our team to meet our target.”
- Emphasize the values you have in common:
“To achieve the change we want we need to meet our targets.”
- Frame it so that it seems the person you’re asking is the solution to the problem:
“Will you take on the role of canvass lead?”
- Be specific, make sure they understand what it is you are asking them. Provide time and space for them to ask questions until they’re clear.
- End the meeting with an understanding of next steps – that is, they should leave knowing the next time you will meet or how and when they will hear from you.

In this portion of the 1:1, you are trying to get them to share their Story of Self with you, and then to share your story to build a Story of Us. See the Telling Stories section for what this means.

Best Practices for a 1:1

Do	Don't
Schedule a time to have this conversation (usually 30-60 minutes)	Be unclear about purpose and length of conversation
Plan to listen and ask questions	Try to persuade rather than listen and ask questions
Have a plan for your meeting – give context or purpose, connect with one another, and secure commitment	Chit chat about your interests
Share experiences and motivations	Skip stories to 'get to the point'
Illustrate a vision that articulates a shared set of interests for change	Miss the opportunity to share ideas about how things can change
Be clear about your next steps together	End the conversation without a clear plan for next steps
Split the bill if you meet in a coffee shop or restaurant	Pay for the whole bill (note: it can make the relationship feel transactional and can get expensive in the long run!)
Meet in public unless you know them well (e.g. a coffee shop or public park)	

Recruitment & Retention Best Practices

Employing best practices can significantly increase the rate at which new people join and stay on your team. Here are some key best practices to keep in mind when building and maintaining relationships:

- Don't be apologetic: organizing is an opportunity, not a favour. When asking for commitment, be enthusiastic.
- Always Follow-Up: When someone offers to get more involved, ask for their contact information and give them yours. Follow up with them as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours.
- Always schedule for the next time: don't let anyone leave without asking when they'll be coming back.
- Confirm commitment: use a hard ask and make sure your people understand that you are counting on them.
- Plan for no-shows: assume that half of your people will turn up. For example, if you need four people for a successful event, plan on scheduling eight.
- Design actions that are empowering to participate in.

Designing actions so that they are inherently motivational is a key way to keep people engaged. See the Acting: Targets & Timelines section for information on "motivational engagement."

In organizing, it's up to us to create welcoming, organized spaces and engage volunteers so that they keep coming back. The following is a list of top reasons why volunteers don't return:

- They don't feel it is worth their time
- Atmosphere is disorganized and they don't feel they're receiving attention or direction
- No one explained why the work they are doing is important
- They are uncomfortable doing what they have been asked to do
- They feel overwhelmed by tasks and goals
- The volunteer environment is unwelcoming
- No one recognizes their contribution
- No one asked them

To summarize, building strong, resilient relationships is critical for effective community organizing. Our power stems from our commitment to one another and to taking action together, and the hard ask, the 1:1 meeting, and best practices for recruitment and retention are key ways we can secure commitment in our work.

Thinking About Organizing Conversations – A.K.A. – One on Ones

Organizing Through the Anxiety by Max Belasco, UPTE-CWA for "The *Strikewave* Editorial Collective"

Imagine this for a minute:

You're representing your local at a day long new staff orientation. Your contract gives you fifteen minutes to talk about the union, sign members up for mailing lists, and get as many in the room interested in coming out to the next meeting. Management has "unintentionally" gone long in the driest HR presentation you can imagine, and warms the room up for you by saying that once the union representative is done everyone can break for lunch. By the time you're up, you've got ten minutes and the crowd is looking at the clock more than you. Who are you, trying to talk contracts and grievances and putting their lunch off?

Or maybe think about this scenario: you need to visit a building on campus filled with workers notorious for being evasive and difficult to reach. You're in contract negotiations, and you need to get folks to sign commitment cards saying that they'll keep paying their dues for the coming year. There are some in the building that are friendly to your union, but there are more than a few that won't greet you warmly. You've got to prepare for coworkers demanding that you leave the building, along with some very aggressive managers who will threaten to call security if you dare to talk to their workers while they're on the clock.

If you're at all like me, either of these situations makes your stomach turn. I vomited after my first visit encountering workers hostile to our union. I'm an introvert by nature; I've been struggling with social anxiety for most of my adult life, and I'm normally very conflict-averse. Many of our union kin are in the same boat, and some still don't seem to understand why I wanted to start engaging members and take on the duty of being a steward for our local. They certainly don't believe me when I explain to them that I find the experience empowering and therapeutic.

The first dozen times I did site visits or presentations to new staff were some of the hardest experiences I've had at work. Having conversations with dozens of complete strangers on a regular basis, and getting asked very specific questions about HR and the grievance process, all the while trying to look more authoritative and trustworthy than management, is a nerve wracking experience. What if I give the wrong information, mess up someone's case, embitter them and their coworkers forever to the union? What if I lose this whole orientation crowd and nobody attends our new member meetings? What if someone more experienced could have handled that conversation better, won that member over, and my failure to do so is just hurting my union?

But it started to change for me when I first learned to have organizing conversations. Conversations with strangers, inside or outside a union context, are frightening to me. I'm terrible with small talk and I never know what to say. I thought organizers had to be charismatic and witty, charming members into attending meetings. It never dawned on me that there was a structure to the way organizers would have conversations with those they are organizing: a structure that guides someone into becoming more involved in building their union. Once I learned that organizing conversations have a natural arc and you can use this to identify a coworker's issues, agitate them by validating their concerns, get them to lay the blame at the feet of the boss, and then have them commit to take action to resolve the issue, I started picking up some lessons I use for every social situation.

Of course, organizing conversations aren't exactly like conversations you have with friends and family—it's poor form to bring a petition or union cards for everyone to sign at Thanksgiving. But I've found what makes for a good organizing conversation also makes a good conversation in general. Trying to discover my coworker's issues made a lot more patient and deliberate in my listening to any conversation partner, making me focus on asking

questions rather than scrambling for something clever to say. Don't get me wrong: I'm still terrible at small talk. But I feel my conversations in general have gotten much more thoughtful and clear since I started adopting lessons from organizing conversations.

When I first started canvassing buildings I found success agitating coworkers once I found out what issues bothered them the most, but earning a commitment from them to come to a meeting seemed impossible to me. Part of it was just not wanting to be rebuffed by a lot of coworkers about union work, but another part of me was worried that maybe I was pushing people too much out of their comfort zone. What if I was demanding too much, and actually coming off as a jerk?

I remember sharing this concern with a more experienced union member, and his response to me is something of a mantra now—"Don't make decisions for your coworkers." An organizing conversation is an invitation you give your coworkers to take a more active role in building their power in the workplace. They may say no, but if you never ask you deny them that opportunity to make that decision for themselves.

I'm not saying that every introvert should brave their anxiety and other inhibitions to become a steward, or dive head first into organizing conversations. They're challenging and can be emotionally taxing, and it took years of practice for me to get competent at them. However, they're also structured, and that structure keeps me centered when I'm organizing in a way I don't find in other social situations. I doubt that I'd have the handle on my own social problems that I have now if I didn't learn organizing conversations as a technique.

Talking with your coworkers is hard. Having a weak union—or no union—is much harder. The way we build power is by learning to trust each other, and you build that trust one conversation at a time. Make sure that you know your own limits, but don't think being a good organizer is contingent on being a social butterfly.

Max Belasco is a rank-and-file member of UPTE-CWA and a member of the StrikewaveEditorial Collective.

Bad Habits of Listening Checklist (for self or others)

The following is a list of ten bad habits of listening. Check any of the listening bad habits that you are sometimes guilty of committing when communicating with others. Be honest with yourself!

- I interrupt to try to finish the other person's sentences.
- I jump to conclusions.
- I am often overly parental and answer with advice, even when not requested.
- I make up my mind before I have all the information.
- I am a compulsive note taker.
- I don't give any response afterward, even if I say I will.
- I am impatient.
- I lose my temper when hearing things that I don't agree with.
- I try to change the subject to something that relates to my own experiences.
- I think more about my reply while the other person is speaking than what he or she is saying.

***If you have someone you trust have them fill out this form for you sometime, from their perspective. It can be a very enlightening and positive experience.

Communication Shutdowns

This list is made up of common phrases people use that tend to shut down conversations and communication. If not prepared for this it can create major barriers.

Come up with examples of questions or statements you can use to direct/redirect, move towards a positive outcome or help discover the obstacles that this person feels are in the way.

1. Don't be ridiculous
2. It'll cost too much.
3. That's not my responsibility.
4. We don't have time.
5. We've never done that before.
6. That's not the way we do things around here.
7. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
8. We're not ready for that.
9. You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
10. It will never sell.
11. We will become the laughing stock of the community.
12. We tried that before and it didn't work.
13. It simply can't be done.
14. It's too radical of a change.
15. That will make our current equipment obsolete.
16. It's not really our problem.
17. Let's get back to reality.
18. I need to go over the numbers again.
19. Let's put a pin in that for now.
20. It's not in our budget.
21. We have done alright without it all this time.
22. It won't work here.
23. Okay, but if it doesn't work, you're the one who's going to get the blame.
24. I don't personally agree, but if you insist.
25. Are you crazy?

Recovering Information – Asking Questions to Understand

We often generalize when speaking, and in doing so, leave some information out. Recognize when generalizations are being used, and recover the missing information or reasoning with questions.

Generalizations	When You Hear:	Ask:	Find the Reasoning
Universal words	Every, all, never, always, etc.	“Every time?” “All of the group?”	What is the size, frequency, scope of the issue?
Restriction of possibility	Can’t, impossible, unable	“What stops you?” What would happen if you did?”	What barriers do you perceive?
Statement of necessity	Have to, necessary, must	“Or what would happen?” What would happen if we didn’t?”	What consequences do you fear?
Nominalizations Words that label a process as a thing or category	“No communication” “Lack of Transportation”	“How would you like to?” “What doesmean to you?”	How specifically does this category affect you?
Unspecified nouns and verbs	“Costs are rising” “Work is harder”	“Which costs” “Compared with what?”	What specifically does this category represent for you?
Simple negatives	Not sure, not happy	“About what in particular?”	“Find out where the discomfort arises”
Lack of reference	They aren’t happy, It happens all the time	“Who specifically?” “To you or to someone you know?”	Try to distinguish personal experience and the experience of others’ in circle of reference

Some Tips for Overturning Objections

- Keep asking. Make the potential member your project until he or she joins.
- If a potential member attempts to get you to argue or defend your position, respond with a question or offer to provide more information.
- Listen to what the potential member is saying. Continue to use listening skills while the person fully expresses his or her objection.
- Refrain from giving an immediate response to an objection.
- Keep the potential member talking after he or she has raised an objection. Ask open-ended questions that reflect on what the potential member said. This helps the person “talk it through” without your arguing or defending.
- Determine if the potential member is firm in his or her objection by observing if he or she sticks to it.
- Listen carefully until it is your turn. Then check out your statement of what you believe the objection is before you respond to it. (People often want to merely get something off their chests. In that case, just hearing them out is all that is required.)
- Share your own reasons for joining. An enthusiastic member is the best person to promote the organization.

The following are some of the most useful techniques for responding to objections:

- “That was yesterday. What can we do about it now?”
- “What should we start doing?”
- “I’ll accept that.”
- “Even if that were true...
 - what can we do to change it?”
 - what better option do we have?”
 - what better option have we than to work together?”
 - how about giving us a chance?”
 - why don’t you join us to change it?”
 - why don’t you join sides with the rest of us?”
 - I believe it’s the best thing we have going.”
- “I hear what you are saying.”
- “I understand.”

Overturning Some Specific Objections

Recruiters will be most successful if they follow the listening techniques already explained and illustrated. Their own, personal answers to questions are very likely to be the best ones to use.

Experience has shown that some questions arise again and again in all jurisdictions, all sections of the country, among all employee classifications and in local affiliates of every size.

The pages immediately following deal with 12 of the most often heard objections. We offer a number of possible responses to each objection. These are merely guides. We include them to help you along in your training session. Do not substitute them for personal ingenuity and creativity and certainly not for answers that prospective members themselves suggest in conversations with the recruiters.

Recruiter's own personal answers to questions are very likely the ones to use, but take time to consider the suggested responses to common objections.

Objections and Responses

1. "Membership costs too much. I can't afford it."
2. "Why should I join? I get the benefits for nothing."
3. "I don't agree with _____ of the Association."
4. "I'd join the local (or local/state) but not NEA."
5. "I don't like unions."
6. "We shouldn't be involved in politics."
7. "The Association doesn't do anything for kids and education."
8. "My spouse is a member. I don't need to join."
9. "I don't like (past or present) leaders."
10. "We don't need to be members this year." (non-bargaining year)
11. "I'm disgruntled because of what happened in the past."
12. "I don't know how long I'll be working here." (retiring soon)

Objections and Responses

(Continued)

1. "Membership costs too much. I can't afford it."

- "How can you afford not to?"
- "You pay only ____ a pay day (week). What can you buy for only ____ a pay day (week)?"
- "The cost of membership is less than the cost of a Big Mac, (movie, a six pack of beer...)." Equate the daily amount to an item it would buy.
- "Money is tight for most of us. We're all on the same salary schedule. Those of us who join think the benefits outweigh the cost."
- "Membership can actually save you money if you take advantage of NEA Member Benefits opportunities." Show how members save money through NEA Member Benefits group buying.
- One recruiter placed a copy of his first pay voucher alongside a current voucher on a sheet of paper to show how much he'd gained in salary over the years. On the same sheet of paper he wrote, "Thanks, to a large extent, to the Association's efforts."
- Cite salary increases over recent years and credit Association lobbying and bargaining efforts. Show that dues are a good investment.
- List protections and benefits members get 365 days a year for just \$____ per day in dues, such things as lobbying at the state and federal levels, contract enforcement, bargaining, defense in legal cases.
- "What if you lost your job? You will need the Association to represent you more than ever if you need your salary, medical insurance, and retirement credit from you job."
- "If you needed an attorney to defend you against charges such as child abuse, how would you pay the bill?"
- Remind NEA-Student Program members that their membership dues entitle them to a credit that will be deducted from their dues when they join NEA as active members after graduation.
- Equate dues to an investment.
- Remind NEA Retired members that their membership keeps them protected and involved.
- "You aren't buying services, you're buying into a cooperative."
- "You don't wait until your house is on fire to buy fire insurance." Equate paying membership dues to buying insurance.
- NEA Dues Tab provides life insurance in the amount of your dues for continuous membership.
- Personalize your message by using a member who is a single parent, new employee, or veteran member who has never had to actually "use" the organization.

Objections and Responses

(Continued)

2. “Why should I join? I get the benefits for nothing.”

- “No one gets the benefits free. Your colleagues at the local, state and national levels are paying the tab.”
- Make a list of what non-members don’t get.
- Members pay dues that cover the cost of representation and bargaining for all bargaining unit members and potential members (in units that don’t have fair share provisions where all employees pay for the costs of representation.) In addition, dues payments entitle members to vote, hold office, attend meetings, voice their concerns, and be represented on all work related matters. It also entitles them to liability insurance and buying privileges reserved for members.
- “It costs money to represent employees.”
- “The time has come when members can no longer carry the financial burden of others who have failed to make the commitment to their profession. Those who oppose public education and public school employee organizations have joined forces. We can afford to do no less.”
- “We should all be working together to make our organization the very best it can be at representing all of us.” (for locals that do have fair share or agency fee agreements)
- “When you remain a potential member, you are actually working against your colleagues.”
- One Association sends a “bill” to potential members each month to ask them to join and to remind them that it costs money to represent them.
- “As a member, you can take an active part in decision making. You can vote, hold office, and have a voice in a democratic, representative organization.”
- “If something happened to you and you needed the Association, it would be too late to join and obtain the assistance automatically provided to Association members.”
- “If everyone felt as you do, the Association would not exist and you would not be able to receive these benefits.”

3. “I don’t agree with _____ of the Association.”

- “Few people agree 100 percent with the actions or positions of any group or organization. But representative government in organizations - as well as nations - depends on people who “pay their dues” and who participate in decision making. If you don’t agree with some direction the Association is taking, join, become active and work to change its course.
- “Our Association is democratic. No member is required to agree with the majority on any issue. But every member has a chance to try to sway the majority through representative democratic governance structures. Furthermore, our representative bodies issue the recommendations of the majority. The Association doesn’t attempt to speak for every individual member in every decision.”

Objections and Responses

(Continued)

- “What if taxpayers in the district could elect not to pay taxes because they objected to something or because they do not have children in public schools or universities?”
- Emphasize the democratic nature of the organization and that the Association respects the opinions of those in the minority.
- Compare membership dues to taxation and services such as water, fire-fighting, trash collection, parks, security. Each taxpayer pays his or her share even when he or she may disagree or not make use of some services.
- “Each year the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) holds open discussions on resolutions that members initiate. The RA votes on them.” Introduce the prospective member to his or her local representative who was a delegate to the RA.
- Review the NEA Resolutions (available to every member in the September issue of the all-member *NEA Today* and in the *NEA Handbook*, available in each UniServ office). Have a member of the Resolutions Committee from your state contact the potential member.
- “How can you get involved, be informed, or work for change if you don’t join? Wouldn’t joining and working for change be more effective than staying on the outside and complaining?”
- “Some positions that the Association takes do not affect us on a day-to-day basis. The advantages of membership far outweigh the disadvantages of one or two things with which we may disagree.”
- “Our enemies distort our positions.” Explain the distortions, emotional issues, and tactics of the radical right.
- “Public education is at stake.”
- If the objection is to our protecting a “bad” employee, point out that it is our responsibility to make sure each employee has a “day in court.” Point out that rights, like laws, must be enforced for each individual or they will not exist for anyone. Cite cases.
- “Do you agree with everything the legislature does? But you don’t drop your citizenship, give up the right to vote, or refuse to pay your taxes just because elected officials take positions with which you disagree.

