

# Civic Academies

## TOOLKIT



# The National Education Association (NEA)

**The National Education Association (NEA)**, the nation's largest professional employee organization, is committed to advancing the cause of public education. NEA's 3 million members work at every level of education — from pre-school to university graduate programs. NEA has affiliate organizations in every state and in more than 14,000 communities across the United States.

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## What Is a “Civic Academy”?

The need for local education associations to build strong alliances with parents and community members has never been greater than it is today.

Associations with strong, consistent parent and community relationships deliver large, student-centered wins.

“Civic Academies” are the name the National Education Association (NEA) has given to a special kind of parent and community organizing committee, although they go by many names in the places where they have been built.

## The Old Model

The development of Civic Academies comes as a response to the challenges and pitfalls local education associations have encountered when building parent and community relationships in the past.

- Locals reached out to parent and community allies only in the middle of a difficult campaign.
- Association leaders and staff often struggled to make and build community relationships.
- Messaging was limited to the immediate needs of the local association.
- The timing and transactional nature of these connections frequently led to parents and Association leaders going their separate ways at the end of the campaign.
- Locals lost touch with the outside leaders who helped them win.
- Parents were left feeling like the local was only interested in their partnership when the union needed something.
- Allies experienced fatigue and churn, which made it more difficult for union leaders to engage those supporters in subsequent campaigns.

## The Path Forward

Civic Academies break this unhelpful pattern in two primary ways:

1. Civic Academies create a permanent community organizing committee structure that is designed to maintain relationships beyond any one campaign. This allows Association leaders and staff to develop community leaders' organizing skills just as they would any other key Association leader. It also allows local associations to lay the groundwork for the community component of a campaign well in advance of the major points of compression during the campaign.
2. Civic Academies connect analysis with action, grounding the work with a focus on organizing around issues that transcend a single campaign. This deeper analysis should be grounded in research about the ways that the economy, tax policy, and school funding harm students, educators, and their communities. This analysis also allows local leaders and community members to see how these economic structures create and exacerbate racial inequalities in their community.

## The Benefits of Civic Academies

### For Community Members

1. Pull community relationships away from transactional contacts and into sustainable partnerships by helping participants see their own self-interests clearly.
2. Build skills to become better advocates for their children and community and find power in being connected to the local association.
3. Provide access to tools that members of the community don't possess as individuals, such as collective bargaining, the ability to shape school board policies, local and state political action committees, trained organizing staff and leaders who can support their work, and political professionals who can lobby state leaders for changes in policy.

### For Local Association Leaders

1. See parents and community allies as essential partners in building the pressure they need to win campaigns.
2. Build partnerships as a core part of the functioning of the local association rather than as an add-on or an afterthought.
3. Center racial justice in the work so local leaders can clearly see how racial justice work is critical to building local strength – and not just “something we should be doing.”
4. Use permanent community organizing committees to exert pressure on unlikely targets, i.e. the corporations and wealthy individuals who profit from the policies that starve our schools and harm our children.

## Moving the Pro-Public Education Movement Forward

Historically, local education associations have counterbalanced the managerial authority of local school boards and their hired administrators. This orientation, which is particularly strong in collective bargaining states, can lead to a state of constant struggle between the local association and the school district.

**Today, the real struggle in public education is between groups that want to starve and replace or eliminate public education and the educators, students, parents, and district leaders struggling to preserve and improve their schools.**

Civic Academies, through their use of research and analysis, help educators and parents see the real villains behind the manufactured scarcity that leads to fights between educators and administrators.

### Key Points on Civic Academies:

- Go by many names in the places they have been created
- Are permanent parent and community organizing committees composed of local association leaders, parents, community members, and students (where appropriate)
- Use research to develop an analysis about how the economy, tax policy, and school funding harm students, educators, and their communities, and create and exacerbate racial inequalities
- Are NOT study groups, but instead tie analysis to action as part of campaigns
- Create an opportunity for local education associations to strive for more collaborative relationships with local school district leaders, united in the fight to improve public education and save it from the interests working to dismantle it

## Debunking the Scarcity Myth

Funding for public services, like schools, continues to decline in terms of inflation-adjusted dollars.

Individual Americans feel scarcity in their own lives: wages that don't keep up with the cost of living, rising health care costs, student debt, and the decline of retirement security. Rather than asking where the money went or questioning policy decisions, many Americans have come to believe that there is not enough money to go around or, worse, that other groups are in competition with them for limited resources.



### GOP tax law will add \$1.9 trillion to debt: CBO

BY NIV ELIS - 04/09/18 02:45 PM EDT 356 COMMENTS

7,203 SHARES

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A big reason for the concentration of wealth and the American belief in scarcity is our broken tax system. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, passed by the Republican Congress and signed into law by President Trump, is projected to add \$1.9 trillion to the national debt over the next decade.

