

## Tips for recruiting new members to your local association, MSEA, and NEA

**1. People join your local, MSEA, and NEA because they believe in the principles, values, and mission of the association.** They join because they want to associate with like-minded professionals eager to make a difference.

How you relate to the association is vital. Let them know you are proud to be a member and proud of the work we do. Let them know you believe the association makes a difference.

**2. Contact colleagues in person.** Contact your colleague when they are alone for a one-on-one conversation. Telephone contacts and mail or printed material are second and third choices.

**3. Timing is important.** People join when a major activity occurs, when they are newly hired, when they are helped with a problem, and—most importantly—when they are asked!

**4. Make it personal!** Talk about the association in terms of our principles, values and mission.

- Ask relevant open-ended questions (not simple yes or no questions).
- Listen to the colleague's unique replies and professional needs.
- Connect their concerns with ways the association advocates and supports educators.
- It's okay if you don't know something. Contact your local association office or UniServ Director, then follow up with the information your colleague is looking for.
- When talking about dues, talk in the smallest terms. *For example:* by day, week, month, or paycheck. Compare the daily amount with what that amount will buy in everyday purchases. Members receive protection and service 365 days a year.

**5. Hand-deliver printed material.** Point out specific information that will interest your colleague. Write a personal note to go along with it.

**6. If someone shows interest, try to sign them up immediately.** Be familiar with the application so you can help.

**7. Remember the basics of closing a deal:** Ask!

**Membership doesn't cost—it pays!** When you consider the terrific benefits NEA, MSEA, and your local provide, you have access to some of the best values in goods and services anywhere! Share with your colleagues the NEA Member Benefits page and show them the website! Visit [marylandeducators.org/clickandsave](http://marylandeducators.org/clickandsave) for great savings on brand name merchandise from top retailers, online stores, and local merchants.

### SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN HANDLING OBJECTIONS:

The reasons given for not joining are often not strongly held.

The first objections given are often not the real reasons for not joining. Often objections are due to a lack of information or incorrect information.

Excuses may be a result of fears, uncertainty, doubts about the recruiter, the organization, the programs and benefits of membership, the price, or the timing of the contact.

When a colleague doesn't join, consider if it may be the result of not having established a positive relationship and discovering the colleague's needs, wants, and concerns.

Reluctant colleagues often have joined when recruiters continue to ask them, even though they continue to hold the same objections.

Don't argue, agree, or disagree with the colleague. If attempts are made to get you to argue or defend, responding with a question will keep your colleague talking.

Listen carefully. People often want to get something off their chest. In that case, listen. Don't underestimate your own reasons for joining. An enthusiastic member is the best person to sell the organization.

*Remember:* Despite your positive attitude, not everyone will join.



## THERE'S POWER IN NUMBERS

**That's why membership recruitment is always a top priority for association reps and activists**

**Membership recruitment is about creating a culture of organizing and mobilizing education employees to create positive change for students, their profession, and public education.**

It's more than signing people up. Our members must have an active, engaged, supportive, and reciprocal relationship with the association. Our success depends on it.

**Membership recruitment is all about what the association is doing to support educator and student success. It's about making the connection between actions and outcome—empowering educators to take control of their careers by gaining access to proven tools, resources, and relationships.**

It's about what's happening right now—such as successful legislation that supports educators on the implementation of Common Core Standards and their evaluations—that educators can relate to as having a huge impact on their careers.

**Membership recruitment is about building relationships with your colleagues and sharing professional concerns and aspirations.**

It's about listening, connecting and shared goals.

**Membership recruitment is a continuous year-round responsibility of the association and should be a presence at every event where there are members and non-members.**

It's more than a back-to-school or incentive-driven activity. Negotiations, professional development events, elections, and the General Assembly—when professional concerns heighten awareness of association activities—are great times to mobilize members.

**Membership recruitment is the responsibility of every member. Every member must understand that there is power in numbers.**

Membership recruitment is supported and organized by officers, staff, and association reps. MSEA and the local provide support to member recruiters through talking points and year-round membership campaign materials. Training is available.

### **It's about building strong locals**

Membership recruitment is about market share—the percentage of members vs. the potential of members in your school or workplace. We strive for 100% of eligible education employees in every school or worksite. It's not as simple as raw numbers—one school may have 80% membership of 45 employees (36 members), another may have 40 percent of 90 (36 members). The more members in each school building or worksite—the higher the market share—the stronger the voice of the employees.



