

From Contracts to Classrooms: Covering Teachers Unions



A PRIMER FOR JOURNALISTS



THE
Hechinger Institute
ON EDUCATION AND THE MEDIA
Teachers College, Columbia University

CONTENTS

2	The Rise of Teachers Unions
5	How Unions Flex Their Political Muscle
7	Basics of Collective Bargaining
9	Understanding Teacher Compensation
10	Alternative Teacher-Pay Plans
11	Retiree Benefits: A Ticking Time Bomb?
13	Seniority Rules and Education Reform
14	Teacher Unions and Charter Schools
15	How Work Rules Shape the School Day
16	Behind Teacher Grievances
17	New Database Tracks Teacher Contracts
18	Contract Coverage Often Misses the Big Picture
	Perspectives on Teachers Unions
19	Tenure Investigation Hits a Nerve
23	A Labor Expert's Tips on Covering Bargaining
26	The Education of a Beat Reporter
30	10 Ways to Improve Union Coverage
33	Why Unions Are Vital to School Reform
34	Books on Collective Bargaining
35	Experts and Additional Resources



Joe Williams, a writer, contributor and speaker on education reform, wrote many of the articles in this primer. Williams has more than a decade of experience in covering education for newspapers, including the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, where he won numerous local and national awards for his coverage of that city's private school voucher program, and the New York Daily News, where he covered the city's public school system. The author of "Cheating Our Kids: How Politics and Greed Ruin Education" (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), Williams is a nonresident senior fellow at Education Sector, a nonpartisan Washington, D.C., think tank.



It's often been said that the teacher union contract

is the single biggest influence on what happens in schools. Yet most newspaper stories about the collective bargaining process remain strangely divorced from what happens in schools, as if labor negotiations involve teachers and their unions but have nothing to do with kids and schools. Stories typically report on the average wage increase in the contract and quote both sides saying that each won or (disingenuously, often) that “kids were the true winners.” The Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media at Teachers College, with support from the Joyce Foundation, is publishing this guide to help reporters go much further and to provide historical perspective, practical advice and inspiration. Many of the pieces were authored by Joe Williams, a former New York Daily News reporter who has written about schools throughout the country.

While editing these pieces, Hechinger Director Richard Lee Colvin and I recalled how heavily we relied on teachers unions for reaction, quotes and perspective during our many years on the education beat – mine at New York Newsday and Richard’s at the Los Angeles Times. Like many education reporters caught up in the daily grind and stymied by reticent or uncooperative school board officials, we regularly sought out union contacts. In retrospect, we wished we’d also paid more attention to the contract, which is the compromise that representatives of school districts and teachers unions, the adults in the room, have reached on many issues that will have a great effect on children.

We might have probed deeper into issues like work rules and asked the question Dan Weisberg, director of labor policy for New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, and others pose in this primer: How does every aspect of the contract influence teacher quality, performance, and student achievement? How many minutes are students being taught each day? If their teacher isn’t doing a good job, what happens? If their teacher is doing a fantastic job, is she rewarded? What training will the teacher get and will the teacher be paid to prepare for class? How does compensation differ from salary, and what role does seniority play in determining who ends up getting squeezed out by a budget crunch?

The tools to ask such questions are now in your hands. Many thanks go to Gretchen Crosby Sims and The Joyce Foundation for their support and enthusiasm for this work on behalf of children. If you find this volume useful, or if it inspires you to do stories you’d not otherwise have done, please let us know. We’d love to see them and to share them as examples.

There's more to teacher unions and contracts than meets the eye. Read all about it inside.

Richard Colvin
Director, Hechinger Institute
on Education and the Media

Liz Willen
Assistant Director, Hechinger Institute
on Education and the Media



From ‘Begging’ to Bargaining: The Rise of Unions

Today’s teacher associations wield enormous clout, but gaining power was not quick or easy.

By Joe Williams

It was a joke, but it was one of those jokes grounded in just enough truth to make it deviously hilarious. In the 1973 Woody Allen film “Sleeper,” the main character awakes after being asleep for nearly 200 years to find the world has drastically changed. The entire Southwestern portion of the United States has been destroyed by war. A man tells Allen: “According to history, over a hundred years ago a man named Albert Shanker got hold of a nuclear warhead ...”

Shanker, of course, was the legendary president of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City. His work helping to launch the era of teacher militancy in the 1960s changed the inner workings of American public education forever. That he was enough of a recognized character in the nation’s pop culture scene (or at least New York’s) at the time to warrant a cheap joke in a Woody Allen movie is a testament to what a national figure he had become as well as the importance of teacher unionism under his watch.

In most communities in America, the leader of the teachers union is among the most recognizable figures on the public stage. We quote them in our education policy stories regularly. When new reporters take over the education beat at newspapers, it is often the union leaders or their representatives who are first to reach out, inviting them to lunch and offering the lowdown. The unions they command exert a tremendous amount of influence over what happens in a community’s

schools. The contracts they negotiate with school boards and superintendents establish precedents and lock in practices and policies that are extremely difficult to change. In short, these leaders and their unions are among the most powerful forces in public education today. But attaining this sort of power came neither easily nor quickly.

The **National Education Association** has roots dating back to 1857, when a group calling itself the National Teachers Association gathered in Philadelphia to unite as one voice for the cause of public education. It was to be a professional association of classroom teachers, administrators and school superintendents, and eventually became the NEA. The NEA was granted a charter by Congress and for much of its history shunned traditional labor activity. For its first 104 years, for example, the NEA officially opposed collective bargaining and focused on issues like curriculum, education financing and teacher education, said Mike Antonucci, head of the California-based Education Intelligence Agency, which monitors the activity of teacher unions nationally.

The **American Federation of Teachers** was founded in Chicago in 1916 and from the start was considered part of the American Federation of Labor, meaning it was decidedly a union and not a professional association like the NEA. For much of the last century, school administrators who dominated the governing

MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF TEACHERS UNIONS

The first meeting of the National Teachers Association is held in Philadelphia. It is attended by 43 educators from eight states and the District of Columbia. The name of the group would eventually be changed to the National Education Association.



The American Federation of Teachers forms at a meeting in Chicago, obtaining its charter from the American Federation of Labor. The founders include teacher groups from Chicago; Gary, Ind.; New York City; Scranton, Pa.; and Washington, D.C.



NEA members in New Jersey fight for passage of the first state pension system for teachers. By 1945, every state has a pension system in effect.

1857

1902

1916

1919



structure of the NEA urged teachers to join with them so the teachers wouldn't adopt hard-line union tactics (including strikes and collective bargaining) like those espoused by the AFT.

Before the onset of collective bargaining in the 1960s, salaries, working conditions and other employment issues were dealt with under a process widely known as "meet and confer." That is, the administration and school board sat on one side of the table with teams of educators grouped according to grade or subject matter on the other side. Julia Koppich, a San Francisco-based education consultant who has written extensively on teacher unions, notes: "The meet-and-confer approach assumed that teachers achieved their influence because their interests were coincidental with school district goals. In other words, teachers were [already] powerful because they wanted what the school district wanted."¹

But the process wasn't perfect. Each group of teachers fended for itself and tried to get whatever it could out of negotiations. For example, savvy administrators figured out how to play elementary school teachers (mostly women, paid less) against high school teachers (more men, more highly paid). Even when agreements were reached and spelled out in memoranda of understanding, nothing was legally

binding. Some union leaders refer to the old process as "collective begging," though others note that while teachers were certainly begging, there was nothing collective about the experience. Annual raises were not guaranteed, pay was historically low and benefits often were minimal. Female teachers who got pregnant, for example, were expected to stop working as soon as they were showing.

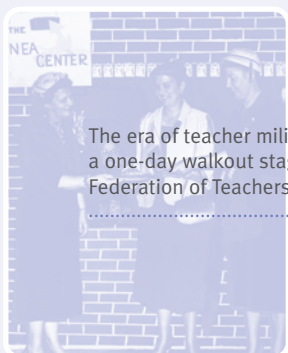
The notion that teachers should engage in collective bargaining – much less go on strike to get districts to meet their demands – was controversial. Resistance even came from the ranks of traditional organized labor. Champions of labor such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt argued that strikes by public workers were immoral. AFL-CIO President George Meany in 1959 even declared: "It is impossible to bargain collectively with government."²

The tension between the NEA's "professionalism" and AFT's "unionism" came to a head in 1961, when New York City teachers held a collective bargaining election. Essentially they were asked to choose whether to engage in collective bargaining. The vote, which came on the heels of a one-day strike by the 5,000-member United Federation of Teachers, came down decidedly in favor of bargaining a contract. Teachers in the city then



Fighting for better classroom conditions, the legendary United Federation of Teachers leader Al Shanker led 40,000 teachers and paraprofessionals in a march across the Brooklyn Bridge in 1975.

Wisconsin becomes the first state to enact a law allowing public employees to engage in collective bargaining.



The era of teacher militancy begins with a one-day walkout staged by the United Federation of Teachers in New York City.

1959



The UFT engages in another strike, this time securing the first comprehensive teacher contract in the country, including a \$995 pay increase and a duty-free lunch.

1960

1962

The NEA creates UniServe programs (Unified Service) around the country to provide assistance to local unions on collective bargaining, defense of member rights, political action and other matters.

The NEA, which reluctantly reverses its long-standing opposition to collective bargaining, also officially recognizes the right of teachers to strike.



1969

1970

overwhelmingly selected the UFT to be the official bargaining agent for all of the city's teachers.

A year later, after the UFT struck over such bread-and-butter union issues as higher pay and free lunch periods for teachers, the union won the nation's first major collective bargaining contract, including a \$995 per year raise and a duty-free lunch period. In a profession undermined at the time by low pay and heavy-handed management, collective bargaining and teacher unionism took off like a rocket nationwide. By the end of the decade, even the NEA was forced to drop its longstanding resistance to collective bargaining and teacher strikes because the idea was so popular with teachers.

The number of teacher strikes eventually reached 203 nationwide by the 1975-76 school year. Today, about two-thirds of the nation's 3.1 million teachers are covered by union contracts. The NEA has 14,000 affiliates and a membership of 3.2 million, which includes college faculty, retirees, college students, and support staff. The AFT has over 3,000 affiliates and about 1.3 million members, including teachers, college faculty and others. As union membership grew, so did the unions' political clout, making teachers today one of the most powerful forces in American politics.

The NEA and AFT have used their clout to push important social and civil rights. In 1957, for example, the AFT cut ties with local affiliates that refused to allow African-American teachers to join. But critics, particularly in the last 15 years, have accused teacher unions of looking out more for their interests at the expense of their students. Contracts designed to protect teachers from tyrannical principals and penny-pinching

school boards were now criticized for making it difficult to turn around struggling schools. Critics charged that the teachers unions had used their clout to turn schools into job protection zones, rather than child education zones.

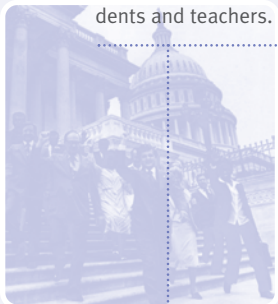
Responding to the criticism, the AFT's Shanker called upon teachers in the mid-1980s to take control of their profession, putting student achievement at the forefront of contract negotiations. In 1997 NEA President Bob Chase also called for a brand of "new unionism" with an eye toward providing a quality education for children. Both campaigns were designed to burnish the unions' image in the minds of a public losing faith in its schools. Yet both union leaders faced fierce opposition within their own ranks, and years later it is difficult to see much change.

At the start of the new millennium there are signs of hope that teacher unions are starting to pay attention to quality and performance. Various forms of performance and skill-related pay are spreading. Both unions appear to be taking steps to address a phenomenon in which younger teachers are more likely to define social justice as working to close the achievement gap than by getting arrested to improve salaries and working conditions. Yet, amid the national push for educational accountability, unions still often lead the opposition.

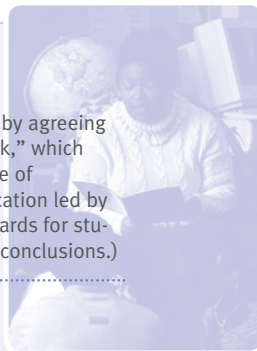
¹ Julia E. Koppich, "The As-Yet-Unfulfilled Promise of Reform Bargaining," in *Collective Bargaining in Education*, ed. Jane Hannaway and Andrew J. Rotherham (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Education Press, 2006).

² Max Green, *Epitaph for American Labor: How Union Leaders Lost Touch with America* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1996).

AFT President Al Shanker stuns the education community by agreeing with the thrust of a national report called "A Nation At Risk," which argued that America's schools were caught in a "rising tide of mediocrity." Shanker called for sweeping changes to education led by educators themselves, including pushing for higher standards for students and teachers. (The NEA disagreed with the report's conclusions.)



1983



In the federal lawsuit *Pontiac vs. Spellings*, the NEA challenges the constitutionality of the 2002 federal No Child Left Behind Act. The case is later dismissed but the union makes clear that making major changes to the law (specifically portions dealing with the evaluation of schools and sanctions for failing schools and districts) are its top legislative priority.

NEA President Bob Chase reverses the union's position on the need for major education reform, calling for a brand of "new unionism" in which educators take responsibility for quality and outcomes in collective bargaining. Many of his specific proposals are eventually brushed back by union delegates.



2005



How Teachers Unions Flex Their Political Muscle

Members can swing elections and change policy; coverage needs to take note of groups' role.