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But the benefits of that bill's tax cuts have predominantly gone to the wealthiest individuals and large corporations. For the first time in the nation's history, billionaires are paying a lower tax rate than working-class Americans:

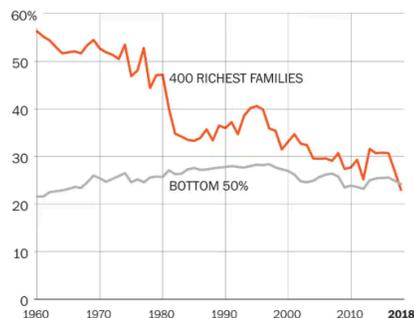
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### Business

## For the first time in history, U.S. billionaires paid a lower tax rate than the working class last year

### In 2018, the super-rich paid a lower tax rate than the bottom 50%

Average effective tax rates of the 400 richest families and the bottom 50 percent of U.S. households



Source: Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman

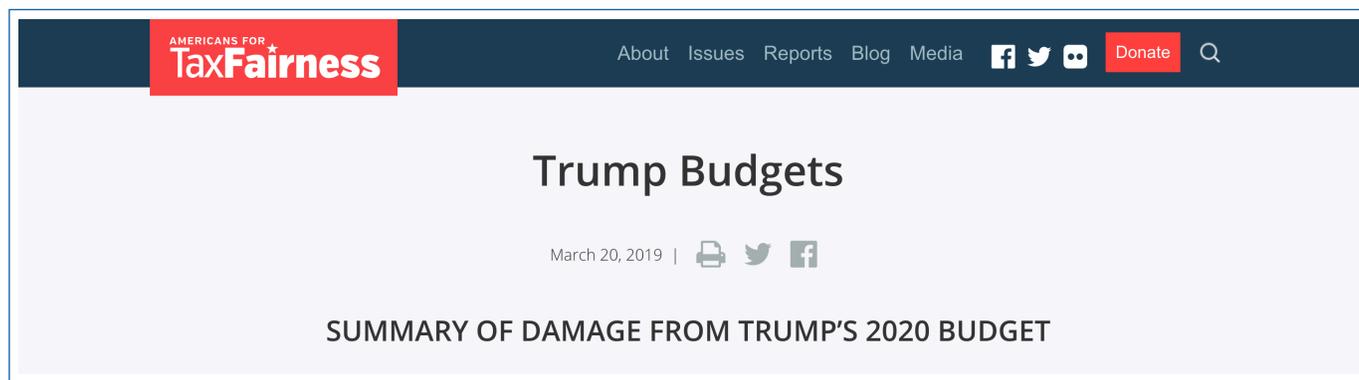
THE WASHINGTON POST

Note: Includes federal, state and local taxes.

By Christopher Ingraham

## Debunking the Scarcity Myth *continued*

And the current administration plans to deal with the deficits created by these tax cuts through even deeper cuts to public programs and services:



This recent tax cut is part of a long-term trend toward lower marginal rates of taxation on America's richest people. The top federal marginal income tax rate today is 37 percent, but that top rate used to be over 90 percent in the 1950s and early 1960s:

Tax Policy Center

### Statistics

Home > Statistics > Individual > Historical Data

## Historical Highest Marginal Income Tax Rates

2018

1913 - 2018 historical highest marginal personal income tax rates

18-Jan-19

Historical Highest Marginal Income Tax Rates

Year	Top Marginal Rate	Year	Top Marginal Rate	Year	Top Marginal Rate
1913	7.00%	1948	82.13%	1983	50.00%
1914	7.00%	1949	82.13%	1984	50.00%
1915	7.00%	1950	84.36%	1985	50.00%
1916	15.00%	1951	91.00%	1986	50.00%
1917	67.00%	1952	92.00%	1987	38.50%
1918	77.00%	1953	92.00%	1988	28.00%
1919	73.00%	1954	91.00%	1989	28.00%
1920	73.00%	1955	91.00%	1990	28.00%
1921	73.00%	1956	91.00%	1991	31.00%
1922	58.00%	1957	91.00%	1992	31.00%
1923	43.50%	1958	91.00%	1993	39.60%
1924	46.00%	1959	91.00%	1994	39.60%
1925	25.00%	1960	91.00%	1995	39.60%

These unequal tax laws did not happen by accident – these rules were created by people, and they can be changed by people.

## On Scarcity: Turning This Analysis into Action

When we allow the myth of scarcity to go unchallenged, we lower expectations for change.

There are enough resources to go around, and building this understanding allows local associations to advance a powerful vision for the kind of schools and communities they want to co-create.

When it is clear that there is enough money to fully fund our schools, state associations are able to go to the state legislature and local associations are able to go to the bargaining table with substantial, inspiring demands instead of a set of limited and incremental goals.

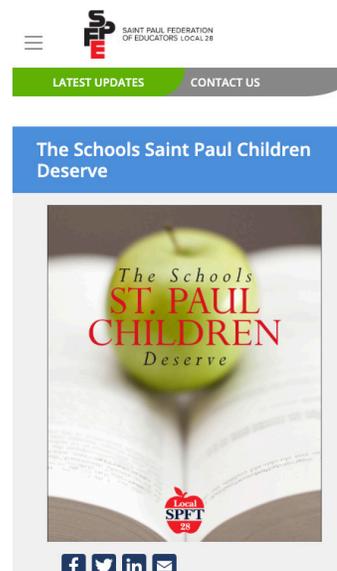
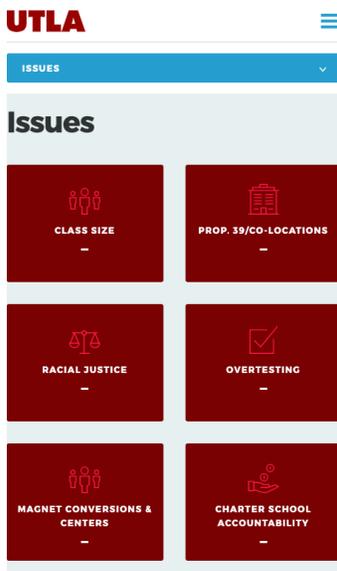
### Revisiting The Schools Chicago's Children Deserve

By CTU Education Policy Department | September 12, 2018 | [Features](#)

File under: [Education](#), [Evaluation](#), [Race to the Top](#), [Racism](#), [Rahm Emanuel](#), [Strike](#), [Sustainable Community Schools](#)

In 2012, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) decided to frame its upcoming contract negotiations around a series of bold, student-centered improvements to schools based on the premise that the city had the money to make those changes; it only lacked the political will. The result was the report *The Schools Chicago's Children Deserve*.