4. I’d join the local (or local/state) but not NEA.

- The NEA family - local, state, and national affiliates - works constantly to protect, promote, and strengthen member rights through a variety of avenues.
 - UniServ
 - Legal services
 - Professional development
 - Research
 - Bargaining assistance
 - Benefits

Objections and Responses

(Continued)

- Human and civil rights
- Staff assistance at conferences and workshops
- Offices and office supplies
- Shared projects
- Show the Association's budget.
- "Who represents you as a delegate at all levels of the Association?"
- "How would you be affected if a colleague had a problem and no one had resources or simply chose not to help your colleague? Precedents set in other cases help protect all of us."
- Demonstrate how the NEA resolutions and budget are taking new directions. Explain politically motivated efforts to separate members from leaders, local affiliates from state affiliates, and national affiliates from the national.

5. "I don't like unions."

- "What do you think of when you say union?"
- Use dictionary definition of union: join together for a common cause.
- Cite professional development, community action, child protection, help for parents, and workshops and conferences on professional issues ranging from stress and discipline to school safety, technology, and teacher quality.
- "What would be the effect if there were no union to monitor, lobby, represent, enforce policies and contracts, and ensure due process?" Cite local, state and national records.
- "Our activities are common to both unions and professional associations."
- The unions role is to work to improve education and to guarantee that everyone's rights are respected.

6. "We shouldn't be involved in politics."

- "If we want to have an impact on the resources that are available to our schools and students, we must recognize that people elected to public office control those resources."
- "If we want modern schools, qualified teachers, and computer-equipped classrooms, we need to have people in public office who regard these as priorities. If we're not involved in politics, public education may not be a priority."
- NEA does not use dues to make direct contributions to candidates in federal elections. (Add state and local rules and practices.)
- Education employees make recommendations regarding support for candidates for public office through a fair and open process.

Objections and Responses

(Continued)

7. “The Association doesn’t do anything for kids and education.”

- “The Association is focusing its efforts on ways to enhance teacher quality and improve student achievement.”
- “What should we be doing?”
- “What are you willing to do?”
- Share information about local, state, and national activities to promote quality education and benefit students.
- Share information on teaching and learning initiatives.
- Share information about new unionism.
- Share information about the \$1 per member per year of NEA dues set aside to support the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education.
- Point out the Association’s many professional development and outreach activities; grants and scholarships, workshops, publications, professional standards, activities for American Education Week, National ESP Day, Teacher Day, and Read Across America.
- Point out the resources available through the NEA website www.nea.org, such as “helpfrom.nea.org,” and the new member CD-ROM, “It’s All About Kids.”

8. “My Spouse is a member. I don’t need to join.”

- “How many salaries do you and your spouse get? If one of you is a member, only one of you will get the benefits of membership - liability insurance and representation, for example.”
- “It’s true you both can read our publications, but the percent of dues that goes to publications is minimal. So much more goes into other vital services that benefit every member.”
- “Anti-public education attacks and anti-education employee actions affect both of you. Association activities that counter these attacks help both of you.”
- Note other couples who are both members.
- “Both of you get salary increases and bargained benefits.”
- “Could either of you afford to pay for attorneys to defend yourself?”
- “There are special needs of special groups at the work-site level.
- “The school system did not hire you because you are a couple. Each of you must stand on his or her own.”

Objections and Responses

(Continued)

9. “I don’t like (past or present) leaders.”

- “Get involved and help change things.”
- “It’s understandable that some people don’t like some people.”
- “They are volunteers.”
- “The way to influence the Association and its leaders is to join and participate.”
- “They are elected by means of open nominations and secret ballot by majority vote.”
- “That was yesterday. What should we do about it now?”
- “What should we start/stop/continue doing?”
- “Whom would you suggest as a better leader?”
- If the prospective member is speaking of a current leader, ask him or her to follow up.
- Take the prospective member to a meeting with you.

10. “We don’t need to be members this year.” (non-bargaining year)

- What happens in neighboring districts and states affects us when we bargain next time - rollbacks, strikes, arbitration, legal cases, unfair decisions, for example.
- Programs go on all the time:
 - Teaching and learning initiatives
 - Research
 - Training of leaders and bargaining teams
 - Office maintenance
 - UniServ
 - Lobbying
 - Monitoring of state and federal agencies
 - Monitoring of retirement funds
 - Legislative programs
 - Community relations
 - Public relations and employee image programs
 - Contract enforcement

11. “I’m disgruntled because of what happened in the past.”

- “What are you willing to do to change that?”
- “That’s history. What do we need to do now?”
- “I understand that.”
- “You’re right. Now what can we do?”
- “Nothing can change that. Now we are...”

Objections and Responses

(Continued)

- “I know it.”
- “We’re working this year so that we will be strong next year.”
- If the problem is a poor record in the past, especially in bargaining, acknowledge it if it’s true. Then move the potential member to join to help improve the situation or cite positive gains in the most recent bargaining. “We’re making improvements now.”
- “We didn’t have the benefits of your participation in the past. What can you do to ensure better results next time?”

12. “I don’t know how long I’ll be working here.” (retiring soon)

- “Your retirement income depends on salary gains these last years. We need your support to get maximum gains.”
- “Retired people have the greatest need of all for these vital protections and services. The Association monitors such things as retirement funds and insurance.”
- “Join now and stay involved through NEA Retired. You’ll not only remain a vital part of education, but the Association will continue to work 365 days a year to protect your investment and your future.”
- “For now, join the group and build unity. Get to know your colleagues.”
- “You’ll benefit from the support of other Association members.”

Trusted and Respected

Seattle's site-based organizing

BY JOHN DONAGHY



KATHERINE STREETER

“**S**hannon—but she doesn’t like the union,” said a 3rd-grade teacher, then a 4th-grade teacher, and then eight more teachers over the course of the day we spent at an elementary school in North Seattle in spring 2014. My partner, a board member of the Seattle Education Association (SEA), and I were on a union listening tour. The question we’d posed to each teacher, after first asking how their year was going and about our upcoming bargaining, was “Who’s trusted and respected here in the building?”

SEA was then two years into an effort to reorganize. We’d visited at least 80 of the District’s 100 schools and spoken with more than half of SEA’s 6,000 teachers and certificated staff, para-educators, and office administrators.

The reorganization would culminate in a seven-day strike in September 2015, led by a 40-member bargaining team of largely first-time bargainers and activists. The action won guaranteed recess time for students, removed any connection between test scores and teacher evaluations, won significant raises, and launched Racial Equity Teams in dozens of schools.

The cornerstone of the reorganization was an effort to identify natural school leaders—educators trusted and respected by their co-workers, regardless of their disposition toward the union—and invite them to engage with and shape the union’s direction.

New Leaders Elected

Recognizing their union was not nearly as powerful as it could be, a new slate of SEA officers and the union’s executive director, Glenn Bafia, looked for a new approach in spring 2012. Membership participation and educator morale were low following the bruising regime of an education reformer as superintendent. The union had eaten a high-profile, though somewhat symbolic concession on teacher evaluations and student testing without much of a fight. The regular monthly meetings of building representatives were contentious and caustic, often focusing on “taking positions” on issues but with little action to back them up. Member engagement lagged well behind other locals in the state. SEA staff were buried in disciplinary hearings, grievance meetings, and evaluation conferences, without a strategy or much time to organize.

SEA’s new president, Jonathan Knapp, was a high school auto-shop teacher who’d just finished a term as vice president. Phyllis Campano, an elementary special education teacher, was the new vice president. They were both on full-time release from their teaching jobs. When I first met them, after I was assigned by the Washington Education Association (WEA) to support local organizing, the two indicated they wanted to meet one-on-one with every SEA member. Across WEA and other NEA state affiliates, local leaders were being asked to sit down with each member for a half hour or so to get to know them. I looked at my watch, pressed a button, and said, “Go!” With only four-year terms, they would need to start right away.

In Aesop’s fable, the strength of a single stick is contrasted with that of a bundle of sticks. A single stick can easily be broken, but wrap together enough of even the flimsiest sticks, and they can’t be broken. This is of course the very premise of unionism. But while Aesop’s fable holds much truth, we know as organizers that rather than members being simply scattered individuals, they have instead already grouped themselves informally around natural leaders. The work of the union, then, is to unite as many of the natural leaders as possible, who then bring along those in their circles of influence.

In unions that regularly and successfully organize unorganized workers, the identification and recruitment of natural leaders is the basis for developing effective campaigns. When the employer fights back hard against the union, either the natural leaders can assure their co-workers that the struggle is worth it, or the campaign is defeated.

The opposite approach, which is more common, puts a premium on activism and affinity for the union over actual leadership. The ticket to getting union roles is simply willingness to do something—lobby, make phone calls, come to a school board meeting—rather than any ability to bring others along. Some who get involved are in fact leaders, but many are not. When activists complain about co-worker apathy, a common refrain, it can be an indicator they simply do not have leadership. I was on a building visit in another local, and my partner there began recruiting someone we’d just met to be a building rep after she told us how big a union supporter she was—even though she also told us that she was new in the building and isolated from everyone else! We had no reason to think this person would influence any of her co-workers; if she did become rep, it was likely to be a frustrating experience for everyone.

SEA’s leaders instead decided to apply a natural leaders approach. Early in the reorganization we were running phone banks for an upcoming school levy vote. Our usual turnout methods—email blasts, announcements at union meetings, etc.—were getting the usual poor turnout. One afternoon we received a call from an elementary teacher, Michael Tamayo, asking for the phone-banking details. A half-dozen or so of Michael’s co-workers had named him among the most trusted and respected educators in his school. A few hours later, he showed up with eight co-workers in tow. Although the union was a bit of a vague idea to him, he cared a lot about the school levy, since it provided more resources to his low-income school and to a program that provided a path for people of color to become teachers. Jonathan and Phyllis continued to seek him out, and he became progressively more involved in SEA, especially around teacher quality and racial equity, and eventually he became SEA’s president in late 2019.

With the understanding that natural leaders exist in every school, our plan was to identify and engage such leaders across Seattle’s 100 schools. That seemed more doable than sitting down individually with 6,000 members! Our theory of change went something like this: “We can reboot the Seattle Education Association by relentlessly identifying natural school leaders, building relationships with them, and inviting them to lend their leadership to a new shared purpose.”

The First Listening Tour

Eager to help the state’s largest local reinvent itself, WEA’s state president and executive director joined the SEA team of staff and local officers in June 2012 for the first listening tours. We broke into teams of two to go from room to room and office to office in our target schools to seek out staff for brief one-on-one conversations. We didn’t announce our visits ahead of time, lest various gatekeepers—principals, office managers, human resources—try to herd us into break rooms or otherwise restrict access.

The teams spoke individually with more than 700 educators in 20 schools over four days. While some union staff feared members would close their doors to us or even be hostile, the opposite occurred. Members were eager to talk with us. If they couldn’t speak when we visited, they’d insist we come find them later in the

day. While some shared criticisms, most were curious about our visits and hopeful that the union could make a difference.

The individual visits were intended to last about 10 minutes. These were not classic one-on-ones, but a survey with an eye toward mapping important relationships in the building. We mostly asked how their year was, what the school was like, and what they thought their union should be focusing on. And then we asked, who would you say is trusted and respected here in the building?

Trust and respect are the main currency in cultivating a following. You can trust someone without respecting them, or vice versa. You might have a colleague you trust enough to share complaints about the principal, but whose teaching doesn't meet your standards. Likewise, you might admire someone's excellent lessons, but you wouldn't share a complaint with them for fear it would get back to the principal. Without a measure of both trust and respect, it's unlikely someone will have much influence with you.

When the Seattle teams returned to the union office, they wrote visit reports, and then, on large posters of each school's roster, placed a colored adhesive dot next to a person's name for each time they were named by someone as trusted and respected. Dozens of educators had five or 10 dots next to their names, and in larger schools some had more than 20! While some of those members (and with union shop in place, nearly all were members) were known to union staff and leaders, others were not. Many were wholly uninvolved in SEA.

As the team looked at the posters, it was inspiring to think of the power educators could wield if these natural leaders were united. In subsequent presentations we've done with other locals, showing leaders and staff one of these charts is enough to set them salivating.

Based on my experience in Seattle and then in other locals around the country, not all team members are immediately successful at asking the "trusted and respected" question. Sometimes they aren't fully committed to the reason for asking (which can result from a less than timely orientation). They may think that the real value of the tour is in showing members their union is active and cares about them. That's a common viewpoint, but unfortunately one that reinforces the idea that the union is a third party. Others may struggle because the question can feel like a non sequitur. It takes a bit of skill to have a 10-minute conversation with someone where you establish enough trust and credibility that you can get up from the table and say, "Great talking with you today. Before we go, who would you say are some of the folks who are really trusted and respected among the staff here at Longwood Elementary?"

In the experience of most tour leaders, members are actually happy to answer that question and recognize some esteemed co-workers. It does tend to be better not to ask them directly who they *themselves* trust and respect; that can feel too personal. But asking them who is generally trusted and respected seems to create the needed personal distance (and in fact often results in the member sharing who they personally trust and respect, saying for example, "She's such a great teacher.") The No. 1 mistake we make is not to give enough time to answer the question. In-

stead of letting the question hang out there while the person mentally goes down the building's roster (or looks at the roster we have), we rephrase the question, most typically into something like "you know, who do people go to?" That's actually a different question, one that tends to result in a skew toward naming people with more access to knowledge or resources, such as department chairs, team leaders, office secretaries, union building reps, or even the principal.

Combating Racism and Implicit Bias

Evidence-based leadership identification and recruiting is an important check on implicit bias. Without it, we are likely to pick people who tend to be like us. At future decision points, SEA leaders would check the name of every potential recruit to a committee, lobbying team, or other union body against what their co-workers indicated. We weren't shy about calling each other out for seeking to elevate someone we personally liked in the absence of evidence of leadership. If none of your co-workers placed you among their most trusted and respected colleagues, it wouldn't make sense for the union to ignore their views and elevate you into a representative role. This created some delicate situations when eager volunteers or longtime activists were turned away. While this could be awkward, officers believed the benefit to the union made it worthwhile.

Officers and staff were keen to discern the leadership of educators of color. On one hand, we had a fairly objective measure, but on the other, it was an overwhelmingly white certificated workforce (paraprofessionals and office staff were much more racially mixed) naming whom they trusted and respected. Although there were in fact many educators of color who were named by their white co-workers as trusted and respected, we chose to bake an assumption of bias into our future recruitment efforts. If you ask a white educator to name colleagues they trust and respect, we assumed that they would be at least somewhat more likely to think of other white people first. So when we were recruiting elementary teachers to a committee, for example, we might build a starting list from all the educators of color who received at least three dots and all white educators who received at least five dots.

While this method supported robust recruitment of educators of color into union roles—membership of color on SEA's 40-member bargaining teams has been at least 40 percent over the last three bargains, far higher than the share of educators of color in the workforce—some wondered whether the chosen educators of color were those who were named more by their white peers than their peers of color and how that might be skewing representation. (No one argued that the leadership of an educator of color who was frequently named by white peers should be discounted, only that we needed to be sure that educators of color were represented by leaders of their choosing as well.) To some degree this concern was met by over-recruiting from schools with higher proportions of educators of color, virtually guaranteeing that the leaders were named by educators of color. SEA has also begun in recent years to enter more data into NEA's new membership database, called NEA 360. This allows the union to note exactly who each member names as those they trust and respect, and thus reports can be generated that

provide some insight into that question. In the meantime, SEA did generate one useful data point on that question: a survey about new graduation requirements asked 1,000 high school staff to name staff they trusted and respected to serve on a bargaining committee with the district. SEA was able to disaggregate responses by race and compare who educators of color and white educators each chose and fine-tune recruitment (although in that survey, at any rate, largely the same educators were chosen by both groups).

Intentional Leadership Recruitment

The issue that led us to Shannon's North Seattle school in 2014 was that we'd gotten almost no signatures from there on a petition to place a class size initiative on the Washington state ballot. The union's building rep told us people were apathetic. We were puzzled, as members at other buildings were collecting signatures like crazy—the first fruits of our efforts to involve more natural leaders over the previous two years. For the first time anyone could remember, SEA was among the state's leaders in participating in a coordinated WEA action.

Members at the school told us that Shannon (not her real name) didn't like the union and had spoken against the initiative at a meeting. It would have been easy to take a pass on initiating contact with Shannon—there were 100 other schools to get signatures from. But not every school has a Shannon, trusted and respected to the virtual exclusion of anyone else. We often find three or four staff taking top billing. If we were going to get any signatures from her school, or probably much support for anything union, we needed to meet Shannon.

Vice President Phyllis Campano stopped by a few days later. As it turned out, Shannon was not anti-union, but rather simply believed the union's priority needed to be compensation, not class size. Phyllis couldn't persuade her our ballot initiative was the right priority, and we never did get many signatures from her school. But a relationship was begun that eventually led to Shannon being a member of the 2015 bargaining team, and then of SEA's executive board. In the years that followed, I can't recall a union event that Shannon attended, and there were many, where she didn't bring along a sizable group of colleagues.

After the initial round of visits in June 2012, SEA visited another 50 schools the following school year. But the follow-up with leaders was slow and not terribly successful. The officers invited identified school leaders to lobby days and other events, but had few takers. SEA's leadership team knew the union wasn't seen as very powerful, and these natural leaders were clearly reluctant to invest time and energy in an uncertain proposition. Also, many of them were already highly engaged both at school and in their personal lives.

