



A Union of Professionals

QuEST 2007

Quality Educational Standards in Teaching

The Building Representative's Role in School Reform: *Improving the Institutions Where Our Members Work*

Description

This mini-institute will provide the knowledge and skills needed for building reps to serve as effective school leaders, union builders, communicators, and problem solvers in the demanding environment of today's schools. Building reps especially will benefit personally, the seminar also is designed for those who coordinate the union's steward program—officers, executive board members or chief stewards. With unions' involvement in school reform, building representatives are required to assume new roles and responsibilities. In addition to their traditional duties, building reps provide professional support to staff and are key players in reform efforts, often serving on school improvement teams and labor-management committees. Knowledge of school accountability measures, educational policy and restructuring programs and reforms will be the focus along with building cooperative relationships among the staff and administration that foster collaboration and commitment.

Presenters

Diane Airhart, AFT Union Leadership Institute
Kathy Buzad, AFT Educational Issues Department
Building Representatives, ABC Unified School District

Session Outline

Wednesday, July 11, 2007 (afternoon):

Opening

- Group Introductions
- Overview and Objectives
- Introduction: Building Reps Who Lead Reform—Roles and Responsibilities

The Building Rep as School Leader

Participants will:

- Examine the practices of leaders and how they relate to the building rep role
- Assess their school in four dimensions, using the Building Representative School Site Audit tool
- Identify key issues in their schools and collect strategies for addressing them
- Review AFT materials and professional resources that building reps can use
- Interact with “experts from the field”—Artesia High School building representatives, ABC Unified School District

Break

Building Rep as Union Builder

Participants will:

- Plan strategies for recruiting and mobilizing union members based on findings from the Membership Consolidation/Internal Organizing program
- Consider ways to position the union as a “cause,” not just a service; as “our” union, not “the” union

- Brainstorm ways to create opportunities for involvement and distributed leadership
- Plan for ways to reach out to, and meet the needs of, new employees

Thursday, July 12, 2007 (morning)

The Building Rep as Communicator

Participants will:

- Collect ideas for contacting members and potential members regularly, using multiple approaches
- Practice active listening skills
- Learn and practice the elements of a one-on-one organizing conversation, using school reform issues as the focus

Break

Building Rep as Problem Solver

Participants will:

- Analyze a problem to determine its root cause
- Apply a nine-step problem solving model, using a scenario based on an authentic issue related to school reform

Analysis and Action

Participants will:

- Analyze their union's building rep structure in terms of eight essential components

Identify action steps for improvement