The success of CTU's strike in 2012 inspired other locals to follow suit:



## Winning the Argument: Helpful Facts

We live in the wealthiest nation in the entire history of the world.

But to most Americans, it doesn't feel that way. Wealth in America is concentrated with the rich, to a degree not seen in a century:

**GDP (current US\$)**  
World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.  
License: CC BY-4.0

Line Bar **Map** Share Details

Shaded Points

2018

Trillions  
 < 0.28  
 0.28 - 1.22  
 1.22 - 2.86  
 2.86 - 4.97  
 > 4.97

**MONEY**

### Income inequality grew again: The highest level in more than 50 years, Census Bureau says

**Mike Schneider** Associated Press  
Published 9:06 a.m. ET Sep. 26, 2019 | Updated 9:45 a.m. ET Sep. 26, 2019

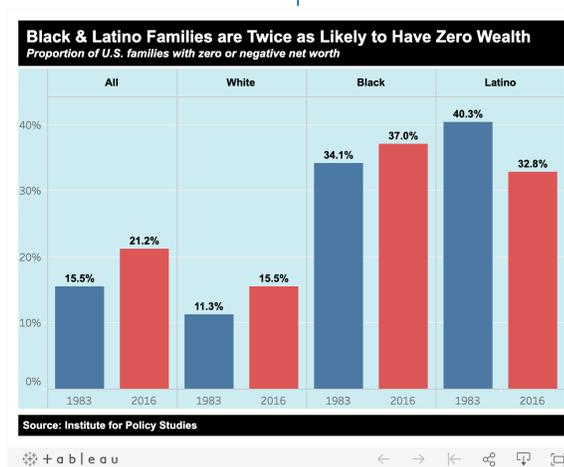
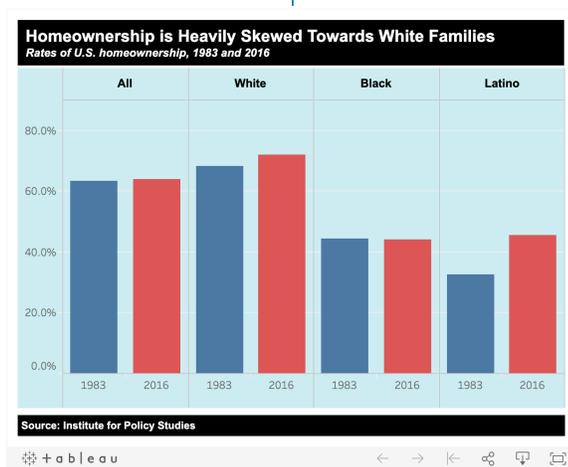
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Three Men Own as Much as Bottom Half of Americans  
184,820 views | IFS.Inequality

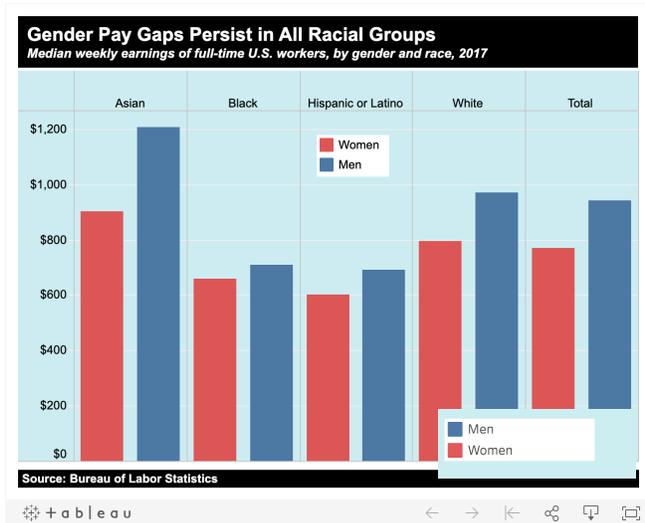
- Income equality in America has reached a 50-year high.
- The richest three Americans in 2018 owned more wealth than the bottom 50 percent of Americans combined.

Black and Latino families are far more likely than white families to have a negative net worth.

- **This racial disparity in wealth impacts who can afford to own a home.**



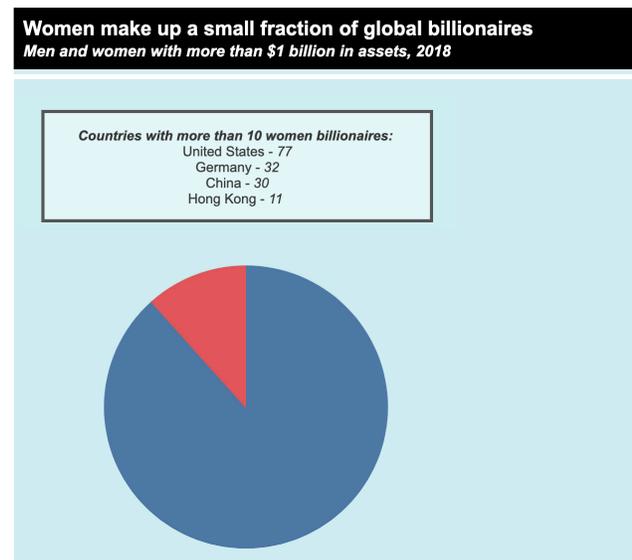
## Winning the Argument: Helpful Facts continued




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Women still earn significantly less than their male counterparts.