Teachers unions can have an enormous amount of influence on local, state and national policies and debates. They get this power because they are effective political campaigners. They have discipline, long-range vision, access to enormous amounts of money from union dues and something most special interest groups can only dream of: a corps of loyal foot-soldiers ready to be mobilized at nearly a moment's notice and a built-in infrastructure to communicate with them. About 1 of every 100 Americans is a dues-paying member of either the National Education Association or the American Federation of Teachers.¹

San Diego Education Association President Terry Pesta explained to his members in 2002 the political nature of their school jobs, just before a highly contested school board election:

“You are involved in politics. If you are a teacher, a counselor, a librarian or any school employee, you are involved in politics. Politicians control everything you do every day at your school site or program. Your class size, your caseload, your curriculum, your hours of employment, your wages and your benefits, everything is determined by either national, state or local politicians. Why am I telling you this? It's very simple. Since politicians determine everything that you do, it's important that you do your part to make sure the correct politicians are the ones that make the decisions.”²

Teacher unions flex their political muscle in any number of ways: sometimes simply by encouraging their members to support a specific candidate or cause, other times by spending vast sums of union money on campaigns and issue advertising designed to make a dent in public opinion. Reporters can find information on unions' political action committee filings at the local, state and federal level, but many aspects of union political activities fall under loose definitions of “communications with members” and thus are not considered official political expenditures.

On the local level, unions often are capable of operating what Wisconsin political consultant Bill Christofferson calls a “turnkey campaign operation” for the candidates they support in local school board elections. “Typically, once they find the candidate, they run the entire campaign,” Christofferson said. “They file the papers, do the phone banks, put up the yard signs and do the fund-raising. It's very difficult for a regular person who is not a teacher-backed candidate to take them on.”³

Understanding the role of unions in school board elections is particularly important. It is often said that the three most important management duties of school boards involve hiring the superintendent, negotiating contracts with teachers and passing the annual school budget. It is easy, then, to see why organized teacher groups would want to have a say in who sits on the “management” side of the table. In fact, their ability to do so and the fact that administrators are often former teacher union members makes public school collective bargaining very different from that in the private sector.

The United Teachers Los Angeles had such a tight grip on its school board in 2004 that union leaders actually instructed them on important policies and made no attempt to hide their hand signals to school board members during meetings. The hand signals were in addition to phone calls and e-mails being sent by the union to board members during meetings. “It's so blatant. It's like a baseball game – people are giving signals out there. It's ridiculous,” said board member Mike Lansing – who, you might have guessed, was not supported by the union.⁴

In an internal report for the United Federation of Teachers in 2004, New York political consultant Scott Levenson examined turnout rates among city teachers from 1999 to 2003 and concluded what every politician in New York understood: The union was a “political powerhouse,” with teacher turnout at the polls consistently higher than the general public's. In 1999, a low-turnout election year, 32 percent of the union's members voted in elections for City Council, compared with 7.81 percent of the public citywide. The union's newspaper, *New York Teacher*, called the findings something “all candidates ought to bear in mind.”

Levenson's study also highlighted races in which UFT members almost certainly determined the outcome. In the 2001 Democratic primary election, for example, one city councilman from Staten Island won by just 170 votes in a district in which 668 teachers union members voted. Another councilman from Queens won by 202 votes in a district where 353 UFT members voted. To counter the power of the union, business groups in Los Angeles, San Diego, Atlanta and elsewhere have backed and bankrolled school board candidates. This, too, is an important dynamic for journalists to pay attention to. A good story, in fact, would be to compare the political spending of business and

labor in a school board race. Don't forget, however, that the union also has its members, who are a tremendous campaign resource.

Teacher unions also are powerful in state-level elections and policy discussions. The union's influence helps shape state laws that determine what issues may be collectively bargained, as well as those regarding teacher tenure, pensions and retirement. If teachers unions succeed in writing subjects into state law that are normally resolved locally at the bargaining table, it makes them even more powerful in local negotiations because it takes those issues off the table – allowing them to concentrate on other issues on their wish list.

Teachers unions also supply millions of dollars in campaign cash and workers to presidential elections, sometimes even transporting members to key swing states to assist local political workers. The American Federation of Teachers in 2004 transported member campaign workers to Pennsylvania and Ohio, both considered close calls in the presidential elections. (Both the AFT and NEA supported Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., over President George W. Bush.)

The New York union's newspaper headlined an article seeking volunteers: "Spend your summer helping dump Bush." Teachers were also asked to volunteer over the summer if they were vacationing or passing through Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The article noted that "Travel, housing, and food costs will be defrayed."⁵

It isn't just elections that capture the interest of the teachers unions and their political apparatus. In 2006, the think tank Education Sector noted that the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union, had given millions of dollars to numerous organizations that publicly criticized the federal No Child Left Behind law. The 3.2 million-member NEA had led a crusade against the law and even filed a lawsuit questioning its constitutionality. By paying outside groups that criticized the law in public, it created a pos-

sible impression that the union had more support for its position than met the eye.

The NEA created, for example, a group called Communities for Quality Education, which worked in various states to raise public awareness of what the union

considered to be shortcomings in the NCLB law. The NEA provided millions of dollars to the group, whose board of directors included prominent NEA bigwigs.

Among other newsworthy groups identified as being on the receiving end of NEA largesse were the Harvard Civil Rights Project and Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice, both of which produced academic studies critical of NCLB and standardized testing. The Education Sector report did not identify anything illegal or improper in the relationships between the NEA and these

groups, but noted that important ties with the union were often not disclosed in news accounts on work produced by these outside groups.

What should reporters make of all of this? Unions have a legitimate right to be political actors and, as San Diego's Terry Pesta noted, their self-interest is at stake. But it is also legitimate for reporters to examine the political activities of unions and make them transparent. Moreover, it is legitimate to ask whether the policies and politicians that teachers unions support are serving the interest of the students.

– Joe Williams



David Sherman, a former vice president for the United Federation of Teachers, visits a school with Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass. Union leaders often forge alliances with politicians and provide millions of dollars in campaign cash, along with massive get-out-the vote efforts.

¹ Based on the 2005 U.S. population of 295 million. There are about 2.5 million members of the National Education Association and 1 million members of the American Federation of Teachers

² Terry Pesta, "Voters Are Anxious to Hear From You," San Diego Education Association *Advocate*, October 2002.

³ Charles Mahtesian, "Payback is Hell," *Campaigns and Elections*, Feb. 2000, p. 22.

⁴ Jennifer Radcliffe, "Romer's Uphill Battle: LAUSD's chief faces pressure from UTLA," *Daily News of Los Angeles*, May 30, 2004.

⁵ "Spend Your Summer Dumping Bush," *New York Teacher*, June 16, 2004, p. 6.



Understanding Collective Bargaining: The Basics

How to avoid combatants' spin and report accurately on teacher-district negotiations.

Teachers unions exist in every state and, for the most part, the rules of collective bargaining, if it exists, are set at the state level. Thirty-three states – constituting 75 percent of the nation's 14,500 school districts – require districts to collectively bargain with organized teachers; another six allow collective bargaining but don't require it. In a few states, like Texas, state law specifically bars teachers from bargaining collectively. But even in Texas, districts typically negotiate with teachers through a process called "exclusive consultation."¹

While participants and state statutes refer to the process of developing a contract or a work agreement as "bargaining" or "collective bargaining," many newspaper editors prefer to refer to this process in colloquial terms such as "negotiations" or "contract talks."

Most bargaining occurs in one of two modes:

Traditional bargaining. Sometimes referred to as "zero-sum bargaining," this approach assumes that management and the union have polar-opposite positions on issues and that each party will be required to make concessions. In talks using this model, union negotiators start from the notion that everything in the previous contract is a given, and any variance from that document that does not serve teachers' interests is framed as a "give-back." Any give-back must be balanced by a concession from the district. The district tends to want to start with a clean slate and build an agreement from scratch. Thus, tensions, and stories, arise.

Collaborative (or interest-based) bargaining. This approach places an emphasis on finding common ground, and identifying and solving problems together in a partnership. During bargaining sessions, which are typically held behind closed doors, negotiators for the union (the bargaining unit) and management (the administration) meet to try to work out a deal palatable

to both sides. In some districts, the sessions take place with little or no notice to the press. In others, reporters may be camped outside the negotiating room waiting for some sort of announcement when the talks conclude.

Each side generally gives consideration to what, if anything, it will say to reporters once they leave the table. As a rule of thumb, if talks are moving along neither side will say much, other than some variation of, "We had a good, productive meeting, and we look forward to continuing our discussions." Press leaks, almost always from the union, usually mean things have gone sour around the table.

Unions, particularly if frustrated by a tough management negotiating team asking for significant concessions sometimes communicate management's demands to members in internal union newsletters. (A good reason for journalists to be on the mailing list.) Management teams generally are less able to air their position, for fear of being accused of bargaining in bad faith. Journalists therefore should be wary of being used to pressure the district.

Experienced negotiators on both sides say they attempt to get the easiest issues out of the way first. This is seen as a way to build momentum before taking on more difficult issues such as pay. Reporters should pay particular attention to non-wage issues. Clearly identifying the side seeking work rule changes will help the public understand the negotiations and the contract, as well as its potential effects on students.

If the sides are unable to reach a deal, they generally enter into a conflict-resolution process determined by state law. If that does not lead to a resolution, either side can declare talks to be at an impasse, triggering a state-sanctioned process

The Ebb and Flow of Teacher Strikes

YEAR:	1960	1964	1966	1967	1976	1991	2003
STRIKES:	3	9	30	105	203	99	15

Source: *Collective Bargaining in Education*, ed. Jane Hannaway and Andrew J. Rotherham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2006).

Among the most common means of addressing an impasse:

Mediation. Each side presents its case to a third-party mediator, who makes recommendations for a compromise. Mediation is nonbinding, but tremendous political pressure can be brought to bear on either side if it doesn't appear to be taking the process seriously. This is the most widely used means of resolution.

Fact-finding. As in a civil legal proceeding, each side presents its case to a panel of fact finders. Witnesses are often called to provide or rebut information presented by either side. The fact-finding panel usually consists of one person selected by labor, one person selected by management, and one person agreed upon by both sides. The panel hears each side and then issues

committee or delegate assembly, and then a vote by the rank and file.

Here are some suggestions for covering this phase:

- Take note of the percentage of teachers who vote on the contract, either for or against. This is a measure of whether teachers are engaged in the process.
- In cases where fact-finding reports are issued, reporters often will find a treasure trove of important statistical and descriptive information for use in future stories.
- As soon as you get on the beat you should ask to be added to the distribution list for the union's newspaper or newsletter. It can help you understand the union's positions as well as tensions within the union.



THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN WHICH THESE TEACHER UNIONS OPERATE ARE CHANGING DRAMATICALLY AND DON'T RESEMBLE THE KINDS OF LEARNING INSTITUTIONS THAT EXISTED WHEN UNIONS ROSE IN THE 1960S. THERE IS TREMENDOUS PRESSURE FOR TEACHER UNIONS TO HELP REFORM DISTRICTS THROUGH CONTRACT CHANGES. SOME UNION LEADERS ARE THE ONES PROPOSING THESE CHANGES. THROUGH STUBBORNNESS ON BOTH SIDES, THOUGH, THESE SEEMINGLY GOOD INTENTIONS DON'T ALWAYS TRANSLATE TO THE CLASSROOM.

ONE EXAMPLE IS THE COMMON COMPLAINT THAT ADMINISTRATORS CAN'T MOVE THE BEST TEACHERS INTO THE WORST SCHOOLS. INCENTIVES HAVE BEEN PROPOSED TO SWEETEN THIS IDEA, TO MAKE IT MORE PALATABLE, BUT IS THE "BEST" TEACHER ALWAYS THE "RIGHT" TEACHER? AND ONCE A DISTRICT GETS INTO OFFERING INCENTIVES, HOW DOES IT CUT COSTS SOMEWHERE ELSE?

JANET OKOBEN, *CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER*

a report, which is not binding but which can become the basis for a final round of talks. Again, political pressure is often brought to bear – by mayors, business leaders or even state legislators and governors – to bring both sides back to the table. This method of solving the dispute can be extremely expensive for both sides.

Binding arbitration. Considered the option of last resort, binding arbitration is mandated in only a handful of states. In binding arbitration, both sides submit their proposed contract to an independent arbitrator, who crafts a final contract that he or she feels is fair and can be imposed. Neither side tends to like this form of resolution because it takes power out of their hands completely. That said, it does guarantee a settlement of some sort, and often the threat of binding arbitration alone can jolt a round of last-minute negotiations and concessions.

Once a settlement is reached, it is time for ratification. Both the school board and the union must approve the contract deal. In the union's case, ratification typically first involves a vote of the union's executive

- In arbitration cases, reporters can track down the record of a particular arbitrator. Do this person's decisions usually favor the union or the administration? This may be impractical at most newspapers, but one union leader offered this suggestion when she spoke with reporters at a 2005 conference sponsored by the Hechinger Institute: Try to get both sides to allow a reporter to observe all negotiation sessions – as long as the reporter agrees not to disclose any of what happened until after the contract is settled. This way, the reporter could tell the story of who got what, who gave up what, and, more important, how much time was spent in negotiations talking about ways to improve educational opportunities for children.

– Joe Williams

¹ Frederick M. Hess and Andrew P. Kelly, "Scapegoat, Albatross, or What?" in *Collective Bargaining in Education*. Ed. Jane Hannaway and Andrew J. Rotherham. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Education Press, 2006



Go Beyond Formulas for Truer Picture of Teacher Pay

Along with negotiated pay hikes, add longevity increases, education credits and benefit packages.

