Seattle 2015
Anatomy of a Strike

Presenter:
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COMPETENCY 6: ORGANIZING

• **Competency Progression Level**
  Level 3: Agenda Driving

• **Themes**
  – Utilizes organizing best practices
  – Builds meaningful community partnerships
  – Makes strategic plans that rely on data and analysis
  – Engages in collective action to identify and address pivotal issues
  – Creates conditions for continuous association growth and strength
  – Fosters the development of leaders at all levels of the organization
Setting the Scene: SEA Organizes

• When I was still just the president-elect in the Spring of 2012, we started our internal organizing work with 1-on-1 meetings

• In those conversations we who were the trusted and respected leaders

• We engaged those leaders in conversation about their commitment to public education (80% said “yes”)

• Relationship building: no “ask” during the meetings

• New people take an interest in the union
2013 Contract Bargaining

- We were not ready to exercise power
- Still identifying leaders; not enough leaders engaged yet
- No opportunities yet to build members’ capacity for action (continuum of action)
- No community organizing
- Conventional Bargaining Team/Bargaining Support Team
- Result: member disappointment and 58% “yes” vote
- Two-year contract: a date with 2015
Participant Activity

• Have you started member organizing/leadership identification?
• Let’s do some “building blitz” planning.
• What moves you? How relational organizing gets at the question of motivation.
2014: Picking Up Momentum

• February budget fight: schools say that cuts are not necessary
• April election: clearing the hurdle of union transformation
• May-November: leading the Class Size Initiative
2015: Upping the Ante

- January: membership action on behalf of a member suffering “double-jeopardy” punishment
- January-June: pressuring the legislature on education funding
- May 19: one-day walkout against the legislature
- June 17: shot across the bow of the school board
Build-Up to Bargaining

The Bargaining Structure

- Choosing 40 leaders for the Bargaining Team
- Creating a zone structure w/leaders as zone captains
- Building a Bargaining Support Team: 230 strong
Build-Up to Bargaining

Trial Runs

• Vetting the issues with members: surveys and focus groups

• May 19: one-day walkout for education funding

• June 17: throwing down the gauntlet at the school board meeting
Build-Up to Bargaining

- Finding the high ground
- Building community partnerships in the high-poverty neighborhoods
- Looking for “parent-friendly” issues
- Vetting issues with the community: face-to-face meetings
What’s Your Build-Up to Bargaining?

Questions for participants

• Who here will be bargaining this year?
• Who here will be bargaining next year?

Write it down

• What are your issues?
• What are the “big picture” outcomes that you want?
Build-Up to Strike:

The Continuum of Action:
Effort x Participation = Power

You build power by progressively asking members for more effort and/or more participation
The Continuum of Action
Build-Up to Strike

• 2013 Bargaining Survey: 2534
• 2013 Special Ed Petition: 3073
• 2014 Budget Action: 50 schools vote “no”; 25 ready to vote “no”
• 2014 Governance Elections: 130% increase in turnout
• I-1351 Class Size Initiative Signature Gathering: 124% of goal
• I-1351 Class Size Initiative Phone Banking: twice as much as any other council
• 2015 “Double-Jeopardy Action: 90 schools
The Continuum of Action: 2013-14

- Phoning
- 1351
- BA 50
- SpEd
- Survey

Effort vs. Participation

POWER

Unite, Inspire, Lead
Empowering Educators for Success

2016 NEA National Leadership Summit | February 26-28, 2016 | Hilton Anatole | Dallas, Texas
Build-Up to Strike: Power on the Rise

• 2015 bargaining survey: 3698
• May 19 strike authorization vote: 85% participation; 85% “yes” vote
• May 19 Turnout: 5000 participants; 3000 members; all schools closed
• June 17 message to school board: 95 schools circulate the petition
• State legislature approves budget only after school has let out for the summer
• Supreme Court fines the State $100,000/day under “McCleary” ruling
The Continuum of Action: 2015

EFFORT

PARTICIPATION

POWERT

- Strike!
- May 19 Turnout
- May 19 Vote
- SB Petition
- Survey
- Strike Vote
Continuum of Action Planning

Imagine 3 to 5 actions on the continuum of action

• Start with something that has a low effort/participation quotient
• Build up from there on effort or participation or both
• Write them down
• Discuss them with your partner
Reflecting on Member Engagement

- Meaningful action builds confidence
- Confidence builds engagement
- Meaningless action destroys confidence
- No pre-determined, “necessary” actions: everything depends on context and history
- Protests aren’t necessarily the answer, though some people have a strong disposition for them
- Handle “vanguard actions” carefully
Reflecting on Member Engagement

- You can’t go from member disengagement to full member engagement in one giant leap: you have to build up to it
- Each new level of participation helps you to imagine new possibilities for exercising power
- Think about working toward a “virtuous circle” of membership engagement
What Does Member Engagement Mean to You?

Why that?

Talk it over
Outcomes: A Striking Success

• 30 minutes guaranteed recess in elementary schools
• 30 school-based equity teams to work on disproportionate student discipline
• Joint committee to determine yearly testing regime
• State standardized tests no longer linked to teacher evaluation as a growth measure
• Enforceable caseloads for ESAs
• Clarity in teacher evaluation language
• Mentors for classified employees
Outcomes: A Striking Success

• 9.5% raise over three years
• Plus 4.8% COLA over two years
• Plus whatever the State approved COLA is for the third year
• Plus 3% increase in pay for the third year for 20-minute increase in the teaching day
• 60% of the 20-minute increase is for individually-determined teacher collaboration time
• 20% of the 20-minute increase if for individual teacher prep time
• Additional 8% pay increase for Family Support Workers
A Striking Success in Non-CBA Outcomes

• Increased respect from the City of Seattle (Mayor & City Council)
• Marked increase in requests for political endorsements
• Parent group inquiries about issues or relationships
• More media inquiries about education issues beyond the strike
• Better public recognition that the union is the voice of educators
A Striking Success in Member Outcomes

• Pride in being part of the union
• A feeling of agency and power
• A desire to do union work
• An eagerness to act collectively
• A willingness to tackle new challenges
• Higher expectations for the union
Questions from Me; Answers from You

Union internal transformation vs. take-over by insurgent member group

• Why aren’t strikes more common?
• Why aren’t the ones that happen more successful?
• What are the impediments that make this work hard?
• What are the structural challenges within a union that don’t necessarily guarantee a transformation when a take-over happens?
Questions from You; Answers from Me
Session Outcomes

• The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:
  – Example 1:
  – Example 2:
  – Example 3:
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