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The gender wealth gap is even more extreme. Women make up a small percentage of the world's billionaires.

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## Getting Started: Checklist of Things to Do

There is some pre-work to consider before launching a Civic Academy series:

1. Identify the relevant issue(s)
2. Develop a power base of diverse institutions
3. Form a Civic Academy committee or central team
4. Organize a “deliverables” calendar
5. Organize Civic Academy teams

### 1. Identify the relevant issues

Tools to identify issues:

- ▣ One-on-one conversations
- ▣ 10-minute meetings
- ▣ Opportunity checklists

Determine if there is a funding component that needs to be addressed to make gains around identified issues.

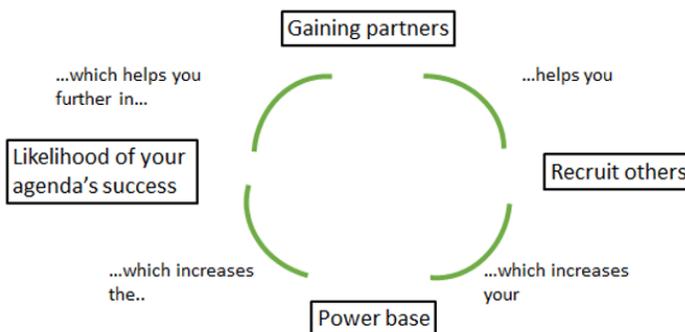
### 2. Develop a power base of diverse institutions

To build strong alliances within a community, target institutions that have similar interests or missions: i.e. faith-based institutions, parent teacher organizations (PTOs), alumni associations, or civic organizations.

Engaging in power mapping can help identify the key organizations that should be engaged around the planned campaign.

#### Power Mapping Best Practices:

- Brainstorm groups and organizations in the area
- Write organization names on sticky notes
- Place the sticky notes on a chart, according to their level of influence (y axis) and their relative support for the local association's demands and issues (x axis) [See example power mapping chart to the right]
- Identify the groups that have both the potential to influence the targets of the local association's demands and be potentially supportive of the local's efforts



## Getting Started: Checklist of Things to Do continued

### 3. Form a Civic Academy committee or central team

Any successful campaign needs an organizing committee made up of key leaders. In a Civic Academy campaign, that committee needs to be made up of both local association members and leaders as well as members of other groups in the community that stood out as potential allies in the power mapping exercise. Civic Academy committees usually contain:

- ❑ Educators (existing and new Association leaders)
- ❑ Parents (PTA/PTO members, active parents at district schools)
- ❑ Leaders of community groups (faith-based organizations, social groups, labor and progressive organizations)

Role of Civic Academy committee/central team:

- ❑ Manage/organize the Civic Academy series
- ❑ Help steer the direction of the campaign
- ❑ Assess the progress of the campaign

### 4. Organize a “deliverables” calendar

Civic Academy Planning Timeline				
Date	Meeting	Focus	Action	Leaders
Aug. 21 – Sep. 5	One-on-one meetings with primary leaders at targeted institutions	Introduce the issue(s), an opportunity to build a partnership and civic academy proposal	Primary leaders commit to participate in the civic academy series  Primary leaders identify 1-2 leaders that will serve as the civic academy committee	Member organizers, affiliate’s part-time organizers, NEA staff
Sep. 10	Pre-Meeting: Civic Academy Training	Create an agenda for the civic academy training  Evaluate one-on-one meetings, identify the committed institutions  Identify roles for the civic academy training	Notify identified leaders from partner institutions about the civic academy training, email materials to leaders	Member organizers, affiliate’s part-time organizers, NEA staff
Sep. 19	Civic Academy Training	Train leaders on the civic academy, team roles/responsibilities, assign leaders to teams	Committee leaders identify leaders in the institution  Meet with identified leaders, ask them to serve as mobilizers within their institution	Member organizers, affiliate’s part-time organizers, committee leaders, NEA staff
Sep. 26	Civic Academy Planning Meeting	Review the identified issues, outline topics of research	Research team will research the identified issues and develop a report  Committee leaders and member organizers will support research team and conduct one-on-ones with identified leaders	Member organizers, affiliate’s part-time organizers, committee leaders, NEA staff

## Getting Started: Checklist of Things to Do *continued*

### 5. Organize Civic Academy teams

#### Communications

The communications team plays a key role in managing the database system of the participants and controlling the messaging of the campaign.

*Tasks may include:*

- ❑ Input contact information; update database
- ❑ Organize phone banking
- ❑ Coordinate media coverage with the press; produce press releases
- ❑ Manage social media accounts

#### Logistics

The logistics team ensures that leaders are equipped with the necessary tools and materials and manages the flow of the meetings.

*Tasks may include:*

- ❑ Identify and confirm meeting locations
- ❑ Coordinate room setup
- ❑ Organize sign-in or collect information from participants
- ❑ Print and organize materials

#### Action Team

The action team strategizes and organizes the agenda to drive toward the intended outcome of the meeting.

*Tasks may include:*

- ❑ Assign roles to leaders; make sure each person knows their part
- ❑ Schedule pre-meetings and debriefs
- ❑ Make necessary adjustments to the agenda based on the recommendations of the Civic Academy committee

#### Research Team

The research team has a vital role in finding useful information that can shape the campaign's demands and discover an opportunity for a win.