Almost all stories about contract negotiations report on a pay raise that is proposed, demanded or negotiated, typically reading something like the following: “Teachers and the district yesterday agreed to a three-year deal that will provide 6 percent raises.”

As many reporters come to learn, teacher salary scales are complicated and settlements richer than a simple percentage might indicate. Moreover, compensation consists of more than just salaries. Pensions and the cost of health benefits, including coverage for teachers’ families and retirees, are also part of the compensation picture.

Teachers’ salaries go up based on experience and taking classes. The number of years on the job moves teachers up the “steps” of the salary schedule. The classes they take, such as earning a master’s degree, moves them across the “columns.” Each move brings more money. That means that the annual increase in salary for most teachers is higher than the percentage negotiated.

Take for example, the case highlighted recently by Michael Podgursky, chairman of the economics department at the University of Missouri-Columbia and an expert on teacher compensation. Assume that a teacher, fresh out of college with a bachelor’s degree and hired in the fall of 1999, was paid \$32,561. Between the fall of 1999 and the fall of 2002, the average starting pay for teachers in her district rose a modest 6.1 percent. But our sample teacher’s pay increased by 23.1 percent in the same time period, because of both the annual salary increase and the additional “bump” she received for each year of service. If the 2003-04 salary schedule again rose by 2 percent, as it had in recent years, it would mean that our sample teacher’s salary would rise 31.1 percent – in only four years.

This is a real scenario. A newspaper would technically be correct in reporting that the contract the teacher worked under awarded teachers a 2 percent annual raise over several years. However, this teacher – and her checking account – actually fared much better.

One value of such “step and column” pay schedules is that they treat all teachers of similar experience and training the same. But that’s also their weakness, because they make performance and expertise irrelevant. Reporters also should be aware that there is little connection between either experience and master’s

degrees and teacher effectiveness. Marguerite Roza of the University of Washington recently reported that research suggests that teachers become more effective for the first few years of their careers. But improvement “tends to plateau after only five years or so, and may even decline as teachers approach retirement.”¹

Other issues to think about. Reporters also should ask whether teachers are required to pay part of the premium for their health benefits. (Some are, some aren’t. Private sector employees usually have to.) Do they have a co-payment for doctor visits? Can they retire at age 55 with full benefits? When they retire many teachers are paid a percentage of their highest salary, often indexed to inflation. That’s called a “defined benefit” pension. Most private sector workers these days have a “defined contribution” pension, in which their employer contributes a certain percentage but their post-retirement income is not guaranteed. Teachers have won such perks over the years, often in lieu of short-term pay raises. But they add to the costs of teacher compensation and total compensation are often overlooked.

Three researchers from the Economic Policy Institute, in a 2004 book funded by teachers unions called “How Does Teacher Pay Compare,” argue that weekly wage increases for teachers actually fell behind weekly wages for other professions in the last decade. EPI President Lawrence Mishel maintains that there is a link between low teacher pay and educational quality, and that lagging pay for teachers makes attracting and retaining teachers difficult.²

On the other hand, Podgursky argues that if you take into account the shorter official work year and workday teachers often have, their average hourly pay exceeds that of comparable professionals.

– Joe Williams

For a debate on this question between Podgursky and Mishel and a co-author, go to <http://www.nctq.org/nctq/publications/debate.jsp> or <http://tinyurl.com/2leemr>

¹ Jay Mathews, “Cutting Provisions in Union Contracts Could Free Funds.” Washington Post, Jan. 8, 2007, p. B8.

² Lawrence Mishel, et al, “How Does Teacher Pay Compare: Methodological Challenges and Answers” (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2004).



Alternative Pay Plans Seek to Reward Top Teachers

Proposals question the traditional single-salary schedule, which values experience and training.

One of the major accomplishments of teachers unions historically has been the “single-salary schedule,” which determines how most teachers are paid. The schedule, which many education reformers say prevents managers from using pay as an incentive or reward, arose early in the 20th century because of blatant unfairness: Women, who mostly taught in elementary schools, were paid less than men, who taught mostly in high schools. What resulted was a system in which most teachers can only earn more money through taking classes and gaining experience, regardless of their effectiveness. Fearing unequal treatment, teacher unions have resisted attempts – many of them short-lived, poorly financed and ill-conceived – to undermine the schedule. Besides, evidence is scant that paying teachers more based on their performance helps kids learn more.

But over the past few years, differential pay plans involving hundreds of millions of dollars – some publicly financed, some backed privately, some with unions’ assent, others over their protests – have emerged nationally and seem unlikely to disappear quickly. It’s worthwhile, therefore, for journalists to familiarize themselves with the new compensation schemes and to monitor their progress. Though details differ, the premise of the programs is that teachers, effective or not, represent the single most important school factor in student achievement. The other central idea is that the public rewards teachers each year with billions of dollars in additional pay for academic degrees and experience, which have little if any effect on student achievement.

One form of differential pay provides bonuses to teachers with specialized knowledge or training, whether in math, science, special education, foreign language or bilingual instruction. Some districts also pay a bonus to good teachers willing to take a position in a low-performing school serving disadvantaged students. The amounts can be substantial: \$5,000 is not unusual, and algebra teachers serving in so-called “Mission Possible” schools in Guilford County, N.C., can earn as much as \$14,000 extra if they do well.¹ But such plans can also cause problems and do not necessarily achieve their goal to attract and retain teachers at schools and in fields where their skill and knowledge is most in need. The state of Massachusetts a few years back offered bonuses of up to \$20,000 to candidates

willing to complete a seven-week training program and teach in what it called “high need” schools. Studies found that the program failed to attract many more candidates into urban schools, and those who did sign up left quickly.

One performance pay program growing rapidly nationally is the Teacher Advancement Program, which was developed by the Milken Family Foundation and is now backed by the federal education department and several philanthropies. The program provides teachers with professional development time during the school day and bonuses for performing additional duties, for student progress and for good evaluations by superiors. It is being implemented in 130 schools by 4,000 teachers. Research on its effectiveness is positive, if inconclusive: TAP schools produce greater learning gains than do similar non-participating schools.²

Arizona, Minnesota and North Carolina partly tie teacher salaries to test scores. Texas (\$100 million in performance awards for schools serving disadvantaged children), Florida (\$147 million last year, but that could double this year) and Alaska also have begun awarding teachers bonuses. Competitive pressures from a voucher program for private school tuition and charter schools persuaded teachers in Washington, D.C., in June 2006 to agree to a performance pay experiment.

It remains to be seen whether these programs will become the norm. A \$99 million federal program supporting performance pay experiments was eliminated in early 2007 after Democrats took control of Congress. Even so, journalists should be equipped to ask good questions. William J. Slotnik, who helped create a performance pay plan in Denver, suggests judging them on the following terms: transparency, support, accountability, leadership and caution.³

–Richard Lee Colvin

¹ “Teacher Rules, Roles and Rights,” Web site. National Council on Teacher Quality. Accessed at <http://www.nctq.org/cb/>

² Bess Keller, “Program That Expands Teachers’ Roles Linked to Higher Student Achievement.” *Education Week*, Jan. 31, 2007.

³ William J. Slotnik, “Mission Possible: Tying Earning to Learning.” *Education Week*, Sept. 28, 2005. Accessed at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2005/09/28/05slotnik.h25.html?print=1> or <http://tinyurl.com/2nq5sg>



Are Retiree Benefits a Ticking Time Bomb for Schools?

Boards sometimes agree to cover health-care costs and pensions as a trade-off for smaller pay hikes. But reporters should ask how districts plan to pay for such expensive future obligations.

In February 2006, USA Today reporter Greg Toppo wrote a story that highlighted what could be one of the scariest fiscal scenarios facing public education today. Noting that school boards nationwide made promises years ago to cover the cost of health benefits and pensions for retirees, the story told of the serious financial problems many school districts now face as the teacher corps ages and retires and the costs of health benefits have soared.

Toppo quoted one analyst who said the predicament could turn into a “death spiral” for school districts. He cited shocking projections that showed, for example, how Fresno, Calif., faced a bill of as much as \$1.1 billion, more than the district’s entire budget. Los Angeles, the nation’s second largest school district, estimated the cost of future health benefits for current retirees at \$5 billion.¹

It’s a troubling scenario for today’s school boards and union leaders. On the one hand, these school districts agreed to pay the benefits long ago, often in exchange for smaller pay increases. School boards worried about maintaining short-term labor peace with teachers often ended up racking up long-range expenses without any contingency plans to pay for them. The teacher retirees lived up to their half of the bargain, but now it is difficult to imagine how school districts can possibly live up to theirs, especially if they want to keep running quality schools at the same time.

Paul T. Hill, director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington, describes the mess:

“As with growing evidence of global warming, the long-term costs of teacher collective bargaining agreements are now becoming clear. They are starting to bankrupt school districts and render them unable to adapt education to the needs of a changing population and a more demanding economy.”²

Sadly, every time a school board agreed to one of these contracts, there was probably a reporter – or two, or three – who was in a position to ask the basic question: How are you guys going to pay for this? It is a stark reminder of the important role that the free press can play in these important policy decisions. But there is still time for the press to play a role by shining a light on this crucial issue.

New Government Accounting Standards Board

rules in 2006 began requiring school districts nationwide to start auditing their retiree health-care systems over the next three years. The new rules aren’t entirely mandatory, but could affect a district’s credit ratings and its ability to borrow money cheaply. Essentially, districts – some for the first time – are being asked to project how much they must spend to meet their previously negotiated obligations in coming years. How do these numbers look in the districts you cover? In some districts, because of longer life spans and relatively early retirement ages, retirees will outnumber active teachers – raising important policy questions about whether education budgets will be dominated by classroom expenses or hospital room expenses.

In terms of teacher benefits, health care is typically negotiated and handled by local districts. Pensions are usually handled at the state level, through a state Teachers Retirement System.

In what are known as **defined benefit retirement plans**, teacher pensions typically pay teachers in retirement based on their longevity in the pension system. Defined benefit plans generally guarantee a certain monthly lifetime income based on salary, age and the number of years of service at the time of retirement. All of this is a subject of negotiations and is often overlooked by journalists. What may seem like an arcane discussion of the rate at which pensions will go up may, in a relatively few years, turn into a question of whether the district can continue to offer, say, music or sustain its athletic budget. Teachers, particularly if they started teaching in their 20s, are generally able to retire at a much younger age than most other professionals.

Many workers in other fields these days participate in very different retirement plans called **defined contribution plans**. The employer agrees to contribute a defined amount to a 401(K) plan if the employee antes up some as well. But the value of that account when the employee retires is not guaranteed and depends on how the employee has chosen to invest it and on the performance of stocks, mutual funds and bonds.

The financial health of teacher retirement systems largely depends on investment policies and funding from the state legislature. In Ohio, for example, as the teacher’s pension fund was losing an estimated \$12 billion in value, it was discovered that the pension organization spent more than \$800,000 on artwork and gave

employees \$14 million in bonuses.³

Aside from stories about mismanagement of teacher pension funds, reporters should be on the lookout for ways in which these benefits and their overall structure impact classroom learning. Because retirement formulas generally make payments based on the salaries in a teacher's final years, for example, are the most senior teachers signing up to teach summer school or participate in other salary-enhancing activities? In these cases, do the retirement incentives mix with seniority rights to impact the quality of teachers selected for these assignments?

In 2005, Betsy Hammond, a reporter for the Portland Oregonian, determined that for every person employed in public schools in Oregon, school districts paid an average of \$18,300 for health insurance and retirement pay – 55 percent more than schools across the nation. Hammond showed that with more than

series focused on the significant power that public-sector unions have and paid particular attention to the clout of the New Jersey Education Association. One of the newspaper's installments, by reporter Monsy Alvarado, compared the health plan used by a Jersey City school teacher with that of a retail saleswoman in nearby Ridgefield Park.

The teacher paid no premiums for her health care. When she had a baby, the teacher's insurance covered her regular checkups, two ultrasounds and a first-trimester screening. Her hospital stay for the delivery cost her nothing but the \$5 co-pay.

In contrast, the saleswoman paid more than \$100 out of her biweekly paycheck toward her health insurance premiums and still had to pay for portions of her ultrasounds and \$30 co-pays for specialists. The woman paid more than \$2,500 in medical expenses to deliver her child.⁵



advice

BE COGNIZANT OF THE ROLE THAT UNION CONTRACTS PLAY IN WHAT THE KIDS GET OR DON'T GET. IF A KID IS STUCK WITH A "LEMON" TEACHER THERE MAY BE CONTRACT CLAUSES MAKING IT HARD TO GET RID OF OR REASSIGN THAT TEACHER. IF THERE IS NO AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM, MAYBE THERE IS CONTRACT LANGUAGE THAT MAKES IT COST-PROHIBITIVE. ALSO, COSTS AND BENEFITS OUTLINED IN LABOR CONTRACTS HAVE A REAL COST TO TAXPAYERS. SOME COSTS, SUCH AS LIFETIME HEALTH INSURANCE, MAY NOT LOOK SO EXPENSIVE NOW BUT

THEY WILL BE IN FUTURE YEARS, AND YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE IF ANYONE HAS PLANNED FOR THAT. BE SKEPTICAL OF CLAIMS MADE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE UNION-MANAGEMENT DIVIDE. A LOT OF GRIEVANCES FILED IN A GIVEN SCHOOL COULD REFLECT A PETTY OR VINDICTIVE PRINCIPAL – OR IT COULD REFLECT A PRINCIPAL WHO IS TRYING TO SHAKE UP A LETHARGIC SCHOOL AND IS GETTING RESISTANCE.

