

# New Hire Orientation and Recruitment Process



**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**





## Why build a robust union orientation process?

Our union's strength comes from our ability to be there for each other and stand up for meaningful improvements for students, our profession, public education and our communities. Providing an effective orientation process can have a lasting impact on the strength of unions.

Strong locals have a culture of joining and ask new hires to be active members of the union from day one. A high-quality union orientation connects new hires with support in a demanding profession, builds authentic connections and stronger relationships and provides opportunities for new hires to be heard.

New hires who participate in a union orientation program, and find it helpful, are much more committed to the union than new hires who do not participate in union orientation. Moreover, that high level of commitment to the union continues after year one.

When more educators opt in to their union, they have more power at the bargaining table and in policymaking at the local, state and national levels. Our collective voice allows us to advocate for our profession and the public schools our students deserve.

This booklet will help you prepare and plan a continuous new hire orientation and recruitment process. The first section helps you design a yearlong process to orient and engage your new members with a sample calendar. The later sections focus on the welcome meeting, follow up ideas for connections with new members and ongoing recruitment strategies for potential members.

### **New Hires Who Attend a “Helpful” Orientation ...**

- Are more likely to volunteer for the union.
- Are more loyal union members.
- Feel greater responsibility toward the union.

## Best practices for new hire orientation process

New educators are excited to start their new jobs, and our union orientation process should reflect that excitement and be the starting point for continuous support and engagement throughout their careers. Keep in mind that the quality of the union's orientation process, both in substance and style, influences member commitment to the union.

### □ Set concrete goals.

- Determine the number of union-sponsored events for the year.
- Diversify your leadership team in advance in order to build a more welcoming local.
- Determine the number of conversations with new hires in the first 90 days. Research suggests a minimum of three in-person contacts in the first 90 days will create a strong union affinity in new hires.
- Create a timeline for your engagement work with benchmarks along the way to track progress.





### ☐ **Create informal and formal face-to-face opportunities.**

- Informal interactions help identify concerns and allow us to connect individual values to the work of the union.
- Formal interactions help establish an understanding of the purpose of the union and its connection to student success and strong public schools.

### ☐ **Be intentional when choosing the members who connect with new hires.**

- Consider the purpose of the meeting and who is the best messenger for the content.
- Include members with a range of cultural and educational experiences.

### ☐ **Track new hire participation.**

- Use sign-in sheets that collect personal email and phone numbers at all union-sponsored activities.
- Set up a system to track participation so you know if your plan is working.

### ☐ **Create high-quality, informative materials.**

- Use templates and publications from Education Minnesota.
- Provide website and social media information for the union.

### ☐ **Follow up on issues and concerns.**

- Build member affinity for the union and confidence in its power.
- Give members opportunities to take action on issues important to them.



# EVERY MONTH

## Ongoing process for all new hires

- ☐ **Track new hires through HR and via school board minutes.**
- ☐ **Ensure building leadership receives lists of all new hires by working with the building secretary to find out who has been newly hired.**
- ☐ **Write handwritten notes to new hires inviting them to a union welcome meeting.**
- ☐ **Consider home visits to invite new hires to a welcome meeting.**
- ☐ **Meet individually with any mid-year hires for individual union orientation.**
- ☐ **Highlight new members (with their consent) in local newsletters.**
- ☐ **Connect members of color to local and state affinity groups.**
- ☐ **Provide opportunities for new members to ask questions about the union.**
- ☐ **Follow up on issues and concerns that are important to new hires.**
- ☐ **Communicate in a variety of ways with new hires, including text messages and social media.**

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## New hire member engagement ideas

Month	Local Engagement of New Members	State and National Events
<b>August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Host new hire union welcome meeting.</li> <li>▪ Site leadership check in on new hires, answer questions and provide a union contacts handout.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summer Seminar</li> </ul>
<b>September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Follow up individually with each new hire.</li> <li>▪ Hold a building meeting, thanking new members with union “swag” and answer initial questions about the union.</li> <li>▪ Invite new hires to union-sponsored homecoming tailgate party.</li> <li>▪ Intermediate organization PD options (fall drive-ins).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Follow Education Minnesota social media on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram.</li> </ul>
<b>October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Schedule new member pizza gathering and reinforce union as a support for our profession.</li> <li>▪ Attend early voting parties with other members at site.</li> <li>▪ Invite new hires to connect with local and state affinity groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minnesota Educator Academy Conference</li> </ul>
<b>November</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organize a fun, social event (paint &amp; sip, brewery tour, etc.) and discuss relevant district policies.</li> <li>▪ Survey new hires to see how the school year is going to identify opportunities and challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Political Conference (even-numbered years)</li> <li>▪ Get Out the Vote Rallies</li> </ul>
<b>December</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Invite new members to site-level union cookie social.</li> </ul>	
<b>January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offer PD offerings and actions relevant to members interest (racial justice, education debt, etc.)</li> </ul>	
<b>February</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hold negotiations 101 with new hires and encourage participation in negotiations survey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collective Bargaining &amp; Organizing Conference (odd-numbered years)</li> </ul>
<b>March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Share district spring protocols to know in newsletter.</li> <li>▪ Invite new members to attend union action at the school board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NEA ESP Conference</li> <li>▪ AFT PSRP Conference</li> </ul>
<b>April</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hold social event and discuss how our union can improve new hire support.</li> <li>▪ Invite new members to spring professional development events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Representative Convention</li> </ul>





## The welcome meeting

### Present a positive, substantive introduction to the union

Despite the proven value of orientations, many local unions do not take advantage of this opportunity to form a positive and ongoing impression. On average, only a little more than one-third of new members participate in a new hire welcome meeting.