One leader at a North Seattle high school was on our radar for several years. Although she always seemed on the edge of getting involved, she never made the leap. She led a vibrant after-school horticulture program, was science department chair, and was in training to be a principal. A few weeks *after* the strike in 2015, however, she walked into the union office and told us she'd stepped down as department chair and wanted to prioritize union activism. It took the success of the

strike for her to believe collective action by educators, and her union, held more potential to make the change she wanted to see. While we were fortunate that not all natural school leaders needed this level of proof, there is a positive feedback loop between organizational success and leadership commitment: More of one spurs more of the other.

The leadership team pivoted in the winter of 2013–14. Instead of recruiting leaders to join the union’s work, which hadn’t borne fruit, we set up a series of meetings that simply brought these leaders together to meet and talk about what was important to them. We approached about 75 of the newly identified leaders, most of whom had little or no union involvement, and more than 60 participated, an astonishing turnout. After a brief welcome from Jonathan and Phyllis, they rotated World Café-style in groups of four for the next hour or so, responding to some open-ended questions. The leaders were excited to have met and to have had rich conversations, and were intrigued by what this convening said about their union.

The meeting did not include an ask, which is something of a sin in organizer circles, but making an ask is what they expected us to do, and we knew we needed these new leaders to join us in figuring out what was worth asking and doing as a union. We never did get around to reconvening these groups, but they provided an important entrée to establish new relationships and signal to these leaders that there was untapped possibility in their union.

Time to Fight Back

SEA’s leaders correctly assessed that there was a significant lack of trust in the union and its leadership. SEA had accepted a concession on testing and evaluation in 2010 and failed to remove it in bargaining in 2013. While the practical impacts of the provision were limited, and the contract settlement was otherwise pretty typical, the contract passed by only a thin margin. Educators at Seattle’s Garfield High School had organized a high-profile and successful boycott of the district’s use of the standardized MAP tests that spring, but the union had failed to leverage that into a robust or successful contract fight over testing and evaluations. Members were understandably reluctant to express approval for a deal that reflected that failure. While the union had tried to organize some pushback in the summer of 2013, it was too little, too late.

In truth, the natural leaders of the workforce were largely on the sidelines as far as the union was concerned and were not responsive to calls to action, such as there were. Most immersed themselves in the work of their individual schools. Some joined Social Equity Educators (SEE), a member caucus, to push the union and Seattle Public Schools toward a more progressive agenda. When natural leaders did choose to become reps, many quickly quit or confined themselves to their buildings. As many confessed to us, they found the monthly Rep Assembly absurdly contentious, and seemingly irrelevant. Indeed, the first Rep Assembly I witnessed featured a lengthy debate over a letter to an elected official of another state. Meanwhile the union’s bargaining team had just begun bargaining and virtually no time was devoted to any meaningful discussion of what was at stake.

Following the 2013 bargain, SEA's leadership team and staff conducted more school visits but also focused on following up with the hundreds of members identified as natural leaders. They found that almost to a person they were angry about education reform, cynical about the district's leadership, and, although wary of SEA, appreciative that union leaders had recognized their leadership and were reaching out to them. Finally feeling some sense that they could turn things around, union leaders were challenged in early 2014 by an announcement from the district that it was going to cut 50 positions due to an unexpected budget shortfall.

With many schools at a loss on how to cope with the coming cuts, they began recommending that schools vote down their budgets.

Union leaders believed the district had enough in reserves to cover the shortfall, but complaining publicly about that in board meetings hadn't stopped such cuts before. So rather than focus on getting a few dozen or even a few hundred people to a school board meeting to protest, leaders devised a strategy to create chaos in the school-by-school budgeting process then underway. It would require schools to vote down their budgets, which by contract would trigger a mediation process facilitated by a central office administrator. Even though the superintendent held final say over each school's budget, such a strategy would have the potential to involve thousands of educators right where they worked.

Successful execution of the strategy would require influential educators in each school to endorse it and validate the union's recommendation to vote no on their school budget, *even if their school was untouched by the cuts*. The SEA Rep Assembly endorsed the strategy somewhat lukewarmly, expressing doubts about the union's analysis and strategy. But SEA's leaders then began reaching out to the school leaders they had been cultivating relationships with to get their thoughts on the strategy. With many schools at a loss on how to cope with the coming cuts, they took a leap of faith and, along with many of the building reps, began recommending that schools vote down their budgets to force central office administrators to come explain themselves.

Within three weeks, nearly 50 schools voted to reject their budgets, with more reporting in each day. After the first school's mediation, and faced with the prospects of dozens more, the district called the union to say they were re-analyzing their budget for ways to avoid the cuts. In a school board meeting shortly thereafter, the district's budget director publicly thanked SEA for pointing out that there was a "fudge factor" that could cover the cuts. District administrators then privately appealed to the union for help in getting new school budgets passed, without the cuts, expressing particular bewilderment about "all these solidarity votes" where even schools without cuts had rejected their schools' budgets.

Following the budget action, SEA began recruiting its team for the upcoming bargaining. While the budget fight had garnered SEA's leadership some credibility,

they still barely won re-election later that spring. The following school year, SEA's leadership team proposed quadrupling the size of its bargaining team. We wanted as many members as possible to know someone on that team who held their trust and respect. The countless hours of relationship-building, the success of the budget fight, and the commitment to open the process to many more people led to a tremendous amount of interest from heretofore inactive leaders in joining the new team.

2015 Bargain and Strike

The 2015 bargaining kicked off a year later as locals up and down the I-5 corridor had been going on one-day strikes against the Washington Legislature. Seattle chose May 19 for its one-day strike, the day *before* bargaining was to start. The march through downtown Seattle was a blocks-long warning shot to the school district; this was not the SEA they had been dealing with in recent years. While everyone from SEA's building reps to district officials expressed doubt that a 40-member team could functionally bargain, as team members walked into bargaining in their red T-shirts, still jubilant from the previous day's action, our power was evident.

Most team members were new to bargaining, and many to being active in the union. Others were seasoned bargainers, and at least five were members of the SEE caucus. SEA's leaders had made a particular effort to recruit natural leaders who were in SEE, including their candidate for vice president in the recent election. SEE members, for their part, made it clear they weren't going to drop their critique of union leadership nor back off from their own progressive advocacy, including guaranteed recess for all students, not a typical union demand (and which was immediately dismissed by the district as outside legal bargaining parameters).

The union officers knew that all on the team, even their critics, were highly credible to their co-workers, and that would lead to a cohesive and effective bargaining team. The team debated and hashed out proposals from recess to teacher quality, from racial equity for students to the pay gap between ESPs and certificated staff, and won on virtually all of them (including recess). When the district brought a late-game takeaway to the table, a raucous meeting of thousands of SEA members gave the team unanimous authority to call a strike. When talks broke down the night before school was to start, our team let the district know that we were now on strike.

Any large strike of any length is a story in itself, and Seattle's seven-day strike is no exception. Almost to a person, the WEA and NEA staff who joined in to support our strike noted how incredibly well organized each school's strike operation was, and how little was needed of them. The natural school leaders were in charge. 📍

John Donaghy is a former middle school math teacher and president of the Highline Education Association, as well as a former organizer for SEIU. He served as executive director of the Seattle Education Association from 2013 to 2019 and now works for the NEA Center for Organizing.

Somerville, MA, Paraprofessionals Win Huge Living Wage Victory: The Story and Lessons for the Future

By **Margaret Whittier-Ferguson** June 12, 2020

<https://www.socialistalternative.org/2020/06/12/somerville-ma-paraprofessionals-win-huge-living-wage-victory-the-story-and-lessons-for-the-future/>

Margaret Whittier-Ferguson works in a prekindergarten classroom as a Paraprofessional in Somerville, Massachusetts. She is a Building Representative with the Somerville Teachers Association and served as the chair of the Paraprofessional Contract Action Team throughout their year-long campaign for fair salaries and job security. Before the contract campaign paras made between \$20,000 and \$25,000 a year. Margaret is also a member of the Cambridge/Somerville branch of Socialist Alternative.

To see Socialist Alternative's past reporting on this inspiring campaign, check out these articles written as this struggle unfolded:

Somerville, MA, Paraprofessionals Fight for Livable Salary and Job Security
Somerville, MA Paraprofessionals Escalate Fight for A Fair Contract
Somerville Paras Continue Fight for Fair Contract



After over a year of organizing and fighting, Somerville Paraprofessionals, organized in the Somerville Teachers Association (STA), have won an important victory. We won a starting salary of \$25,000 a year which amounts to an immediate 25% raise. I'm going to say that again: an immediate 25% raise!

What makes this victory all the more critical is its context. Educators face

budget cuts across the country triggered – in part – by the impending economic depression. Despite this overall trend, Somerville Paraprofessionals won! By running a rank-and-file and community oriented campaign, we were able to win a starting salary of \$25,000, up from an abysmal \$20,000, and 3% raises next year and the following year, as well as job security after 4 years of employment (previously Paraprofessionals had no job security).

Paraprofessionals (support staff) in Somerville have been in contract negotiations for around a year now. This victory for Somerville Paraprofessionals can serve as inspiration for support staff and teachers across the country fighting for raises and, crucially, against budget cuts.

This article tells the story of how this victory was won and the most important lessons for teachers' struggles and the labor movement going forward. Somerville Paras should vote YES on this contract, as this is a massive victory not just for Somerville, but for support staff across the country!

This victory is 100% a testament to the strength of our union and the community campaign that backed us. Before the pandemic hit, we were going all out: we were storming school committee meetings, organizing walk-ins, and receiving large levels of community and parent support. The story of this year-long campaign should serve as a reminder to teachers' unions that our power comes from our ability to mobilize our unions and the community to fight for what staff and students need!

New Leadership Elected and Paras Reject a Concessionary Contract: The Fight Begins

In October 2019, 77% of Paraprofessionals voted down a contract proposal that did next to nothing to address the financial hardships Paraprofessionals were facing. With a 72% turnout of Paraprofessionals to the vote, it was clear that we were not okay with business-as-usual contract negotiations. This "no" vote came just months after we elected a new "reform leadership" in our union: the Somerville Caucus of Rank and File Educators (SCORE) slate.

The election of SCORE members as President, Vice President, and several building representatives, myself among them, injected new life into the union. SCORE ran on the basis of jump-starting rank-and-file union involvement and social justice unionism, both things that were sorely needed in the STA. SCORE winning brought about a renewed confidence among union members that if we fight, we can win, and this undoubtedly played a major role in the willingness of a majority of Paras to reject the business-as-usual contract.

Following the "no" vote, we decided to try a different type of contract negotiation than what the STA had done in the past. We formed a Contract Action Team (CAT), comprised of rank-and-file Paraprofessionals from across the district, based on the idea that our power as a union comes not from clever arguments at the negotiation table, but by involving as much of the union rank-and-file as possible, building community support, and not being afraid to confront the School Committee and Mayor. Consistent CAT meetings throughout the campaign were crucial in providing ongoing leadership to the rank-and-file of the union. Our demands were as follows:

- A starting salary of \$25,000 a year
- Job Security after 4 years of employment
- A 2-year contract so we negotiate at the same time as teachers

A Strategy to Win

At every step in the campaign, there were active debates in the union over what was the most effective strategy to win. How do we most effectively fight for a fair contract? What is the best way to mobilize union members and the community? How do we make democratic decisions? Should we mobilize now, or wait until later?

Democratic discussion and debate involving the rank-and-file are crucial for the success of any contract battle. In the past, the STA focused on closed-door meetings and negotiation with the School Committee. As a socialist, I see the active involvement of fellow union members as the key to our success. We are far stronger when we are united and determined. I consistently pushed for a strategy of rank-and-file mobilization, building a strong base of community support, and not shying away from confrontation with the School Committee and Mayor.

On December 19, 2019, we held an incredibly successful community meeting. We built for this by flyering parents outside of schools and reaching out to those that signed our [Pledge of Support](#). Nearly fifty people attended the meeting, including parents, union members from other local unions, and a City Councilor. We discussed the important role that Paraprofessionals play in our schools — we are the extra set of eyes, ears, and hands that ensure that our students' basic and more complex needs are met — and strategy for how our movement could win. Out of this meeting, we decided to build for a massive turn-out to the School Committee meeting on January 13, 2020.



Packing School Committee: A Turning Point in the Campaign

On January 13, 200 Paraprofessionals, teachers, parents, and community members rallied and packed the School Committee in one of the largest, if not the largest, turnout to a Somerville School Committee meeting ever recorded. After a stand-out and impromptu rally featuring speakers from the STA, Boston Teachers Union, Massachusetts Teachers' Association, and Socialist Alternative, we marched into City Hall chambers. Details and videos from this amazing action can be found [here](#).

The mood in schools across the district was electric following our successful turnout to the School Committee meeting. Many educators were realizing for the first time what can be accomplished when a union is organized and takes a movement-building approach to fighting for what we need.

Following the School Committee meeting, the CAT launched a series of walk-ins where educators at schools across the district rallied outside of their schools at the same time. At many of these walk-ins, students, parents, and community members joined rallying educators, putting on full display the depth of our movement! At my school, the school with the most Paraprofessionals in the district, Socialist Alternative members who live in the community played a crucial role in driving turnout to the School Committee and walk-ins.

Throughout February we continued building pressure by hosting community meetings, rallies, and participation in School Committee meetings. [Check out a speech](#) I gave at one of these rallies, the last action before the Coronavirus hit.

School Committee Uses Coronavirus for Illegal Move: Paras Stand Strong

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted the work of educators across the country. We have been tasked with setting up a completely new model of educating – remote learning – with little notice or resources. We have had to adjust our entire approach to teaching to meet the needs of this particular situation. On top of that, for those of us in the middle of contract battles it threw a big wrench in our plans. We have had to teach our students *and* fight for our rights as educators under lockdown! To add insult to injury, educators across the country are now facing brutal budget cuts as states scramble to deal with growing debt.

This is not a new phenomenon, we have seen how districts use crises as an excuse to cut social services and education. In New Orleans, following Hurricane Katrina, countless public schools were shuttered, replaced by charter and private schools. Now, districts across the country will likely attempt to use Covid-19 to similar ends.

In this context, on April 30th, the School Committee took their last offer – a 5% raise this year, 6% raise next year, and 7% the following year – off the table. They instead offered 0% raises over the next three years. That's right: 0% raises from a \$20,000 starting salary over the next 3 years.

Given this, it is shocking to read the [City of Somerville's official press release](#) about the agreement reached which quotes School Committee Chair Carrie Normand saying, "For many months, School Committee and City officials have publicly stated our support for a Paraprofessional wage scale that starts at \$25,000 annually." This would be laughable if we hadn't spent a year campaigning for a living wage in the face of the School Committee's blatant and insulting opposition.

This 0% proposal was a real blow and the CAT struggled to see a path forward, but we were determined to keep up the pressure on the School Committee virtually. We attended virtual School Committee meetings and finance meetings. We attended School Committee office hours en masse. We did not let up the pressure, despite the fact that the budget process was looking grim.

The School Committee's move to take their last offer off the table and replace it with 0% raises is considered "regressive bargaining" and is totally illegal. While we of course filed an unfair labor practice, we knew we couldn't rely on Trump's National Labor Relations Board to rule in our favor. Additionally, getting to a conclusive ruling in this process can take years. It has actually been quite common for supposedly progressive cities and institutions such as universities to consciously carry out illegal bargaining tactics with the [full knowledge](#) that Trump's NLRB appointees [will have their back](#).

At a district-wide all-Paras meeting in mid May, we discussed and debated how to move forward. We voted not to take a 0% raise and to continue fighting for a living wage. District-wide discussions are imperative for unions.

Black Lives Matter: The Straw that Broke the School Committee's Back

In a complete reversal of their previous position, on Wednesday, June 3, the School Committee offered us a starting salary of \$25,000 a year. For many of us, given the 0% raise offered just one month earlier, this new offer felt out of the blue. So what happened, and why did the School Committee finally give into our demands after a full year of fighting us with all their power? We will never fully know what discussions went on behind closed doors that led to this 180 degree turnaround, but we can make a confident, educated guess.

First, the School Committee's power move in late April didn't break us. They used the pandemic as cover to offer us 0% raises over three years, knowing we were in a weaker position to organize and hoping to kill our spirits, but this did not work. We did not back down and made it clear we were still going to fight. We discussed organizing a car caravan to put pressure on the School Committee, and we knew that in order to win our demands, we must maintain constant pressure on the School Committee and the Mayor.

Then, Black Lives Matter broke out. The brutal police murder of another black man has sent shock waves around the world, with solidarity protests springing up in every corner of the country and dozens of countries across the world. The majority of Paraprofessionals are women, and many of them are women of color. Demands around defunding the police to fund education, housing, and social services gained steam. A group of community members including members of Democratic Socialists of America and other local activists began to circulate a [petition](#) calling for the defunding of Somerville police to fund education, and a living wage for Paraprofessionals in particular. The petition went semi-viral across the city, getting thousands of signatures. Undoubtedly, the Mayor and School Committee saw the writing on the wall that with the new wave of BLM, they would look even worse than before if they refused to pay Paraprofessionals a living wage.

This victory for Somerville Paras would have been unimaginable without the year of intense struggle and a rank-and-file led, movement-building approach by our union. But in the eleventh hour, we believe the straw that finally broke the School Committee's back was the Black Lives Matter movement. If true, the implications of this are enormous.

The fight against racism and the fight for economic demands are not separate issues to be fought on separate fields of battle. If unions and the labor movement use our power as workers to boldly take up the fight against systemic racism our movement will be unstoppable.