RICK KARLIN, ALBANY TIMES-UNION

55,000 full-time workers in Oregon schools, the cost of these benefits "put a big dent in how much schools can pump into the classroom to reduce class size, add counselors and provide extra help for struggling students."⁴

Because many workers have become acutely aware of their own rising health care costs, reporters should be as specific as possible in describing the plans that are negotiated for teachers. Do teachers pay monthly premiums for themselves or for their spouses, and are they required to make co-payments when they visit their doctors? Are teachers required to use an HMO or can they see any doctor they like? Such seemingly minor issues actually can be a major roadblock to reaching a contract settlement. They also allow for important comparisons between what is negotiated for teachers and other school employees and conventional plans in the private sector.

In the summer of 2006, the (Bergen County, N.J.) Record ran a weeklong series titled "Runaway Pay" that examined the exorbitant costs of public employee compensation, benefits and retirement in New Jersey. The

It is not necessarily scandalous that teachers receive these kinds of benefits, of course, but many newspaper readers would understand and appreciate this kind of context when reporters write about the overall impact of collective bargaining.

– Joe Williams

¹ Greg Toppo, "School Systems Face Healthcare Squeeze," Feb. 6, 2006.

² Paul Hill, "The Costs of Collective Bargaining Agreements and Related District Policies," in *Collective Bargaining in Education*, ed. Jane Hannaway and Andrew J. Rotherham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2006).

³ Jordan Gentile, "Teacher Pension Spending Studied," Cincinnati *Enquirer*, July 9, 2003.

⁴ Betsy Hammond, "Benefits Eat Schools' Cash," Portland *Oregonian*, July 10, 2005.

⁵ Monsy Alvarado, "Workers' Health Care Causing Pain," (Bergen County, N.J.) *Record*, July 18, 2006.



Do Seniority Rules Thwart Education Reform?

Unions often insist on such provisions as a matter of fairness, but reporters should examine the way they affect teacher quality – especially in low-performing schools.

Cathy Nelson had 13 years of experience teaching at Fridley High School in suburban Minneapolis in 1990 when she was named the Minnesota Teacher of the Year. Nelson came from a long line of educators and was passionate about her craft, but had the least seniority within the school's social studies department. So, when the cost-cutting ax fell that year, she lost her job. When asked why by the *New York Times*, her principal had a ready answer: "Last hired is the first fired."¹

It wasn't an isolated occurrence. Do an electronic clip search of "Teacher of the Year" and "fired" and you'll find a shocking trail of similar stories. In 2003, two teachers honored as "Teachers of the Year" by Wal-Mart were laid off. In the case of Lauri Cerasani, one of the two, her school kept the \$1,000 gift from Wal-Mart, while she got to take home a certificate and a blue vest from the retail giant.²

One way teachers unions ensure their members are treated fairly is by insisting that seniority, rather than administrators' subjectivity, be used to determine the order of layoffs as well as transfer requests and, in some schools, teaching assignments. Special training or skill in say, how to teach first-graders to read carries little weight. But reporters who choose to write about seniority and its effects in schools should question whether teachers really are interchangeable. Indeed, as has been stated elsewhere in this volume, research shows that generally speaking teachers do not automatically continue to increase in effectiveness and improve their craft after about five years on the job.

Seniority also can affect hiring. In districts with strong seniority policies, all teachers requesting transfers or who have been bumped from their positions must be placed before hiring can begin.³ That whole process makes it hard for districts, especially urban districts, to hire quickly, and so attractive candidates end up getting jobs elsewhere.

Seniority rights are coveted by teachers and attempting to take them away can quickly lead to a strike. Yet, seniority, when strictly applied, can make it difficult for school leaders, especially at schools serving large numbers of disadvantaged children, to assemble the faculty they need. It sometimes seems as if everyone involved in the debate is right and the system is simply unworkable. It does seem that seniority policies may be weakening – teachers in Philadelphia,

Milwaukee, San Diego and elsewhere have given up some protections.

How does it work in the district you cover? Do principals choose their teachers, perhaps in consultation with the faculty? Or does the district and seniority determine who works where and does what?

One place journalists can turn to for guidance is called the New Teacher Project. The project produced a 2005 report called "Unintended Consequences" that concluded that contracts often prevent schools from considering teachers' effectiveness and expertise, their "fit" for a school or the needs of students in hiring decisions.

The American Federation of Teachers in May 2006 issued its own report in response to the New Teacher Project's findings. Union research chief F. Howard Nelson argued that collective bargaining agreements were not the source of teacher quality problems in urban districts and that, if anything, labor contracts reduce transfers and increase stability in school staffing.⁴

Seniority practices differ from state to state and district to district. But it's worth a reporter's time to look into whether seniority is serving the interests of the teachers and the students – as Nelson argues – or whether it is serving the interests of only the adults, as critics argue.

– Joe Williams

The TNTP report can be found at:

<http://www.tntp.org/files/UnintendedConsequences.pdf>

The AFT report can be found at:

http://www.aft.org/topics/teacher-quality/downloads/cb_handout.pdf

¹ William Celis, "Minnesota's Teacher of the Year Is Laid Off in Budget Crisis," *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1991.

² Chicago *Tribune*, "She Loses the Job, but Keeps the Vest," May 11, 2003.

³ Susan Moore Johnson and Morgaen L. Donaldson, "The Effects of Collective Bargaining on Teacher Quality," in *Collective Bargaining in Education*, ed. Jane Hannaway and Andrew J. Rotherham, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2006).

⁴ F. Howard Nelson, "The Impact of Collective Bargaining on Teacher Transfer Rates in Urban High-Quality Schools," American Federation of Teachers, May 2006.

Unions' Charter School Choice: Fight or Organize?

The emergence of charter schools provides new questions and issues for teacher unions. Charter schools are often defined as public schools that are allowed to operate somewhat independently, without many of the bureaucratic rules governing traditional schools. Because only a very small percentage of charter schools nationwide are unionized, it is clear that many charter school operators view teacher labor contracts as a significant part of the bureaucracy they are seeking to avoid. Indeed, some policy types observe that this is the chief reason why teacher unions generally seek to block charter schools.

These charter schools, both unionized and non-unionized, offer reporters ample opportunities to compare and contrast the impact (or lack) of specific provisions contained in teacher contracts. They likely differ from traditional public schools both in terms of school culture and classroom instruction, although researchers such as Luis Huerta from Teachers College have found charters are often surprisingly traditional when it comes to instruction and school culture.

Teachers unions, after years of fighting charter school laws when these alternative public schools were first gaining traction, are now facing an important question: Do they continue to fight the spread of charters, try to organize the teachers working in them, or, in some cases, do both?

This internal tension within unions is a potential

goldmine of stories for reporters, particularly as unions face the prospect of shrinking membership in areas where charter schools are growing quickly. In Los Angeles, for example, the Green Dot Public Schools, one of the fastest growing charter school organizations, decided from the outset that it wanted its teachers to be unionized. But interestingly, the United Teachers of Los Angeles refused to organize the teachers there, contending that it would be giving aid and comfort to the enemy. The teachers were eventually organized under the auspices of the statewide union.

In New York City, the United Federation of Teachers is currently operating two charter schools of its own. In the UFT's case, the union

wants to prove to critics that it is possible to run a good school under the existing teacher contract.

Reporters writing about this issue can get another good source of big-picture information from charter school operators. Do they think they can run good charter schools with the union's work rules in place? If not, which rules are they specifically targeting? What does the union have to say about those rules? It's also worth asking what they hope to do better than the regular public schools.

If your local school district did away with those rules, would they even need charter schools as a reform tool?

—Joe Williams



Tom Mooney, Ohio Teachers Union Leader, Dies at 52



The Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media notes the tragic loss of Tom Mooney, president of the Ohio Federation of Teachers and a longtime advocate for teachers, journalists and children, who died of a heart attack in December. As a union leader, Mooney, 52, understood the role of the press and made it a point to always be accessible to journalists – and to respect their

deadline pressures. At the time of his death, Mooney was in the midst of several contentious public education battles, from the growth of charter schools to taxpayer-funded school vouchers and how to turn around struggling schools. Mooney was, as close friend and colleague David Sherman of the American Federation of Teachers recalls, “a man who knew how to love.”

Work Rules Spell Out What Teachers Can and Can't Do

Contract language may be arcane, but it determines the daily interactions of teachers and students.

Teachers didn't do cafeteria duty in New York City. Principals couldn't get rid of bad teachers if they gave them "unsatisfactory" ratings, so they marked them "satisfactory" and passed them along to another school. School custodians weren't allowed to paint anything higher than 10 feet – that job was for the painter's union.

All of these "work rules" came to light thanks to the sunshine brought to school labor contracts in public hearings held by the chairwoman of the New York City Council's Education Committee in 2003. Over the course of four days, then-councilwoman Eva Moskowitz did what reporters in the city had never done: She picked apart, line by line, the various labor contracts affecting the day-to-day operation of the school system.

As *Newsday's* Joe Dolman wrote at their conclusion: "Few outfits could run the way the school system runs and not find themselves unceremoniously hooted out of town."¹

Work rules negotiated into union contracts all over the country determine what is and isn't a teacher's responsibility, the number of minutes teachers teach each day (349 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin), class size, and whether a union president is freed from teaching responsibilities to focus on union issues. Such rules affect students directly. Chicago elementary school teachers work 222 hours less each year than do Los

Angeles teachers, costing students the equivalent of six weeks of instruction.²

Labor leaders say that a contract's work rules often tell the history of a particular district, with distinct language crafted to combat past issues. There's no doubt a story behind why the San Diego contract says changes to the dress code for teachers must be approved by a two-thirds majority on a secret ballot. Or that teachers in Carlsbad, N.M. cannot be held liable if money collected from students and stored in a desk drawer is stolen.³ Other work rules appear to be boilerplate language taken from other contracts.

For reporters, work rules can provide a roadmap for examining how contracts affect students. It is also important to keep in mind, as Dan Weisberg suggests elsewhere in this publication, that work rules are implemented differently from school to school. Teachers tend to give principals they respect more latitude and

flexibility, especially if they see how it benefits their students.

– Joe Williams



¹ Joseph Dolman, "Blowing Lid Off Schools Doesn't Win Pals," *Newsday*, Nov. 19, 2003, p. A32.

² Education Intelligence Agency, www.eiaonline.com

³ *Ibid.*



LOOK AT THE PAST CONTRACTS AND TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT HOW PAST LABOR MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIPS SHAPED THOSE CONTRACTS. YOU LEARN A LOT ABOUT WHY CERTAIN PROVISIONS ARE IN THERE AND WHY OTHERS ARE NOT.

MEGAN BOLDT, ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS



To Know a District, Look at Teachers' Grievances

When teachers believe their rights under the contract have been violated, typically they ask their union representative to file what is called a grievance, essentially a formal complaint. In many cases, a grievance is filed only after the teacher (and union rep) have tried to settle the situation informally with their principal or the offending administrator.

Depending on the process outlined in the contract and the size of the district, the grievance will work its way up the chain of command through various steps. If the grievance can't be settled to the teacher's liking by the time it reaches the superintendent (or chancellor, or school president), the teacher and the union may turn the matter over to an independent arbitrator.

Typically, a hearing is then held and both sides present their case. When the dispute is between a

all of the grievances filed over a certain time period, as well as their dispositions? Is there a way to tally how much money gets spent in your district dealing with grievances? Lawyers' and arbitrator fees? Salary costs in the human resources office for handling the grievances? What types of grievances are most common in the school district you cover? How do they come out – generally in favor of the district or the union? Is the district or union working to reduce the number of grievances?

How long does it take for a typical case to be settled? Is justice delayed or justice denied? You should also look to see if certain schools seem to generate a disproportionate share of grievances. A flood of grievances from a school can alert you to possible stories, but it may take a lot of reporting to find out what the story is. It could be, for example, that teachers are filing griev-



advice

KNOW THE HISTORY AND PERSONALITIES OF THE PLAYERS IN YOUR DISTRICT. BIG DISPUTES WILL BE LESS OF A SURPRISE WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT LED NEGOTIATIONS TO THIS POINT. AVOID SIMPLY FRAMING ARGUMENTS AS ARGUMENTS AND PROVIDE CONTEXT ABOUT CHANGES IN LABOR OVER TIME, FOR EXAMPLE, AWAY FROM THE FACTORY MODEL. CONTEXT ABOUT PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS, SUCH AS MERIT PAY, IS ALSO ESSENTIAL. JOURNALISTS CAN HELP KEEP THE FOCUS ON STUDENTS BY LOOKING BEYOND LABOR-MANAGEMENT SQUABBLING AT HOW CONTRACTS ARE IMPLEMENTED AND HOW STUDENTS BENEFIT.

JAMES DEAN, *FLORIDA TODAY*

teacher and his or her principal, both individuals usually testify. Arbitrators' decisions in such cases are usually binding and establish a precedent for future actions under the contract. But it still may not be the end: Sometimes either side can challenge an arbitrator's decision in a courtroom by filing a lawsuit. It's not uncommon for a case to drag on for several years.

Grievances can provide a glimpse into some of a school district's dirty little secrets. Examined over a period of time, grievances can help you, and your readers, learn whether management routinely treats workers poorly or if the teachers union is being picky to the point of interfering with the running of good schools. In some districts, it is strict union policy that any time a teacher receives a performance evaluation that is not "excellent," the union automatically files a grievance. In that case, principals rarely bother to document ways teachers could improve.

