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FIGHTING FOR THE SCHOOLS
OUR COMMUNITIES DESERVE

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**Signing Up
New Members**

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This guide includes information from the National Education Association.

INTRODUCTION

New members are our lifeblood. Our goal should be 100 percent membership and engagement. We want all employees to be active members of the union. To reach that goal we need to have a plan of action – to sign up all new hires as members of our union and to reach out to them individually to get them involved.

This guide is a tool to help locals sign up and involve all new hires, so they ensure their power in the future.

FOUR STEPS BEFORE ORIENTATION

1. Get the Names and Contact Information for Newly Hired Staff

Our first task is to get the names and contact information for all new hires as they are hired. There are two ways to go about this: the easy way or the hard way.

The easy way is to ask a friendly person in the administration for this information. They would then provide it to us on a rolling basis, as employees are hired. That's the most convenient method for both the new employee and us. And it's the law. All school districts are required under Chapter 150e of the M.G.L. to provide this information to us within 10 days of hire. If the school administration won't do this, we must then make a legal demand for it and file a prohibited practice charge against the school district. One way or another, we will get the names and contact information for all newly hired staff!

2. Assemble a Team of Greeters

We want a group of current staff to do the outreach to the newly hired. This is the type of union assignment that can be done by those who may otherwise be reluctant to engage in the more confrontational activities of your local (like grievances and

negotiations). Assemble a good welcoming team. Ideally, you'd like people from the new employee's school, grade level and department. You want contact and follow-up to be natural and convenient. To that end, a well-distributed team is essential.

3. Train the Team

The training doesn't need to be long, but it must include a few elements. The welcoming team needs to know whom it is going to welcome as well as a simple, easy, and appropriate way to say hello and provide necessary information. The team needs to have a couple of good initial questions and it needs to be prepared to practice good listening skills. Team members need to go over a good way to end the introduction while leaving the door open for future contact. Their initial outreach to the new hire should last no longer than 5 minutes. Training the team should take about 30 minutes.

4. Meet and Greet the Newly Hired as they are Hired

Most locals greet newly hired educators when they start their orientation during the beginning days of the school year. These meetings make sense as they are an efficient way to meet the newest potential members. Even so, the ideal membership campaign begins even before these new educators walk through the doors for their first day.

Most educators are hired well before they start their job – some as early as May of the prior school year. Ideally, we will greet them soon after this hiring period. We want to be among the first to welcome them to their new school system. That way, we can ensure that we create their first impression of our union.

INTRODUCTION TO NEW HIRE ORIENTATIONS

First Impressions Matter

New educators never forget the friendly face on orientation day who made them feel welcomed. Walking into a new school – or a new profession – is an exciting and overwhelming time. Personal connections matter.

Researchers agree. Effective orientation programs have an outsized and lasting impact on the strength of unions, according to a joint study by The Pennsylvania State University and the Jobs with Justice Education Fund.

The longitudinal study conducted in six states found that new hires who attended a helpful orientation were more likely to feel a greater commitment to the union and were 35 percent more likely to participate in union activities.

Essentially, a good orientation is a smart and strategic way to connect with new hires, boost membership numbers and build a foundation for later activism.

On the flip side, an unhelpful orientation, or one thrown together at the last minute (think typos, old handouts and unprepared presenters), can sow doubt about the union and make it even harder to recruit new members.

FIVE SIMPLE STEPS FOR ORIENTATION

1. Union Leadership Attendance

You want to have a strong group of union leaders approach people individually, and make sure everyone attending is asked to sign up as a member. This means making sure, well in advance, that you have commitments from individuals to attend and participate.

2. Union Membership Material

The MTA has prepared new member packets. They include information about the MTA, information about MTA Benefits, a new member calendar, and a few other papers welcoming educators. Make sure that you also have a welcoming letter from the local president with a list of officers and contact people at every school, department, team and grade level. You also should prepare your team for signing up members electronically. And you should have enough activists to sign up everyone without delay.

3. Preparation Meeting

Run through your orientation with all of your leaders and materials. Consider it a dress rehearsal. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to practice the role they'll play at the orientation – especially member sign-up.

SAMPLE ORIENTATION AGENDA

Introduce your union and its mission

- Use “we” and “our union” to emphasize that we’re all in this together. Share how your association is a solutions-based group that meets the needs of the district’s students and educators.
- Provide context for members to understand their relationship to the local, state and national associations.

Talk about the power of collective action

- Explain key pieces of your collective bargaining agreement: salary schedule; leaves (including medical, personal); health and retirement benefits; workday; safe working conditions; etc.

- Talk about how to deal with issues at work, i.e., when to call the association.

