

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Think about the people closest to you. The connection you feel for them is strong. You want to make sure they stay an important part of your life. The same holds true for educators and the union. The connection between the two is the best predictor of how educators will respond when faced with the possibility of dropping their membership. The stronger the connection, the more likely members are to join or stay in the union. So what can we do to develop such strong, enduring bonds? Here's what members had to say.

1 FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT.

Members who received an in-person or face-to-face invitation to join are more likely to view the association favorably than those asked to join by card or email.

2 SMALL GROUP AND ONE-ON-ONE CONTACTS ARE IDEAL.

Small group and one-on-one settings are best for having informal or face-to-face conversations that lead to authentic connections.

3 OUR MEMBERS WANT A UNION THAT LISTENS.

The best way to connect with members is to listen. Our members want to be heard—someone to listen to their concerns, gripes, successes, and achievements.

4 OUR MEMBERS WANT TO FEEL SUPPORTED.

Members feel good when they feel supported on the job. Our members are the best sources of support and encouragement for each other and belonging to the union fosters a nurturing environment.

5 RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRE CARE AND FEEDING.

Constant and continuous communication is the best way to ensure members' connection to the union grows in strength and intensity, which means they are less likely to drop their membership.

TACTICS

We support our members and listen to their concerns. This means we follow through on our promises, support them and that they're connected to their union.

BUILD A TEAM AND FACILITATE CONVERSATIONS:

Find other members who are willing to help. Small groups are an effective way of building stronger communications with members.

CALENDAR CHECK-INS AND MAKE THEM REGULAR:

Let members know you're there, schedule a time for a check-in to ask how they're doing. Don't go alone, bring another member with you. Create a routine time for you to connect with and listen to your members.

AUTHENTICALLY LISTEN AND FOLLOW UP:

Don't dominate conversations – ensure that you're listening. If a member has mentioned a need, follow up and connect them with some of the many NEA or affiliate resources. The Value of Membership Cards offer several resources to assist members.

USE DATA TO DRIVE CONVERSATIONS AND PLAN OPPORTUNITIES:

If a potential member has completed a New Educator Card, follow up on the interests they expressed with answers or resources offered from their union – this can be extended to a larger scale with larger events like professional development offerings.

BE AN INFORMAL MENTOR:

As a leader/organizer you have a better understanding of processes within your school and district and how to handle challenges your colleagues face – share your tips, lesson plans, and experience.