*Tasks may include:*

- ❑ Request and interpret public records
- ❑ Review current policies
- ❑ Research out-of-state legislation

## Areas for Civic Academy Research

When it is done correctly, research by a Civic Academy team can help to tell a story about why a problem exists in our schools, where the money is to fix it, and who needs to be convinced in order for that change to take place.

Some areas that should be studied include:



- **State and local school funding over time** (Has funding grown or declined compared to inflation? Have the sources of funding shifted over time?)
- **Individual income tax rates** (What are the rates of state income taxes for different income levels? How have those rates changed over time? Are they growing more or less progressive? Does the state have an income tax at all?)
- **Corporate taxes** (What percentage of corporate profit or revenue is paid in state taxes? How does the effective tax rate differ from this? – This is a good way to look at the impact of corporate tax loopholes. How has corporate taxation changed over time in the state? Do corporations now pay a higher or lower share of the overall state tax revenues?)
- **Local taxes** (How do local sales taxes and property taxes impact the school district? How have those taxes changed over time? Who pays these taxes and who is exempted?)
- **Corporate subsidies** (Do any corporations in the area receive subsidies or tax breaks from the state or local government? What impact do these subsidies or tax breaks have on the school district's budget? What role do school district leaders play – if any – in determining whether these subsidies or tax breaks are offered? Do any community benefit agreements exist that require the recipients of these subsidies to provide anything back to the local community? If so, how were those agreements crafted and how do they benefit the school district – if at all?)

Your state association may have staff members who have experience conducting this kind of research or who know of individuals and organizations that can assist. Take advantage of these helpful connections to avoid reinventing the wheel in areas of research that others may already have explored.

Make sure all members of the Civic Academy team are involved in the research work. When team members present the results of their research to the rest of the group, it helps prepare them for sharing that information with broader audiences.

## Identifying Targets and Crafting Demands

Research in isolation from a campaign doesn't create change. To make the research powerful, it is important to use it to identify targets for the organizing work of the Civic Academy and to help frame the demands that will be made of those targets.

Targets for a campaign should be people or organizations that have the power to fix or can help fix the problem(s) identified as issues by the Civic Academy. Demands should be specific actions that the target can take to solve the problem.

### Example:

The Anytown Education Association conducted a series of issue-based conversations with members and parents and discovered that one of the issues people are concerned about is the lack of full-time, licensed school nurses at school sites. After the local association did an analysis of the Anytown School District's budget, it seemed unlikely that the \$2 million it would take to fund a full-time, licensed school nurse in every building could come from the district's current budget.

**Issue: Parents and educators want a full-time, licensed school nurse in every district school. (Cost: \$2 million per year)**

The Anytown Education Association decided to form a Civic Academy team to look into corporate tax avoidance that was costing the local school district money. Local association leaders did a power mapping exercise and identified some groups of parents and leaders of other local organizations that they wanted to invite to help form the Civic Academy team. They began to conduct research on local and state tax rules and how they impacted the local school district's budget.

While doing this research, they discovered that the local hospital was exempted from paying any property taxes because the health care organization that owned it was, legally, a not-for-profit entity. The health care organization, Wellness Incorporated, had publicized annual reports online showing revenues in excess of \$60 million per year, and that Wellness Inc.'s CEO received \$1.5 million per year in compensation. The Anytown Community Hospital building/property was valued by the county at \$40 million, making it one of the five most valuable pieces of property in all of Anytown. All of Wellness Inc.'s properties in Anytown would have generated a total of \$2.3 million per year in property taxes if Wellness Inc. had not been exempted from paying those taxes due to its nonprofit status. Further research by Civic Academy members at the local courthouse showed that Wellness Inc. sued hundreds of Anytown residents each year for unpaid medical bills, even though its nonprofit charter talked about the mission of providing charity care to the community.

Anytown Civic Academy members consulted local public health professionals and a researcher at the nearby university. These experts helped the Civic Academy understand the racial disparities in the community around access to affordable health care.

As a result of this research, the Anytown Civic Academy decided to run a campaign to target Wellness Inc.

**Demand: We want Wellness Inc. to provide a \$2 million annual payment in lieu of taxes to the Anytown School District to fund an expansion of the district's school nursing program.**

The Civic Academy team made this demand in conjunction with the Anytown Education Association's bargaining team, making a demand in contract negotiations that the district commits to assigning a full-time, licensed school nurse at every school.

## Action to Create Pressure for Settlement

Once a target and a demand are identified, it is important for the Civic Academy to develop a plan of escalating action that will force the target to agree to the demand — a campaign. The Civic Academy should conduct a power mapping exercise for the designated campaign target. This exercise will aid the Civic Academy team as it begins to develop a sense of what kinds of pressure might be sufficient to induce the target to agree to the team's demands. An escalating series of actions can also help in determining how much the target may be vulnerable to certain kinds of community pressure.



## Case Study 1: Saint Paul TIGER Team

In the spring of 2016, the Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE, formerly the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers) had won two consecutive contracts that reduced class sizes and improved staffing in the Saint Paul Public Schools. The contract settlement reached in early 2016 came about when the local association determined, through analysis of the district's budget, that further reductions in class size and increases in staffing would push the school district beyond its existing budget. It was no longer a question of dividing up the pie — SPFE needed a bigger pie.