It's worth finding out if grievances are public records in your district. Have you tried to get copies of

ances because the principal is punitive and rides roughshod on teachers' legitimate rights. But it could also be that a principal is working hard to improve a school and in the process is demanding more effort from teachers, who are resisting by filing grievances.

A district where few grievances occur may be a district where the working relationship between the teachers and management is strong and healthy. Or, it could mean that the district does not want headaches and so asks very little of teachers. Either way, looking at grievances can help reporters get a handle on what's going on.

One final note: Who are the arbitrators hearing these disputes? Do they more often side with management or with labor? Are they often overturned in court? These are important questions worth considering for journalists, and they may provide a great deal of insight about what is happening inside the schools you cover.

– Joe Williams

Baffled by a District Contract? New Web Site Can Help

For years, details contained in piles and piles of teacher contracts around the country were a mystery. Collecting the contracts, much less analyzing them, was considered futile – especially in districts where union and school board lawyers were the only ones who seemed to have copies of the agreements.

Technology, however, is lifting the veil and shining some much-needed sunlight on documents that govern how public schools operate. A new online database, located on the Web site of the National Council on Teacher Quality, is a goldmine for reporters who want to poke around and discover the details in their district's contract.

A joint project of the NCTQ and the Citizens Commission on Civil Rights, the online search portal provides a wealth of information on the intricacies of collective bargaining agreements, along with board policies, state laws and teacher handbooks from the nation's 50 largest school districts.

Information from the next 50 largest school districts will be added in spring 2007.

The Web address is <http://www.nctq.org/cb/>.

Users of the database can examine and compare more than 300 distinct provisions that impact the day-to-day operation of schools – from salary and benefits to how teachers may be evaluated by principals. Users can also download charts and graphs and analyze trends in bargaining and personnel practices. The focus can be on all 50 districts – or on comparisons between specific districts.

For example, a comparison between sabbatical leave policies for teachers in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York shows that while all three offer sabbaticals, each has different requirements. In Chicago, the custom-made report shows that teachers qualify for a sabbatical leave after six years of service and receive full pay minus the cost of a substitute to take their place in the classroom. In Los Angeles, teachers must work for eight years and can receive 50 percent of their salaries. In New York, teachers can take sabbaticals after 15 years and receive 70 percent of their pay.

Similar comparisons can be made for issues such as negotiated class size requirements, rules regarding

faculty meetings and the way grievances are handled within each district. Also in 2007 organizers expect to add information on transfer policies and seniority, dismissal policies, benefits, grievances and class size provisions. Organizers expect to add information on the existing districts over time as well as expand the pool of districts covered beyond the 50 largest in the country.

In the meantime, reporters with questions about what comes up in the database can download the contracts for each school district. It's as easy as clicking on a map to locate the district.

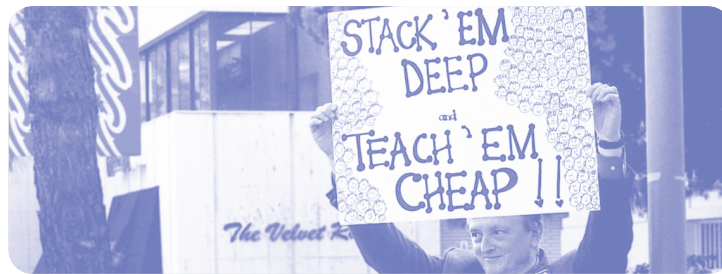
Color coding on the map, to cite one more example, allows users to compare various contract provisions between districts where collective bargaining is required and where it is voluntary. Union officials have

helped in the development of the database to ensure that it is accurate. But they say that local practice often differs from contract language, a point that is emphasized elsewhere in this primer. So, it is

important to use the database as a starting point for further reporting. A search of the amount of preparation time for elementary teachers in large districts in California finds that teachers in Fresno get five hours paid for this use each week but teachers in Los Angeles and San Diego receive only one paid hour. What explains the difference? Another search finds that teachers in Los Angeles can earn up to \$1,500 extra per year if they have good attendance. Where did that provision come from? Is it cutting down on absenteeism? Only reporting can answer those questions.

The database also is a handy tool for reporters who want to put some context into their reporting on local contracts. Do other districts require teachers to submit their lesson plans if asked by their principal? Is starting teacher pay in your district really the highest in your part of the country? You don't have to take the school board lawyer's (or teacher union leader's) word for it anymore. This vast collection of information allows reporters to find out for themselves.

– Joe Williams



You can access the database at: www.nctq.org/cb



How Contract Coverage Fails to See the Big Picture

Most reporters treat bargaining as a labor story without an educational context, study finds.

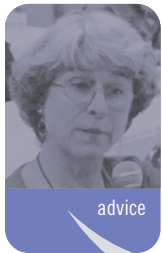
By Richard Lee Colvin

The labor contract covering teachers in many urban school systems is often hundreds of pages thick. Everyone – lawyers for school districts and union negotiators – acknowledges that such documents are often written in a language that bears only the remotest of relationships to conversational English. But those obstacles, as real as they are on a beat that produces a lot of news, should not keep journalists from having a working knowledge of the major contract provisions. They should also know something about how those provisions came about. What did the teachers and the district

The answer to that, unfortunately, appears to be “no.”

Journalists frame stories about teachers unions and collective bargaining as labor stories rather than education stories, the analysis found. Terms such as “academic standards,” “test scores,” “teacher quality,” “literacy” or other words that might convey the idea of education quality are largely missing from collective bargaining stories.

Teacher salaries are a major element of stories that also mention collective bargaining. But “even in dealing with teacher compensation, the newspaper stories



advice

READ THE CONTRACT, MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING, SIDE LETTERS OF AGREEMENT AND OTHER LOCAL DOCUMENTS. CHECK STATE LAW ON THE PROCESS. ARE THESE RULES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION? THAT KNOWLEDGE IS ONE OF THE TOUCHSTONES TO HELP YOU JUDGE THE TRUTH AND VALIDITY OF WHAT PEOPLE TELL YOU. FIND OUT HOW MUCH ACCESS YOU’LL HAVE TO THE PROCESS, INCLUDING NEGOTIATION SESSIONS AND PAPERWORK. CHECK WITH YOUR NEWS-

PAPER’S LEGAL FOLKS TO SEE IF YOU CAN PUSH THE ENVELOPE ON AREAS THAT HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN CLOSED. TRACK DOWN SOME EXPERTS WHO CAN EXPLAIN THE BEST-CASE SCENARIO FOR BOTH THE PROCESS AND THE RESULTS. LET YOUR READERS SEE THAT PICTURE AND USE IT AS BACKGROUND TO FRAME THE FOCUS OF YOUR STORIES.

DIANE LONG, *The Tennessean*

each forego? Most important, are readers and listeners being helped to understand this complex and often misunderstood area of education?

So, do journalists actually cover the collective bargaining that produces the contract? Do they write about teachers unions and their influence? Do they connect collective bargaining and teachers unions to what happens inside schools?

The answer to the first two questions is a qualified “yes.” The source of those answers is a quantitative analysis of coverage of teachers unions in major newspapers that the Hechinger Institute commissioned from communications researchers at the James M. Cox Jr. Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research at the University of Georgia. Between 2003 and 2005, the 24 largest-circulation newspapers operating in states where teachers have a right to collectively bargain with school districts published nearly 6,000 articles that referred to teacher unions. The research team estimates that between 800 and 1,200 of those stories actually dealt with collective bargaining in some way. So, what about the third question? Do these stories relate directly to what actually occurs in schools?

examined present a rather narrow framework,” the report notes. “The stories deal with salary and pay, but they infrequently mention health-care benefits or even pensions. They almost never deal with salary gaps.”

The budget and budget implications of salary increases are a major element of the coverage as well. But rarely do journalists connect what happens at the bargaining table to education quality or to learning or teaching. Only one in 10 compensation stories in any way mentioned test scores, for example. Another finding was that the incidence of stories dealing with performance pay tripled between 2003 and 2005, indicating that the topic has gained traction among policy-makers and that journalists are paying attention.

“There is no evidence the journalists are making linkages between the unions and teaching quality or between the labor negotiations and the product the school systems provide to the students, parents and society they serve,” the report’s authors, Lee B. Becker and Tudor Vlad, wrote.

The conclusions in the analysis are preliminary. The study was underwritten by a grant from The Joyce Foundation.



HOW JOB SECURITY ISSUES CAN CLOUD ACCOUNTABILITY

One reporter's investigation showed that his state's teachers are rarely fired or evaluated critically. Districts cited the high cost of dismissing a substandard employee with tenure.

By Scott Reeder

Illinois AFL-CIO President Margaret Blackshere stood at the podium at the Illinois State Fair in August 2002 and repeatedly hollered, “Don’t believe the bullshit!”

Blackshere’s barnyard expletive for Republican and big-business criticism might well have blended in at a union hall, but it raised a few eyebrows at a Democratic Party family picnic at the fair.

Blackshere is not a steelworker, truck driver or a backhoe operator. She was a kindergarten teacher before becoming a union leader. And, contrary to the image cultivated by teacher unions of being quiet, cerebral, professional organizations, Blackshere is every bit as militant as her blue-collar brethren.

These days, teacher unions are power brokers flexing their political muscle through their campaign contributions and highly educated, motivated members.

The two largest teachers unions in Illinois – the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers – ranked first and third among the state’s political contributors over the past 12 years, outpacing traditional political heavyweights such as manufacturers, public utilities and insurance companies.

Much of the teacher union clout is invested in job security issues that can be best summed up with one word: tenure. Tenure is a special form of job protection given to teachers with a certain number of years of experience. (In Illinois, it is four years, but the threshold varies from state to state.) Tenure is intended to shield teachers from being unfairly dismissed for issues unrelated to performance – political beliefs, religious orientation, personal vendettas by supervisors and even marriage status. (It wasn’t all that long ago that female teachers were fired if they married.) College professors earn tenure as well, but only after compiling a record of high-quality scholarship and teaching as judged by peers in one’s field as well as by other professors and administrators. Judges also have a form of tenure to shield them from the winds of political change.

But as accountability and student performance have become priorities in K-12 education, a growing body of critics have asked whether tenure, at least in the way it currently operates, is an anachronism.

During the course of a six-month investigation, I examined tenure and other accountability issues in Illinois, where I am a statehouse reporter for a chain of newspapers. The investigation’s findings punched holes in many of the state’s teacher unions’ contentions on the issue.

Key findings of the study, published in December 2006 in the Rock Island Argus, (Moline) Dispatch, (Ottawa) Daily Times and (Kankakee) Daily Journal, included the following:

- Of an estimated 95,500 tenured educators employed in Illinois, an average of only two are dismissed each year for poor performance.
- Eighty-three percent of Illinois school districts have not given any tenured teacher an “unsatisfactory” job evaluation in the last decade.
- Ninety-three percent of Illinois school districts have never attempted to fire anyone with tenure during the last 18 years.
- Only one of every 930 job-performance evaluations of tenured teachers results in an unsatisfactory rating. Fifty percent of those receiving substandard marks continue to teach.

Both the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers, its more urban counterpart, publicly contended that their underperforming

Ninety-three percent of Illinois school districts have never attempted to fire anyone with tenure during the last 18 years.

teachers were routinely fired. Early in the investigation, one union leader challenged me to find statistics that showed otherwise.

He may well have known that no one had tracked that data, but probably didn’t anticipate I would file 1,500 Freedom of Information Act requests with 876 school districts to create my own database. (I was able to achieve FOIA compliance from every district contacted.)

The results showed that 20 years after the reforms mandated in Illinois to increase accountability among teachers, it remains almost impossible to fire a tenured educator. The legislation required school principals to spend more than 2.5 million hours evaluating tenured teachers, but ended up having little impact in weeding out underperforming teachers or rewarding good ones.

The investigation won praise from readers across the state and captured several national journalism awards after it was published in December 2006. And – perhaps not surprisingly – it generated plenty of criticism from teachers unions.

For example, an IFT spokesman called into question a statement that school districts could reasonably expect to spend at least \$100,000 in attorney fees in a dismissal case. I had generated that estimate by interviewing lawyers in about half a dozen education law firms across Illinois.

The IFT contended in a magazine article to its members, in Internet postings and in a news release that most cases cost less than \$50,000 to litigate. They used this contention in a vitriolic denunciation of the investigation.

“The point I’m making is that Reeder blew the dollar figure way out of propor-

tion to add even more slant to his hit piece,” a union spokesman said in one Internet posting.

To settle the question, I filed FOIA requests for every attorney bill paid by an Illinois school district in a teacher dismissal case during the past five years. The bills indicated that school districts retaining non-staff lawyers spent an average of \$219,500 in legal fees for dismissal cases and related litigation from the beginning of 2001 until the end of 2005. As staggering as that number is, it actually understates the ultimate cost of these lawsuits. Forty-four percent of these cases are still on appeal and the legal bills continue to grow. It also does not account for the cost of the many hours spent by administrators compiling the exhaustive amount of documentation require in such cases.

Cost is a major reason cited by school officials for not trying to dismiss underperforming teachers, said T.J. Wilson, an Illinois attorney specializing in education labor law. “When I sit down with school administrators who want to fire someone, I tell them to plan on spending at least \$100,000 in attorney fees and that they still may lose,” Wilson said. “Those administrators are sitting there thinking that three new teachers could be hired for the cost of firing one bad one.”

School districts must face the possibility they will have to cut a program that benefits children to pay for the cost of firing a teacher, Wilson said. “This is the biggest reason school districts do not try to fire bad teachers,” he said.