In Seattle, members of the Seattle Education Association have [officially voted](#) to support the call, spearheaded in City Hall by Socialist Alternative's City Councilor Kshama Sawant, to defund the Seattle police by 50% and redirect those funds to necessary social services. Locally, though not as strong but still important, the Boston Teachers Union recently passed

a [resolution](#) calling for a 10% reduction in the Boston police budget, as well as getting police out of our schools. These are examples of the solidarity we need between the labor movement and anti-racist struggles.

The Role of SCORE and Reform Caucuses in Unions

None of what the STA has accomplished over the last year would have been possible without the election of SCORE at the end of last school year. But at the same time, just electing a new reform leadership was not enough. Immediately after being elected, all sorts of pressures are exerted on any new union leadership. There can be pressure to tone down your message, abandon promises to build rank and file democracy, and give up a more combative approach in favor of backroom negotiations. We see similar pressures exerted on progressive elected officials at the city, state, and federal level as well.

Because of this, active rank-and-file involvement and accountability is crucial. Throughout this campaign there were debates about strategy, leadership, and needing to stay true to the platform and approach that SCORE promised upon election. This is an important lesson for reform caucuses and teachers unions nationally. After the election of a new reform leadership, the caucus should stay active and organized and the members or supporters of the caucus have a crucial role to play in successfully transforming the union into an effective fighting organization.

SCORE's platform crucially included more general membership meetings, however there's been a lack of regular meetings over the past year. Going forward, having more regular membership meetings will help build off this victory and prepare us to fight for an equally strong teachers' contract, which is up next school year. While it may take time to build up, there is no replacement for an actively engaged rank-and-file.

Our Fight is Far From Over

This is an absolutely tremendous victory. Socialist Alternative has stood alongside Paraprofessionals fighting for a living wage throughout this campaign, and this sort of solidarity has been critical to the campaign's success. A year ago, most people in Somerville had no idea what a Paraprofessionals was. Today, we see massive amounts of community support not just for Paraprofessionals' living wage campaign, but for school funding more broadly. It is because of the community support that we were able to win this victory. And we should be clear: this is a victory not just for Somerville Paraprofessionals, but for all educators across Massachusetts and the entire country. Paraprofessionals in other districts should reach out to Somerville Paras to discuss how we ran our campaign, so that we can all learn from one another how to fight for a living wage and job security. We need to work together to ensure we have the working and learning conditions we need!

Despite the budget crises we are seeing across the country, it is absolutely imperative that educator unions do not let up the fight for fully funded schools. Wall Street should pay for this crisis, not working families. Brookline Public Schools, one of the wealthier districts in Massachusetts, [pink-slipped over 300 teachers in the last few weeks](#), and only because of a strong public outcry have they retracted some of these layoffs. This is what we should expect to see across the country.

Many of our students are going to be coming back to school dysregulated and many having experienced trauma. We need not less but *more* well-paid staff and wrap-around services for students including counseling services. This pay raise for Somerville paras cannot come at the expense of staffing cuts, and if the School Committee makes any attempts to cut para or other positions, the STA should fight back against them just as hard as we did for the contract fight. Fully funded schools means well-paid *and* fully staffed, not just one or the other.

For educators and families across the country, the question of how and when we reopen schools is at the forefront of our minds. Educators must be the ones to determine how and when we go back to school, given the very real health and safety concerns of returning to school.

It is crucial that we learn the lessons of building broad support, being well organized internally, and connecting to larger demands around defunding the police to fully fund our schools. In a period when we are up against massive budget cuts, this victory should be shouted from the rooftops. The union and our community must draw correct conclusions about how and why this campaign was successful: It was only by building a movement that mobilized *both* the rank-and-file of the union and the community that this victory was won. We should be proud of our success, but should also know that the struggle is not over. We have a responsibility to share these lessons and join in other struggles happening across our city, our state, and our country. We're going to need to continue to take militant and bold action to win the schools we all deserve.

Somerville educators win record wages for paras, parental leave and a school choice policy review

<https://www.cambridgeday.com/2025/07/01/somerville-educators-win-record-wages-for-paras-parental-leave-and-a-school-choice-policy-review/>

By Ella Stern
Tuesday, July 1, 2025



Somerville Educators Union

Somerville Educators Union members and allies rally during contract negotiations.

The Somerville Educators Union ratified a contract June 23, ushering in landmark paraprofessional wages and parental leave. The contract also aims to mitigate educators' overflowing workloads, drawing promises from the district to reevaluate Somerville's school choice policy and implementing a co-teaching pilot program and a new workload model for special education staff.

As Somerville educators, along with workers around the country, struggled through recent bouts of inflation, the lowest-paid SEU members were hit the

hardest, union president Dayshawn Simmons said. The contract brings Somerville Public Schools paraprofessionals' pay to \$50,000 a year, doubling the wages they made six years ago. This number, which towers over the \$31,640-a-year starting salary of Cambridge Public Schools paraprofessionals, could make SEU a beacon for its fellow unions.

Simmons described this salary raise as “life-changing” for paraprofessionals. It could allow many to drop one of their extra jobs – though some hold four or five jobs total, he said.

The parental-leave provisions in the new contract also set Somerville educators' benefits above counterparts in Massachusetts. By the third year of the contract, the district pays fully for parental leave; educators will no longer need to use their own sick time to care for newborns or newly adopted children, a benefit Simmons called “unheard of.”

SEU already had some of the best parental leave in the state going into this round of bargaining, Simmons said, and the district “really met” the union on improving the policies further.

Somerville's parental leave policies are “now a model for other communities,” School Committee chair Ilana Krepchin said in an email to Cambridge Day.

Coming with these pay-related wins is a 12 percent cost-of-living increase for teachers, social workers, deans and other union members whose jobs require a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education license. An increase of this extent is “an absolute game changer” that stands out in the current economy, Simmons said.

In negotiations, the district agreed to review its school choice policy, which allows families to decide which school their children attend. The policy has created some inequities, Simmons said. For instance, some kindergarten educators teach a dozen students, while others teach 25. To Simmons, it should not be the case that “being a kindergarten teacher in one building means something different than in another.”

Union goals in having the district review this policy include lowering class sizes to increase academic achievement.

The contract sets the foundation for a model in which a general education staff member and a special education staff member co-teach. The need for an extra educator in classrooms “comes from our educators being asked to do the job of seven,” Simmons said. He added that this model should cap educator workloads, saying that this is needed in “classrooms with high numbers, with

such high need that our educators are constantly making the decision 'who am I not going to serve today? Who will not get my full attention?'"

Before scaling up the costly practice of giving classrooms an extra teacher, the district will run a pilot inclusion model for targeted grade levels at the East Somerville Community School and Winter Hill Community Innovation School, which is placed at the Edgerly Education Center since the closing of the Winter Hill campus. In addition, a working group will research and analyze best co-teaching practices.

The contract establishes weighted caseloads and workload limits for special educators too. Often doing work disproportionate to the number of students to whom they are assigned, special education staff "have become overrun," Simmons said.

Other contract highlights include protecting students and families from hostile immigration actions in schools, a goal the union and school district shared.

The provision "is particularly transformative for a lot of our families, reaffirming that school can be a safe space for them," Simmons said.

"Everyone on this team wanted what was best for the kids, and we wanted to codify as many of those best practices as we could in the contract," Simmons added. "We couldn't get all of them, but we're able to get some really good things, and we are super pumped to see how this plays out in hopefully allowing our students more of an opportunity to achieve."

The contract goes into effect Sept. 1 and runs through Aug. 31, 2028. Several provisions kick in during year two or three of the contract, which gives "the city and the district a little bit of time to figure out how they're going to fund all of it," Simmons said.

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne's administration "set aside \$1.5 million for a new Somerville Educators Union contract that has achieved its intended purpose and will now be folded into the FY26 budget," contributing to the overall 7.4 percent increase in the School Department allocation," the mayor said in a quote forwarded to Cambridge Day. Simmons described this \$1.5 million as being squeezed out as a result of union pressure, including a [rally May 7](#).

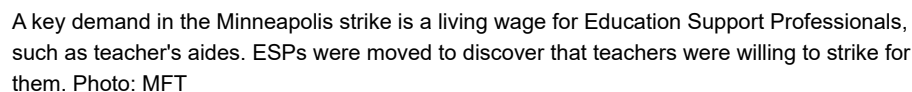
Representatives of Somerville Public Schools did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

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[employees-gear-strike](#)). “St. Paul has the experience,” said St. Paul special ed teacher Jeff Garcia. “Minneapolis has the energy. They are really fired up.”

The Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and the St. Paul Federation of Educators both announced February 18 that their members had voted to authorize strikes.

MFT members walked out March 8. The strikers are in two bargaining units: 3,000 teachers and 1,000 education support professionals (ESPs), such as teacher’s aides.

The SPFE, a combined unit of 3,600 teachers and ESPs, managed to leverage its strike threat into a last-minute tentative agreement.

Close on their heels, 200 Minneapolis Public Schools food service workers with Service Employees (SEIU) Local 284 filed their own 10-day strike notice on March 15.

PUSHING FOR STABILITY

ESPs in both cities are being paid poverty wages and living out of cars. The strikers are demanding a living wage for ESPs, along with more mental health workers and smaller class sizes—all of which they say translates directly into stability and supportive learning opportunities for students.

“Nobody is going to let the teachers be gaslit into thinking that these demands are not necessary,” said Marcia Howard, an educator in Minneapolis since 1998. “The answer to ‘But what about the children?’ is ‘Exactly.’”

MFT is also demanding more counselors, caseload caps, lower health insurance premiums, and policies to support and retain educators of color.

The settlement in St. Paul will limit class size, add new counselors, and raise ESP wages substantially. These wins are reinforcing the commitment on the Minneapolis strike lines.

“MFT members get it,” said Shaun Laden, president of the MFT ESP chapter. “If St. Paul can add mental health workers, cap class size, and pay their ESPs \$37,000, Minneapolis can figure out how to do that too.”

SEIU Local 284 is fighting for higher wages. Its members, mostly women and people of color, top out at \$28,000 a year and have to work second jobs to make ends meet.

And all three unions face a threat to the very existence of public schools: a proposed constitutional amendment that would end the state’s mandate to fund public education.

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A BIGGER FIGHT

These unions are part of a larger coalition of Minnesota unions threatening strikes—including county and school clerical staff (AFSCME Locals 56 and 2822), social workers (AFSCME Local 34), and janitors and security guards (SEIU Local 26).

“At a time when billionaires’ wealth is exploding and our state is sitting on a \$7.7 billion surplus, it is maddening we are still stuck in a debate where one side insists there is not enough to provide for the common good,” wrote leaders of the coalition in a joint op-ed.

“That is why our locals have been forced to consider strike actions to move decision-makers to listen to their workers and negotiate fair deals that will address the urgent and necessary demands we’ve put forward that meet the requirements of the moment.”

“We’ve always looked over at St. Paul to try to take from their playbook and how they are building power in their union,” said Ma-Riah Roberson-Moody, ESP chapter vice president in the MFT.

Eventually, said Laden, there was “recognition that we were doing things separately, but some of our circumstances were such that it made sense politically to work together. Teachers in Minnesota are in the crosshairs of ed reform.”

And educators were ready to strike, having experienced the pandemic as “two years of ‘They don’t care if we quit or if we die,’” said Greta Callahan, president of the MFT teacher chapter.

GETTING STRIKE-READY

It’s been 50 years since the MFT last struck, though, so the union had some work to do.

“When we knew the strike could happen,” Callahan said, “we had meetings in every site and let people get their fears out. What if the parents don’t support us? What if the special education students don’t get their needs met? What if the boss comes after me?”

“What is the alternative?” Callahan would ask in response. “That question galvanized members.”



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The ESP chapter decided to use a paper survey (rather than an online one), carrying it from person to person as part of a conversation about what members wanted in the contract.

The organizing for a potential strike and the focus on ESP demands across both chapters has increased the ESP's chapter membership by more than 100.

"If you do something that the members feel deeply about, they are there for the fight," said Laden. "If we are doing something like 'Every year go and tell your legislator your story,' they will not be engaged, because they do that every year and it doesn't matter."

NO MORE SILOS

Not only did the unions in each city have to learn to work together, but teachers and ESPs also had to overcome years of operating in silos within the same union.

The majority of teachers in the Twin Cities are white; the majority of the ESPs are people of color.

Education support professionals work with individual students on their learning needs, most often side-by-side with teachers. But, said Laden, "we are strangers working together who don't know each other."

At meetings, both chapters made a point of talking about cross-chapter solidarity. But for Minneapolis art teacher Silvia Ibanez, the biggest difference was in talking with her own co-workers.

"In my school we got together, and some ESPs were talking about how they need to have more than one job and haven't had an increase in salary for many years," she said. "We didn't know until we had an opportunity to sit down and talk."

Teachers also joined the ESP open bargaining sessions—made easier since negotiating sessions were on Zoom.

"Schools operate to create intentional isolation," said Laden. "There is a lot of tension. Classism plays into that, racism plays into that, and how we operate as a district.

"But as people have learned more about each other and talked to each other, it has been transformational—especially for ESPs, hearing teachers say, 'I am going on strike for ESPs to have a living wage.'"

SOLIDARITY FOREVER

Since the tentative agreement, St. Paul educators have been organizing support for the Minneapolis strikers and joining their picket lines before school. The first weekend of the strike, SPFE members showed up to rally outside the building where MFT was negotiating.

Support from the wider community has been strong too. “I’m at Roosevelt High School, and every morning parents and students are coming to our pickets,” said Moody-Roberson. “There is a sea of honking horns. Our strike fund tripled in one day.”

The deluge of support has shocked management, Laden said: “It seems that the district leadership is in disarray, trying to figure out what to do.”

Solidarity is also being extended from MFT to SEIU Local 284. Educators showed up to rally support while the food service workers were in negotiations.

‘NO JUSTICE, NO STREETS’

The courage and conviction of these members owes a lot to the uprising that swept the Twin Cities in 2020 after Minneapolis police murdered George Floyd. “It showed everyone we need to be in control of our lives, our jobs, our cities,” said Callahan, who is white.

Floyd was killed 263 steps from Marcia Howard’s front door. Howard took a leave of absence to help lead the occupation of George Floyd Square, turning the intersection where he was killed into a memorial and protest site. She’s back to teaching now, but still maintains the fire in the square every day before and after school.

“All of the educators in Minnesota were keenly aware that what happened impacted all of our students,” she said. “At 38th and Chicago [George Floyd Square] we say, ‘No justice, no streets.’ Teachers are saying the same thing. We have decided that we will hold our ground until our demands are met.”

District leaders have tried to couch their decisions—such as a redistricting plan that the union and much of the community opposed because it would displace students and educators—in civil rights terms. But the educators aren’t buying it.

“It is all the same fight,” said Callahan. “When we are fighting for our schools we are fighting for Black lives.”

Howard, who is Black, agrees. “It wasn’t until there was a rally with teachers, some in red [SPFE’s color] and some in blue [MFT’s color], walking across the bridge to St. Paul [that] I knew: this is what solidarity looks like,” she said. “I was in tears.”

“I am aware that I am in a racialized and gendered profession. They expect the white Midwestern women will hear the words ‘What about the children?’ and they will capitulate. But we are fighting for a better world, and one of the battlefields is in our schools.”

Barbara Madeloni ([/author/5862/content](#)) is Education Coordinator at Labor Notes and a former president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association.
barbara@labornotes.org (<mailto:barbara@labornotes.org>).

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Thinking Bigger in Local Minimum Wage Campaigns: The Fight for \$15 in Seattle

JULY 15, 2014 • DAVID ROLF

Seattle recently passed the highest minimum wage in the country, \$15 an hour phased in over 3-7 years, with temporary credits for health care spending and tips. While Seattle's \$15 agreement is complex, the principles it reflects are straightforward: Workers get a substantial pay boost to \$15 an hour, smaller businesses get time to adapt, and our local economy sees a \$3 billion boost to the paychecks of 100,000 low-wage workers over the next decade.[\[i\]](#)

This victory for low-income workers was the product of multiple intersecting forces including: The national economic and political climate; local political shifts; and smart, strategic organizing that seized this moment of opportunity.



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Why raise the minimum wage?

At a moment when the labor movement is losing ground – including basic collective bargaining rights following recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions^[ii] – some workers and labor institutions have decided to take a new approach to building power and supporting struggling families. Raising the minimum wage is the most potent poverty reduction tool in our current economic and policy arsenal. Even for low-income Americans receiving public assistance, 70% of their income is tied to their wage and employment status^[iii].

Workers at the bottom of the income ladder have also been hit particularly hard by widening income inequality and increasing long-term unemployment in the recession and post-recession economy^[iv]. Wage income is more important than ever to raising the fortunes of low-income families^[v].

Yet rising inequality has broken the link between economic growth and broadly shared prosperity that characterized post-WWII American history^[vi]. Without strong pressure on companies to share the wealth with workers, gains have increasingly accrued to the top earners.

So how do we reverse wage stagnation?

Historically, major advances for workers have been won through politics at the federal level, or through campaigns to organize workers at major employers. But political gridlock means Congress is unlikely to yield any progress. And the current state of collective bargaining law presents few viable opportunities to take on corporate recalcitrance and bargain new worker victories on any significant scale.

This situation has left an opportunity at the local level to find real solutions to these challenges. And as public opinion consolidates — minimum wage increases tend to poll well — state and local minimum wage initiatives are sprouting up across the country^[vii].

Setting the stage for change: Shifts in the economic and political climate

The overall picture of the deterioration of our economy and increasing concentration of wealth is by now well-known:

- The gap between the top 1% and the rest of us has grown to crisis levels not seen since the Great Depression^[viii].
- Real hourly wages have been stagnant for several decades^[ix].
- Low-wage jobs are growing much faster than the rest of the economy^[x].



