



# msea core training

MINNESOTA SCHOOL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

## CONTRACT CAMPAIGNS

*October 2009*

**STRENGTH IN UNITY**

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# MSEA Contract Campaign Manual

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# contract campaigns

Building strength,  
unity and  
member satisfaction

Solidarity is not a matter of sentiment but a fact, cold and impassive as the granite foundations of a skyscraper. If the basic elements, identity of interest, clarity of vision, honesty of intent, and oneness of purpose, or any of these is lacking, all sentimental pleas for solidarity, and all other efforts to achieve it will be barren of results.

~ Eugene V. Debs, American Union Leader

# **CONTRACT CAMPAIGN PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

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Negotiating a fair contract may require more than having a good negotiator and/or team at the table. A contract campaign is a useful tool for helping a bargaining unit to achieve a fair contract or address other important issues and goals. A contract campaign is a way to organize and unify your bargaining unit to address specific goals. By creating a unified group and a coherent message we become more effective communicators and achieve greater success. Remember, “Strength in Unity” is not just an empty platitude, it can and does actually work!

## **Laying the Foundation for Success**

### **CREATING THE PLAN**

A clear and well thought out plan is critical to the success of any contract campaign. Start early and stay flexible!



- Meet with the leadership and the negotiation team to create the initial plan.
- Thoroughly discuss each step of your plan! Assign roles and responsibilities to ensure that everyone understands the plan and their role in that plan.
- Determine all the information and other resources you'll need to complete your plan, including human resource needs.
- Outline the major tasks to be done.
- As tasks are completed and the campaign progresses, update the plan.
- Build in re-evaluation points to review the plan and revise as necessary. For each phase of the plan, determine a method to measure the successes and failures of your plan.
- Remember, things change and your plan needs to remain fluid and flexible. Update the plan when necessary.

### **RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS**

What issues are important to the membership? What are your bargaining unit's strengths and weaknesses? What are the district's strengths and weaknesses? Is your bargaining history adversarial or cooperative?

- Have there been grievances or contract language issues that have come up since the last round of bargaining? Were there any Memorandums or Letters of Agreement? What issues did you let go of last round of bargaining that you may want to address again?
- Conduct wage and benefit comparisons with surrounding districts and districts of similar size.
- Survey the membership. Are there significant issues that most members of the bargaining unit share?
- Are there pay equity, health and safety, training or other issues that need to be addressed?
- Do you share issues with other employee groups? What are the issues that the other units are planning to address? Establish contact with other units and explore the possibility of forming a coalition.

- What is the financial health of the district? Recent contract settlements? New superintendent? New business manager? New Board chair? Any other relevant factors?

## DEFINE THE ISSUES

Now that you have gathered and analyzed all of the data, it is time to identify the issues. Remember, the goal is to determine what issue or issues are critical to your membership!

- Understand that one classification may have a “hot” issue that does not affect the other classifications – you need to address those too when possible!
- A good issue is one that is winnable! No sense beating your head against a brick wall.
- Select issues that unite the membership. A unit divided against itself will certainly fall!
- Select issues with broad member support! If the membership does not care about the issue, you are going to have a difficult time getting them involved.
- Involve as many members as possible. Members will be more likely to volunteer if they have been involved in picking the issues.

## ESTABLISHING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Each issue must have a clear goal or solution. By setting clear goals we are able to formulate a strategy to achieve our goals. A goal is the destination – a strategy is the road map that leads you to that goal.

Strategies should also build the union! They must include activities that build group unity and morale. The basic strategy of any contract campaign is to educate co-workers, involve them deeply in every step of the bargaining process, then use the resulting solidarity to pressure the employer to achieve your goals.

- Goals: What do we want? Does the goal match the issue? Is the goal attainable? **Do the members support the goal?**
- Strategy: Is it rooted in reality? Is it a winnable strategy? Will it build the membership? Will it build our credibility? Does the strategy utilize our resources? **Will it work?**

## Defining Strategies



If strategies are the roadmap to achieving your goals, then tactics are the specific actions taken to implement your strategy and build the union.

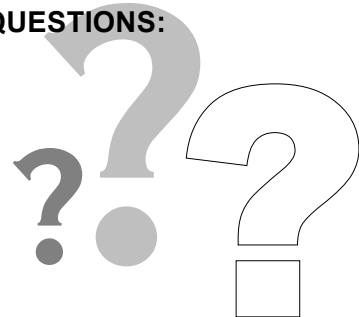
When people think of union tactics, they usually think of strikes. Strikes are one tactic, but there are numerous other tactics to consider.