Other attempts were made to penalize the four newspapers I serve for carrying the stories. For example:

- A group of teachers in LaSalle County, Ill., canceled their classroom subscriptions to The Daily Times in Ottawa, reducing Newspapers in Education circulation there by about one-third.
- Notes signed by two parents were sent home with children in the Riverdale School District asking parents to cancel their newspaper subscriptions to The Dispatch in Moline. It's unclear who authorized the letters. (There was no discernable reduction in newspaper circulation within that school district.)

Teacher unions also began efforts to “spin” the investigation’s results, noting that most bad teachers are persuaded to quit and that is why so few are fired. Jim Dougherty, president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, said the reason so few tenured teachers are fired is because so few need to be. The union provided no data to back up its assertions, and I could not help wondering when these teachers were allegedly persuaded to quit if 83 percent of the school districts in Illinois never gave a substandard evaluation during the last decade. Was it before or after their good evaluations?

Cost is a major reason cited by school officials for not trying to dismiss underperforming teachers.

Once again, the teacher unions countered that many instructors quit during their first few years of teaching, allowing chronic underperformers to “self-select” out of the profession. Certainly many teachers quit early in their careers, but the unions have provided little evidence that such self-selection weeds out the worst in the profession.

University of Washington professor Dan Goldhaber, a national expert in teacher retention issues, calls the argument “preposterous,” and pointed out that the best teachers may leave because they have many options.

“The preliminary findings of a study we are conducting in North Carolina found that those who leave teaching during the first few years in the profession scored higher on teacher licensure exams than their peers who remained in teaching,” Goldhaber said.

“If you are a superstar, you have many options open to you in many fields, so those people tend to get pulled out of teaching into other professions where the pay is better or individual achievement is more likely to be recognized.”

There is no more important calling for journalists than to hold those in government accountable.

Goldhaber cited research conducted by Richard Murnane, dean of Harvard University's College of Education, in the book “Who Will Teach?” (Harvard University Press, 1991). “Teachers with high IQs were more likely to leave teaching at the end of each year of service than those with low scores,” Murnane writes.

The Harvard data, as well as the results of other studies, raise troubling evidence that the current probationary system may be screening out the best teachers rather than the worst, said Richard Manatt, a national authority on teacher

evaluations based in Ames, Iowa.

This is not to say that the vast majority of teachers aren’t doing a good job. But it does raise serious questions about whether there is an effective system for holding the worst in the profession accountable.

There is no more important charge given to government than to educate our children. And there is no more important calling for journalists than to hold those in government accountable. If we don’t, who will?



Scott Reeder is capital bureau chief for the Small Newspaper Group in Illinois. He spent more than six months examining the practical impact of school reforms passed by the Illinois Legislature aimed at improving the overall quality of the state’s teaching force. The entire investigation can be viewed at: www.thehiddencostsofthenure.com. Scott Reeder can be reached at (217) 525-8201 or sng@springnet1.com.

CUTTING THROUGH THE LEGALESE IN UNION CONTRACTS

Talk to principals, teachers and support staff to learn about the ways an agreement affects students.

By Dan Weisberg

Assigned to cover contract negotiations between a school district and a teachers union for the first time? You might think reading a copy of the current collective bargaining agreement cover to cover is the logical first step. After all, the starting point for negotiations will be the salary scales, fringe benefit obligations and work rules and how they will change.

Unfortunately, your reward for reading the fine print in a typical teachers union contract will be a pounding headache and rising contempt for lawyers rather than a good understanding of the stakes involved in collective bargaining. Gleaning the true meaning of the contract – a product of decades of bargaining, with layer upon layer of abstrusely worded provisions disconnected from and sometimes even contradicting each other – is often impossible.

So, as someone who actually sits at the bargaining table representing management and whose job it is to negotiate a contract that serves the interests of students, I'd like to instead suggest that you start at a basic level: Go visit a cross-section of typical schools in your district and see how they are run. The real test is how the contract influences what is going on in the schools and affects students.

That's why it's important for you to talk to principals, teachers and support staff. Ask about the challenges and impediments to change and improvement in a public school. Then do the same at a local private school, parochial school and charter school.

Do the principals of those schools face the same limitations in leading their schools, in terms of who they can recruit, how they manage their staff during the workday and how they hold them accountable?

You may find no major differences. The pay and benefits may be similar, there may be a similar level of flexibility in what teachers and other staff do, and they may be held to the same performance standards.

Or, you may find that the principals in the public schools – as a result of agreements in the teacher contract – have little discretion in hiring, assignments, scheduling, compensation and disciplinary matters compared with principals of private or charter schools who may have only the broadest limitations in those areas.

Decisions like assigning the best teachers to a new after-school tutoring program or adopting a new math curriculum may be affected or even determined by what has been negotiated at the bargaining table.

In looking at any contract, focus on how it affects two crucial but closely related areas: teacher quality and student achievement. Though education researchers may disagree on just about everything else, there is consensus that teacher

quality influences student achievement far more powerfully than any other factor studied.

So the key question for those who negotiate teacher union contracts as well as those who write about them should be, how does this contract promote teacher quality and, therefore, student achievement?

The key question should be, how does this contract promote teacher quality and, therefore, student achievement?

If you are getting blank stares or platitudes in answer to this question, it probably means that while the adults may have done a good job for themselves in negotiating this contract, there isn't much for the children to be happy about.

To be clear, this is much more a question for management than for the union. The union is duty-bound to advocate for the interests of its members. The late American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker once commented that, "When students start paying union dues, I'll start representing students."

Though some use this quip as evidence of the alleged venality of unions, in fact it reflects nothing more than the proper mission of a labor organization. And, to be sure, there are times where the interests of teachers and students coincide.

For your purposes as reporters, I would like to share a few hints I hope will prove helpful for covering labor negotiations.

- *What is the dynamic between the two negotiating parties? Does the teachers union have substantial influence on the elected school board, or is it a new union leadership? Are the negotiators for the district responsible to a mayor or other elected executive who has promised changes in the way schools do business? Is there a long history between the parties of accepting the status quo as a means of maintaining labor peace and stability?*
- *What is the legal framework? Is it illegal to strike in the district you cover? If not, is there a history of illegal strikes, and what kinds of penalties have been imposed? Is the union entitled to binding arbitration if the parties reach impasse? Knowing this also gives you key information about where the leverage lies and whether there is a real deadline for an agreement.*
- *Is the district having severe fiscal problems, and does that mean it will need concessions on salaries or benefits? If so, the district may be willing to negotiate away management discretion in some areas as a quid pro quo. Is the union looking for major gains as a result of agreeing to concessions in the last round of bargaining? Again, the answers to these questions will give you clues about where the leverage can be applied.*

Finally, I'd like to close with an anecdote from the New York City Schools system, where I learned a valuable lesson about the way contracts work. In 2005, the NYC Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers negotiated a contract that contained a significant pay raise for teachers as well as a series of groundbreaking work rule reforms.

One of the more esoteric but powerful changes involved teachers' "professional activity periods," which all middle and high school teachers have each day, in addition to five teaching periods, one preparation period and one lunch period. Some elementary school teachers also have one professional period per week.

These periods were designed to be used for things like curriculum development or training. In my view they had become additional unsupervised, undirected periods. The 2005 contract changed all of that by giving principals the authority to set a menu of activities teachers can choose from for these periods — such as tutoring, hallway duty or small-group tutoring.

Schools created literally thousands of new assignments during these periods, such as new school newspapers or student clubs. In some cases they put teachers in hallways and school yards to improve safety. Some principals also chose to create homerooms during the professional periods, which puzzled me.

I wondered why they would choose a 15-minute homeroom. Wouldn't tutoring, overseeing student clubs or safety-related assignments be a better choice?

In discussing this choice with these principals I realized that, for some of them, the decision had nothing to do with teaching and learning. It was all about winter coats. Without homerooms, they explained, students would have to lug their heavy coats from class to class.

Why not just have them hang their coats in their first period class, I asked?

It would be a programming nightmare to make sure the kids were in the same room during their last period as they were in first period, I was told.

Then it hit me — this problem would never exist in private or charter schools where teachers didn't arrive as class was supposed to start and didn't leave when classes were over.

In those schools, an opportunity to get struggling students additional tutoring during the day or to create a new robotics or chess club wouldn't have been passed up because kids needed a time and place to hang their coats.

The decision had nothing to do with teaching and learning. It was all about winter coats.



Dan Weisberg is the executive director, labor policy, for the New York City Department of Education, where he advises Chancellor Joel I. Klein on labor policy for the public school system and its 1.1 million students. Weisberg manages the department's relationships with the numerous labor unions representing its employees and is chief negotiator in collective bargaining for the DOE. He recently led negotiations with the United Federation of Teachers, which resulted in an agreement containing a groundbreaking series of reforms. The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not represent the position of the New York City Department of Education.



THE EDUCATION OF A REPORTER ON THE TEACHER CONTRACT BEAT

Once, unions protected teachers and students. Over the years, those interests have diverged.

————— Dale Mezzacappa —————

Only once in my 35-year reporting career was I goaded into responding in kind to someone who yelled at me. The yeller was an attorney for the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, reacting to my story about the contract settlement between the union and the school district after months of contentious talks.

The year was 1996. The big issue, other than money, was teacher accountability. The union furiously fought the superintendent's effort to reward and sanction school faculties based on student progress in tests and other measures, calling it punitive and abhorrent. The story in that morning's *Inquirer* outlined the settlement – emphasizing its cost, because the district was close to broke – and let both the superintendent and the union spin the accountability issue. The superintendent claimed a foot in the door because automatic raises would be delayed for teachers rated unsatisfactory. The union president claimed “near total victory.”

But the attorney – who also, by the way, represented the Newspaper Guild – was livid.

“We won!!” the lawyer shouted at me. “That should have been the headline! He” – the superintendent – “got nothing!”

Uncharacteristically, I yelled back. The night before, I had found it unsettling, to say the least, to watch as thousands of teachers cheered wildly at the news that they didn't have to worry about whether their students learned anything. They'd still get automatic raises even if none of their kids met achievement goals; they'd still get their pick of jobs based on seniority; they'd still have the right to refuse extra training even if their teaching skills were woefully out of date.

“If teachers don't improve kids' learning, what are they there for?” I asked. “What should they be judged on? What are they getting paid to do?”

To which I got the remarkable rejoinder: “Teacher performance and student achievement have nothing to do with each other.”

It took me a few minutes to get my head around that. I knew plenty of skilled, dedicated teachers who worked long hours in some of the city's most dangerous neighborhoods, put clothes on their students' backs, and day after day pulled out all their pedagogical tricks in classrooms stuffed with 30 or more kids.

Even those teachers were at the rally cheering this “victory.”

Teacher unions were forged at a time when teachers were mistreated and undervalued. Philadelphia's story in that regard is particularly egregious, starting with the district's creation of segregated black schools to employ black teachers. Women and African-Americans were paid less than white men, while teacher salaries overall were abysmal. Administrators kept the school day short to jus-

tify the low salaries, and because they assumed any teacher supporting a family would work a second job to make ends meet. This only got worse as the district's enrollment became more heavily African-American and poor; most of the powerbrokers' children went to private and Catholic schools, which educated more white city students than the public system.

But while unions were founded to protect both children and teachers, soon those interests sadly diverged. Surely, teachers were the unions' first priority. But until that day I'd never fully comprehended just how complete that divergence had become. Teacher contracts, besides getting them more money, had over the years become vehicles to insulate them from responsibility for the performance of their students. Even the best teachers appreciate this protection, and it affects how they do their jobs.

As attempts to break down this barrier get more intense in the No Child Left Behind era, union leaders maintain that it is misguided to blame and punish teachers for society's ills. They are correct. Performance pay is complex and does raise legitimate questions of fairness.

But the contracts favored by unions and districts are better suited to factories than to schools, and the ways in which they impede education reform go way beyond performance pay. With rare exception, teacher contracts reject the idea of teaching and learning as a two-way street and of schools as communities of learners. Many teachers complain about rigid, one-size-fits all curricula that they say serve to "teacher-proof" learning. But the contracts their unions negotiate treat them as if they are all, indeed, the same. Under such contracts teachers are interchangeable, as if they were doing little more than turning out widgets instead of teaching students. Contracts vary some, but all get back to the same thing: it's about hours worked, not results achieved; it's about treating everyone the same, not rewarding excellence; it's about fighting against management, not about working together as colleagues to improve education.

This leads to all kinds of paradoxes. Because most contracts still base raises entirely on longevity and education level, good teachers are compensated in counterproductive ways. Coveted are quasi-administrative jobs that take them out of the classroom for much of the day. In other words, the reward for good teachers is to teach less.

Such contracts also distort notions about what it means to be a professional. In my experience, many teachers equate being treated like "professionals" with being able to leave the building during their daily preparation period. Efforts to work out mutually acceptable ways to optimize the use of the time to benefit students are treated as strike-issue give-backs, not as educationally sound practice.

None of this is to say that the alternative to unions – no unions – is the answer. Last year I wrote about a charter school where the owner of the management company that was contracted to run it hired inexperienced teachers, paid them little and counted on turnover to keep costs down and profits up. He had very few

With rare exception, teacher contracts reject the idea of teaching and learning as a two-way street.

experienced educators on his staff, relying on one of the more packaged, scripted curriculum programs. He got away with it because test scores in the charter were slightly better than those of the extremely dysfunctional district in which it was located, even though more than half of his kids scored below grade level.

It would be nice to say that bringing in a union to this school would improve things for students. Unfortunately, that wouldn't necessarily be so. The union might insist on better wages and job protections, but not on better education.

