

THE BENEFITS OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining gives educators a voice. Through collective bargaining, NEA members negotiate for more than their own economic security. They are also securing vital resources to help communities bring in more public resources to improve education, by reducing class size, increasing student learning times while reducing unnecessary testing, and gaining affordable health care for children and their families. The strength in unions is critical to improving our economy and helping working families get ahead.

In good or bad economic times, a collaborative public education employer can better serve students and the community by negotiating in good faith with its union(s). Our locals are also opening up the negotiations process to include community partners and parents to develop proposals together to gain critical resources for students and ensure that all students have the support they need, no matter where they live.

Bargaining can help improve teaching and learning in your school

Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions, so by addressing school and classroom issues, everyone gains. In negotiations, educators and their employers collaborate on student-centered issues such as setting limits on class size, specifying time for teachers and paraeducators to share effective classroom practices, addressing school health and safety issues, and ensuring teacher input into their own professional learning—all of which help students thrive.

Administrators and faculty members bring valuable insights to the education enterprise. To capture everyone's best thinking, local associations typically work with forward-looking districts set up structures such as joint labor-management committees that meet regularly to resolve workplace concerns and tackle student learning issues.

Bargaining supports the fight for social justice

Educators are driven by purpose. There's the day-to-day purpose of helping students learn, but there's also a higher purpose to help improve students' lives, especially for the growing number who struggle with poverty. NEA affiliates are using negotiations to organize local stakeholders around a set of issues that benefit not just our members in a building, but the wider community as a whole. All educational employees and their associations are standing together to demand better for our schools and our children and for the common good of our communities.

Bargaining can help attract and retain the highest quality employees

Professional salaries are a significant incentive for recruiting educators to work in a particular district or to choose education as a career. By joining together as an association, educators have more strength in numbers and can negotiate for better compensation and benefits. Teachers are traditionally underpaid in comparison to comparable professionals. Negotiating as a group helps leverage teachers' power, not only in terms of compensation and benefits, but also for improved working conditions.

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Bargaining gives education professionals a genuine voice

Every organization, including schools and higher education institutions, can benefit from the ideas and expertise of its employees. Negotiations ensure that education employees have a respected voice in the workplace and are involved in both identifying and solving school and classroom issues, which in turn promotes student learning.

Front-line educators are given a meaningful say in such issues as the availability of needed resources, teaching of at-risk students, professional development, peer assistance and worksite health and safety.

Bargaining ensures fair, objective employment procedures

A negotiated contract ensures that employees are treated fairly because both parties have discussed and agreed upon rules and processes for the workplace. Employees and administrators understand it is necessary to ensure due process. Associations and management rely on negotiated impasse procedures to resolve problems. Contracts may also set forth procedures and principles for teacher evaluations that are comprehensive, meaningful, fair, and lead to improved teacher practice and student learning.

Bargaining gives new educators more support

New teachers often find teaching to be challenging—and even veteran teachers need extra support if they are teaching new subjects or curriculums. A negotiated mentoring or coaching program is especially helpful so new teachers receive feedback and support about curriculum development, classroom management, parent communications, and other responsibilities. Associations can negotiate or collaborate on identifying the roles and responsibilities for mentors and coaches, the selection process, compensation, and other program elements. The Association can also ensure that the mentoring/coaching program aligns with existing teacher evaluation procedures and that all new teachers understand the system.