Bargaining over new employee orientation

As new educators enter the workforce at the beginning of or throughout each school year, they have questions that our union is in the best position to answer. Connecting with potential members during their first days on the job through a well-planned union orientation is a powerful way to develop an ongoing relationship between our union and our members.

Many school districts provide an initial orientation which can cover vast amounts of information around employee benefits, school district protocols and practices, curriculum and schedules. It can be overwhelming. It is important that we have dedicated time for our local unions to talk with members, to answer questions that members may not feel safe asking school or district administration and to invite them to join our union.

Although public employers are not required to allow time for union orientations, many already do. We recommend that you bargain language into your contract to ensure that your local has time to connect with potential members at the start of their employment.

**Guidance**

1. **Negotiate language into contracts that provides access to new employees in our bargaining unit at all new member orientations, both at the beginning and throughout the school year.**
2. **Work within your local to develop orientation material that both provides usable and useful information that also helps establish a relationship with potential members.**

## Opportunities to connect at new employee orientation

School districts most frequently hold new employee orientations before in-service days at the beginning of the school year. Some school districts hold new hire orientations quarterly or semi-annually if they frequently bring on new staff. As the exclusive representative, our union is responsible for connecting with members to ensure that they know whom to connect with for issues related to our collective bargaining agreements. New employee orientations are a good moment to start or plan one-on-one conversations with new potential members.

Public employers are not required to grant access, but locals may bargain for it as a way of ensuring the ability to talk to all new hires about their rights under the contract, support offered by the union and other benefits of union membership.

## Sample language

We recommend that local unions negotiate a dedicated time to present to new employees. Ideally, contract language should provide for a union-planned section of orientation where administrators are not present. At a minimum, representatives at our union should have time on the agenda to present to members and make initial connections. Possible language is as follows:

“The Employer shall provide (local name) access to all new employee orientations. In-person orientations shall be held during work hours. (Local name) will be given at least 60 minutes for its presentation. If the orientation is online or otherwise not in person, (local name) will have the opportunity to share print or electronic materials to participants.”

Additions to this language could include:

1. **Union-only meeting time:** “During new employee orientation, the Employer shall schedule at least one (1) sixty (60) minute period for the Union to meet with new hires, immediately before or after the orientation meeting. This period of time will be closed to representatives of the Employer.”
2. **Notice of orientation meetings:** “The Employer shall notify the Union of each scheduled orientation meeting for new hires. The notice will be sent as soon as such meetings are scheduled but not less than ten (10) days in advance and will include date, time and location. In the event a formal orientation meeting is not held for new hires or the Union is unable to attend the formal orientation, the Employer shall allow a Union representative and the newly hired employee(s) to meet during the duty day at a mutually agreed upon time and location for a minimum of thirty (30) minutes.”
3. **Minimum standards for orientation content:** “The Employer shall provide all new employees with standard orientation information, on paper or electronically, that will include but not be limited to: general information about the district, district policies and procedures, detailed benefits and salary information, specific job expectations, a job description, information about accessing appropriate technology and facilities, employment forms, information about required training and a copy of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.”