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## Organizing and mobilizing for a strong membership in your school or worksite

### Responding to objections

When you shift to an organizing and mobilizing approach to increasing membership, you're reminding your colleagues that there is power in numbers. The potential for successfully advocating for your school, your students, and your profession increases with every member.

Below is a guide to answering some common objections that arise again and again in locals of all sizes and among all employee classifications. Adapt to your local and add your own experience.

A number of possible responses are offered below to help you respond to common objections. These are merely guides, of course, and not intended to substitute for your own ingenuity and creativity, especially in regard to your local association.

#### *"Membership costs too much. I can't afford it."*

Membership doesn't cost—it pays! When you consider the terrific benefits NEA, MSEA, and your local provide, you have access to some of the best values in goods and services anywhere!

Equate membership to buying insurance. You don't know when you will need it. Quote dues in lowest terms: per day, pay period, per week, etc. Let them know that dues may be tax deductible if you file the long form. Ask the prospect, "If you needed an attorney to defend you against charges such as child abuse, injury, etc., how would you pay the bill?"

#### *"The association doesn't do anything for kids and education."*

MSEA works aggressively at the state level to help pass pro-education legislation that improves education funding and the status of students, teachers, and education professionals in every jurisdiction.

Thanks to the hard work of MSEA, leaders, and member activists throughout the 2015 General

Assembly, PARCC tests may not be used for personnel decisions until at least the 2016–2017, and local school systems and local associations are able to mutually agree upon what is included in the teacher and principal evaluation models.



#### *"We shouldn't be involved in politics."*

Every decision about every student, brick, book, and education employee is made by persons elected to public office or appointed or hired by those persons. We are involved in the political arena. Education is politics. Our only decision is whether or not we want a voice in the outcome.

Direct political contributions are only made from voluntary contributions and are kept entirely separate from dues. Dues money CANNOT be used to support candidates.

The members of our association make decisions about which candidate or legislation to support through a democratic process. We focus only on decisions that affect education, education employees, and students.




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*"Why should I join? I get association representation for nothing."*

No one gets anything for free. Your colleagues in the local, state, and national associations are paying the tab for non-members.

Members pay dues, which cover the cost of professional services. These include contract negotiation and support for all members of the bargaining unit. In some jurisdictions, a "fair share" provision requires all employees to pay their fair share of the costs of representation; in others, non-members receive the benefit of professional representation without paying their fair share.

Dues payment also entitles members to vote, hold office, attend meetings and events, attend professional development workshops, and receive other benefits of membership. Members are provided association representation on all matters covered by the negotiated agreement. It also entitles them to liability insurance and money-saving member benefits programs.

With every new member, the voice of your local association and MSEA grows stronger. MSEA represents 71,000 members—and we have a proven history of achieving positive results with legislators, school administrators, and boards of education.

*"I don't like unions."*

Note broad areas of interest and involvement. For example: year-round professional development, including workshops at the annual convention; civic/community action; child protection; help for parents; coalition-building with child and public education advocacy groups; and a pro-public education message, which holds stakeholders accountable for student welfare at all levels.

Imagine the situation if no union existed to monitor, lobby, represent, enforce policies and contracts, or ensure due process.

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*"I don't agree with the position of the association on \_\_\_\_\_."*

Few people agree 100 percent with any group or organization's actions. But representative government in organizations, as well as nations, depends on people who "pay their dues" and 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.

Our association is democratic; no member is required to agree with the majority on every issue. Every member has a chance to try to sway the majority through representative democratic governance structures at every level of the association. Our representative bodies issue the recommendations of the majority; the association doesn't attempt to speak for every individual member in every decision.

If the objection is that we protect "bad" employees, point out that we do not hire, fire, evaluate, or judge an employee. It is our responsibility to give each employee a "day in court." Point out that rights, like laws, must be enforced for each individual or they won't exist for anyone.

Don't agree and don't argue. Refer specific questions that you can't answer to your UniServ director(s).

*"I'd join the local association, but not MSEA or NEA."*

Your local association, along with MSEA and NEA, is constantly working to protect, promote, and strengthen members' rights. Important benefits to local associations include:

- UniServ staff in every local association and access to MSEA professional staff
- Legal services and support
- Leadership and professional development workshops and trainings
- Research
- Assistance with contract negotiations
- Grants and program support
- Human and civil rights programs and support
- Support for social media and communications initiatives
- Collaboration and support on local campaigns/issues