

# NEA GUIDE TO TRANSFORMATIONAL ORGANIZING CONVERSATIONS

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**TOGETHER. A STRONGER VOICE.**  
Together We're Stronger. Together We're Heard.

*Thank you for taking the time to help build a stronger union. As you engage with potential members you might encounter some tough questions. This document will help you start recruitment conversations and navigate those questions while highlighting all that NEA has to offer at the local, state and national level.*

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR HOW YOU CAN GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS GUIDE:

- **Don't read this guide verbatim.** The most compelling way to get your colleagues to join is through a one-on-one conversation where you are engaging and listening authentically. The below guide builds on the Ask, Hope, Urgency, Your call to Action (AHUY) model of one-on-one organizing conversations
- **Ask questions about the person and don't be afraid to share a bit about yourself.** Building a personal connection is the best way to recruit new members.
- **Emphasize personal experience and local wins** that your local association has delivered for members.

## LISTENING WELL IS YOUR BEST TOOL TO RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS.

*Below are some helpful tips and tricks to help you be the best listener:*

### Listening Dos

- Listen 80% of the time and talk 20% of the time.
- Ask follow-up questions using “how”, “what”, or “why”.
- Practice empathy. If someone is sharing something in their work environment that upsets them, acknowledge and respect their experiences.
- Give your recruit time to think about and answer your questions.
- **Localize the conversation by talking about specific issues in your community and district.**

## Listening Dont's

- Don't ask questions that are statements. For example, don't ask questions like: "Don't you think smaller class sizes would be better?"
- Don't answer a question if you don't know the answer. It's ok to tell your recruit that you don't know and will get back to them.
- Don't make union benefits the focal point of your conversation. Your conversations should be focused on the needs and concerns of the person you are recruiting.
- Don't overwhelm the person you are recruiting by listing all the issues that could be facing educators.

## Starting the Conversation

- I'm \_\_\_\_\_. I'm an educator at \_\_\_\_\_, can I have a few minutes of your time?  
Name School
- I'm here today as a member of \_\_\_\_\_, our local association for educators like you.  
Local Association

## Ask

- How long have you been working here? How's it going this year?
- What is one thing that you would change about your job?
- Are you familiar with \_\_\_\_\_?  
Local Association
  - We have \_\_\_\_\_ members right here in \_\_\_\_\_ and are part of a  
Local membership # State/ school district  
national network with nearly three million members.
  - Our local association is made up of educators like us, who band together to help give all of us a stronger voice that can be used to improve our daily lives and help you change things like  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
Reference specific wins
  - That starts with advocating for higher salaries and better working conditions for educators right here.

## Hope and Urgency

- Together, we have worked with school administrators, school boards, and lawmakers from both political parties to: \_\_\_\_\_.

Reference specific wins

For example:

- Improve healthcare benefits.
- Expand student loan forgiveness and repayment programs.
- Get duty-free lunches for educators.
- Improve the daily lives of educators so we are equipped to give students our best.

## Your Call to Action

### ASK THEM TO JOIN THEIR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

- Being an educator is one of the hardest jobs in the world and it's never been harder than right now. With more members like you, we'll have a stronger collective voice that improves our daily lives so we can give students our best. Will you join \_\_\_\_\_ as a member?

Local Association

## Possible Follow Up

- Do you know much about the benefits of being a member?
- In addition to giving us a stronger voice in important decisions that impact our daily lives, \_\_\_\_\_ members receive comprehensive benefits including:
  - Liability insurance to protect educators from false or unfair accusations
  - Discounts on school-related items
  - Professional learning resources and opportunities
- Are these things you could find helpful?

Local Association

## WHENEVER ANSWERING QUESTIONS BE SURE TO USE THE FRAMEWORK OF AFFIRM, ANSWER, REDIRECT (AAR) WHEN POSSIBLE.

- **AFFIRM:** Let them know you're listening, you understand, and their feelings are valid. Don't get mad at them—validate and educate them.
- **ANSWER:** Give a truthful, concise answer to the question. If you don't know the answer, don't guess. Tell them you'll find out and get back to them.
- **REDIRECT:** Once you've answered the question, bring the conversation back to ask them to join membership.

### I thought my state was a right to work/non-union state. Are you sure unions are legal?

**AFFIRM:** I know some people have heard that.

**ANSWER:** \_\_\_\_\_ is a union for educators just like us in \_\_\_\_\_.  
Local Association School district/ State

Some people aren't aware, but unions are legal everywhere. As a union, we regularly meet with school administrators, school boards, and lawmakers from both parties to advocate for higher wages, better benefits, and improved working conditions for educators.