### TACTICS INCLUDE:

- Worksite activities, such as surveys, petition campaigns and demonstrations. This can demonstrate solidarity to management.
- Job actions, such as “work to rule” – taking contractual breaks and working your assigned hours. Don’t work off the clock! This can show management what they have been getting “for free!”

- Communicating your goals to parents, politicians and community members.
- Encouraging community members to communicate their support of your goals to the district.
- Community actions that maximize media coverage to pressure districts with community leaders and organizations.

**WHEN CONSIDERING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS ASK THESE QUESTIONS:**



- Will it work?
- Does it unite people?
- Does it send a direct and simple message?
- Is it fun?
- Will our actions make our members uncomfortable?
- Will the tactic help members feel successful and empowered?
- Will our actions have a negative impact on our image in the public or media?

**THEN GO BACK AND REVIEW YOUR POSITION:**

- Are the tactics based on a clear analysis of your unit’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as the employers?
- What have we learned from past experiences with these types of tactics?
- Have you considered that members often give the strongest support to actions they have helped develop?

**SAMPLE TACTICS:**

<p><u>Mild Tactics</u>          Visibility – buttons, hats          T-shirts, armbands          Contract rejection votes          Union Days          Health &amp; Safety              whistle blowing          Hold workshops          Petitions          Silent vigils</p>	<p><u>More Involved</u>          Informational picketing          Daily rallies          Daily emails          Workers “talk up”              bargaining          Letters to the editor          Arrive/leave as a unit          One-minute moment              of solidarity</p>	<p><u>Stronger Tactics</u>          Work-to-rule actions          “Public” bargaining              (media, etc)          Public hearings          Boycotts          Legal Action          Targeting the Board</p>	<p><u>Optional Tactics</u>          Labor networking          Paid advertising          Press conferences          Public rallies          Bring in experts,              community leaders,              politicians who              support your issues</p>
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**CREATE A TIMELINE**

It is important to chart all of your planning so that you can follow through more effectively. Once the campaign kicks into gear, everyone is so busy doing things that it is easy for some of the tasks you have planned to slip through the cracks. Please refer to Appendix A - Sample Campaign Timeline.

## CREATE A BUDGET

It is important to prepare a budget for the campaign to make sure you have the resources necessary. Determine what you will need for each task and where you could possibly get assistance in helping to provide that service, function or task. Please refer to Appendix B - Sample Campaign Budget.

## INTERNAL UNIT CAMPAIGN

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**We must build our local units!** Besides selecting a negotiation team, units should select a Contract Campaign Committee (CCC). The negotiation team must focus on negotiations, as that is their primary task. The CCC works in conjunction with the negotiation team, not only helping to set-up your unit's contract campaign plan for negotiations, but also running the plan all through the bargaining process.

## Educating the Membership

After developing your goals and strategies, your next task is to bring the rank-and-file membership "up-to-speed" on the issues. This will help you recruit volunteers. Then you will want to turn the members' interests into action. It is important that the membership understands this is "their" contract!

### WHAT DOES THE MEMBERSHIP NEED TO KNOW?

The members need information that both informs them about contractual issues and helps them take ownership of those issues and their contract as a whole. Examples:

- How important your jobs are and how you contribute to the district and the community.
- That bargaining is a process of negotiations, trade-offs and compromises, so that expectations can be managed.
- How members have the power through joint actions and solidarity to win a fair contract settlement.
- How the union and the district are solving problems in a way this is beneficial to both parties.
- That more member involvement will convince management to cooperate further with the union.
- How the district may be attacking your contract with take-away proposals.
- That the employer is confident in defeating the union because the union and its membership are perceived as being weak and divided!

### HOW DO YOU EDUCATE THE MEMBERS?

- Begin early! Lay the foundation for bargaining by sharing the economic climate, the state budget situation and the employer's financial status.
- Fully explain "hot" issues and the union positions on those issues.
- Use a variety of printed material to reach, inform and reinforce your message with the membership.
- Inspire members and set a tone of strength, momentum and unity. YOU are the Union!