SPFE had also campaigned successfully to elect four new members to the seven-member local school board in 2015. The local association did not want to begin the next contract campaign like the previous campaigns, where the district administration and school board were the primary targets. SPFE needed to shift the focus of their next campaign so they could try to form a more collaborative relationship with their district's leaders.

Efforts at the Minnesota State Legislature to significantly increase education funding or to end some corporate tax loopholes were always opposed by the same lobbying organization: The Minnesota Business Partnership. The Minnesota Business Partnership is the lobbying arm of the state's largest corporations such as US Bank, Wells Fargo, and Ecolab. (Minnesota has 19 Fortune 500 corporations headquartered in the state.) These large corporations were also funding efforts to expand charter schools in the state through an organization called Minnesota Comeback.

### **SPFE realized that allied groups in Minnesota were fighting different campaigns, but they all traced back to the same corporate actors:**

- **ISAIAH**, a coalition of faith communities, was fighting payday lending exploitation — US Bank and Wells Fargo were key investors.
- **SEIU**, a labor union, was fighting for higher living standards for janitorial and security officers — US Bank and Wells Fargo were financing the building owners who hired the contractors their members worked for. Those banks were also major tenants of downtown buildings.
- **MN 350** was fighting new pipelines from the oil fields in the Dakotas going through Minnesota (Enbridge, Standing Rock) — and US Bank and Wells Fargo were key financiers of those fields and pipelines. Ecolab was a leading supplier of chemicals for hydraulic fracking.
- **Black Lives Matter Minnesota** was pivoting to challenge corporate profiteering from mass incarceration — and US Bank and Wells Fargo were profiting in everything from private prisons, to companies selling military hardware to police departments, to financing bonds that were paid off for cities hit with judgments in excessive force lawsuits.

### SPFE leaders began to ask: How could we make their campaigns into OUR campaign?

At about the same time, leaders from all of these groups realized that the Super Bowl would be coming to Minnesota in February of 2018 — right around the time SPFE would be trying to settle its next contract. The chairs of the host committee for the Super Bowl happened to be the outgoing CEO of US Bank and the CEO of Ecolab.

In 2017, the Saint Paul Federation of Educators released a report about bargaining priorities that included research on specific tax issues that, if addressed, could provide more funding for the local association's priorities (starting on page 29).



This report built on information from an earlier report by an allied group called Minnesotans for a Fair Economy published in 2015. That report was called “With Friends Like These.”

SPFE leaders decided to form a Civic Academy team to develop a campaign that, it was anticipated, would drive more revenue to the Saint Paul Public Schools to fund the local association's bargaining priorities. It was also hoped that the Civic Academy team's work would confront the myth of scarcity by showing where money was in the community. Lastly, SPFE leaders wanted to highlight the racial disparities caused by corporate greed and inadequate school funding. The result was the TIGER team. “TIGER” stood for “Teaching and Inquiring about Greed, Equity, and Racism.” The TIGER team was designed to be a place to recruit members who felt they were not yet ready to step up to become a building

steward or to join the local's Contract Action Team, but who had an interest in learning more about corporate greed and structural racism.

SPFE's recruiting pitch to members, parents, and community allies was: “Want to know where the money is for better public schools? We've found it. Come learn more by joining the TIGER team.”

SPFE's leaders envisioned the TIGER team as an organizing committee for the collective corporate campaigns of the local and its allies — and SPFE felt that bringing these groups together would help drive the momentum and timelines for escalation to help the local maximize pressure when it was ready to build toward a possible strike in Saint Paul in early 2018.

SPFE leaders also recognized that many of the spaces in the local association were white-dominated. These spaces did not feel welcoming to people of color, according to feedback SPFE leaders had sought from members and parents. They wanted the TIGER team to be different.

SPFE conducted an initial training for members of the TIGER team. The training included grounding in research on America's income and wealth gaps, anti-racism training, team-building, and a train-the-trainer component so team members could begin sharing what they learned with co-workers, fellow parents, elected officials, and community members. A preliminary version of research conducted by Saint Paul parent Jordan Ash, an expert on tax policy and corporate tax avoidance, was presented to the members of the team.

One effective element of the TIGER team training was the poster walk. SPFE worked with artists and our allied organizations to create cartoon images that represented ideas behind each organization's campaign. TIGER trainees would walk in groups around the room and study and discuss each poster.

## SACKED

*How Corporations on the Super Bowl Host Committee Left Minnesota's Public Schools Underfunded and Under Attack*



December 2017



Saint Paul Federation of Teachers

Another effective tool during the training was breaking the trainees into small groups, giving each group a one-page summary of a particular kind of corporate tax avoidance, and having that group turn it into a short skit to perform for the rest of the trainees. This helped take complicated ideas such as Tax Increment Financing and make them understandable for participants.

SPFE kicked off its campaign by marching to the US Bank Operations Center near downtown Saint Paul. This property had been leased to US Bank by the City of Saint Paul for 50 years at the cost of \$1 per year. This arrangement allowed US Bank to avoid paying \$1 million per year in local property taxes. SPFE leaders, parents, and allies presented US Bank with an invoice for unpaid taxes. The press conference and march received local press coverage.

The TIGER team members conducted a series of presentations to a broad range of community groups, including school faculty meetings, PTO meetings, local elected officials, allied organization leaders, and many others. Thousands of Saint Paul residents ended up seeing these presentations over the months that followed.

SPFE set up a campaign microsite highlighting the tax avoidance of US Bank and Ecolab, and they used targeted social media advertising to drive traffic to the site. As the union built toward a strike vote, US Bank and Ecolab began to worry that their big party was going to be disrupted by SPFE and its TIGER team.

