



Tips on Addressing Objections by Non-Members

“Dues are too expensive. I can’t afford them.”

- » “How can you afford not to?” Tell the non-member that our union increases our salaries and fights to maintain affordable health insurance costs for employees during every round of bargaining. Remind the non-member that we are gaining ground, but only because of the union. If you have it, show the potential member a copy of your first paycheck alongside the current paycheck on a single sheet of paper to show how much you have gained in salary over the years — thanks in large part to the union’s efforts.
- » Quote dues in lowest terms — per day, pay period, week, etc.
- » “What can you buy for only \$ _____ a day?” Equate the daily amount to what that amount would buy: less than the cost of a couple of cups of coffee per week, a movie, etc.
- » “You aren’t buying services. You’re buying into a cooperative, a democratic organization that is stronger only if you belong.”
- » “You don’t know when you’ll need the union’s help.” Or, “You don’t wait until your house is on fire to buy fire insurance.”
- » NEA life insurance is available to those with continuous membership at no additional cost.
- » “Your dues are tax deductible if you file the long form.” Make a chart showing how much people at different tax rates receive back.
- » Save through special discounts via MTA and NEA Benefits. Show ways you save. “In fact, membership can actually save you money if you take advantage of special services opportunities.” Go to www.mtabenefits.com or www.neamb.com for more information.
- » “If you needed an attorney to defend you against work-related charges, how would you pay the bill?”

“Why should I join? I get representation for nothing.”

- » “No one gets it for free. Your colleagues in the local, state and national associations are paying the tab.”
- » Make a chart showing what a member gets as opposed to a non-member. *Use the table on Pages 19–21 in this guide.* Some of the most important benefits and resources provided by the union are available only to members, such as access to well-trained and skilled staff, including attorneys for job-related problems.
- » Members pay dues that cover the costs of representation, bargaining and contract support for all bargaining unit employees, members and non-members alike. Additionally, dues payment entitles members to vote, hold office, attend meetings and be represented on matters in addition to those covered by the negotiated agreement.
- » “It costs money to represent employees. All who benefit should share that expense.”
- » “Our ability to negotiate strong contracts that protect public education and our profession are under attack. The opponents of organized labor and those who seek to privatize public education are extremely well-funded and wield a great deal of political influence.” Members are our greatest asset. It is essential to demonstrate to the fullest extent possible the commitment that educators have to the principles held by our union.
- » We should all be working together to make our organization the very best it can be at representing all of us.
- » “As a member, you can take an active part in decision-making, voting, holding office and having a voice in a democratic, representative organization.”
- » “If something happened to you and you needed the union, it would be too late to join and obtain the assistance that is automatically provided to union members.”
- » “Try joining for a year and see what we can accomplish together. Take advantage of some of the members-only benefits during that year and see what a difference it makes in your professional life.”

“I don’t agree with the (fill in the blank) of the association.”

- » “Few people agree 100 percent with any group or organization’s actions. But representative government in organizations depends on people who pay their dues and who participate in decision-making. If you don’t agree with some direction the association is taking, join, become active and work to change its course.”
- » As educators, we have a lot in common and face many of the same workplace challenges. Focus on shared values and goals and build off broad foundations, such as being treated with respect and wanting the best for our students, schools and communities.
- » “Our association is democratic — no member is required to agree with the majority on every issue. But every member has a chance to try to sway the majority through representative, democratic governance structures at every level of the association. Furthermore, our representative bodies issue the recommendations of the majority; the association doesn’t attempt to speak for every individual member in every decision.”

- » “What if taxpayers in the district could elect not to pay taxes voted in because they objected to something, or because they do not have children in the schools or in public universities?”
- » Compare to taxation, services such as water, fire and trash collection, parks and security. One pays one’s share even when one disagrees or does not use the service.
- » Explain the policy or political position. If it’s a resolution, explain that resolutions are reviewed each year by the Annual Meeting of Delegates, Board of Directors, etc. Resolutions are initiated by members and voted on by the assembly of their elected representatives. Introduce the person to his/her local representative who was in on the decision.
- » Explain how the union recommends (or does not recommend) political candidates. Groups of members meet and interview almost every candidate up for election in Massachusetts. That group makes recommendations to the MTA Board of Directors, which is elected by the members. This is a very democratic process, and any member can take part.
- » “How can you get involved, be informed, find out what is happening and work for change if you don’t join?”
- » Some positions do not affect us on a day-to-day basis. The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages of one or two things we do not like or agree with. “Remember, most of your union’s work is done at the local level. We want your involvement and voice — and that only comes with membership.” Then talk about the union’s goals and accomplishments and what is ahead.
- » Many positions are distorted by enemies of public education. Explain the distortions, emotional issues and tactics.
- » If the objection is to our protecting a “bad” employee, point out that we do not hire, fire, evaluate or judge an employee. It is our responsibility to make sure every employee is fairly treated and given due process. Point out that rights, like laws, must be enforced for each individual or they will not exist for all. Cite cases.