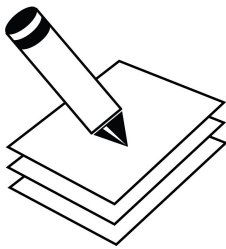


## Building Solidarity Around the Issues

### MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

Member involvement is critical to the success of any contract campaign. Member involvement will be more likely if the issue is important. Here are some tips for getting members involved:

- Identify some activities for volunteers to complete. Keep a list of specific tasks members can do to help out the campaign. (This allows for members to take ownership in the process and builds the union.) Some examples are:
  - ✓ Talk to at least two co-workers about an issue
  - ✓ Make phone calls (Please refer to Appendix E - Sample Phone Scripts)
  - ✓ Write letters to the editor
  - ✓ Make and/or distribute flyers, newsletters, or other printed material
  - ✓ Take pictures at an event
  - ✓ Update the telephone/email calling tree
  - ✓ Gather petition signatures
  - ✓ Call/email school board members
  - ✓ Ask building reps and leadership to meet with members in their buildings.
- Provide volunteers with all required information and “orientation.” Bring them up to speed on the goals and appropriate strategies. Seek their input on the issues and on tactic selection.
- Remember why volunteers volunteer! It is a commitment that is often emotional or passionate for them. Remember to provide praise and recognition – they are not getting paid for this!
- As much as possible, volunteer members should help to determine goals, strategies and tactics. This builds a stronger democracy and increases member satisfaction.



### FAIR SHARE CONVERSIONS

The district knows how united or divided your unit is by the number of fair share fee payers you have in your unit. It is critical during a CCC that your unit has a strong unified presence. Building reps, leadership and volunteer members need to have face-to-face meetings with each fair share fee payer to discuss converting to full member status. Your goal should be 100% full members in your unit!

### COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is key to a successful contract campaign! Knowledge is Power. You want your membership informed and knowledgeable on the issues. This is how you engage the members, create ownership in the union and solicit volunteerism.

## Resource Lists

#### MSEA Resources

Field Representative  
Office Staff  
Financial Support  
Communication  
Networking

#### Unit Resources

Unit Dues  
Members w/special  
abilities or interests:  
Web site  
Writers  
Speakers  
Relationships w/Board,  
community leaders,  
public

#### School Info

School calendar  
School locations  
Addresses/phone #'s  
School Board list  
School employee  
directory

#### Support/Allies

Media contacts:  
Print  
TV  
Radio  
News sources  
Other bargaining units  
in the school district  
Community Leaders  
PTA or parent groups

## **DISTRICT CAMPAIGN**

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There are different aspects to consider with the district portion of the campaign. There are the district representatives, school board members and other bargaining units and their members. (There is a public aspect as well that we will deal with later.) Each of these needs to be included in your research and analysis.

### **Negotiation Team**

The negotiation team must focus on negotiations. They are given the task to present the units issues to the district at the bargaining table. The issues should be clear and the team unified. Keep in mind we never go to the table asking for nothing or less than you already have. There is always an increased cost for the district involved. The team must seek to convince the district that a fair contract is best for both parties.

- It is critical that the negotiation team and the CCC coordinate their activities. Both are working towards the same goals and should be in synch.
- The key to implementing tactics is one step at a time, moving from safe and easy tactics to stronger tactics. Gradual escalation of tactics also builds credibility for the district to take the union seriously, and often makes the use of the strongest tactics unnecessary.

### **School Board**

#### **SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS**

School boards are elected officials and are accountable to the public and that includes You!

- Set-up a schedule to attend school board meeting regularly (Wear identifiable hats, t-shirts, etc.)
- Have volunteers speak during the “Open Comment” section of a School Board meeting.
- Have volunteer members phone and e-mail school board members requesting support or specific action as guided by the CCC.
- Do informational picketing or distribute flyers at a school board meeting. (Please refer to Appendix C - Sample Informational Flyer.)

### **Other Bargaining Units in the District**

Seek out other bargaining units in your district and meet with their leadership or negotiation team. Explore possible areas of mutual interest in “hot” issues and ways to support each other. Keep lines of communication open as your CCC progresses.

### **Work Site Actions**

Work site actions can unify your unit around an issue. It can build members’ confidence and commitment. It gives members a sense of ownership and empowerment in their own union. It also

engages the membership is taking some kind of action to move your cause forward. Some of these actions are:

- Have all unit members wear the same color clothing, buttons or t-shirts on a specific day.
- Mass attendance at a school board meeting.
- Have members meet outside and walk in to work all together (solidarity walk.)
- One-minute moments of solidarity (silence.)
- Refusing to do more than is required for your job (taking all your breaks, not doing work off the clock, etc.)
- Don't forget to declare victories along the way to bolster the membership!
- Use one-on-one contact with co-workers to find out how many will participate in any planned actions. This will allow you to gauge your probable success or failure of the planned tactic.