SPFE led a series of marches on US Bank, Ecolab, and Wells Fargo throughout the campaign. Eventually, both US Bank and Ecolab entered into negotiations with SPFE leaders in response to this public pressure. Prior to the Super Bowl, SPFE released a report called "Sacked" about the corporate tax avoidance of the Super Bowl host committee members.

Eventually, SPFE reached a settlement on its next contract a few weeks after the Super Bowl. It was a significant victory, and it averted what would have been Saint Paul's first educator strike since 1946. In the end, school district leaders, and even the newly elected school board members, ended up being a bigger obstacle than SPFE expected, and this made it hard for the union to unite with those leaders in a shared message about corporate greed until a settlement was reached. District leaders didn't fully embrace the "Good Cop" role the union had envisioned for them and, in the end, left money on the table that we could have extracted from US Bank and Ecolab during the compression leading up to the Super Bowl.



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**“The real win in this work was shifting the public narrative around school funding with our members and the community,”** said Nick Faber, president of SPFE. **SPFE leaders had wanted more money from Ecolab and US Bank, but the union ended up with some other victories leaders hadn't anticipated.**

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SPFE and its TIGER team supported a campaign to push through a \$15 minimum wage for Saint Paul workers and helped elect a progressive mayor, Melvin Carter III, who played a key role in helping the union reach a settlement with the school district. Saint Paul now has a progressive majority on its city council due to the election of a former SPFE organizer to the council.

As part of the contract settlement, Saint Paul Public School leaders committed to partnering with SPFE to seek new revenue from the state legislature and from corporate tax avoiders. In addition, the school board and the mayor agreed to push for a significant increase in the school district's voter-approved tax levy in the fall of 2018. That referendum passed in November 2018 and helped increase the district's budget by over \$20 million per year.

The TIGER team's focus on dismantling structural racism helped change SPFE's internal culture. For the first time ever, SPFE merged all three of its bargaining teams into a single negotiating table in 2018 — this included SPFE Education Assistants and School and Community Support Professionals groups. This new unity within SPFE led to the member-driven decision to change the union's name from the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers to the Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) as the union marked the 100th anniversary of the local in the spring of 2019.

## Case Study 2: Baton Rouge

In 2017, Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE) organized an “opportunity checklist campaign” to help their members surface their most pressing issues. In Baton Rouge, one of the targeted locals’ members expressed that they had major issues with the current salary schedule and wages.

More than half of the workforce had been frozen on the same step for at least six years. Once the cost of inflation was factored in, their purchasing power was found to have decreased by nearly \$8,500 over the past 10 years. Time and time again, elected officials delivered the same message: “There just isn’t enough money in the budget to warrant pay raises.”

In the state of Louisiana, there is a corporate incentive program called the Industrial Tax Exemption Program (ITEP), in which companies can receive up to 10 years of exemptions on their property taxes. Even though it is a state program, the money comes from local tax dollars. For 82 years, the state’s Board of Commerce and Industry had the sole authority to approve corporate exemptions from local property tax dollars, without the approval of local entities.

On average, schools in East Baton Rouge Parish lost \$28 million a year to ITEP. Research has shown that \$28 million is the cost of a \$4,000 pay raise for every school employee in the parish.

In 2016, the current governor signed an executive order granting local entities the authority to approve and deny requests. LAE knew that this would open an opportunity for funding that could be allocated towards pay raises and/or other school needs. However, the leaders understood that it wouldn’t be an easy fight going up against major corporations and their lobbyists, so they sought out potential partners.

LAE is a member of a broad-based institution called Together Baton Rouge (TBR), which is made up of faith-based institutions, civic groups, and other labor unions. TBR had taken up ITEP as one of their top priorities. They knew that in order to win big, they needed to build a strong force within the community. In the summer of 2018, TBR launched a Civic Academy campaign with the goal of educating over 300 community members and preparing them to take action against corporate tax exemption requests.

### **Together Baton Rouge launches civic academy series, recruiting hundreds to learn, then take action**

BY GRACE TOOHEY | GTOOHEY@THEADVOCATE.COM AUG 14, 2018 - 9:39 AM 2 min to read

During the Civic Academy series, participants learned how ITEP financially impacts local entities, how to interpret the new rules under the executive order, and strategies for going public. It also provided a space for educators to build alliances between competing unions.

In October 2018, ExxonMobil submitted four ITEP requests, which would have cost the East Baton Rouge Parish \$6 million in lost revenue. By this time, several LAE members had attended the Civic Academies and were agitated enough to go up against ExxonMobil. They organized a strike vote with members of American Federation of Teachers (AFT), in which they decided to take off a day from work and attend the Board of Commerce and Industry meeting in an attempt to block the requests. A day later, ExxonMobil withdrew their requests.

## **Hundreds of Baton Rouge school workers vote for walkout; here's why, when, what to know**

BY CHARLES LUSSIER | CLUSSIER@THEADVOCATE.COM OCT 23, 2018 - 8:16 PM 3 min to read

Though a significant victory for the educators at the time, ExxonMobil brought back the same requests at the December meeting. The Board of Commerce and Industry approved all four requests. However, with the new rules in place, ExxonMobil had to submit their requests to local entities within 30 days to receive the full exemption.

The following January, ExxonMobil went before the school board in East Baton Rouge Parish in an attempt to receive the full exemption. As a result of the Civic Academy series, nearly 200 people flooded the board room to contest the requests. Educators expressed how they hadn't received a significant pay raise in almost a decade and how they had to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. Also, they were able to articulate the research on how ITEP has caused a hefty financial burden on the parish and what \$6 million would cost them. The school board denied all four requests, and less than 24 hours later, ExxonMobil withdrew their requests from the metro council.