- Labor unions represent an ever-decreasing share of workers[xi]. The share of income going to the top 10% has a consistent inverse relationship with union membership over the past 100 years[xii], and as membership has fallen, the top 10% have grown wealthier.

While income inequality, depressed wages, and declining unions represent long-term trends, the magnitude and permanence of the economic change we've undergone has only become widely recognized since the Great Recession, the bank bailouts, and their aftermath.

During the bleak times of recessionary free-fall in 2011, the Occupy movement emerged. In a moment when the people had little real economic power, activists created a new term – the 99% – that summarized many Americans' frustration and emphasized our shared economic pain not to mention our political divisions. Occupy focused public attention on the issue of income inequality and helped create a sense of moral and economic crisis about the gap between the top 1% and the 99%.

Since Occupy, worker unrest has continued to grow and amplify the public narrative about inequality. In late 2012, the Walmart Black Friday strikes and national fast food strikes set the stage for climate in which workers' demands for a better life could be taken seriously.[xiii] When fast food workers launched the first strike in their industry with a bold and even somewhat implausible-sounding demand for \$15 an hour, it sparked a level of attention surprisingly strong support. Suddenly — or rather, at last — we had a movement exciting enough and a demand transformative enough to measure up to the crisis at hand, launched by a radically disempowered and disrespected workforce in one of the least-paid and lowest-status occupations.

Many would have called organizing in the rapidly growing fast food industry impossible. It was common for critics to dismiss a much-stereotyped workforce of “teens and dropouts” paid minimum wage for serving customers of large profitable corporations, while trying to survive in some of the most expensive cities in the world. Against those odds, it was these workers, instead of the frustrated narrative of Occupy, who were fighting back to change the economy — and winning broad public support for their efforts.

Testing the waters: Airport workers win \$15 at the ballot box in SeaTac WA



In November 2013, the first \$15 minimum wage in the nation was passed in SeaTac, Washington (a suburb of Seattle). SeaTac Proposition 1 established an inflation-adjusted \$15 minimum wage for workers at large transportation and hospitality employers in and around Sea-Tac International Airport. The first time the \$15 minimum wage was tested at the ballot box, workers won, demonstrating that \$15 was not a dream or a negotiable demand, but the spark of a new movement for economic justice.

The \$15 minimum wage went to the ballot in SeaTac only after a long period of workplace-based mobilization by airport workers. Baggage handlers, cabin cleaners and other service workers had once been direct employees of airlines or the airport, but over the past decades their jobs have been contracted out and their wages eroded. As a result, a publicly owned airport was staffed by thousands of invisible poverty-wage workers, employed by an alphabet soup of little-known contractors to serve the customers of national-brand airlines.^[xiv] After a high-profile campaign failed to win concessions from the dominant local airline or the public agency that runs the airport, workers and community supporters were left with only one option: take it to voters with a local initiative. Though the victory in the November election was a narrow one, it remains a signal success for the \$15 movement, showing the scale of change that is possible in the current climate.

Although court challenges have meant that Proposition 1 remains unrealized for many workers, the political momentum for higher wages continues to build. Alaska Airlines — the dominant economic player at the airport and a key corporate target of the worker campaign — has recently paid for its subcontractors to raise wages to \$12/hour, and announced this move to the media.^[xv] And the governmental body that controls the airport, the Port of Seattle, is touting a process to establish new wage guidelines for airport workers.^[xvi] While neither of these moves is sufficient, they do reflect the intense level of public support for lifting up poverty-wage workers, and the ongoing political pressure to find a way forward.

Seizing the moment: Fighting for \$15 in Seattle

The national and regional stage was set for a big move in Seattle. Within just a few months of the first Seattle fast food strike in May 2013, both candidates in the race for Seattle mayor had publicly endorsed a \$15 minimum wage, and were even engaging in one-upmanship about who was a better champion of the issue.^[xvii]

At the same time, the only seriously contested race for City Council focused almost entirely on the \$15 minimum wage. Kshama Sawant — political outsider,

academic, and socialist — emerged as a towering political figure in the city after successfully challenging a long-term incumbent on a pro-worker, \$15 wage platform. Between the Mayoral and City Council races and the SeaTac ballot measure on the ballot, the political debate in Seattle was shifting with extraordinary speed.

The momentum continued after Election Day. Even before his swearing in, incoming Seattle Mayor Ed Murray announced plans to convene an Income Inequality Advisory Committee (IIAC) to quickly produce recommendations on how best to raise the minimum wage. Co-chaired by myself and local hotel investor Howard S. Wright III, the IIAC brought together representatives of workers, business, nonprofits, and community groups to hash out a plan to raise the minimum wage. Working under a deadline set in part by the mayor and in part by the looming possibility of ballot initiative, the IIAC was, after a few fits and starts, able to reach overwhelming agreement on a compromise plan the mayor forwarded to city council. (Only two members of the IIAC voted no — a business owner who demanded less, and Councilmember Sawant, who demanded more. The head of the local Chamber of Commerce abstained.^[xviii])

Though it does include some compromises, the IIAC agreement ratifies every key demand of the worker movement for \$15/hour. It ensures that:

- Every low-wage worker gets a significant raise every year on the way to \$15/hour and beyond.
- Every workers benefits from a robust system of community based enforcement of labor standards.
- After the phase-in period, everyone gets to a true \$15 minimum wage with no deductions for tips or benefits, adjusted annually for inflation.

Policy research helped to bring it home: Economic impacts of raising the wage

While worker voices changed what was possible, strategic data gathering and policy research helped win the debate on this new terrain. As part of its process, the city commissioned two reports that played a key role.

University of Washington researchers investigated which workers would be affected by a \$15 minimum wage, breaking down the numbers by industry as well as along demographic lines. This work established some powerful data points and lent them official bearing including, crucially, that there are approximately 100,000 workers paid less \$15 an hour in the City of Seattle (whose total population is

about 600,000); and that these workers overwhelmingly are employed in larger worksites, not smaller ones.^[xix]

University of California, Berkeley researchers took a close look at the economic impacts in other cities that had raised their minimum wages over the past decade. Their careful survey convincingly demonstrated to decision makers, journalists, and other influencers that higher wages do *not* result in job loss. Moving this key issue from a contentious question to a matter of settled fact has contributed greatly to the success of the campaign so far. Business claims about job losses have been greeted with an air of skepticism in many quarters quite unlike other recent debates on labor standards.^[xx]

Locally, the community empowerment organization Puget Sound Sage generated a series of reports that responded quickly to key questions around impacts on different groups such as tipped workers; women, immigrants, and people of color. They also reported on the overall economic impact of higher wages. Puget Sound Sage's local credibility and ability to produce convincing and strategic analysis of emerging questions was a critical part of the effort for \$15^[xxi]

A summary of the data collected by researchers:

- Decreasing poverty: If there were no changes in the labor market, an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour would reduce the share of Seattle residents whose family income was below the poverty line from 13.6% to 9.4% (University of Washington)
- Dispelling the myth that this hasn't been done before: A raise in the minimum wage of \$9.32 to \$15 would be a 61% increase. In 2003-2004, Santa Fe raised its minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$8.50, a 65% increase with no net impact on employment or store closures—IIR Policy Brief, "*Do Businesses Flee Citywide Minimum Wage*," (Sept. 2006). When Washington State raised the minimum wage in 1989, the tip credit was also eliminated. The result was an 85% increase in the minimum wage for tipped workers over those two years. Restaurant employment continued to grow. (Source: *The Stranger*, 2/2/2014)
- Cost increases: a Political Economy Research Institute study (Sept. 2013) estimated that a minimum wage increase from \$7.25 to \$10.50 (45%) would increase fast food restaurants' cost of doing business by 2.7%^[xxii]. The *Seattle Times* recently estimated that raise in the minimum wage to \$15 would at most raise consumers' cost of dining out by 7% –*Seattle Times*, citing UC Berkeley research (March 12, 2014)
- On store closures and layoffs:
 - Other cities which have raised minimum wage showed no significant impact on employment or retail store closures. *Seattle Times* (relying on a UC Berkeley report studying San Francisco + 8 cities and 21 states with higher base pay than the federal minimum wage) showed almost no effect on employment

rates because of higher productivity, less turnover and modest increase in prices at the restaurants – *Seattle Times* (March 12, 2014)

- Studies of the Washington/Idaho border showed that rather than business flight to lower-wage Idaho, wages rose in Idaho to remain competitive with WA. And Big Macs cost the same. *Washington Post* (Jan. 8, 2014)

For the next wave: Lessons from the \$15 campaigns in SeaTac and Seattle

The public mood on the economy has shifted, offering us the possibility to seize new political opportunities to win gains for workers on a historic scale. In fact, the 100,000 Seattle workers whose wages would be substantially lifted by the mayor's \$15 minimum wage plan is greater than the number of workers organized in any single National Labor Relations Board election in U.S. history.^[xxiii]

Seattle has shown that public and political opinion can be moved dramatically in a very short time. It was less than a year from the first time fast food workers strike demanding \$15 an hour on May 30, 2013 to the mayor's announcement of a concrete plan to reach a \$15 wage on May 1, 2014. This extraordinary speed wasn't borne of a longstanding plan; it happened because advocates had the flexibility to seize the new political opportunities before us.

Public debate in Seattle has been transformed through the relentless appearance of workers articulating their aspirations, and solidified by the new data-driven consensus that higher wages lift the economy. Supporters of the \$15 minimum wage of all stripes have been extremely disciplined in reiterating the commonsense "middle out" argument about how economics works: more people with more money means more customers for more businesses.

Notably, working people have presented as people, not just workers. They're seen as our neighbors first, not activists. Instead of talking about their jobs, they've talked about their lives, their families, their struggles, and their aspirations. This is a rare workplace struggle where the debate has not focused on the workplace itself, but rather on our communities and our economic future. The result has been new perceptions of who low-wage workers are, what they deserve, and whether they matter.

And perhaps because Seattle's \$15 movement began in fast food — an industry not generally considered to have much intrinsic value — the focus has remained sharp on the universal human needs of working people rather than the "worth" of the particular type of labor they engage in. Universalizing this sense of who is

“deserving” has compounded the middle-out storyline, underlining the sense that higher wages are also a near universal economic benefit.

While polling has shown overwhelming support for the case workers have articulated, low-wage workers could not have won this struggle alone. It has been critical throughout the process to allow space for grassroots organizations and community business to come along. Their endorsements have been valuable ratifications of worker voices, helping move perceptions of worker demands from quixotic hopes to serious plans.

Another critical lesson is that high minimum wage numbers can rapidly become normalized. Initially, the demand for \$15 sounded quite high to many observers — including some staffers and even some low-wage workers — but with repetition and endorsement it became normalized.

Overall, the success of the \$15 effort in Seattle has demonstrated that worker voices can shape and move opinion about the economy — even more than business owners, elected officials, and journalists. In a recent poll, fast food workers registered as the group considered “most trusted” on the minimum wage. They came in significantly ahead of our new mayor, and far outpaced the Restaurant Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and the *Seattle Times*.^[xxiv]

The same poll also showed that public can be quite sophisticated and engaged in understanding these issues. An astonishing 74% of Seattle voters offered support for the idea of a \$15 minimum wage, up slightly from 68% earlier in the year. And the support appears to be firm: 87% of Seattle voters said they’re paying attention to the debate. Perhaps this close attention explains why many have been able to sympathize with some business concerns while maintaining a sharp commitment to the clear call offered by workers that bold action is necessary to take on the central moral and economic crisis of our era.

Most importantly, Seattle shows that by positioning the debate as a question of corporate profits or workers’ lives, ongoing mobilization by workers can keep the political debate focused on friendly terrain, offering new opportunities for bold policy moves that take on income inequality and lift up workers.



Known nationally as an innovative labor leader, David Rolf is the President of SEIU Healthcare 775NW based in Seattle, the fastest growing union in the Northwest representing 43,000 home care and nursing home workers in Washington state and Montana. He also serves as an International Vice President of the Service Employees International Union, the international

organization which represents more than 2.1 million workers in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

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[ii] <http://www.epi.org/blog/courts-harris-quinn-decision-undermines/>

[iii] <http://talkpoverty.org/2014/06/18/gould/>

[iv] <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/09/charts-income-inequality-middle-class-census>; <http://www.epi.org/publication/raising-americas-pay/#figure-S>

[v] <http://www.epi.org/publication/raising-wages-key-improving-incomes-income/>

[vi] <http://www.nasdaq.com/article/productivity-gains-not-being-shared-with-the-workforce-cm345539>

[vii] A Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found 63% support nationwide for a \$10.10 Federal minimum wage, including 47% of Republicans. And a Washington State poll on a proposal to increase the statewide minimum to \$12/hour shows 65% support. See Morath, Eric. "Support for \$10.10 Minimum Wage," Wall Street Journal, 12/11/2013. Accessed at <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB1000142405270230333020457925047300549288C> and Minard, Anna, "New Poll Finds Strong Statewide Support for Raising the Minimum Wage," The Stranger 2/4/2014. Accessed at <http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2014/02/04/new-poll-finds-strong-statewide-support-for-raising-the-minimum-wage/?oid=18821539&show=comments&sort=desc&display=>

[viii] DeSilver, Drew. "U.S. income inequality, on rise for decades, is now highest since 1928," Pew Research Center, 12/5/2013. Accessed at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/12/05/u-s-income-inequality-on-rise-for-decades-is-now-highest-since-1928/>

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generation/. Real hourly wages of the median worker are up less than 4% since 1973, while productivity has risen 80%.

[x] Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Occupations with the most job growth,” 12/19/2013. Accessed at: http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_104.htm. A ninth occupation, “Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive,” has a median annual wage just above the full-time equivalent of \$15/hour.

[xi] Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Union Membership (Annual) News Release,” 1/24/2014. Accessed at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.htm>. Just 6.7% of private sector workers were members of unions in 2013.

[xii] <http://www.epi.org/blog/union-decline-rising-inequality-charts/>

[xiii] <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2013/11/29/3005101/walmart-workers-risking-arrest-strike/>

[xiv] For more background on the SeaTac Airport economy, see Medoza, David, et al. “First-class airport, Poverty-wage jobs,” Puget Sound Sage, May 2012. Accessed at <http://www.pugetsoundsage.org/downloads/First-class%20Airport,%20Poverty-class%20Jobs.pdf>

[xv] Gross, Ashley. “Amid Minimum Wage Debate, Alaska Air Gives Contractors A Raise To \$12 An Hour,” KPLU, 5/20/2014. Accessed at <http://www.kplu.org/post/amid-minimum-wage-debate-alaska-air-gives-contractors-raise-12-hour>

[xvi] Heffter, Emily. “Port of Seattle says it will act by June on airport-wages issue,” Seattle Times, 1/7/2014. Accessed at http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2022616972_portcommissionxml.html

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[xviii] Barnett, Erica. “With Labor and Business Support, Murray Announces Minimum Wage Plan,” Publicola, 5/1/2014. Accessed at: <http://www.seattlemet.com/news-and-profiles/publicola/articles/murray-announces-minimum-wage-plan-may-2014>

[xix] “Local Minimum Wage Laws: Impacts on Workers, Families and Businesses,” the city-commissioned study by University of Washington

Evans School of Public Affairs researchers, is available at:

http://murray.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Evans-report-3_21_14-+-appdx.pdf

[xx] “Who Would be Affected by an Increase in Seattle’s Minimum Wage?” the city-commissioned study by University of California, Berkeley researchers, is available at: <http://murray.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/UC-Berkeley-IIAC-Report-3-20-2014.pdf>

[xxi] Numerous policy briefs and other research produced by Puget Sound Sage are available at their Sound Progress blog: <http://soundprogress.wordpress.com/>

[xxii] The Costs to Fast-Food Restaurants of a Minimum Wage Increase to \$10.50 per Hour. Jeannette Wicks-Lim and Robert Pollin, Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, September 2013

[xxiii] Harold Meyerson argues that the Seattle minimum wage proposal is akin to a form of collective bargaining in “Collective Bargaining Reborn?” The American Prospect, 5/27/2014. Available at: <http://prospect.org/article/seattles-15-minimum-wage-agreement-collective-bargaining-reborn>. The largest NLRB election, at the Ford River Rouge plant, covered about 85,000 workers in a single vote.

[xxiv] Minard, Anna, “New Poll on the \$15 Minimum Wage Shows Support in Seattle is Higher Than Ever: 74 Percent,” The Stranger, 5/14/2014. Accessed at <http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2014/05/14/new-poll-on-the-15-minimum-wage-shows-support-in-seattle-is-higher-than-ever-at-74-percent>



Dunbar's Numbers and Labor Organizing

Dunbar's number is the cognitive limit to the number of people with whom an individual can maintain stable personal relationships, generally cited as **approximately 150 people**.

Challenges of Growth Beyond 150

Once a group surpasses **150 members**, the reliance on informal bonds and peer pressure to maintain cohesion begins to fail, leading to:

- **Loss of Solidarity:** The sense of common purpose weakens as members can no longer know everyone personally, making it harder to build deep **trust and kinship** required for collective action.
- **Weakened Communication:** Communication shifts from fluid and informal to more **structured and formalized**, which reduces face-to-face interaction between general members and leadership.
- **Need for Formal Structure:** A more formal, hierarchical management structure becomes necessary to maintain organization.

Strategic Organizing Based on Dunbar's Numbers

Labor organizers can structure their efforts by creating dense, interconnected networks of smaller groups, using the full scale of Dunbar's numbers as a blueprint:

Group Size	Relationship Layer	Organizing Role / Application
5	Core Group (Most intimate, trusted circle)	Core leaders or the " inside organizing committee ."
15	Good Friends/Support Group (Close friends who can be relied on)	Smaller, self-contained teams of activists, empowered to delegate authority and make decisions.