## **PUBLIC CAMPAIGN**

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There are times when it is necessary to take your CCC to the public!

### **Getting Your Issues and Information Out**



- Flyers, leaflets, e-mails
- Informational picketing
- Other union coalitions (within and outside your district)
- Rallies
- PTA and other parent groups
- Discussion with friends, neighbors, and relatives
  - ✓ Media outlets
  - ✓ Letters to the editor (See Appendix D-Sample Letter to the Editor)
  - ✓ Press releases
  - ✓ Paid ads

## **STRIKES**

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A strike is the ultimate member action. A great deal of consideration and planning must precede any strike action. This is a deeply personal decision; each unit member must decide if they would be willing to support and participate in a unit strike. Please refer to MSEA's strike manual for specific strike information.

## **CONTRACT RATIFICATION AND CCC EVALUATION**

Ratification is an important step in the bargaining process, yet it is not often used to its fullest potential. Ratification reinforces the democratic traditions of the union. It also provides an excellent opportunity for celebration and evaluation.

### **Analysis and Actions**

- Declare victory and “hype” the results of the CCC.
- Celebrate the ratification! Send out a congratulatory flyer highlighting key contract gains.
- Solicit membership evaluations of the CCC.
- Thank everyone who helped!
- Have key leaders conduct an in-depth evaluation session on what worked and what did not.
- Plan follow-up activities based on results.

### **Continued Contract Education And Enforcement**

Once a new contract is ratified, you should begin to lay the groundwork for the next contract. You do not want to lose the momentum you have built. It is important you continue to engage members – include new members, maintain the feelings of solidarity and build on your wins!

There are many things left to do after contract ratification. Education on the changes in the contract, continued contract enforcement and training goals continue to empower the membership. This keeps the members connected to the union and provides a sense of value for their union membership!

### **TASKS TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM MOVING FORWARD**

- Let employees know when they will get their new contracts, send out reminders on new benefits.
- Address any training issues your unit may have.
- Encourage, develop and nurture emerging leaders and volunteers!

# SAMPLE

## Campaign Timeline

It's important to chart all of our planning so that we can follow through effectively. Once the campaign kicks into high gear, everyone is so busy doing things that it's easy for some of the tasks we planned to slip through the cracks.

### **Here's a sample campaign timeline covering the beginning stages of bargaining:**

Unit leadership meeting .....	Every Monday, Month 1
Preliminary campaign planning.....	By Week 3
Campaign research .....	Month 1
Bargaining survey .....	Week 1
Executive survey.....	Week 5
Decide on issues	
Develop goals	
First flyer distributed (sets the tone) .....	Week 6
Begin volunteer recruitment campaign .....	Week 6
Negotiating team meets to develop contract proposals .....	Week 7
Executive Board meeting .....	Week 8
Finalize initial campaign plan	
Decide on tactics	
Establish campaign committees	
First phone bank .....	Weeks 8-9
Unit meeting.....	Week 9 (Beginning of Month 3)
Membership approval of proposals	
Check-in point	
Flyer distribution: contract proposals .....	Week 9
School Board meeting .....	Week 10
Present proposals	
Flyer distribution: report on school board meeting.....	Week 13
Negotiations begin .....	Week 14
PTA meeting .....	Week 15
Enlist support	
School Board meeting .....	Week 16
Possible presentation or action	
Flyer distribution: report on first negotiation meeting .....	Week 16
Executive Board meeting .....	Week 17
Check-in	
Refine/tweak plan for next portion of the campaign	

(this is only an example)

## Appendix B

# SAMPLE

## Campaign Budget

It's also important to prepare a budget breakdown for the campaign to make sure we have the resources necessary to carry it out.

### Here's a sample of a simple budget:

#### PAPER

20 reams x \$5 per ream (500 sheets).....\$100

#### PHOTOCOPYING

20 flyers, updates, etc. x 500 X \$.05 each copy .....\$500

#### REFRESHMENTS/FOOD

10 events, meetings, etc. x \$15 each .....\$150

#### HOTLINE

\$10/month x 6 months .....\$60

#### BUTTONS, T-SHIRTS, ETC

\$10 each x 100 .....\$1,000

#### ADVERTISING

2 ads x \$500 each .....\$1,000

#### PICKET SIGNS & STAKES

\$.50 each x 250 signs .....\$125

**TOTAL.....\$2,935**

# SAMPLE

Informational Flyer

## **MSEA FROSTBITE FALLS SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF**

**February 10, 2009**

For reasons we do not understand, the Frostbite Falls School District representatives are focusing on take-away language and removing longtime-bargained benefits from our contract. The District has taken no such action with any other bargaining units. If the District was in a financial crisis and asking every group to cut back, we would undoubtedly feel differently. But that is not the case. We are seeking a fair and equitable settlement; no different than settlements the District has already reached with other school employees.