“I’d join the local (or local/state) but not the NEA.”

- » “Our local, along with the state and national associations, is constantly working to protect, promote and strengthen members’ rights. Only the tip of the iceberg shows here at the local.” Some programs are:
 - » UniServ program
 - » Legal services
 - » Professional development
 - » Research
 - » Bargaining assistance
 - » Staff assistance at conferences and workshops

- » “We stand stronger together with our fellow members at the state and national levels. The state and national levels provide us with expertise, support and resources to do the work of the union at the local level.” Share examples of how the state and national union have assisted your local union.

“I don’t like unions.”

- » “What do you think of when you say *union*?”
- » Define *union* from the dictionary: join together for a common cause and a unified voice.
- » Cite professional development; community action; child protection; help for parents; available workshops; conferences on professional issues such as stress, discipline, censorship, etc.
- » What would the effect be if no union existed to monitor, lobby, represent and enforce policies and contracts and ensure due process?

“We shouldn’t be involved in politics.”

- » Every decision about every brick, every book and every education employee is made by elected or appointed officials and the people they hire. We are involved in the political arena by necessity, not by choice.
- » Education is politics. Our only decision is whether we will affect the outcome.
- » Direct political contributions to campaigns are only made from voluntary contributions and are kept entirely separate from dues.

“The association doesn’t do anything for kids and education.”

- » Share information about local activities that promote quality education and benefit students.
- » Familiarize yourself with the MTA’s legislative agenda, which is available online at www.massteacher.org/legislation, and share information on lobbying activities, legislative goals and programs that benefit and improve education.
- » Point out scholarships, community support programs such as The Massachusetts Child, workshops and ongoing training for educators.

“My partner belongs. I don’t need to.”

- » “How many salaries do you get?” If one belongs, only one gets the benefits of membership. Only one gets liability insurance, only one gets representation available to members only, and if you are affected by layoffs, only one of you gets representation beyond contractual provisions.
- » Both are affected by the attacks on public-sector unions and public education.

- » Both get salary increases and bargained benefits.
- » “Could either of you afford to pay for an attorney to defend yourself?”
- » Because no two worksites are the same, you each have a unique and vital role in your union.
- » You are *both* important members of the unit. We all need participation from *both* of you — on the job and in the union.

“I don’t like (past or present) leaders.”

- » “They are volunteers.”
- » “They are elected by means of open nominations and secret ballot by majority vote — one person, one vote, proportional representation.”
- » “That was yesterday. What should we do about it now?”
- » “What should we start/stop/continue doing?”
- » “Could you suggest a better leader?”
- » If current leader, schedule him/her to follow up.
- » “Get involved and help make things better.”

“We don’t need it this year (non-bargaining year).”

- » What happens in neighboring districts and states affects us when we bargain next time (e.g., rollbacks, strikes, arbitrations, legal cases, unfair decisions, etc.).
- » Programs go on all the time:
 - › Research
 - › Training of leaders and bargaining team
 - › Office maintenance
 - › UniServ program
 - › Monitoring of state and federal agencies
 - › Monitoring of retirement funds
 - › Legislative program
 - › Community relations
 - › PR and education employee image programs

- › Professional development programs
- › Contract enforcement

“Disgruntled from past”

- » “I understand your perspective. What can we do now?”
- » “You’re right. Now what can we do?”
- » “Nothing can change that. Now we are ...”
- » “We’re working/investing this year so we will be strong next.”
- » “Even if that were true, it’s the best option we have now. If we don’t stand up for (ourselves/members), who will — the School Committee? The administration (which is helpless, caught in the middle, powerless)? The Legislature?”
- » “What are you willing to do to change it?”
- » If the problem is a poor record in the past, especially in bargaining, acknowledge this if it is true. Then move the person to joining to help improve the situation or cite positive gains in the most recent bargaining. “We’re doing a lot *now*.”
- » “Even if that were true, what can we do to ensure better results this time?”

“I don’t know how long I’ll be working here (*leaving employment or retiring soon*).”

- » “The investment will be small but still have a big impact.”
- » “Anything can happen, even if you don’t expect it. It is best to have protection and the union’s support as a public educator no matter how long you work in education.”
- » “For now, join the group, build unity, and support your colleagues who will be here in the coming years.”
- » “You need more protection because you are most vulnerable due to being on probation or being one of the last people hired.”
- » “You’ll benefit from the support of union members and resources/benefits provided by the union.”
- » “We monitor retirement funds, insurance, etc.”
- » “Your retirement depends upon salary gains these last years. We need your support to get maximum gains.”
- » “Join now and *stay* involved through MTA Retired and NEA-Retired. You’ll not only remain a vital part of education, but the association will *continue* to work 365 days a year to protect your investment and your future.”