



A Union of Professionals

QuEST 2007

Quality Educational Standards in Teaching

Organizing Around Professional Issues / Engaging New Members

(Prerequisite: Open only to teams of two or more who can influence local union priorities and direction of program.)

Research conducted by AFT says that local unions in general need to do a much better job of articulating a proactive professional issues agenda and engaging new and younger members if we expect to convert potential members to members, members to activists and activists to leaders. In this mini-institute, we will examine this research and the implications for local unions. Then each local team will outline a plan for a professional issues advocacy organizing campaign and a framework for the union becoming a “first and best friend” to new members by providing professional support to them through sustained personal contact.

Facilitators:

Rick Kuplinski and Richard Ford, AFT Department of Organization and Field Services

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

1 to 1:30 p.m. – **Welcome / Introductions / Agenda Overview**

1:30 to 1:45 p.m. -- **“Internal Organizing Defined” and the “Lifecycle of a Unionist”**: What do we mean when we refer to internal organizing? If we could create an ideal model for a member’s relationship with the union, what would it look like?

1:45 to 2:30 p.m. – **The Case for Organizing Around Professional Issues and Engaging New Members**: The AFT Membership Consolidation/Internal Organizing Program (MC/IO) has provided a wake-up call both to the locals involved in the program and the AFT as a whole about the need to transform how we approach internal organizing. This session will provide an extensive briefing on the history of the program, what was learned from the program’s research, and the framework for change (The Four Pillars of Effective Internal Organizing) that was developed in response. It will point out that engaging new members and organizing around professional issues need to be central activities of local unions if they are to sustain high levels of membership and activism.

2:30 to 2:45 p.m. – **Break**

2:45 to 5 p.m. – **Planning to Organize Around Professional Issues**: In this session we will review the elements of issue-based advocacy organizing and why it is superior to other, more “transactional” methods. We will brainstorm issues that lend themselves to issues-based advocacy organizing and each local will outline the basic elements of plan for organizing around professional issues upon returning home. Also discussed will be ideas for making union communication more issues-oriented have each local union define a simple issues-based message that communicates why it is important for people to join and become active in the union.

Thursday, July 12, 2007

8:30 to 11:30 a.m. *(with break included)* – **Planning to Engage with New Members**: In this session we will discuss in depth the characteristics of new employees and the disastrous results of the union’s failure to effectively engage with them. We will explore the concept of union as “first friend, best friend” to build solid, positive relationships with new employees and brainstorm the various types of contacts that can be part of a program of sustained, personal contact with new employees throughout their first year on

the job. Local union teams will have time to outline the basic elements of a union as “first friend, best friend” program of their own.

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. -- **Presentation/Discussion of Local Union Plans:** Each local will present the plans they have developed in the previous sessions and perhaps benefit from everyone’s reactions, questions and suggestions.