Nearly 20 years ago, the Philadelphia union derailed a prescient and promising movement to break up large urban high schools into autonomous, smaller units.

The union might insist on better wages and job protections, but not on better education.

The district wanted these small schools-within-schools, which were trying out new educational approaches, to be able to recruit outside the larger building for like-minded teachers. But while union leaders said they liked the idea of small schools – as a strategy to address one of their perennial complaints, student misbehavior – they ultimately vetoed the idea because it would have wreaked havoc on the seniority and transfer system. “The sentiments from teachers are that they are not willing to play around with their ... rights,” said one union official. So teachers who had worked hard to establish innovative “small learning communities” within their large schools ultimately gave up when they couldn't find enough willing colleagues in the building to buy into their concept.

Lacking autonomy, most of the small learning communities became just another version of tracking, with little to distinguish them academically. The many good teachers who left the classroom to become their coordinators had limited ability to effect real change, and the job largely devolved into just another perk.

Two decades later, it seems clear that the small learning communities made little dent in the high dropout rates and low achievement in the big high schools. Philadelphia, having lost its chance to be a pioneer, is just now getting around to creating autonomous small high schools. In the meantime, of course, hundreds of thousands of students lost the opportunity to attend more intimate, less chaotic high schools staffed by teachers who had been recruited for their special talents and passions.

So teacher collective bargaining, which was to address injustices, instead added to them. As teacher pay and benefits rose, rules were put in place to govern every part of the day and insulate teachers from consequences for poor performance. To combat administrative capriciousness in dismissals, contracts established elaborate due process rights. But those rights so handcuff principals that they pretty much prevent the dismissal of all but the most dangerous teachers. To deal with rampant cronyism, seniority became almost the only judge of competence and the main determinant of salaries. It also governed where teachers worked; administrators ceded any ability to assign teachers based on where they were needed. So a culture grew in which teachers put in their time in the

“bad” schools until they earned a spot in the “better” ones – which almost always meant those with fewer low-income and minority children.

These sorts of problems tend to be worst in big cities but are not confined to them. One of the most bruising performance-pay battles I covered was in a neighboring, high-achieving suburban district, where teachers protested an arbitrator’s ruling that gave them bonuses if their students made progress according to a model devised by a respected economist at the University of Pennsylvania. As teachers made a big show of turning down the bonuses, the hapless union local president was ousted in short order. The full weight of the Pennsylvania State Education Association, the state affiliate of the National Education Association, came down on the superintendent and school board members. The PSEA made it clear it would fight the election of school board members anywhere who announced support for such a system. No district within earshot dared try a version of performance pay again.

But there is an even bigger issue. With the need to fill hundreds of thousands of teaching jobs in the next decade, especially in such difficult areas as math and science, contracts that abandon the law of supply and demand don’t make sense. For instance, there is a glut of elementary school teachers but a shortage of physics teachers. Nevertheless, all first-year teachers make the same amount of money.

Recently, I had lunch with a retired Philadelphia teacher who spent 30 years in the system. In her younger years, she had participated in more than a dozen strikes and lockouts, often risking jail.

Now, she trains young art teachers and tries to get them jobs in city schools. She laments how the contract prevents her from choosing the best mentors for her student teachers. She’s upset that burned-out, ineffective teachers are holding positions that her students would thrive in, and nothing can be done. She finds herself placing them more and more often in charter schools.

But what about all those days walking picket lines? What about all those bruising battles over protecting teachers’ rights?

The swiftness of her answer surprised even me. “We were wrong,” she said.



Dale Mezzacappa is an award-winning journalist who covered education for the Philadelphia Inquirer for 20 years. She left the paper in 2006.



WITH TEACHER CONTRACTS, DO YOUR HOMEWORK

A veteran New York City union leader suggests 10 ways to improve coverage of labor-management issues.

David Sherman

Over the 25 years I've dealt with the New York City and national press, I've been alternately delighted and frustrated in my professional relationships. I have never hesitated to share advice and offer feedback, often unsolicited, about pieces reporters wrote. As a result, I relish a chance to offer the 10 best suggestions I can on how to cover teacher unions – not only when they are in contract negotiations, but day in and day out.

1. Do your homework and ask the right questions. At a UFT press conference in 1986, UFT President Al Shanker announced that he was stepping down to devote all his time to the American Federation of Teachers. One cub reporter approached Shanker and Sandy Feldman, Al's long time protégé, and asked Al, "Who's going to replace you?" Sandy laughed and quickly shot back, "Me!" The fledging reporter then asked, "And who are you?" Shanker then explained to the reporter that if she wanted to succeed on the beat, she needed to do better homework, develop relationships with people from whom she can learn, and yes, ask the right questions. Sandy Feldman served as UFT president until 1997 and then became AFT president through 2004.

2. Develop close relationships with one or two knowledgeable, savvy and trustworthy people in the union and the district. In addition to the union president, the school superintendent and their spokespeople, most organizations have one person who is the nerve center. Get to know him or her and nurture the relationship. Keep this a "for background only and off the record" give and take. Doing this and abiding by the ground rules will give you the edge over other reporters in getting scoops, finding out what's really going on and learning the best questions to ask.

3. Quote and report accurately. At a board of education meeting years ago in New York City, a reporter asked me what I thought about the fact that then-board president Robert Wagner Jr. planned to vote in favor of a resolution strongly opposed by teachers and parents. I said that if you did not know Bobby well, you might think his vote was hypocritical because it differed with his other votes on similar issues. (I knew he was truly voting his conscience.) The piece in the next day's paper said, "Union Official Calls Wagner a Hypocrite." I was infuriated, and the reporter never got another story, scoop or background check from me again. Only Wagner thought it was funny. (We were and stayed friends.)

4. Keep an eye on what's going on nationally with other unions and school districts. Always compare what's going on with your union and district to new trends, negotiated agreements, programs and conflicts in other places, either geographically relevant or similarly situated. For example, Denver negotiated performance pay and the state of Florida put it into law; ask how or if this might play out in the district you cover.

5. Visit schools. Talk to the union and the district but also speak directly and regularly with teachers, parents, principals and kids. Is the union in sync with its members? Are the district's instructional programs right for the schools? Are parents a part of the school experience or merely tolerated? Are the "bad schools" really bad or mislabeled? Does the principal ever leave his or her office? Is the contract being implemented in this school as intended?

6. Don't use the phrase "It's not news." Other than biased or inaccurate reporting, nothing is more frustrating than hearing this phrase from reporters about a story or scoop the union suggests. Most often, this is the response when the story is not about corruption, scandal, school failure, a major safety incident or just good old dirt. Don't simply reject these opportunities – question the union official, probe as to why this is of interest and search as to where it may lead. Perhaps it would make a good feature. If you really have a nose for news, you may find that there is more to a story than you originally suspected. I encouraged a reporter to join me at a teacher and parent meeting at a central Harlem failing school and heard: "It's not news." The next day the school was the location for a citywide press conference on a new systemic initiative for school closing and redesign. It was news after all.

7. Study each side's demands carefully during contract negotiations. Who is the voice of reform and who roots for the status quo? It's often not the usual suspects. Did the union conduct a membership survey? What is the district looking for in terms of give-backs? What are each side's lines in the sand? How do salary and benefit demands compare with neighboring districts? Is the union using the "s"-word? How will the union's internal politics drive its negotiating posture? Also, check union Web sites – more and more, unions are keeping in touch with members daily about the status of negotiations.

If you really have a nose for news, you may find that there is more to a story than you originally suspected.

8. Analyze salary agreements carefully. The union and the district will always put their own spin on things. Often, the agreements are richer or poorer than they appear. Did the district "buy" extra time to give an increase that is not an increase at all? Did the newest teachers get a big boost and veterans in the middle get little? Did all the money go to ready-to- retire members, leaving newer teachers to scrounge or quit? You can usually find specific examples of how the new contract impacts members at all different stages of their careers on the union's Web site.

9. Go beyond bread-and-butter reporting. What did the union and district agree to beyond salary and benefits? That alone tells you a lot. Have labor-management committees been established in the contract on areas not dealt with at the table? What areas do those cover? Is there a "living contract" clause that allows negotiations to go on between formal negotiations? Have the union and district negotiated anything that will have a major impact on the school day, instruction, recruitment, retention, parent outreach, accountability, teacher quality, etc.?

10. Report on what the union is doing between contract negotiations. Unions now are prime-time players in politics, educational reform and parent and community outreach, and professionalizing of teachers. They are organizing new and more members, and driving the agenda for what goes on in schools, whether it's parent-teacher fights for lower class sizes, equitable funding or safe and up-to-date school buildings. Keep your eyes and ears open. Unions may surprise you. You may find they are news!

While some unions are stuck in the industrial model, many are reform-oriented and most now look at educational improvement as their mission.

I want to conclude with one thought on the union-bashing that has become so much the vogue for reporters of late. Teacher unions came into existence to take care of their members' rights and benefits. They have evolved into complex, multifaceted organizations. While some unions are stuck in the industrial model, many are reform-oriented and most now look at educational improvement as their mission along with salary and benefit enhancement.

Often, it is the union that fights to get management to consider reform. Too often, districts are conservative in negotiations because of control issues, and they are reluctant to share decision-making with teachers and parents. Some unions also are conservative because they believe the district is always wrong, which is not necessarily true either.

Covering unions can be thought-provoking, exciting and frustrating at times, but it is always important. Follow the suggestions I've shared and, hopefully, you'll do a much better job at making all of this meaningful for the public.



David Sherman, now a consultant in the office of the president of the American Federation of Teachers, served as vice president of the United Federation of Teachers, the AFT local for New York City teachers, for 14 years. He was the union's liaison to the school system and collaborated with district and community organizations in launching several initiatives for reforming low-performing schools. Sherman taught in public schools from Brownsville, Brooklyn, to Spanish Harlem and was appointed to the U.S. Department of Education's Negotiated Rulemaking Committee on Title I and the No Child Left Behind Act during the Clinton and Bush administrations.



Why Unions Are Vital to Education Reform Efforts

Teachers' response to an emphasis on student achievement will be the key to success or failure.

When you look at the history of public education in America, it's hard to overestimate the role teachers unions have played since negotiating the first contract in 1962. Unions have been effective advocates for higher pay and have gained, on behalf of their members, influence over everything from what is taught to who gets to teach where. Teachers have more power over their assignments, the curriculum and even the school calendar. Superintendents can't simply decide what the school holidays are anymore without approval from the district's calendar committee – which inevitably includes union leadership. Contracts dictate the amount of time teachers are obligated to teach, down to the minute – although it is important to note that many teachers work far more time than the minimum each day.

Some argue that teachers unions are playing too significant a role. Union leaders, for their part, wonder how the attacks on teachers unions that began to resonate at the national level during the 1996 election between Bob Dole and Bill Clinton began and why. The power of teachers unions no doubt caused resentment, as has the slow progress produced by nearly a quarter of a century of education reform.

Nonetheless, as districts continue to search for ways to improve student performance, in part because of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, they will inevitably turn to teachers unions for help. How unions respond will play an important role in writing the next chapter of American public education. Will labor and management cling to a status quo that worked for teachers in the past, at the expense of their own future? Will districts treat educators like professional partners in this quest for improved student achievement? And will unions recognize that their members' larger self-interest lies in the success of their students? Will teachers and their unions be regarded as part of the problem or as part of the solution?

Reporters should be sensitive to these dynamics as they report on efforts to improve educational outcomes – in the suburbs, rural areas and in the cities. They should keep in mind the important generational issues involved. Younger teachers don't have the same knowledge of the gains teachers unions have achieved for their members and may not see them as essential to their professional well-being. They tend to be less sup-

portive of unions, in general, than their predecessors. What will they expect their unions to do for them?

The answers will depend upon the type of leadership that emerges within teachers unions and school management. In most school districts, the local union president typically has enough clout to be a player on all matters, large and small. Union leaders have power because they are often able to say convincingly that they speak on behalf of large numbers of teachers – rank-and-file members who can be quickly mobilized to support or oppose plans, people and agendas. Anyone who has ever covered a school board meeting packed with teachers rankled by proposed budget cuts knows the effect this can have. The effective use of power by union leaders, and not just at the bargaining table, is what makes teachers such a strong force in most school districts.

That doesn't mean there isn't plenty of tension about how much power and influence union leaders should have. Union leaders who push self-reform too hard run the risk of being labeled a sellout or a traitor. Despite an electoral process that makes it difficult to unseat incumbent union leaders in rank-and-file elections, recent history is filled with insurrections that toppled union leaders whom their members considered to be too progressive.

Louise Sundin, who built a national reputation as a progressive union voice as head of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, was ousted in May 2006 by a challenger who rapped her for “walking hand in hand with the district.” Under Sundin's leadership, the district and union adopted a rigorous tenure process for young teachers and developed a mechanism for helping struggling teachers either improve their skills or find work in another profession.

A year earlier, United Teachers Los Angeles President John Perez and the entire slate of candidates he supported were toppled by a slate of militant unionists – the first time an incumbent's slate had been defeated in the union's 35-year history. The message to union leaders seems to be clear: Say what you have to say to make the public believe we are supportive of change, but if you actually get in there and change too much, you'll be out of a job.

Somewhere, tucked between the layers of internal conflict, are stories that educate the public about what is and isn't possible. The world of education is changing



quickly, and journalists have an obligation to help readers and viewers understand that. As Scott Treibitz, a labor consultant who used to work for Al Shanker at the American Federation of Teachers, said, it is not just teachers unions that are at a crossroads.

