Unite, Inspire, Lead
Our Students, Our Union, Our Future

Political Advocacy! Organizing for Power! It’s Time to Lead!

Lee Hedgepeth
Indicate the NEA Strategic Goal and NEA Organizational Priority your session addresses:

- **NEA Strategic Goal**
  - Example: Strategic Goal 1: Strong Affiliates for Educator Voice and Empowerment
  - Example: Strategic Goal 2: Empowered Educators for Successful Students

- **NEA Organizational Priority**
  - Example: Early Career Educators
  - Example: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
  - Example: Institutional Racism/Racial Justice in Education
Indicate the NEA Leadership Competency your session addresses: Example – COMPETENCY: BUSINESS

• Indicate all of the NEA Leadership Competency progression level(s).
  – Example: Level 1: Foundational and Level 2: Mobilizing & Power Building

• Indicate all of the NEA Leadership Competency themes within the competency that your presentation is designed to address.
  – Example: Manages budget development and business policy
  – Example: Manages Risk
Politics + Organizing = Power!
Why Politics?
“Don’t waste time mourning. Organize!”

Last words of IWW Organizer Joe Hill
Executed in Utah, 1915
The Organizing Iron Rule

“Never do for others what they can do for themselves!”
No means not now- not never

- Children are natural negotiators. They never take no for an answer. They keep at it until they get something.
- Keep asking until you get want you need.
- “I will hold my breath until I turn blue?”
Because the work of the people we elect affects our everyday life...

- The kids
- Our jobs
- Our work
- Our salaries and benefits
Start at the beginning...

• What? - Identify the issue...Education funding
• Who? - Members, decision-makers, voters.
• Why? - to bring about a change.
• When? - Starting today!
• How? - Being politically influential - identify strategy and tactics.
• Where? - In all parts of the state or on a targeted basis.
What is organizing?
• Collective action by a group of individuals who work as one to achieve a common goal.

Strike!
"Job Action"
“Power goes to 2 poles: To those who’ve got money and those who’ve got people.”
Why do we need to organize?

To move our agenda or address our issues/concerns!
Organizing to impact the process...
Organizing to impact the process...the message is simple!

Don't make me open this!
To influence...

• Decision makers
• Voters
• Allies
To strengthen our Association...
Do you have trust and confidence in teachers?

71% Yes
27% No
2% DK
Grade groups in your community
Do you hear more good stories or bad stories in the news media?

69% for Bad stories
29% for Good stories
Biggest problems public school must deal with

- Lack of funding: 36%
- Overcrowding: 6%
- Lack of Disc./control: 6%
- Drugs/violence/gangs: 5%
When is the best time to organize...

- As soon as issues are identified.
- Early in the decision-making process.
- Shortly before decisions are made.
- Immediately after decisions have been made.
- All the Time!!!
Always remember, elections and political action work in cycles...

- We recommended you!
- We gave you great support!
- You won!
- You messed up!
- We took you out... (un-elected you)!

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Always remember, elections and political action work in cycles...

We recommended you!

We gave you great support!

We will continue to support you!

You stood up for us!

You won!
Preparing for the Campaign...

• Doing our homework
• Educating our members
• Delivering our votes.
Preparing for the Campaign...

- A sense of urgency...not panic.
- Association involvement means more activities.
- Regardless of the outcome, the Association should grow from the experience.
Building Local Associations’ Capacity

• Identify threats and opportunities...

• Be informed about the opponents...

• Think “Outside the Box”...

• Stick to the plan...
Building Local Associations’ Capacity

• **Formula:** 3/4 Internal...1/4 external
Examine the landscape...

• What’s happening inside?
  – Internal issues - Leadership, management, staff, controversy at the building level…

• What’s happening outside?
  – Attitudes and atmosphere around public education, potential “powder kegs” or volatile issues...
Inside…

• Member Polling
• Focus Groups - (Formal/Informal)
• Worksite Visits
• Publications
• Social Media/On-line feedback
Outside – you have to do your homework…

• What do we know about the general public’s beliefs?
• What kind of relationships do we have?
• What kind of non-association memberships?
Mobilizing/organizing – “Creating a Movement” - 3 points of contact

• Worksites
• Community Events/Gatherings
• Message Delivery/Communications
Worksites

Structure

- Building reps
  - Building Action teams (BAT)
    - Members form a team that serves as the organizing cadre in each site. Specific roles and responsibilities are identified
- Outreach to Members
- Outreach to Potential members

Action - Collecting data

- 10 minute meetings to educate members – one “ask”
- Consistent info sharing
- Building mapping
- Collecting personal emails
- Canvassing – in worksites
- Friends and family networking (FFN)
- There MUST be follow up on all contacts!!
The Community

Structure

• Identify person(s) who will be the lead on community outreach.
  – Community Action Team (CAT)
  – Form coalitions –
    • Usual suspects (PTA, labor groups, police, fire,)
    • Non-traditional – realtors, local chamber, administration, the clubs

Action – collecting data

• Be visible as educators – and educate
  – Athletic events, town hall meetings, club meetings, fairs, hearings, school board mtgs, stores
• Petition drives for data gathering – emails, phone#s,
• Canvassing – door to door
• Identify neighborhood activists – volunteers
• Work in tandem with coalition partners
Where is the best place to collect information about our members and colleagues?
Worksites!