It is imperative that a new hire's introduction to the union be both positive and substantive. Because many new hire union welcome meetings happen during the district's orientation schedule, and new hires may be feeling overwhelmed, ensure that your welcome meeting is meaningful and engaging to your future members.

#### ☐ Ensure that your meeting is organized and that all logistics are finalized.

- Ensure building representatives and officers are present to welcome new staff.
- Have a sign-in sheet that includes a space for personal email addresses and cellphone numbers.
- Have an agenda prepared and plan what you're going to say ahead of time.
  - *Start with your union story.*
  - *Introduce the collective bargaining agreement.*
  - *Discuss what the union does beyond the workplace.*
  - *Describe and demonstrate how new members can get involved.*
  - *Make the case for union membership.*

**RAISING OUR VOICES  
FOR THE SCHOOLS OUR CHILDREN DESERVE**

### ☐ **Make your meeting fun, comfortable and approachable.**

- Use adult-learning strategies that focus on interactive dialogue and active participation.
- Use quality materials through the presentation.
- Stay positive! No horror stories. Speak of the union as a source of solutions.
- Avoid or explain jargon and acronyms.
- Avoid sales pitches. Don't use member financial benefits as the sole tool to recruit members.
- Ask members to join at the meeting; assume new members want to join. Fill out the application in small groups at tables.
- Make filling out the application as simple as possible by walking through each section.
- Provide food if possible.
- Be transparent about dues and how they are collected. Highlight that the return on investment far outweighs what is paid in dues.
- Anticipate tough questions and be prepared to affirm concerns, answer questions and return the conversation to a message of building collective power.
- Get group, site or individual photos of new hires. Suggest a union selfie with their completed application. Post to social media.

**FIGHTING FOR PROFESSIONAL PAY AND  
ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL**

### ☐ Discuss today's unionism.

- Connect union values to new hire values.
  - *Find out what each new hire values (economic security, racial equity, social justice, robust professional development, respect for the profession, etc.).*
  - *Highlight the work of the union that aligns with those values (contract negotiations, PD opportunities, work of the Facing Inequities and Racism in Education Program, member of color affinity groups, advocacy at the Legislature, etc.).*
- Remember the three frames of unionism.
  - *Advocacy for salary and benefits.*
  - *Advocacy for the profession/professional development.*
  - *Advocacy for social justice such as anti-racism work, socio-economic justice and gender justice.*
- Speak in terms of “we” rather than “the union” as a third party, outside institution.

### ☐ Listen to new hires.

- Start to build relationships—be intentional about having one-to-one conversations with the new hires at the welcome meeting.
- Create opportunities specific to the needs of people of color, indigenous educators and LGBTQ+ new hires.
- Gather initial input from new hires about their interests, needs and questions—and be sure to follow up on what you hear.
- Build the groundwork for future one-to-one conversations.

**ADVOCATING COLLECTIVELY  
FOR OUR PROFESSION AND  
HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATORS**

## Follow up with potential members

Membership and member engagement are crucial to the work we do. Many of our new hires are stepping into the classroom for the first time and are looking to their more veteran colleagues for tips, advice and guidance. The union can, and should, play a big role in meeting those needs. Additionally, the sooner we engage new members, the more likely they will be committed to the union for their entire career.

Just because new hires do not join at the time of the union welcome meeting does not mean that they will not join. It may take multiple conversations with a potential member to connect the new hire's values and interests with the value of belonging to the union. It is important to track a potential member's union affinity through conversations and follow up with them throughout the year. Union leadership should also ask other members, with stronger connections with the potential members, to talk about why we want everyone to join the union.

## Potential member recruitment sample timeline

Month	Potential Member Engagement
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connect with potential members in their first week on the job and find out how the start of the year is going.</li><li>• Start with a values-based conversation to get to know the potential member.</li><li>• Ask them to become a member of the union.</li></ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask what has been challenging at the beginning of the year.</li><li>• Highlight the benefit of professional development in a conversation and give them information about the MEA conference.</li><li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li><li>• Share information about local and state affinity groups.</li></ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask potential members what concerns they have about joining the union; be prepared to address the common reasons for not joining.</li><li>• Document potential member's reasons for not joining.</li><li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li></ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check the seniority list to ensure you are recruiting all new hire potential members.</li><li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li></ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check in with potential members about mid-year concerns or questions.</li><li>• Highlight the work the union does on policy and legislative matters and invite them to training on racial justice, education debt or other relevant topics.</li><li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li></ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hold a mid-year welcome meeting with all new hires.</li><li>• Provide information about the negotiations process.</li><li>• Ask them to join in to present a unified voice in negotiations.</li><li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li></ul>

Month	Potential Member Engagement
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up on issues highlighted in previous conversations.</li> <li>• Answer questions about concerns and challenges.</li> <li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li> </ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight the democratic structure of the union.</li> <li>• Use the early enrollment program for potential members who qualify and who still have not joined.</li> <li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in with potential members and share opportunities for leadership development and growth.</li> <li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li> </ul>
June- August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make contact during the summer and invite to have a conversation outside of school.</li> <li>• Ask them to become part of the union.</li> </ul>



## Plans

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*Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers,  
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7/2021