Highlight opportunities for professional growth through the association

Sample Ask For Membership

“I am here today to ask you to join us. As an association, we have developed the resources and support you need to thrive because we have been there. Every one of us has stepped into the classroom for the first time at some point. It can be isolating, but there is power in numbers. When we come together through the association, we get closer to getting the schools our students deserve.”

4. Follow-up Activities

Be ready with union activity. At the orientation, you should invite your new members to do something. It could be a training, social event or rally. But have something for them to do. You want to engage them as soon as possible, to strengthen their union identity. Have these plans and connections ready to launch as soon as the orientation is over — so your new members will immediately be enveloped in the warm blanket of union connection and action.

5. Accurate Tracking Mechanism

You must have a way of keeping track of who has signed up, who has not, and who is responsible for “chasing” those who are not yet members. Consider having your new members fill out a simple survey of their interests, for future union training and activities.

BUILDING ENGAGEMENT IN YOUR UNION

One-on-One Follow-up for Membership

New member orientation is but the first opportunity for enrolling new hires. You'll want to have people ready to track down those who don't sign up initially, as well as those who are hired after the new member orientation. In some cases, such as with ESPs, there may be no large assemblage of new hires — so much of your outreach will come after the orientation and throughout the school year.

One-on-One Follow-up for Involvement

Even if your association reaches 100 percent membership, you will want to have someone follow up individually with each new employee, because you will want them to be engaged in the activity of the union. Your outreach need not take longer than a minute or two. But it is critical.

Start by assigning each new hire to a contact person who works nearby. Ideally, this will be someone at their grade level, in their department or on their team. The contact should be brief — perhaps just an introduction and welcome. But it should leave the door open for future contact. One good way of doing this is to mention the different trainings available for newly hired educators, and then ask if any of these would be of interest. This can be easily followed up with an invitation to one of those trainings when they are scheduled.

Studies have shown that the more frequently new hires are contacted by active union members — even if extremely briefly — the more likely they will be to join and get involved in their union.

CALENDAR OF NEW MEMBER ACTIVITY

May, June, July, early August

- Start gathering from administration information on new educators as they are hired. If administration refuses to provide it, contact MTA Legal to file a Prohibited Practice Charge. Enter new member information into the local association's database.
- Start outreach to new hires. Assign names to your summer outreach team. If there is a critical mass of at least a few new teachers, initiate trainings for them on Professional Teacher Status.
- Prepare your leadership group for new hire orientation. Confirm who will be attending and assisting at these meetings. Gather and ready material for distribution.
- Contact building reps and contact people to prepare them for immediate outreach to new hires in the building.
- Gather names of non-bargaining unit employees who are doing bargaining unit work.
- Conduct Outreach/Membership Training for local leadership group.
- Select New Member Liaison.

Late August, September, October

- Attend and present at new hire orientation meetings, distributing new member packets, signing up new members.

- Follow up with new hires, reaching out to each one. Ask them if they would be interested in any of the new-member trainings we offer.
- Schedule trainings based on interest shown among new hires.
- Follow up this brief outreach with further one-on-one contact, asking new hires to sign up for specific trainings.
- Schedule date for new member social event.
- Plan for recruitment to the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference (EMAC) in December.
- Recruit for the November Early Career Education Conference (ECEC).
- Continue to do one-on-one outreach and membership sign-up as new staff are hired.

November, December, January

- Hold a social event for new hires. Use some of the new members who attended trainings to help with one-on-one contact. Use same outreach as in trainings to get commitments from new members to attend. Send reminders the day before.
- Recruit for EMAC Conference.
- Recruit for New Educator and Education Support Professionals workshops during February break.
- Continue to do one-on-one outreach and membership sign-up as new staff are hired.

- Schedule February, March, and April trainings if new employees arrive after the first round of trainings.

February, March, April

- Send reminders for New Educator and ESP workshops during February break.
- Recruit for February, March and April trainings.
- Recruit new ESPs for the MTA ESP Conference in early April.
- Continue with one-on-one outreach and membership sign-up as new staff are hired.
- Select the most-promising potential leaders from among the new employees to assume some responsibilities in the local association.
- Start publicizing New Member Program at Summer Conference. Encourage most promising new members to apply.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources that you may wish to incorporate into your planning or training, as well as a PDF of this guide, are available at massteacher.org/newmembersignup.

These materials include: Top 10 Reasons to Join; Overcoming Common Objections; a Sample Letter to New Hires; Comparison Chart: Union Member vs Non-Union Member; and How to do a B.R.A.G.

A fillable and printable PDF membership form also is available.



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