**REDIRECT:** Unions get their strength from members, and as more educators like us join, we'll have a stronger voice to deliver real results that make a difference in our daily lives. Will you join \_\_\_\_\_ as a member?

Local Association

### How much does it cost to join?

*Avoid saying the annual fee unless explicitly asked. Also do NOT compare the cost to other daily expenses (coffee, transport, etc). Equating membership cost to daily expenses implies this is a transaction when we want potential members to understand the transformational relationship with the union. If absolutely necessary, talking about the cost per day is better than talking about it as an annual or monthly fee. Make sure to find out how much dues cost for members in your local association.*

**AFFIRM:** Great question.

**ANSWER:** It's \_\_\_\_\_ / day or \_\_\_\_\_ / month.  
Daily dues Monthly dues

**REDIRECT:** What is one thing that you wish you could change within your school to give your students the best?

## I'd like to join but the fees are too high.

**AFFIRM:** I can understand why you would be concerned about dues. Educators certainly aren't paid what they deserve, and people often assume that we have taken a vow of poverty when that simply isn't the case.

**ANSWER:** Joining \_\_\_\_\_ adds your voice to thousands of educators just like us across the state and millions of educators across the country to accomplish things one educator, one bus driver, one janitor, or even one district can't. When we speak up as part of our local union, we can advocate for significant changes, like increased salaries or improved healthcare benefits – things that improve our daily lives.

**REDIRECT:** What is one thing that you wish you could change within your school to give your students the best?

## I just have a hard time believing that joining a union will make a real difference in my life.

*If you can, respond to this question with wins that your local or state association has delivered for members. Also try to highlight wins that connect with any frustrations that the recruit voiced earlier in the conversation.*

**AFFIRM:** I can understand your concern.

**ANSWER:** Joining your local association adds your voice to thousands of educators across the state and millions across the country to accomplish things one educator, one bus driver, one janitor, or even one district can't. When we speak up as part of our local union, we can advocate for significant changes like increased salaries or cost of living adjustments. Additionally, we have already secured improved health-care benefits, comprehensive student loan forgiveness and repayment programs, and discounts on school related items - things that improve our daily lives as educators. We're making progress, but with more members like you, we can have an even stronger voice.

**REDIRECT:** Together, our voice can be even stronger to improve our daily lives and give students our best. Will you join \_\_\_\_\_ as a member?

Local Association

## Unions are too political.

**AFFIRM:** I understand, we got involved with education to make a difference in our students' lives. Providing a quality education is not a partisan issue.

**ANSWER:** That's exactly why we meet regularly with lawmakers from both parties to generate support for public education. There are just some issues, like higher salaries and student loan forgiveness, that require a strong collective voice to bring about the change we need. Our goal is not to advance a partisan agenda, but to make sure that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle give educators the tools we need so we can give students our best.

**REDIRECT:** Together, our voice can be even stronger to improve our daily lives and give students our best. Will you join \_\_\_\_\_ as a member?  
Local Association

## Unions are too aggressive.

**AFFIRM:** I was nervous too. I'm also an educator so my first instinct is to work together and help students – not agitate.

**ANSWER:** I have found our union to be very collaborative and supportive. We are working hand in hand with administrators and lawmakers from both parties to find a shared path forward and I know we can be even more successful with a voice like yours at the table.

**REDIRECT:** Together, our voice can be even stronger to improve our daily lives and give students our best. Will you join \_\_\_\_\_ as a member?  
Local Association

## I'm not sure what my colleagues or my community would think about my involvement in a union.

**AFFIRM:** I understand.

**ANSWER:** First, you should know you have a legally protected right to join without retaliation. But beyond that, it's important to know you aren't alone. Your local association is a community of local educators, just like us, who improve our daily lives so we can give students our best. More than \_\_\_\_\_ educators have joined because we work hand-in-hand with our administrators to give everyone a stronger voice at the table.  
Local membership #

**REDIRECT:** Together, our voice can be even stronger to improve our daily lives and give students our best. Will you join \_\_\_\_\_ as a member?  
Local Association

## Unions don't look out for students.

**AFFIRM:** We became educators because we care about providing the best education possible and setting our students up for success.

**ANSWER:** When educators are respected, appreciated, heard, and have the resources we need, we can give students our very best. With more members like you, we'll have a stronger collective voice that can deliver a future where educators live better lives, and our students get the best education possible.

**REDIRECT:** Together, our voice can be even stronger to improve our daily lives and give students our best. Will you join \_\_\_\_\_ as a member?  
Local Association



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