

K-12 Unionism and Collective Bargaining: Distinctive Features



- ◆ The local school district is the employer; the bargaining unit is the district
- ◆ The local union and school board negotiate local contracts. (State union has no formal role.)
- ◆ Key labor relationship: local president and superintendent (many shared interests)

K-12 Unionism and Collective Bargaining: Distinctive Features



- Bilateral and interest-based bargaining are used
- Term Contract (2-5 years); revised, but rarely rewritten; may be “living”
- Contract cover wages, benefits, layoffs and transfers, hours, working conditions (often broadly conceived)

K-12 Unionism and Bargaining: What We've Learned



- Industrial unionism has limited value in school improvement. (Strikes are uncommon.)
- Reform unionism is challenging to introduce and sustain.
- Most districts today use a hybrid approach to bargaining
 - Bilateral bargaining for wages
 - Interest-based bargaining for solving problems or developing programs.

K-12 Unionism and Bargaining: What We've Learned



- Local contracts cover similar issues, but vary widely in response to local contexts.
- Over time, some contracts get longer and “stronger,” but others do not.
- Local districts often bargain beyond the legal scope defined by state statute, venturing into matters of policy. Rarely contested.
- Many contract provisions are difficult or impossible to enforce.
- Grievance procedures have limited value in resolving complaints.

K-12 Unionism and Bargaining: What We've Learned



- Collective bargaining has raised teachers' wages by about 10%.
- Teachers' professional status has risen over 40 years, but gains are often offset by public views of unions as self-serving.
- Teachers' voice in policy and practice has increased in many districts.

K-12 Unionism and Bargaining: What We've Learned



- Over time, traditional union priorities (seniority, standardization, centralization) are less prominent.
- Productive school reforms (pay reform, peer review) often are jointly managed and emerge from collaborative labor-management relationships.