“In my opinion, innovation and leadership are going to be the key to survival of all unions, whether they’re public sector or private sector,” Treibitz said. “Enlightened leaders who are willing to look at a collective bargaining process differently than in the past are going to be successful, and that covers a wide variety of issues.”

With a quickly changing global economy, business and civic leaders are looking toward public schools for help in keeping the nation competitive by turning out better educated students. Advances in testing and our enhanced ability to disaggregate test scores at district and school levels have shined a spotlight on the achievement gap that exists between white and black and Hispanic students. As a result, the debate about how to close the gap is more contentious.

If nothing else, journalists should take away from this primer a renewed sense that teachers unions don’t just bargain for higher salaries. They bargain on issues that affect students directly and profoundly. Looking at negotiations from the viewpoint of what’s best for kids will yield many important stories. Unions aren’t the bad guys; their role, defined in law and practice, is to advocate on behalf of their members. Allowing readers to understand the context in which union leaders must operate can provide the kind of rich context that makes stories about education policy – and the union’s role in creating and changing policy – more lively and understandable.

Moreover, any contract is the result of the actions of parties sitting on both sides of the bargaining table. It is the job of journalists to hold grownups accountable, regardless of where they sit. The role of public education and its potential for affecting not just the lives of individuals but also the livability and viability of communities stands in the balance.

– Joe Williams

A Sampling of Books on Teachers Unions and Collective Bargaining

Hannaway, Jane, and Rotherham, Andrew J., eds., “Collective Bargaining in Education.” Harvard Education Press: 2006. Essays from a variety of researchers and practitioners.

Loveless, Tom, ed., “Conflicting Missions: Teachers Unions and Educational Reform.” The Brookings Institution: 2000. Collection of essays on the role of teacher unions in schools.

Johnson, Susan Moore, and the staff of the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, “Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools.” Jossey-Bass: 2004.

Cameron, Don, “The Inside Story of the Teacher Revolution in America.” Scarecrow Press: 2005. Former executive director of the NEA describes how teacher unions rose to power in the 1960s and 1970s.

Selden, David, “The Teacher Rebellion.” Howard University Press: 1985. First-person account by the former president of the American Federation of Teachers of efforts to bring collective bargaining to public education, the formation of the United Federation of Teachers, and early (failed) attempts to merge the AFT with the National Education Association.

Lieberman, Myron, “The Teacher Unions: How They Sabotage Educational Reform and Why.” Encounter Books: 2000. Lieberman, a player in both the NEA and AFT in the 1960s, explains how they work from a former insider’s perspective.

Kerchner, Charles Taylor; Koppich, Julia E.; and Weeres, Joseph G., “United Mind Workers.” Teachers College Press: 1997. Outlines how teachers unions can organize around issues of quality teaching and professional development, as well as economic fairness. See also “Taking Charge of Quality” by the same authors.

Brimelow, Peter, “The Worm in the Apple: How the Teacher Unions Are Destroying American Education.” Harper Collins: 2003. Conservative writer makes his case for why teacher unions hurt schools.



From Contracts To Classrooms: Covering Teachers Unions

EXPERTS

CONTRACT BARGAINING

Bill Raabe

National Education Association
Phone: (202) 822-7169
BRAabe@nea.org

Kate Walsh

National Council on Teacher Quality
202-393-0020
kwalsh@nctq.org

Randi Weingarten

United Federation of Teachers,
New York
212-777-7500

Dan Weisberg

New York City
Department of Education
212-374-6592
DWeisbe2@schools.nyc.gov

COMPENSATION

Dale Ballou

Vanderbilt University's
Peabody College
615-322-8039
dale.ballou@vanderbilt.edu

Robert Gordon

Center for American Progress
202-682-1611
rgordon@americanprogress.org

Lawrence Mishel

Economic Policy Institute
202-775-8810
lmishel@epi.org

Michael Podgursky

University of Missouri – Columbia
573-884-7741
podgurskym@missouri.edu

COSTS OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Lisa Blais

Education Partnership
Lblais@edpartnership.org

Paul T. Hill

University of Washington
206-685-2214
bicycle@u.washington.edu

Marguerite Roza

University of Washington
206-685-2214
margroza@u.washington.edu

PERFORMANCE PAY

Brad Jupp

Denver Public Schools
720-423-3629
Brad_Jupp@dpsk12.org

Allan Odden

University of Wisconsin, Madison
608-263-4260
arodden@wisc.edu

William J. Slotnik

Community Training
and Assistance Center
617-423-1444
ctac@ctacusa.com

Lewis C. Solmon

National Institute for
Excellence in Teaching
310-570-4850

POLITICS

Elaine Bernard

Harvard University
617-495-9265
Elaine_Bernard@harvard.edu

Jane Hannaway

Urban Institute
202-261-5753
jhannawa@ui.urban.org

Frederick M. Hess

American Enterprise Institute
202-828-6030
RHess@aei.org

Richard D. Kahlenberg

The Century Foundation
202-745-5476
kahlenberg@tcf.org

Dane Linn

National Governors Association
202-624-5300
dlinn@nga.org

Terry Moe

Stanford University
650-725-8212
moe@hoover.stanford.edu

Andrew J. Rotherham

Education Sector
202-552-2840
arotherham@educationsector.org

TEACHER QUALITY

Susan Moore Johnson

Harvard University
617-495-4677
susan_moore_johnson@
gse.harvard.edu

Dan Goldhaber

University of Washington
206-685-2214
dgoldhab@u.washington.edu

Tom Loveless

The Brookings Institution
202-797-6469
tloveless@brookings.edu

Diane Ravitch

New York University
212 998-5146
dr19@nyu.edu

Victoria Van Cleef

New Teacher Project
303-400-8681
vvancleef@ntnp.org

TEACHERS UNIONS

Mike Antonucci

Education Intelligence Agency
916-422-4373
mike@eionline.com

Julia E. Koppich

Julia E. Koppich and Associates
415-661-8102
jkoppich@sirius.com

Charles Taylor Kerchner

Claremont Graduate University
909-621-8730
charles.kerchner@cgu.edu

Dal Lawrence

Toledo Federation of Teachers
419-535-3013
Dallawrenc@aol.com

David Sherman

American Federation of Teachers
202-879-4727
dsherman@aft.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

American Enterprise Institute.

Private, nonpartisan think-tank whose mission is to promote limited government, democratic capitalism and private enterprise. www.aei.org

"A BETTER BARGAIN: OVERHAULING TEACHER COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY";

click on report at:
http://www.aei.org/events/eventID.1282/event_detail.asp or <http://tinyurl.com/yurfz>

American Federation of Teachers.

One of the two national teachers unions.
<http://www.aft.org>

AFT SALARY SURVEY:

<http://www.aft.org/salary/index.htm>

AFT ISSUE BRIEF ON DEFINED BENEFIT PENSIONS:

<http://www.aft.org/topics/pensions/facts.htm>
or <http://tinyurl.com/j2z4lu9>

The Brown Center on Education Policy.

A nonpartisan education research center within The Brookings Institution.
http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/200604hamilton_1.htm or <http://tinyurl.com/2gwc4z>

"IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE TEACHERS USING PERFORMANCE ON THE JOB," APRIL 2006:

http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/200604hamilton_1.htm or <http://tinyurl.com/3yfpkk>

Center for American Progress.

A politically progressive think-tank.

OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENTIAL PAY PROGRAMS:

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/12/pay_differentials.html or <http://tinyurl.com/2jrgum>

POLITICS OF COMPENSATION REFORM:

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/12/teacher_pay.html
or <http://tinyurl.com/2vlpn>

ISSUE BRIEF ON ATTRACTING HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS:

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/12/teacher_quality.html
or <http://tinyurl.com/2o4ovv>

Education Commission of the States.

Analysis of education issues and state policies.

ISSUE BRIEF ON IMPROVING THE SKILLS OF TEACHERS:

<http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/issue.asp?issueID=129>
or <http://tinyurl.com/3b4xyy>

The Education Partnership.

"RESTORING THE BALANCE": A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ON EDUCATION IN RHODE ISLAND. TOOL FOR FORMULATING QUESTIONS ELSEWHERE.

http://www.edpartnership.org/failed/Contracts_Exec_Summary_2005.pdf
or <http://tinyurl.com/2otcd4>

Education Sector.

Nonpartisan issue analysis.

"FROZEN ASSETS: RETHINKING TEACHER CONTRACTS COULD FREE BILLIONS FOR SCHOOL REFORM"

http://www.educationsector.org/usr_doc/FrozenAssets.pdf
or <http://tinyurl.com/3dejg>

THE MET-LIFE SURVEY OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER

<http://www.metlife.com/Applications/Corporate/WPS/CDA/PageGenerator/0,1674,P2315,00.html>
or <http://tinyurl.com/2rlzd3>

National Education Association.

Labor union of elementary and secondary school-teachers and others involved with education.
www.nea.org

AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY, MAPPED:

<http://www.nea.org/pay/maps/teachermap.html>
or <http://tinyurl.com/3bkdlg>

STATE-BY-STATE SALARIES AND ANALYSIS OF JOB MARKET FOR TEACHERS:

<http://www.nea.org/student-program/about/state.html>
or <http://tinyurl.com/2kmam8>

DATA ON THE TEACHING FORCE:

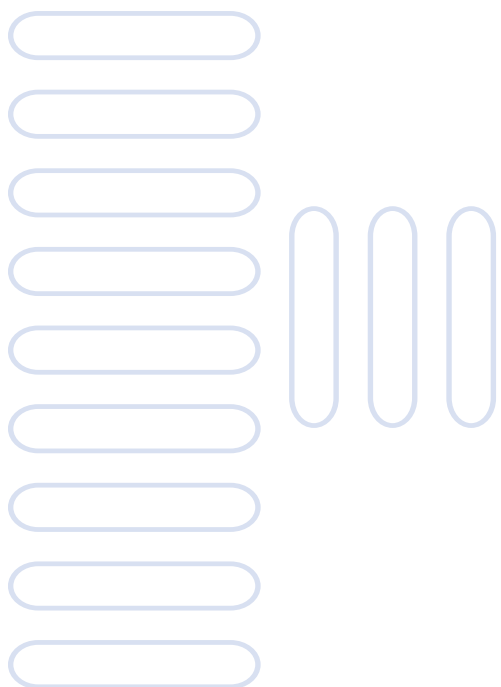
<http://www.nea.org/edstats/index.html>
or <http://tinyurl.com/2k7o70>

Public Agenda.

Independent analysis of public opinion.

"STAND BY ME: WHAT TEACHERS REALLY THINK ABOUT UNIONS, MERIT PAY AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL MATTERS"

http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research_reports_details.cfm?list=10
or <http://tinyurl.com/2wk725>



The Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media at Teachers College, Columbia University is dedicated to promoting fair, accurate and insightful coverage of education, from pre-kindergarten through graduate school.

We carry out our mandate primarily by holding seminars for national audiences of journalists in

THE Hechinger Institute
ON EDUCATION AND THE MEDIA
Teachers College, Columbia University

locales across the country as well as by publishing guides and primers on

an array of education topics. The publications are available on our Web site, along with other resources, commentaries and analyses of education coverage. Journalists from news organizations such as National Public Radio, the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, Philadelphia Inquirer, Miami Herald, USA Today and others are regular participants.. The Institute is named for the late Fred M. Hechinger, a former education editor of the New York Times and a trustee of Teachers College. Support for the Institute and its work comes from a variety of national foundations.

This publication is made possible by a generous grant from The Joyce Foundation. Based in Chicago, the Joyce Foundation invests approximately \$8 million annually in work to improve public education in the Midwest, especially by improving the quality of teachers in low-performing districts.

Hechinger Institute Publications

Beyond the Rankings: Measuring Learning in Higher Education
An Overview for Journalists and Educators
September 2006

Change and Controversy on Campus: The Tough Questions Reporters and Editors Should Ask
November 2006

Leadership and Learning: Covering the Work of Principals and Superintendents
Spring 2007

What Every Journalist Should Know About Teaching
Summer 2007

The Heart of the Matter: A Journalist's Guide to Reporting From Classrooms
Fall 2007

Check the Web site at www.tc.edu/hechinger to see when these publications will be available. Send an e-mail to Hechinger@tc.edu with your name and address to request a copy.

In 2007, the Institute will launch **Covering America, Covering Community Colleges: A Fellowship for Journalists**. This annual semi-residential fellowship in New York City provides a stipend of \$7,500 to support an ambitious reporting project on community colleges. Free-lance journalists, staff writers for news organizations, magazines and Web sites, and editorial writers are eligible to apply. Go to the Hechinger Institute Web site, www.tc.edu/hechinger for more information. **The application deadline for the 2007 fellowship is April 30.**



Has this publication inspired you? Given you guidance on a topic or issue unfamiliar to you? Let us know. Send the stories you write to Hechinger@tc.edu. We'll write about your efforts in our newsletters.

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

The Hechinger Institute gratefully acknowledges photos provided by:

The California Teachers Association and photographer Scott Bushman

- *front cover*
- *page 4c*
- *page 14*
- *page 15*
- *page 17*
- *back cover*

The National Education Association

- *page 2a, b, c*
- *page 3a, b, c*
- *page 4a, 4b*

© Courtesy of the National Education Association. All Rights Reserved.

New York Teacher / United Federation of Teachers

- *page 3*
- *page 6*

Courtesy of the New York Teacher /United Federation of Teachers



THE
Hechinger Institute
ON EDUCATION AND THE MEDIA
Teachers College, Columbia University

PO Box 127 | 525 West 120th Street
New York, New York 10027

