Mobilizing and Building Power for Bargaining
Saint Paul Federation of Teachers
Hannah Ryan and Leah Lindeman

Introductions
• Name
• Union
• Your role in your Union
• What is 1 thing you want to take away, from this workshop, to prepare for bargaining?

Agenda
1. What makes a strong union?
2. Mapping your union
3. Building a Contract Action Team (CAT)
4. Transparency in bargaining
5. Escalating actions
What makes a strong union?

Mapping your site

Mapping your union

- Based on your worksite’s physical space, how would you ensure all members were closely connected to a CAT team member?

- What are the different social groups and communities within your union?
Contract Action Team

This wasn't our first CAT...

From our last round of contract negotiations we learned....
1. Bigger buildings ⇒ Bigger CAT
2. Multiple communication methods
3. Sustained engagement
4. Accountability

CAT Roles
• Communicate vital campaign information to the membership
• Work with the bargaining team and executive board to collect information and stories that can be used during negotiations
• Come to key bargaining sessions and events and turnout members
• Participate in actions and organize membership participation
• Attend CAT training and meetings
CAT Recruiting

Discussion:

Who makes a good Contract Action Team member?

How would you recruit CAT members?

CAT Recruiting

Bargaining Survey Question:

Who do you trust and respect in your building that you would recommend to be on the Contract Action Team?

CAT Training

1. Sharing “The Plan”
2. Fundamentals of organizing
3. Communication skills
Communication with CAT

- Bargaining preparation and debrief
- Bargaining session updates
- Personal email
- Facebook
- Website

CAT Impact

Informed and involved CAT members built relationships with...
1. Fellow SPFT members
2. Parents at their school
3. Community members
4. Students
These relationships make escalation possible!

Open Bargaining
**What is Open Bargaining?**

- Bargaining sessions are open to members, parents, community members, and media.
- Because of our legal status in negotiations, we still decide who speaks at the table.

**Why Open Bargaining?**

- What story is being told about us?
- What do our members hear, and what do our members know?

**Why Open Bargaining?**

- We were proud of our proposals and thought the district should be exposed for its statements and proposals.
- Knew that we wouldn’t win the settlement we wanted without increased pressure.
- Transparency was important to us.
Internal Concerns

- Bargaining Team members worried that their role would be undermined?
- How could we discuss money in front of parents and reporters?
- How would our team confer?
- How would we handle caucuses and sidebars?
- What if we held open bargaining and nobody came?

Solutions Through Preparation

- Discussed ideas and concerns up front with the bargaining team
- Scheduled bargaining team-only prep and debrief
- Defined team roles to play each session
- Key decisions still made by bargaining team
Flow of Sessions

- Agendas set outside of bargaining
- Written proposals exchanged in advance by email
- Pre-meeting with CAT members, community, parents, and media
- Negotiations start and end on time

Flow of Sessions, continued

- Debrief for 30 minutes after each session (community, parents, and media invited to stay):
  - What questions or comments do you have about tonight’s session?
  - Share key messages
  - Remind members/parents of upcoming meetings and actions
  - Bargaining team stays afterward for their own debrief

Discussion

How could you make bargaining more transparent for your members?
SPFT Escalation
Looking Backwards

School Board Meeting Rally

Strike Vote Petition
Walk-ins

School Choice Fair Picket

Lawn Signs

Interactive lawn signs spark conversations across the city
House Parties

Conversations with friends, family, neighbors and coworkers to share our proposals and build petition support.

Petition in Support

• Teachers canvassed around their schools
• Petition drive on the night of our previously scheduled bargaining session
• Trick-or-Treating for signatures in board members’ neighborhoods
• Delivered over 4,000 signatures to the school board

Neighborhood Canvassing
Open Bargaining Sessions
Members, families, and community members

Stay Up to Date
- Membership meetings
- Contract Updates to share
- Email updates
- Facebook
- Website

Campaign Kick-Off with Governor Mark Dayton
Red Shirts on Thursdays

What has it meant for SPFT

Homework
Calendar backwards your next campaign