Please contact the Frostbite Falls School Board members and encourage them to return to the bargaining table and negotiate a fair contract with the MSEA school support staff.

Dawn Whitehead, Chairperson	555-1234
Jon Mitchell, Vice Chairperson	555-2345
Kristi Montandon, Clerk	555-3456 (wk)
Shirley Simpson, Treasurer	555-4567 (wk)
Jim Thom	555-5678
Michelle Fontaine	555-6789

Appendix D

# SAMPLE

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Joe Smith, *Frostbite Falls Daily* Editor

As the MSEA negotiating committee for the Frostbite Falls school support staff (paraprofessionals, secretaries, custodians, food service and other non-certified staff), we would like to take this opportunity to address the growing concerns we have over the school board's hesitation to work directly with the support staff, on the advice of their attorney.

The school board has hired a Twin Cities attorney who is advising them to rewrite the language of our contract, so that it takes away many of the benefits we have fought for in the past. In the past 18 years, our negotiations may have been tough, but always amicable and respectful.

As long-term employees of the school district, we ask the school board to take the right action and bargain in good faith. We would ask the school board to work directly with the support staff negotiation team and help settle this contract that has been open since July 2007. The school district's attorney does not live and work in this community and will not have to repair the harm that has been caused. We are only asking for a fair and equitable settlement, no different than has been settled with all the other bargaining units in the district.

Respectfully,

Ann Anderson  
President

Tom Thompson  
Vice President

Henry Henderson  
Secretary

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Ericka Erickson

Jan Jansen

Carla Carlson

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Please Contact Ann Anderson with questions:  
Ann Anderson  
1234 1<sup>st</sup> St N  
Frostbite Falls, MN 12345  
(222) 555-1234

Appendix E

# SAMPLE

## Phone Scripts

*When talking to your school board member, make sure that what you are saying is personal to you. Let them know how this affects your life, your pocketbook and your family. Be polite and maintain a respectful attitude, but let them know that this is important to you! The following phone script is a suggestion to help you start the conversation, but make it your own.*

### **School Employee/Union Member**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_\_\_ (para, cook, custodian, etc.) at the school. I am calling you tonight to ask you to work directly with us to resolve our contract and continue an amicable and respectful discussion.

I have worked for the school district for \_\_\_\_\_ years and I have never seen negotiations like this and I can only hope it is because the school board's negotiation team is receiving some bad advice from their attorney. I would like to think that my contribution as an employee is more valued than what this contract is proposing.

I would like to know your thoughts on this situation and help me to better understand the school board's reasoning on why they are asking for so many take-aways?... (Let the board member talk, if they are willing.)

Thank you for your time tonight and I hope that we can work together to come to a good solution for everyone.

### **Local Business Owner**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I own \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling today to lend my support to the school support staff that are in the midst of some very difficult contract negotiations. As I understand it, the school board has hired a Twin Cities attorney who is advising the board to gut the employees contract. As a taxpayer, I oppose using taxpayer dollars to harm our local school support staff.

I have been a resident of this school district for \_\_\_\_\_ years and I have never heard that our school board has been so unwilling to work directly with support staff to reach a fair deal for everyone. What is so different this year, that the school board feels it needs to take such drastic steps?... (Let the school board member respond or talk)

I want to thank you for your time today and I hope that this issue is resolved so that everyone wins.

Appendix E - continued

# SAMPLE

## Phone Scripts

### Local Parent

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my child attends \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school.) I recently heard about the difficult contract negotiations that are happening between the school district and the support staff and I am calling today to lend my support to the school staff.

As a parent, I want to make sure that the people who are taking care of my child and helping to create a great learning environment at the school are paid a decent wage and given good benefits.

I respect the work that our paraprofessionals, food service, custodians and secretaries do every day to make sure that school is a fun and safe place for our children to learn. I would hope that the school board feels the same way.

Can you tell me what happened during negotiations that required the school board to use taxpayer dollars to hire an attorney from the Cities?

I know that in the past, the school board and administrators had negotiated with the union – what is different now?... (allow them to answer)

Thanks for taking the time to answer my questions.