50	Casual Friends/Local Community (Principal social circle)	Basis for smaller union chapters or work groups; focus on fostering strong bonds through social activities.
150	Personal Social Group (Maximum for stable personal relationships)	The size for semi-independent units or "chapters" to help maintain a sense of community in large workplaces.

Exponential Growth Implication

The need to build "subcommunities" and delegate authority within these layered groups is key to managing **exponential growth**. Instead of a single leader managing a growing mass of people, the organizational structure *grows with the membership* by replicating the smaller, functional groups, ensuring solidarity and effective communication scales.

Dunbar's number suggests that humans can only maintain stable relationships with approximately 150 people, which can have significant implications for labor organizing. While the theory's empirical basis has faced some challenges, it remains a useful framework for understanding the social dynamics of groups and can inform organizational strategies for unions.

The breakdown of informal bonds

According to the theory, once a group surpasses 150 members, the reliance on peer pressure and personal relationships to maintain cohesion begins to fail. In larger groups, a more formal, hierarchical management structure becomes necessary. For labor unions, this can mean:

- **A loss of solidarity:** As the number of members grows beyond what individuals can know personally, the sense of common purpose and kinship weakens. This

can make it harder to build the kind of deep trust and solidarity required for effective collective action.

- **Weakened communication:** When groups are small, communication can be fluid and informal. In large groups, communication must be more structured and formalized, which can reduce direct, face-to-face interaction between members and leadership.

Strategic organizing based on Dunbar's numbers

To address these social limitations, organizers can use Dunbar's theory to structure their efforts effectively. The full scale of Dunbar's "numbers" includes several layers of relationships, which can be adapted to union structures:

- **Core groups (5 people):** The most intimate, trusted circle. In organizing, these are the core leaders or the "inside organizing committee."
- **Good friends/support group (15 people):** A larger circle of close friends who can be relied on for help. This group can be used to form smaller, self-contained teams of activists who work together frequently.
- **Casual friends/local community (50 people):** The principal social circle. This can be the basis for smaller union chapters or work groups based on department or shared tasks.
- **Personal social group (150 people):** The maximum number for stable personal relationships. Many organizations find that creating semi-independent units of this size helps maintain a sense of community.

Building smaller, connected subgroups

Applying these concepts, labor organizers can focus on building dense, interconnected networks of smaller groups rather than managing one large, unwieldy mass. This can be done by:

- **Delegating authority:** Empowering the 15-person "good friends" groups to make decisions and coordinate action among themselves. This reduces the burden on central leadership and builds a more resilient, distributed network.
- **Fostering strong bonds:** Encourage activities that build deep trust and kinship within the 50-person groups. Social activities like eating together can be highly effective in fostering feelings of belonging and collaboration.
- **Creating "subcommunities":** In very large workplaces, the union can be structured as a collection of smaller units or "chapters" based on location or department. As one leader observed of a large digital agency, groups can be "splintered... when they become unwieldy," creating effective subcommunities.

Case Study: The ESP Bill of Rights Campaign

Education Support Professionals Building Power for Dignity, Respect, and Fair Pay

I. From Invisible to Indispensable: A Story of Power and Purpose

In early winter, the **Riverbend Unified School District** announced a “cost-efficiency plan” that sent shockwaves through staff and families alike. The proposal would **outsource bus driving, custodial, and food service jobs**, cut **paraeducator hours**, and **freeze pay** for all classified staff.

For the district’s **Education Support Professionals (ESPs)** — the backbone of daily school operations — this felt like the final straw.

“We’re called essential, but treated like we’re expendable,” said **Tanya Lopez**, a veteran paraeducator and union steward.

In the cramped office of the **Riverbend Education Support Professionals Association (RESPA)**, a newly energized leadership team of twelve members gathered around a coffee-stained table. They represented bus drivers, paraeducators, custodians, and cafeteria workers — and they were done being ignored.

They realized that traditional bargaining would not be enough. They needed to **reframe their fight** — not as a plea for fair wages, but as a **campaign for respect and recognition: an ESP Bill of Rights**.

II. A Bold Pivot: From Service Unionism to Organizing for the Common Good

The RESPA leadership team made a radical shift: instead of focusing solely on grievances and negotiations, they adopted an **Organizing Model** rooted in **Bargaining for the Common Good**.

Their message:

“When ESPs thrive, students succeed.”

They tied their fight for better pay, safe staffing, and professional respect directly to the quality of education. Bus drivers talked about how route cuts made children late. Food service workers described how low staffing hurt meal quality. Paraeducators shared stories of students missing support minutes due to turnover.

The narrative hit home. Parents, teachers, and community members began to see ESPs not as background helpers — but as **essential educators and protectors of student success**.

III. Building the Common Good Coalition

The union built a “**Support Staff Strong**” Coalition, bringing together:

- **Paraeducators**, demanding fair workloads and paid training
- **Custodians**, fighting for safe, clean, fully staffed schools
- **Bus Drivers**, raising safety concerns from route cuts and contractor pressures
- **Parents**, alarmed by instability caused by low wages and turnover
- **Teachers and students**, uniting to defend the full educational team

They hosted “**Respect Rallies**” in school parking lots, held **listening sessions** in church basements, and **visited neighborhood associations**. Every event added another layer of solidarity — and another voice demanding dignity for ESPs.

IV. Escalating Actions: From Conversations to Confrontation

The campaign rolled out in deliberate, escalating stages:

1. **Pledge Drive** – Thousands signed a commitment to support an “ESP Bill of Rights.”
2. **Visibility Actions** – “Respect for ESPs” shirt days, bus banners, and lunchroom photo actions.
3. **Community Forums** – Workers and families shared stories linking ESP working conditions to student learning.
4. **Districtwide Rally** – Over 3,000 people — including teachers, parents, and students — filled the high school stadium, chanting “Every Educator, Every Student, Every Right!”

Each action built momentum and measured power. A twelve-member core team mobilized thousands across the district — multiplying their reach hundreds of times over.

V. The Turning Point

The final confrontation came when RESPA delivered **6,200 signed pledges** and presented a detailed **ESP Bill of Rights** to the school board. It demanded:

- A living wage for all ESPs
- Safe staffing ratios
- Paid training and professional development
- Job security and respect in decision-making

Facing overwhelming public pressure, the Board backed down from outsourcing, agreed to wage adjustments, and committed to a **joint labor-management task force** to implement the Bill of Rights principles.

The real victory was deeper — **ESPs had changed their role in the district’s power structure.**

They were no longer invisible workers. They were recognized as leaders in the fight for educational justice.

VI. Key Outcomes

- 6,200+ public pledges supporting ESP rights
 - Outsourcing proposal defeated
 - Wage freeze lifted and minimum wage increased by 15%
 - District recognized ESPs as educational partners
 - RESPA transformed into a community organizing hub
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VII. Organizing Framework and Context

Element	Description	Rationale for People Power
Core Mobilization Structure	12-member Core Team recruited 120 site-based organizers across job classifications.	Distributed leadership made every worksite a hub of organizing power.

Element	Description	Rationale for People Power
Broad Campaign Goals	Move beyond “pay and benefits” to a moral campaign: <i>Respect, Recognition, and Rights for Every ESP.</i>	Framing demands as Common Good issues attracted teachers, parents, and students.
Theory of Change	The district responds only to overwhelming community unity and moral pressure.	Demonstrating thousands of voices for justice removes the district’s political cover for austerity.

VIII. Phased Mobilization & Metrics

Phase	Milestone	People Mobilized	Power Mechanism	Result
Phase 1: The Spark (Internal Commitment)	12 Core Leaders recruited 120 site organizers (10% of base).	1,150 ESPs participated in “Purple for Dignity Day.”	Demonstrated 88% internal unity.	Internal structure validated.
Phase 2: The Multiplier (External Coalition)	40 community allies (teachers, parents, clergy) joined as external organizers.	1,800 people attended the districtwide rally.	Coalition unified across job classes and schools.	Shifted narrative to “Respect for All Educators.”
Final Phase: The Confrontation (Victory)	Delivered 6,200 signed pledges.	95% of members authorized a strike vote.	Overwhelming political mandate.	Outsourcing canceled, Bill of Rights adopted in principle.

IX. Lessons in People Power

Power is not what you have, but what you can mobilize.

Success Metric	Result	Key Lesson
Mobilization Ratio	12 core → 120 organizers → 6,200 pledges	Train 10% of base as organizers to multiply power.
Internal Unity	88% early unity achieved	Test structure early with low-risk actions.
External Expansion	60% of rally participants were non-union allies	Reframe the fight as a community issue, not a workplace issue.
Ultimate Leverage	95% strike authorization + 6,200 pledges	True power is organized commitment, not just numbers.

X. Reflection & Application Worksheet

Understanding the Core Concept

1. What does “Power is not what you have, but what you can mobilize” mean in the context of ESP organizing?
2. How did framing the campaign as a Common Good issue expand its reach and influence?

Analyzing the Campaign

3. What were the key turning points that shifted power toward the ESP union?
4. Why was achieving 88% internal unity before going public critical for success?
5. How did the coalition with parents, teachers, and community groups amplify leverage?

Applying Lessons Locally

6. Which steps from this campaign could your local adapt immediately?
7. How can you identify and train 10% of your base as organizers in your district?
8. What measurable power metric (similar to the 6,200 pledges) could define success for your next campaign?

Strategic Reflection

9. Which organizing phase — Internal Unity, External Coalition, or Final Confrontation — would be most challenging for your local? Why?
 10. How can you ensure your organizing structure remains strong and accountable during escalation?
-

XI. Team Planning Checklist: Building Your Own People Power

Use this checklist to assess your local union's readiness and structure:

1. **Leadership Team:** Do we have a diverse, action-oriented team of 5–12 dedicated leaders?
2. **Structure Test:** Have we identified and trained 10% of our base to be organizers?
3. **Measurable Ask:** Does our first action (e.g., a pledge, a color day) have a clear participation goal (e.g., 90%)?
4. **Narrative:** Is our demand framed as a Common Good issue that attracts external allies?
5. **Coalition:** Have we recruited at least 50 external partners (parents, teachers, clergy, community leaders)?
6. **Power Metric:** What is our final, public measure of power (pledges, signatures, votes)?
7. **Accountability:** Do we track participation, follow-up, and progress weekly?

Final Takeaway

Education Support Professionals are no longer just “support.”

They are **educators, protectors, and leaders** — and when they organize together, they win **respect, resources, and recognition** for everyone in the school community.

Organize. Mobilize. Win together — because every educator deserves respect.

Centering Equity in your Campaigns

What does it mean to center equity in Union Work?

Race, class, and gender dynamics, disparities, and divisions permeate our society, communities, schools, and classrooms. Systemic oppression is so deeply rooted in our history, culture, and institutions that there is no escaping it. Visible or not, the impacts are ever-present. Race, class, and gender justice is the systematic fair treatment of all people resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Justice, or equity goes beyond being against the systematic use of oppressions like misogyny, racism, and classism. It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain equity through proactive and preventative measures.

To engage in a systems analysis of a racial issue and develop solutions or to test if your union work centers race, class, and gender justice, good discussion questions to have with partners and union members include:	
Problems: What inequities are you noticing or experiencing? What are the impacts on different groups? Who benefits most and who is hurt most?	
Causes: What institutions, policies, or practices are causing or contributing to the inequities? What social norms, popular myths, or cultural biases may be contributing?	
History: How did things get this way and are things worsening or improving?	
Solutions: What solutions could address the root causes and eliminate the inequities? How would different racial groups be impacted by the proposed solutions?	
Strategies: What strategies and actions could be used to advance the solutions?	
Leadership: Who are the stakeholders most affected by the inequities? Are they involved in naming the issues and solutions? What kinds of active leadership roles could they take to advance the proposed solution?	
Additional Equity Tool Questions: Who is most directly impacted? Who has been left out? How can they be directly engaged? How do our demands center race, class, and gender justice?	

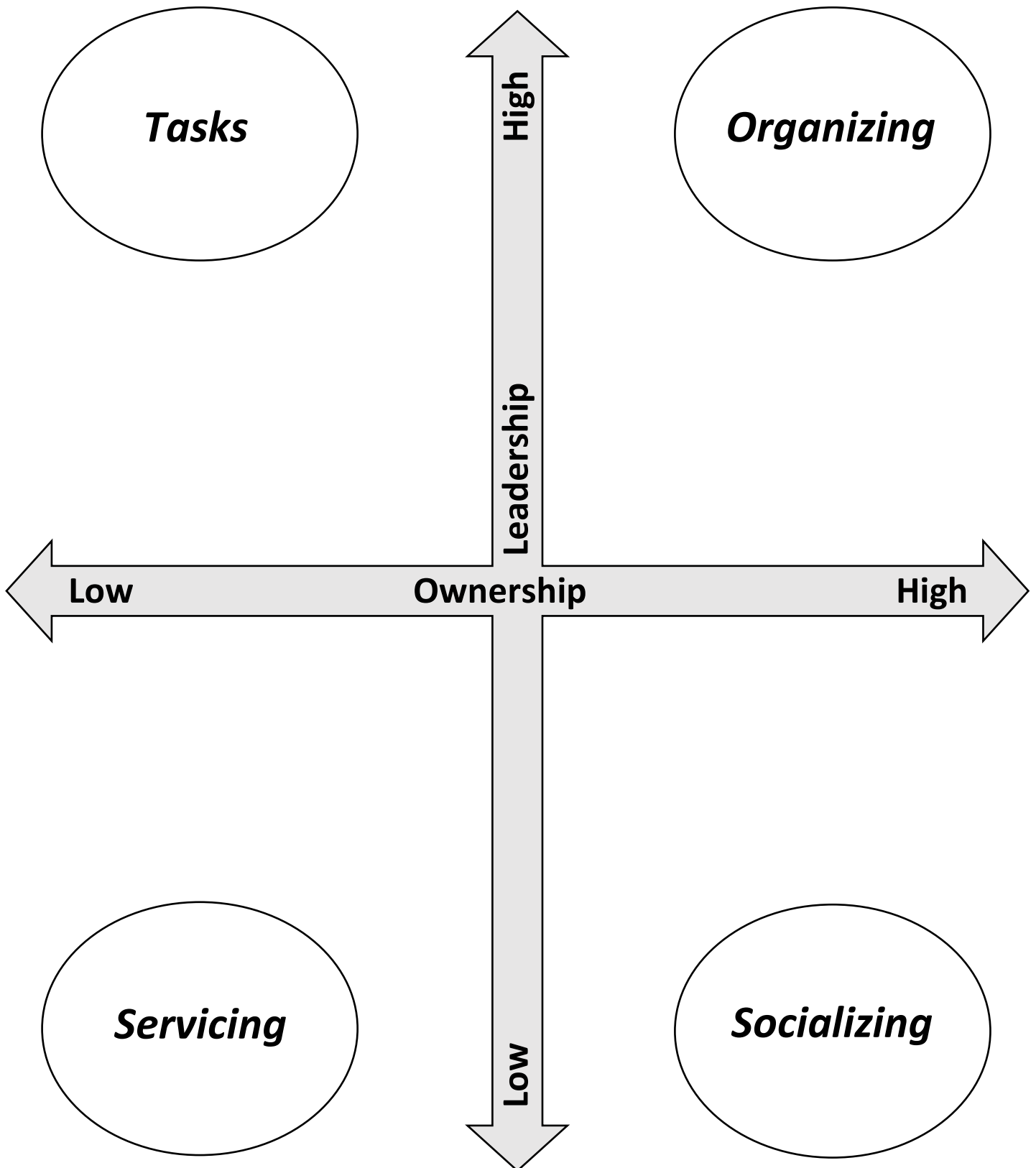
Club or Union?

	Unorganized	Club	Union	Fighting Union
Budgeting	Little or no local funding	Funding used to recognize activists -- stipends, meals	Funding used to recognize activists and also to reach out to members: stickers, buttons, tee shirts, picket signs.	Funding used to release activists to do work, to communicate with members, and to open opportunities to the newly active. Funding supports coalition work and socially focused issues
Roles	A few officers, risk of vacancy	Proliferation of titles and stipends to Presidential allies	Titles and roles generally tied to actual activities; if there's a treasurer, there is a budget; if there's a newsletter chair, there's actually a newsletter	Titles rotate regularly, or are even dropped when no longer needed
Bargaining	No bargaining, or done by a single expert (UD, President)	Small group of the usual folks on the bargaining team that the president trusts	Team represents all major job categories. Criteria is whether or not the president trusts them and they are recognized by members	Team represents all major job categories; criteria is whether they are trusted by the members
Leaders	Volunteers if any	Tends to be the same small group of folks that populate other teams. Little to no risks are taken.	Elections are regularly held and there are sometimes contested positions. Leaders can move others to act. However, their focus is on activism and mobilizing instead of term organizing.	Are trusted and respected by members, and there is a healthy election process with a number of good candidates. Leaders routinely deliver on persuading large groups to take public collective action; the and actively seeks other trusted and respected leaders. Leaders use their agency to take risks that result in growth.
Equity	Very little prioritization of racial equity or inclusionary practices by local leaders.	An awareness of the value of equity-based practices but seeing that as the districts role to execute.	Values diversity and has an 'official' position reserved in the leadership for a diversity representative. Limited interactions with the community around valuing racial equity and inclusion. Still seen as the district's responsibility to implement equity based practices. Leadership may reach out intermittently to underrepresented employee groups.	Infuse bargaining with concerns that address race, class, democracy, historically marginalized communities/members, and equity issues. Local union budget reflects equity as a priority and positions in the union. The commitment to equity is explicit. Management and Labor are partners in engaging families, community and ethnic groups to support the local public schools. Local leadership and positions in the union reflects the diversity of their membership and/or community they work in. Leaders see racial equity as their responsibility to implement and lead on.