Yulee MS  Great Lakes ES

It’s where the members are...!

Blake HS  Raleigh MS

Tuscon Central HS  Faber College
What is **workplace mapping**?

- A leadership team activity to create a physical depiction of the worksite that illustrates presence and physical proximity of workers by such factors as membership or activist status, age/seniority, job title, assessment status, social relationships, etc.

- Once created, a map gives us a look at selected data from a bird’s eye view and provides a starting point for a strategic discussion of political organizing.
Worksite *assessments*...

- A *confidential* rating assigned as a result of an organizing conversation to describe join quotient of a potential member (or willingness of any worker to fulfill “the ask.’)

- Based to the extent possible on *behavior*—not just words.

- Used to help us focus our precious time on those most “organizable” and to collect the information that enable us to make effective connection with their issues, interests, concerns, etc.
A simple membership assessment scale:

COLD:
• Does not engage constructively on value of the union.
• Expresses firm opposition to the union or unions or expresses more negative than positive opinions of the union and its achievements.
• Not willing to receive and consider in good faith information provided about the union or union membership.

WARM:
• Engages constructively on value of the union.
• Receives and considers in good faith information provided about the union/union membership.
• Expresses and/or acknowledges mostly positive opinions of the union and its achievements.
• Participates (or willing to consider participation) in union-sponsored meetings or activities upon invitation.

HOT: All of the above for WARM and . . .
• Actively engages in discussion on union membership, asks constructive questions, and seeks answers to objections.
• Concedes that the union would be stronger and more effective if more joined.
• Accepts membership form.

Move toward the HEAT! Stay out of the cold!
A simple political assessment scale:

**COLD:**
- Does not wish to engage in conversations about union political activities.
- Expresses firm opposition to the union’s political activity.
- Specifically asks **NOT** to receive political communications – including email, mail or phone calls.

**WARM:**
- Engages constructively in political conversations.
- Is willing to consider - in good faith - engaging in political action.
- Expresses and/or acknowledges - mostly positively - the union’s engagement in political activity.
- Participates (or willing to consider participation), if asked, in union-sponsored meetings or activities that involve political action – candidate forums, school board meetings, off-site meetings about political activity.

**HOT:** All of the above for WARM and . . .
- Actively and positively engages in discussion on union politics, asks constructive questions, and seeks answers to objections.
- Concedes that the union would be stronger and more effective if more members were politically involved.
- Volunteers or accepts an invitation to become involved in Association political activity.
- Has a direct connection/relationship with political figures or has solid community ties that could prove helpful.

*Move toward the **HEAT**! Stay out of the **cold**!*
Mapping worksites – the keys...

• Use the roster to map your site – matching names with locations – as much as possible.
  – Start by using the assessment tool
  – Color code each staff member
  – ID Assoc. members who can help with political action.
  – Determine who, how, when members will be approached.

• Follow up on-site with map and roster.

• Centrally deposit **ALL** mapping information and data gathered for future campaign organizing purposes.
Data mining – what should we ask?

- Voter registration
- Personal email
- Cell phone#
- Social media
- Community ties
- Family activists
- Association awareness
- Political action gauge –
Just when we think we do…we don’t

No sweat. I know everything about our members.
• What makes an organization effective is its level of **unity**.
• We don’t have the **dough**!
• However, together, we have proven that we can make a difference at the local, state and national level!
Strategies & Tactics

• **INDIVIDUAL**
  Come up with 5 ways that you can be influential politically.

• **ORGANIZATIONAL**
  Come up with 3 strategies that the LEA could utilize to influence elections and or decision-makers.

• Always remember coalition building
Some tactics/activities

• **Collective action/Mass demonstrations**
  – A good show, but should be linked to a lobbying effort

• **Petition drives/Letter writing campaigns**
  – Can be very helpful in building your numbers, but shouldn’t be used in isolation

• **Social Media - FB, Twitter, MySpace, Texting, Instagram, SKYPE**
  Very good tools – should not be relied upon as the only means of communication.

• **Public Hearings**
  – Go to them or hold your own

• **Civil disobedience**
  – Should never be seen as an end itself. It will bring publicity and help build solidarity.
Session Outcomes

• The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:
  – Preparing your LEA to engage in Effective Political action
  – Building your LEA’s capacity for membership and political organizing
  – Electing friends of public education!
• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session!
• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment