



Session Title: Exploring the Role of Teacher Unions in i3 Grantees' Work

Overview of the Session

This session provided participants an opportunity to discuss the labor management domain and its influence on i3 grant implementation. Presenters from the School Transformation Network and the U.S. Department of Education each shared a specific labor conflict they had encountered and described the strategies they had used to resolve it. Grantee participants worked collaboratively in small groups and with presenters to identify the issues and challenges related to labor management they were experiencing and for which they were beginning to develop potential solutions.

Presenters

Brad Jupp, U.S. Department of Education
Vicki Mogil, National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
Patrice Case-McFadin, Success for All Foundation

i3 TA Liaison Facilitators:

Nicole Breslow, Education Development Center
Karen Shakman, Education Development Center
Clarissa McKithen, Westat

Materials

In addition to these notes from the table discussions, you can find the PowerPoint presentation and problem of practice graphic organizer posted on the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness i3 Community of Practice.

Summary of Presenters' Labor Management Problems and Resolutions

1) Settling for More (Not Less): The Making of the Denver Public Schools/Denver Classroom Teachers Association Pay for Performance Pilot (Brad Jupp)

Background/key players:

- August 1999, after more than a decade of contentious negotiation
- Laura Lefkowitz, Denver Board of Education
- Johnny Lydia, Executive Director, Denver Public Schools Human Resources Department
- Brad Jupp, Chief Negotiator, Denver Classroom Teachers Association
- Andrea Giunta, President, Denver Classroom Teachers Association
- Norm Brand, Mediator

Description of problem:

- The district wanted to introduce a pay-for-performance program for all teachers beginning that school year.
- The teachers wanted an across-the-board pay increase that exceeded the regional cost of living adjustment by 3.5 percent to make up for lost ground
- The parties shared years of conflict-oriented behavior with little outcome.



- There was a wide range of unresolved policy disagreements, including basic work rules, teacher assignment, insurance coverage, etc.
- The Board of Education placed very high value on making a major change to teacher compensation policy, and they were willing to offer a large potential increase to senior teachers as a part of a deal to accept it.
- Teacher appetite for a third strike action in a decade was limited, and, when polled, union representatives expressed guarded interest in a trial run of the pay policy concept.

Description of resolution/lessons learned:

- Through formal mediation, the parties reached agreement to pilot a pay system where teachers received small bonuses based on student outcomes.
- The agreement included a cost of living adjustment that exceeded the regional cost of living adjustment by 1%, as well as approximately \$1.5 million in bonuses for teachers in the pilot.
- The agreement also included settlements on other outstanding policy differences, such as teacher evaluation, etc.
- In addition, the parties committed to share ownership in the design, implementation and evaluation of the pilot.
- In addition to the key players named above, the union representative council, teacher opinion, and public opinion played a role.
- Compromise is not always the solution to a division problem; in this case, it was the solution to an addition problem.

2) How Do We Serve Teachers Who Are Out on the Streets? The 2012 Chicago Teachers' Union Strike (Vicki Mogil)

Background/key players:

- Constant upheaval during CTU/CPS contractual negotiations that began in November of 2011. Resolution of negotiations lingered into the fall of 2012
- Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Teachers' Union
- The Illinois staff members of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform's School Transformation Network grant were beginning their third year with sixth through eighth grade teachers in eight Chicago Public Schools when the strike occurred. Grant staff could do little to nothing about this massive dispute except observe the interaction among teachers and their management. Grant staff's concern was that the potential of a strike would override all other matters as school began, which was a critical time of the year for our school reform model.



Description of problem:

- To quote CNN, “Among the major issues, the teachers are negotiating over the length of the school day, objecting to their evaluations being tied to performance and fretting about potential job losses.”

Description of resolution/lessons learned:

- Chicago settled. Getting access to staff solved itself as staff returned, but grant staff had been able to maintain contact with the schools and keep planning even during the strike because teachers/principals answered their e-mails, either work or personal.
- Relationships with teachers particularly matter in times of institutional stress. Because our team was well established with the teaching staff, the level of trust enabled communication before, during, and after this event over which we had no control.
- Grant design matters. It was very useful to have built into our structure paid stipends for teachers in the schools in grant leadership positions and for outside of contract time. The former assured that there was grass roots support for the project, and the latter kept discussion of whether teachers should be devoting this time to the project off the table as the union began to encourage teachers to prepare for strike.

Issues and Questions Discussed

Labor challenges related to i3 grant implementation:

- Who decides how newly created time is used and what is the decision process? For example, if additional teacher time is identified for professional development, how can we leverage this as an outside provider?
- If a school has committed to an i3 program but teachers have to volunteer their time, how do you get their buy-in and communicate about what participation really means?
- What do you do in situations where a school has committed to a whole-school improvement model, but staff do not buy in and use the contract to “opt out” of activities? This may be an issue with teachers as well as other staff such as social workers, counselors, etc. where the contractual obligations are not clear.
- Schools and teachers have many competing priorities for their time, such as pre-negotiated professional development. How do we deal with this as outside providers when our work is not mandatory?
- Lack of communication with the union can be a challenge.
- How do you cultivate an environment at the schools that supports our innovations rather than a culture of compliance?
- What is the nonprofit role in labor management? What do non-profits need to know about labor relations to navigate them successfully?

Strategies to address labor challenges:

- Invest teachers in our work by grounding it in their needs. Gather information about teacher needs at the beginning and use this to inform our practice to ensure we are relevant and are serving a need teachers recognize.
- Take small steps forward. Work with those teachers who are invested and committed. Bring on others slowly as they hear stories of success.



- Make sure you have broad-based agreement in a school before the commitment is made.
- Gather information from teachers, such as surveys and focus groups as a way to invest them and get their input from the beginning.
- Maintain ongoing communication with teachers to keep them invested. Reorient teachers to the project each year to set the tone for the year, get teachers invested and excited, and communicate expectations for the project.
- Put in time at the beginning of the project to develop relationships. They are essential to success down the road.

Means of Engaging (circle all that apply, $n = 7$ individuals commented)

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| a. Contribute to active online community | 4 |
| b. Hold regular conference calls | 1 |
| c. Attend webinars | 6 |
| d. Participate in online small group meeting | 3 |
| e. Share resources to support other grantees | 1 |
| f. Find resources shared by other grantees | 3 |
| g. Other | 0 |