	Unorganized	Club	Union	Fighting Union
Advocacy	None, or done by staff and/or local president Used as one of the few justifications to pay dues	Few members may help with advocacy with much support from staff. Advocacy is solely viewed as a service to single members.	Intentional identification and training of member advocates who conduct low-level meetings with support of higher levels from staff. Most advocacy is still viewed as a service to individuals with some understanding that protecting the work standards are in everyone's interest.	Advocacy is primarily viewed as way to build worker solidarity and ways to exercise collective action in response to poor work standards. Issues to organize around.
Activity	None, or led by the union, the staff, or by union members. No ownership.	Programs for individual interest with little risk in participating. Led by one person, and focus of change is on personal practice.	Works to have leaders design and lead the programs. Focus is on change of relationship with the union from rank and file to leader. Mobilizing and activism are the norms focused on traditional worker issues.	Organizing is the norm focused on the solidarity of the group and the work is to apply pressure on a system of oppression. Issues are broad and include social movement thinking.

Engagement Grid

John Donaghy, Organizational Specialist, NEA



Gather PAC Donations

Design Professional Development for Colleagues

Representative Assembly

Member Leads Grievance Process for Another Member

Hold a Ten Minute Meeting

Attend Staff Led Bargaining Training

Attend an Early Career Education Networking Event

Attend NEA Led Events

Provide Testimony to Board of Education or Legislature

Find five People Who Want to Plan an Action and Coordinate that Plan

Participate in a Phone Bank

Determine What the Script for a Phone Bank Should Be

Working with Members to Craft Bargaining Language

Lead a Team to Participate in a Phone Bank

Recruiting and Coaching Potential Leaders

Planning and Leading a Community Forum

Recruit Other Members to Design a Professional Development for Colleagues

Plan and find Other Members to Deliver Important 10 Minute Meeting Updates

Participate in a Survey

Design a Survey

Identify a Team who will Design, Distribute, Collect and Analyze a Survey

Read an Important Bulletin

Distribute and Important Bulletin

Find a Team to Design, Distribute and Follow up About an Important Bulletin

Find and Invite Early Career Educators to a Networking Event

Identify a Team of Early Career Educators to Determine What they Need

Donate to PAC

Coordinate a Team to Determine Goals and implement a Plan for PAC Donations

Attend a Rally

Endorse Candidates

Find a Team who Sets Candidate Endorsement Criteria and Plans the Process

Participate in a One on One

Develop a plan for doing one on ones across a worksite

Leading a team doing one on ones, debriefing them and identifying issues

“Stories That Lift Us” ladder activity

Together, we will plan how to engage members and community leaders in a book giveaway and storytelling event. Use this ladder to map out actions, leadership support, and communication strategies that build momentum and uplift diverse voices.

Ladder of Engagement Stage	Member activity to engage others.	Leadership action to support it.	Communication method to amplify it.
Spotting the Ladder (Spark curiosity and introduce the campaign.)			
Gripping the First Rung (Invite members to take simple actions to show interest.)			
Climbing with Purpose (Build momentum and visibility through collective action.)			
Standing Steady (Deepen commitment and create space for member leadership.)			
Reaching the Top (Empower others to lead and sustain the campaign.)			



Campaign Planning



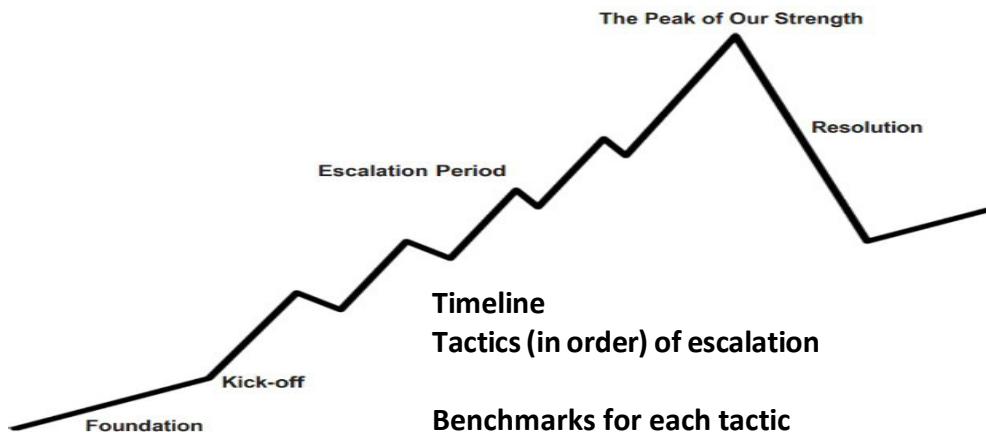
Overview
Centering Equity
Team
Problem and Issue
Power Analysis
Strategy

Campaign Planning Document Overview

Centering Equity (process to ensure this throughout your campaign?)	
Problem (big issue, no clear solution)	
Issue (personal, manageable, specific to the problem needing to be solved with a tangible solution)	
Demand (what do we want in order to solve the issue)	
Target (has the decision making or resources to solve your problem)	
Allies (supporters on this issue)	
Opposition (do not support you on this issue)	
Metrics (inform if you are winning along the way)	

CAMPAIGN MOUNTAIN

Phases of a Campaign



Data (*what will you collect and how*) Campaign Team and Roles (*consider distributing responsibilities*) Res

CENTERING EQUITY (Iterative Analysis)

What does it mean to center equity in your campaign?

Race, class, and gender dynamics, disparities, and divisions permeate our society, communities, schools, and classrooms. Systemic oppression is so deeply rooted in our history, culture, and institutions that there is no escaping it. Visible or not, the impacts are ever-present. Race, class, and gender justice is the systematic fair treatment of all people resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Justice, or equity goes beyond being against the systematic use of oppressions like misogyny, racism, and classism. It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain equity through proactive and preventative measures.

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Additional Equity Tool Questions: Who is most directly impacted? Who has been left out? How can they be directly engaged? How do our demands center race, class, and gender justice?	

Leadership Team

Who are the key people that will lead the actions and shape the plan? What is their shared purpose? What are the community agreements that they are committed to?

Shared Purpose Process

1. In the first part, as individuals, you will take 5 minutes to clarify your own thinking about what the purpose of your team could be as you work on a campaign together.
2. In the second part, as a team, you will take 10 minutes to share your ideas, look for the common focus, and discern a purpose you can all support.
3. You then have 5 more minutes to write a new sentence that you think captures the sense of your team.
4. And finally, as a team, you will have 5 minutes to consider the second round of sentences and decide on one that best articulates your team's perspective.

Step 1: Individual Work (5 min.)

- In the first column, based on the work you did on common interests and values in the relationship session, write down the **unique purpose or purposes of your team**.
- In the second column, write down **whom your team serves**: What are the people like and what are their interests?
- In the third column, write down the kinds of activities that your team could engage in to fulfill its purpose by serving this community? What is the **unique work that your team could do**?

Chart your Individual Responses

WHAT?	WHO?	HOW?
Our team's shared purpose is to...	The constituency we organize is...	We will achieve our shared purpose by...
<i>(briefly describe your team's unique reason for coming together)</i>	<i>(briefly describe your constituency's characteristics)</i>	<i>(list the specific activities that your team would undertake)</i>

After brainstorming answers to all three questions, take a few moments to write a sentence that you think best describes your team's purpose, its constituency, and its activities. Draw on all three columns above.

Examples of a shared purpose sentence:

We share the purpose of educational justice by organizing high school students in Milwaukee to develop their capacity for collective action through providing them with coaching, training, and mentoring.

We share the purpose of gaining water access for organic farming by organizing farmers and community activists through holding 1:1 meetings, community meetings, proposing and passing legislation.

Step 2: Team Work (7 minutes)

As each person reads their sentence, the facilitator notes the key words on the wall poster under purpose, constituency, or work. Note specific words to which you respond, that spark your curiosity, or that give you energy. When you are done, your facilitator circles the words that seem to resonate most strongly with your team.

Our team's shared purpose is to:

Step 3: Individual Work (3 minutes)

In light of what you learned from the last session, write a new sentence that you think can articulate a shared purpose, using some of the key words and themes.

YOUR draft Our team's shared purpose is to:

Step 4: Team Work (5 minutes)

We will read our sentences again and choose—or combine—one that can best articulate the shared sense of your team.

Final Team draft Our team's shared purpose is to:

Team Community Agreements

Process for Developing Community Agreements:

Review the sample community agreements below. Add, subtract or modify to create norms for your team. Be sure to include group agreements on each theme below and how you will self-correct if one is broken. (If you don't self-correct, the new agreement will be breaking the agreements.)

Sample Agreements

Decision-making: <i>What is the process by which we will make decisions?</i>	
• Majority rules: Whatever gets the most votes wins. • Consensus: Everyone must agree. • Delegation: Nominate one or two people on your team to be the ultimate decision-makers. ○ Coin flip: Leave the decision to fate! ○ Other:	
Discussion and Decision-making: <i>How we will discuss options and reach decisions as a team to ensure vigorous input and debate?</i>	
<u>Always Do</u> Engage in open, honest debate Ask open-ended questions Balance advocacy with inquiry	<u>Never Do</u> Engage in personal attacks Fail to listen to what others say Jump to conclusions
Meeting Management: <i>How will we manage meetings to respect each other's time?</i>	
<u>Always Do</u> Start on time; stay on time Be fully present throughout the meeting	<u>Never Do</u> Come to meetings unprepared Answer cell phones or do email
Accountability: <i>How we will delegate responsibilities for actions and activities? How will we follow through on commitments?</i>	
<u>Always Do</u> Clarify understanding Provide follow-up on action items Ask for/offer support when there is a need Weekly check-in	<u>Never Do</u> Assume you have agreement Assume tasks are getting done Commit to a task that you know you won't do
How will you "self-correct" if norms are not followed? We will have to sing a song from childhood for 30 seconds	
Teams work best when you have a regular, reliable time to coordinate together. What will your team's regular meeting time and place be? We are going to meet at the Chanin Auditorium side room A, 5:00 PM every other Friday.	

Team Workspace for Community Agreements

Decision-making: *What is the process by which we will make decisions?*

○

Discussion and Decision-making: *How we will discuss options and reach decisions as a team to ensure vigorous input and debate?*

Always Do

Never Do

Meeting Management: *How will we manage meetings to respect each other's time?*

Always Do

Never Do

Accountability: *How we will delegate responsibilities for actions and activities? How will we follow through on commitments?*

Always Do

Never Do

How will you "self-correct" if norms are not followed?

Teams work best when you have a regular, reliable time to coordinate together. What will your team's regular meeting time and place be?

Team Roles

Process for developing team roles:

Review the Team Coordinator role below as an example of what roles might look like in your individual campaigns. Thinking about how you should organize the next event/meeting, discuss how your roles would fit together to create an interdependent leadership team that supports one another in your individual projects. What would each role have to be good at?

Based on the discussion about the roles, and ask each person to tell others:

1. What experience and talents they have that might contribute to the leadership team
2. What specifically they want to learn in more detail

How might these talents match up to particular roles? Are there any clear “fits?” Note: These team roles should not be seen as permanent. For the team to be strong, all leaders should have to earn leadership by carrying out responsibilities relevant to the role they seek.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES	YOU WOULD BE GOOD FOR THIS ROLE IF YOU...	INTERESTED TEAM MEMBERS & RELATED SKILLS/TALENTS
Ex. Team Lead	Coordinate the work of the leadership team. Prepare for meetings; give support and coaching to the team.	Organized, experienced, good people skills, can make good snacks	Jesse, Queenie, Vera
Ex. Communications	Coordinates the messages sent out to other people in the campaign.	Access to technology, good design skills, attention to detail	Jorge, Mia, Jack

Team Role Workspace

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES	YOU WOULD BE GOOD FOR THIS ROLE IF YOU...	INTERESTED TEAM MEMBERS & RELATED SKILLS/TALENTS

Team Name & Chant (5 min.)

Team Roster:

NAME

PHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS

FINAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

PEOPLE - Who are your people in this organizing plan?

Leadership Team Members

Who are the key people that will lead the actions and shape the plan?

[illegible]

PROBLEM AND ISSUE

What is the problem(s) we are trying to address?

What is a concrete solution(s) to one part of this problem? This is where we find our issue.

Is the issue.. (See Issue Analysis Tools)

Widely felt and/or deeply felt?

- Winnable?
- Aligned with our values?

Does the issue..

- Build the union and builds leaders?

DEMAND

What is the demand to the target(s)? The demand should name a clear target, call on the target to take a specific action, and demonstrate the harm or impact. There may be a primary target and a secondary target.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT - RESOURCES

Examine what resources we have to build and use power. Power is organized people and organized money (and resources).

People

Who are our organized people?

- How many current leaders and active members do we have?
- Who are potential new leaders and active members, and how can we recruit them?
- Who are our allies? How many leaders and active members do they have? What relationship do they have with the target(s)?

Expertise

Key, specialized knowledge that is used to support the change you want to see. Where is it, how do you get it, how do you communicate it, how do you use it?

Durable Resources

Does not go away (meeting space, research)

Exhaustible Resources

One time use, need to be replenished, need a sustainability plan (money, time)

PRIMARY POWER ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUE

Issue Background

What is the history and current status of the issue?

What are the competing agendas or positions on the issue?

What are the narratives surrounding the issue?

Who are allies on the issue? Who are opponents on the issue?

System Landscape

What are the decision making processes on this issue?

Who is involved in each step of the decision making process?

TARGET(S)**Primary Target Name:**

- Based on the Primary Power Analysis who is the primary target? Who can give us what we want?
- Be specific. A target has a name, a face and an address.

Primary Target Power Analysis

Position • What is the target's position on the issue? • Why is the target taking this position? • What is the target's history on the issue?	Self-Interest • What does the target care about? • What motivates the target to act? • What are the target's goals?
Relationships • What relationship do we have with the target? • Who influences the target? Do we (or our allies) have a relationship with any of them? • Who are the target's allies and opponents? • To whom is the target accountable? Is the target elected or appointed? • Who are the target's base of support?	Power • What power does the target have and where does their power derive from? • How do they organize people? • How do they organize money and resources?

Secondary Target Name (if there is one) :

- Be specific. A target has a name and a face. A secondary target can MOVE the primary target.

Secondary Target Power Analysis (if applicable)

Position • What is the target's position on the issue? • Why is the target taking this position? • What is the target's history on the issue?	Self-Interest • What does the target care about? • What motivates the target to act? • What are the target's goals?
Relationships • What relationship do we have with the target? • Who influences the target? Do we (or our allies) have a relationship with any of them? • Who are the target's allies and opponents? • To whom is the target accountable? Is the target elected or appointed? • Who are the target's base of support?	Power • What power does the target have and where does their power derive from? • How do they organize people? • How do they organize money and resources?

SPECTRUM OF ALLIES POWER ANALYSIS (WHO CAN WE MOVE?)

1. Active Allies: Your Constituency

You believe you can **already** count on them to help you.

If your target falls in this area of the spectrum – you tactics will need to find ways to engage your allies even more actively in working with you toward your goal.

2. Passive Allies: Support

You think they have the same interest, investment or need to solve the problem as you do, and may be close to agreeing with you about your vision, but perhaps may not be able or willing to actively or overtly support you.

If your target falls in this area of the spectrum - your tactics will need to help move them to the “*active ally*” position; increasing their interest and willingness to be active.

3. Neutral: Not Yet – With you or Against you

These are people, organizations, institutions that may not know about the problem; may not know about you and your work; have no particular investment in the problem.

If your target falls in this area of the spectrum – your tactics will need to find ways to inform or educate them about the problem and your position in order to move them to a “*passive ally*” position. Examine your tactics to be sure you will not move them toward your opponent’s position.

4. Passive Opponents:

These are people, organizations, institutions that you think have some interests that would be opposed to your vision; they may have relationships with people who are actively opposed to you.

If your target falls in this area of the spectrum – your tactics will need to create doubt about their position, raise fears that their position may be “costly” to them in some way. You want your tactics to move them to a “neutral” position and NOT to an active opponent position.

5. Active Opponents:

These are people, organizations, institutions that have a big investment in opposing your position (related to power, position, finances, relationships, etc.).