“Why Louisiana Stays Poor” video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWTic9btP38>

## **Exxon drops tax break requests after being rejected by EBR school board**

BY SAM KARLIN | SKARLIN@THEADVOCATE.COM JAN 22, 2019 - 1:01 PM 4 min to read

### Case Study 3: Eugene, Oregon

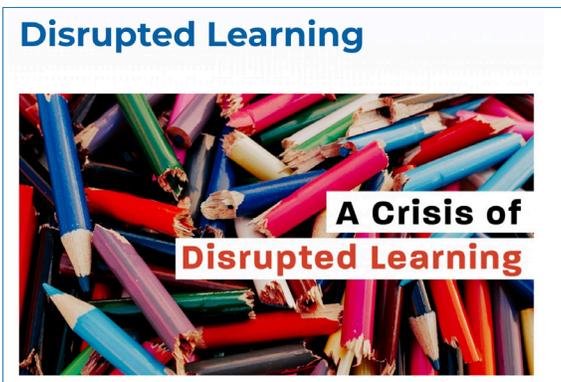


2019 was a tumultuous year for public education in Oregon. In 2018, Oregon voters elected supermajorities of Democrats to both houses of the state legislature and re-elected Democratic governor Kate Brown. Leaders within the Oregon Education Association (OEA) saw an opportunity to finally move forward an effort to increase funding for public education through a tax on corporate revenues. With a group of coalition partners, and even some progressive business allies, OEA developed the Student Success Act (SSA), a corporate tax that is projected to raise at least \$2 billion in new revenue for public schools each biennium.

As the legislative session advanced in the early spring of 2019, two things became clear to Association leaders: They were still several votes short of the supermajorities needed to pass the SSA, and a group of state business leaders was gearing up to run a ballot initiative to repeal the SSA, should it pass. It was clear that more pressure would be required to win in the legislature and more public awareness of the needs of underfunded community schools would have to be built in order to win a ballot repeal campaign.

Leaders of the Eugene Education Association (EEA) developed a plan for local action that would support the state association’s campaign. EEA organized a Campaign Action Team that recruited members to participate in a series of escalating actions in Eugene during the spring of 2019.

EEA identified additional staffing supports around student mental health to address the crisis of disrupted learning in Eugene classrooms as a top issue in their campaign. This aligned with the state association’s campaign on disrupted learning, which included both a report and press coverage of the issue:



EEA turned out members to a rally at the State Capitol in February 2019, local actions in March and April of 2019 and, finally, coordinated with the state association to participate in a statewide educator walkout on May 8, 2019.

## Thousands gather for walkout to support Oregon education

Updated May 08, 2019; Posted May 06, 2019

Within days of the walkout, the state legislature passed the SSA, and Governor Brown signed the bill into law.

EEA leaders turned their attention to two priorities: building a strong coalition of educators, parents, and community allies that would help defeat the SSA repeal campaign in Eugene; and preparing for their next round of contract negotiations, which will begin in early 2020 and will determine how the local school districts continue to prioritize spending in areas of student need addressed by the SSA. EEA applied to NEA for a grant to fund summer organizing work through the Ed Summer program. Leaders from EEA's Campaign Action Team (CAT) joined the Ed Summer team and began a series of issue-based conversations with educators, parents, and community members that stretched throughout the summer. In all, the team had 529 of these conversations during the summer. These conversations focused on identifying the main issues people saw in their community's schools that should be addressed with the new funding from the SSA.

Toward the end of the summer, the business leaders in Oregon who had pledged \$1 million to a campaign to repeal the SSA announced that they no longer felt they could win a repeal campaign.

## Opponents Scrap Campaign To Refer New \$1B Business Tax To Oregon Voters

by [Dirk VanderHart](#) [Follow](#) OPB July 16, 2019 3:05 p.m. | Updated: July 16, 2019 4:17 p.m.

Association leaders credited their statewide walkout and ongoing efforts to engage parents and community members around the need for adequate school funding in Oregon for shifting the political landscape against the SSA's opponents.

EEA's Ed Summer team continued its work by recruiting people who had been part of their outreach conversations to a back-to-school meeting on August 20, 2019. Over 60 people attended the meeting. EEA intended to use the meeting to recruit interested educators, parents, and community members to a Civic Academy team. The focus of the team's work would be to press their local school districts to ensure that new funds from the SSA would be spent on the areas that EEA identified as top priorities from its Ed Summer team conversations.

The EEA team plans future meetings as they progress toward the opening of their contract negotiations in early 2020.



## NEA Center for Organizing My School, My Voice Contacts:

**Nathan Allen**, Associate Director, Local Growth & Strategic Field Opportunities (LGSFO) at [nallen@nea.org](mailto:nallen@nea.org)

**Michael Schoettle**, Field Manager, Local Growth & Strategic Field Opportunities (LGSFO) at [mschoettle@nea.org](mailto:mschoettle@nea.org)

**Paul Rohlfing**, Local Growth & Strategic Field Opportunities (LGSFO) at [prohlfing@nea.org](mailto:prohlfing@nea.org)

**Shanize Byrd**, Local Growth & Strategic Field Opportunities (LGSFO) at [sbyrd@nea.org](mailto:sbyrd@nea.org)

National Education Association  
1201 16th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036-3290

[www.NEA.org](http://www.NEA.org) 

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