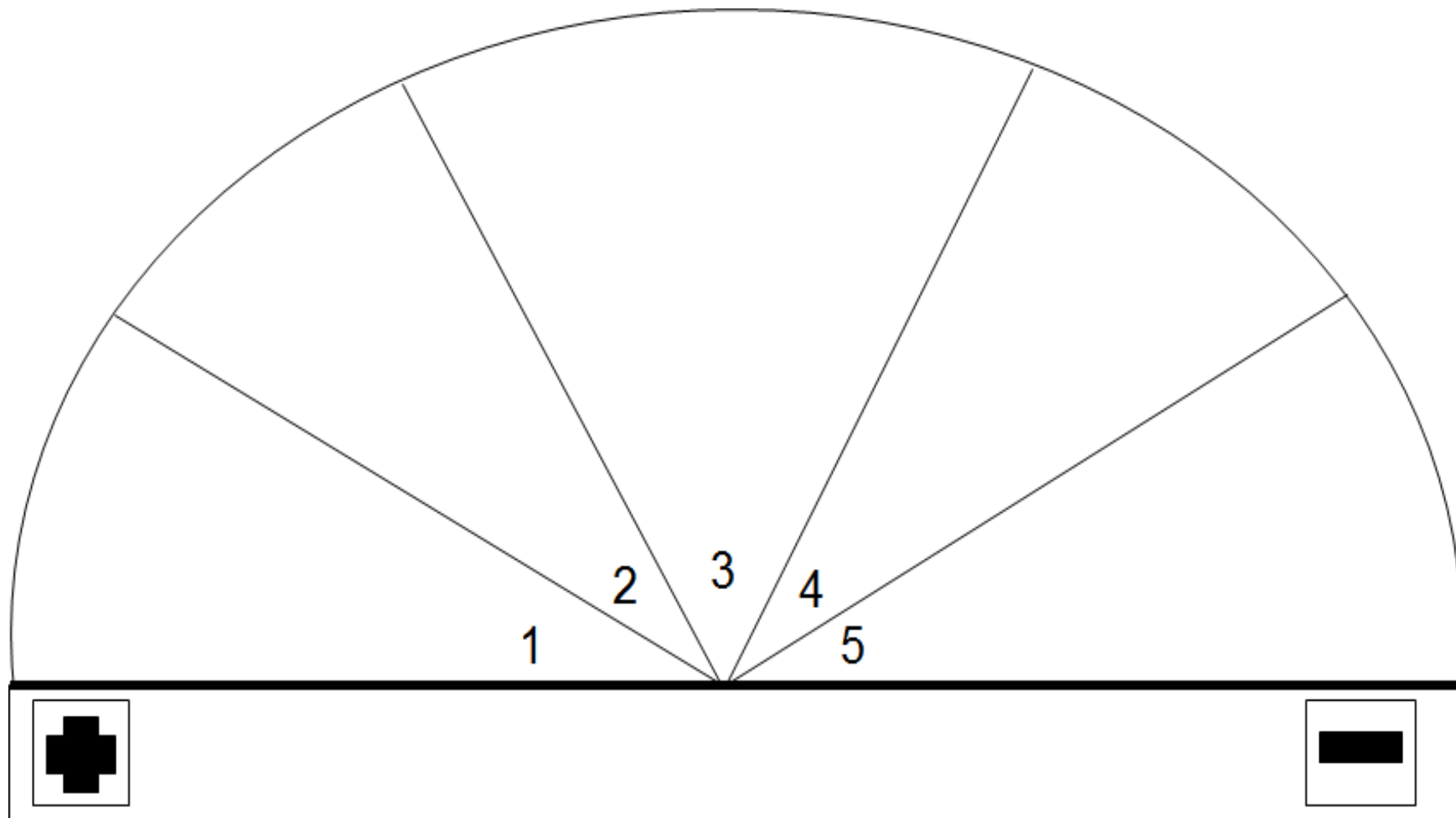
If your target is located in this area of the spectrum – your tactic goal would need to put them into a great dilemma, that any action they would take against you would be very “costly” to them. Your tactic goal would be to move them into a “*passive opponent*” position.

New Tactics in Human Rights is a program of The Center for Victims of Torture

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Problem Statement: _____



Source: Original Source – Training for Change (www.trainingforchange.org) and adapted into five segments by New Tactics in Human Rights.

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PEOPLE COMMUNICATION PLAN – Based on the spectrum of allies analysis, how do you strategically communicate with the people in each of these groups?

Constituency- Your people who care about this issue and may take action to work towards the win		
What is your plan for being in contact with as many of these folks as often as possible? How will you know they care about this issue?		
Support- Individuals and organizations who support the win but may not be a part of the actions	Neutral - Individuals and organizations who are not yet working towards similar wins or against you.	Passive Opposition and Opposition - Individuals and organizations who are against the win you are seeking to achieve
What is your plan for being in contact with these folks? How will you know they support this issue?	What is your plan for being in contact with these folks? How will you know if and when they move towards you or away from you?	What is your plan for being in contact with these folks? How will you know that they oppose this issue?
Individuals and Organizations you identified that you may not know yet if they support, oppose, or compete with you.		
What is your plan for being in contact with these folks?		

MESSAGING

Focusing only on the opposition leads to becoming disheartened or cynical, which means you ignore potential allies and support. Focusing only on how to convince the important power-holder who is against you leads to ignoring all of the potential support you could build that could overpower her opposition.

Focusing only on active allies leads to being an isolated interest-group, which also means you ignore potential allies and support. Always doing events with the same group of individuals or organizations isolates you from creative, powerful community-building that can arise from new alliances and partnerships.

Generalizing about whole groups of people risks misunderstanding the nuances of communities. If you think about "students" as an entire group, you ignore the huge number of different groups & organizations (potential allies!) that exist in a student community.

DO focus on passive allies. These are folks who know or care about what you're up to, but aren't doing anything about it! Give them a chance to participate and build power with you. Good news, In most social change campaigns, it is not necessary to win the **opponent** to your point of view, even if the powerholders are the opponent. It is only necessary to move some or all of the pie wedges one step in your direction. If we shift each wedge one step, we are likely to win, even if the hardliners on the opponent's side don't budge.

Who is the audience for the campaign messaging? What kind of message will reach them? What are their values? Think about 5 sectors you communicate with – Allies, Passive Allies, Neutral, Passive Opponents, Opponents.

Allies

Passive Allies

Neutral

Passive Opponents

Opponents

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Brainstorm tactics that will put pressure on the target(s).

Name how each tactic would disrupt the target(s)'s self-interest, relationships, or power.

List the tactics above which meet the criteria below:

- Put pressure on the target (push them out of their comfort zone)
- Build our power (develop our leaders and bring more people into the campaign)
- Are strategic (make good use of our resources to put pressure on target)

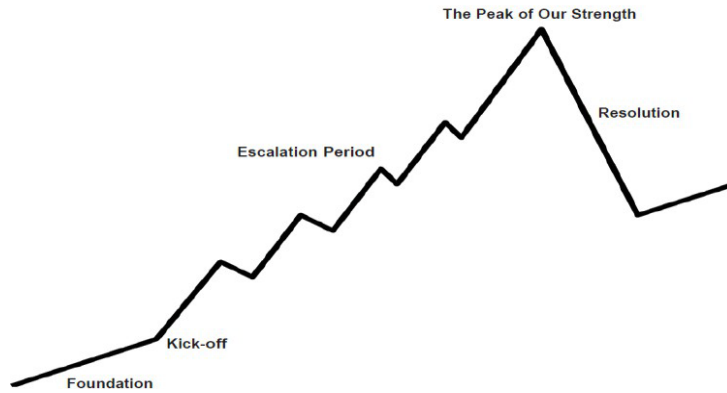
Number the tactics above in order of escalation:

Think about how much participation, resources, and risk each tactic requires, as well as how much pressure it will put on the target(s).

Keep reviewing this list throughout the campaign. Remember that each implemented tactic gives us more information about the readiness of our members for the next step and how much pressure the target(s) can sustain. Use this information to inform the next tactic.

CAMPAIGN MOUNTAIN

Phases of a Campaign



COMPRESSION POINTS

What are the key dates to plan the campaign around?

This can be either externally set dates (board meetings, breaks, etc) or internally set dates (deadlines we give to the target).

BUILDING POWER & DEVELOPING LEADERS

In what ways will we activate more members and build power throughout this campaign?

In what ways will we develop leaders throughout this campaign?

BUILDING POWER & DEVELOPING LEADERS – Do the Math

What is your goal? How many people on what date will it take to win that?

Example:

Goal is 5000 paper petitions signed 4 months from now.

Universe of Potential Actors: 60 Worksites each with 100 Workers

Team Planning: 10 Campaign Team Lead Members create plan (30 Days) (10 People)

Foundation: Each Campaign Team Lead Works with 5 Sites to recruit and train a Campaign Action Lead. (1 Team Lead to 5 Worksite Leads - 50 People)

Structure Building: Those 50 Campaign Action Leads recruit 5 People and train them. (50 Worksite Leads to 5 Building Team Members - 250 People)

Second Peak: Expansion Communication and Kick-off (30 Days)

Each Building team holds one 10 Minute Meeting recruiting 25 people in attendance.

(each Campaign Action Team Member is responsible for recruiting 5 people to the meeting) (250 Building Team Members to 5 Supporters - 1250 People)

Third Peak: Resolution - Asking for Signatures (30 Days)

Each of the 25 who attended each of the 50 building meetings are responsible for collecting at least 5 petition signatures. (1250 Supporters to 5 Supporters - 6250 Signatures and People)

What is your math?

OUTLINE OF STRATEGIC PLAN

- What foundation do you need to build before implementing your campaign (leadership team, initial planning, recruit leaders, gather resources, etc.)? How many people? Date?
- What will you do to kick-off your campaign and gear up for the first tactic? How many people? Date?
- What tactics will you take to reach the win? How many people? Date?
- Are there any natural compression points (dates, events, deadlines) that tactics should align with?

Foundation		
Kick-off		
Tactic 1		
Tactic 2		
Tactic 3		
Tactic 4		
Tactic 5		
Win/Demand		

Kick-Off	
Kick-Off Goal	
# Leaders	
# Participants	
Date(s)	
Location(s)	
Recruitment and Communication Plan	
Resources and Supplies	
Measurable Data (Qualitative and Quantitative)	

Debrief (Complete after action, Plus, Delta, Key Learning)

Tactic 1 (Complete for each tactic)	
Tactical Goal	
#Leaders	
#Participants	
Date(s)	
Location(s)	
Recruitment and Communication Plan	
Resources and Supplies	
Measurable Data (Qualitative and Quantitative)	

Debrief (Complete after action, Plus, Delta, Key Learning for Next Action)

Sample Tactics⁵ — To be used by a local union or a regional or statewide campaign with localized actions.

Basic	Moderate	Advanced
➤ Coordinated buttons in the worksite or armbands (cheaper option) ➤ Hand out information at school events ➤ Sign employee petitions ➤ Coordinated visibility (clothing, union shirts, signs in cars or classrooms, etc.) ➤ Basic education with members on bargaining process and unsettled issues via 10 minute meetings, smart and concise written communications, short videos, etc. ➤ #RedforEd Days to repeat coordinated actions and use the color of red – national solidarity color for educators ➤ Regular worksite meetings that are well publicized ➤ Request financial information from employer or state on budget, management salaries and benefits, outside lawyers, etc. ➤ Membership drive to build member density ➤ One on one campaigns to assess member readiness and educate/agitate members to take action ➤ Small member delegations to board meetings or legislative committees to speak to the outstanding issues ➤ Phone bank members and other bargaining unit members to address questions and educate/agitate for solidarity ➤ Power map board members or key regional or state leaders and community to understand their interests and pressure points ➤ Coordinate member postcards or letters to targets (publish their contact information) ➤ Use the #RedForEd hashtag ➤ Encourage members to share photos of actions on their social media platforms	➤ Solidarity buttons in the community ➤ Create songs about our issue ➤ Informational picketing as large groups in public or at specific events with the employer such as bargaining or board meetings, including a “gauntlet” style layout where the employer must walk past members ➤ Votes of no confidence in the employer/decision-maker ➤ Votes of confidence in the union bargaining team ➤ Phone bank and letters to community members and parents to educate/agitate around the issues ➤ Phone bank and letters to fellow NEA members in area who do not work for the employer, other unions and ally organizations. ➤ Flood board members home mailboxes with postcards – one per member with a unified message ➤ Encourage community members to write messages to board members ➤ ArtBuild ➤ Picket sign creation ➤ Hold more frequent press conferences and press worthy events (highly visible activities) ➤ Create a community e-newsletter to send updates ➤ Organize coffee klatches ➤ Post lawn signs in the community ➤ Place ads in the school athletic programs and parent newsletters ➤ Keep track of the employer’s spending on anti-union activities, outside lawyers, etc. and make it public. ➤ Go door to door with leaflets in the community ➤ Consider a boycott of key businesses owned by board members or supporting management. ➤ Larger delegations of members at board members ➤ Organize building-based solidarity events such as walk-ins before work begins ➤ Create a community petition and/or pledge cards ➤ Create community flyers and share them at supportive businesses (on counter) or leaflet popular community events such as farmers’ markets, recycling centers, etc. ➤ Launch social media channels and post regularly to update the community ➤ Put floats in local parades sponsored by the union ➤ Hold press conferences ➤ Create shareable social media graphics ➤ Leaflet large school events like athletic games ➤ Set up informational booths at local events such as fairs, farmers markets, etc. (“truth booths”) ➤ Launch a landing page website ➤ Meet with community organizations with an interest in students ➤ Encourage other unions in the area to picket and act in solidarity ➤ Consider work-to-rule tactics that impact management, but not students. These tactics include leaving or arriving at work when the day begins, resigning from voluntary committees, passive participation in faculty/staff meetings, etc.	➤ Large community or regional or state rallies ➤ Organize and participate in parades ➤ Organize a speakers’ bureau to go to community events ➤ Marches on the employer/decision makers ➤ Occupying a decision-maker meeting ➤ Member and community delegations to speak at board meetings ➤ Show collective resistance at staff meetings through passive participation ➤ Pack up personal property from classrooms and offices ➤ Picket board members’ houses/work ➤ Organize coordinated walk-ins on the same day across a region ➤ Banner drops ➤ Civil disobedience (be sure to consult with your union’s legal counsel) ➤ Take over board meetings ➤ Hold “sleep ins” during bargaining sessions ➤ Hold large membership rally prior to school board meeting, then pack the room ➤ Attend critical bargaining meetings such as mediation or fact finding hearings and make sure board members see/hear us ➤ Find and open a strike HQ ➤ Hold a strike informational meeting for potential striking unit and other employees potentially impacted by a strike ➤ Train picket captains ➤ Ask athletic coaches to suspend games and work if there is a strike ➤ Reach out to area colleges to ask student teachers not to come to work if there is a strike ➤ Phonebank area substitutes to ask them not to take work at the school in the event of a strike ➤ Hold a strike authorization vote ➤ Hold community forums in-person or virtual town halls ➤ Hold neighborhood based meetings with parents and concerned community members ➤ Translate community outreach materials and go to communities with translators to meet with non-English speaking communities ➤ Work with community organizations to develop proactive plans to support vulnerable students in the event of a strike ➤ Consider a Facebook live to update the community on actions.

⁵ See Tactics Manual WEAC.doc in resource section.

¡Únete al movimiento por un salario digno, la equidad y el r**ESP**eto al personal de apoyo escolar!

#ESPBillofRights

#ESPDeclaraciondeDerechos • #DeclaracionDeDerechosESP



Los Profesionales de Apoyo Educativo (ESP) son fundamentales para el éxito de las escuelas públicas de nuestra nación. Los líderes educativos y los responsables de la formulación de políticas deben comprometerse a invertir en los ESP, respetando su profesionalismo, y reconociendo sus contribuciones vitales al aprendizaje y bienestar de los estudiantes.

✓ **Compensación Justa**

¡Un solo trabajo debe ser suficiente! Los ESP no deberían tener que trabajar en varios trabajos para mantener la independencia financiera. Aquellos que no tienen un contrato completo de 12 meses deberían ser elegibles para beneficios de desempleo durante el verano o el tiempo en que son despedidos o dados de baja.

✓ **Reconocimiento y Respeto**

Los ESP juegan un papel vital en el equipo educativo y en la vida de los estudiantes dentro y fuera del aula. Mantienen nuestras escuelas en funcionamiento y a nuestros estudiantes seguros, saludables y listos para aprender todos los días. Merecen ser respetados y reconocidos como profesionales consumados.

✓ **Ambiente de Trabajo Seguro y Saludable**

Los ESP merecen un lugar de trabajo seguro y saludable que esté libre de violencia, incluido el abuso físico, verbal y emocional, y libre de exposición a materiales peligrosos. Los ESP merecen protocolos de seguridad claros, suministros adecuados, equipos mantenidos de forma segura, entrenamientos sobre las regulaciones del lugar de trabajo y protección de los denunciantes/informantes.

✓ **Seguro Médico Asequible**

Los ESP deben tener acceso a un seguro de salud asequible.

✓ **Tiempo Libre Pagado**

Los ESP merecen tiempo libre pagado, incluidos los días personales, los días de enfermedad, permiso parental/cuidador/a y los beneficios de la Ley de Permiso Familiar y Médica (FMLA).

✓ **Aprendizaje Profesional y Avance Profesional**

Los ESP merecen un aprendizaje profesional de alta calidad relacionado con el trabajo y oportunidades accesibles para el avance profesional. Los derechos de señoría (años de servicio) deben protegerse cuando los ESP buscan ascensos y solicitan traslados, y en momentos de despidos o dados de baja.

✓ **Carga de Trabajo y Dotación de Personal**

Los ESP tienen derecho a una carga de trabajo que les permita sobresalir en sus puestos asignados. Los ESP merecen tener voz en el establecimiento de turnos con todo el personal, protocolos de trabajo claros y recursos que apoyen sus carreras.

✓ **Jubilación**

Los ESP tienen derecho a una jubilación segura. Todos sus años de servicio deben contar para una pensión.

✓ **Protección contra la Privatización**

Los ESP deben estar libres de las amenazas de privatización que ponen en riesgo la estabilidad de las comunidades escolares, silencian la voz de los empleados y socavan aún más el valor de los servicios que prestan en sus puestos de trabajo.

✓ **Derecho a Negociar**

Los ESP merecen una voz fuerte en su lugar de trabajo que incluya el derecho a unirse a su sindicato/unión y abogar por los derechos y protecciones que merecen. La negociación y la promoción garantizan que mejoren el aprendizaje de los estudiantes y mejoren las condiciones de trabajo de los educadores, lo que beneficia a los estudiantes, las escuelas y la comunidad en su conjunto.



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 One job should be enough.