

# Ten Steps to a Living Wage Campaign

## 1. WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

- A Living Wage defined - Sufficient earnings to cover basic needs:  
Food, Housing, Clothing, Transportation, Utilities,  
Child care, Taxes and Health care
- Look up what a living wage is in your area. Try [www.epi.org](http://www.epi.org); [www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu](http://www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu) or survey your members and figure out your own.
- You should be able to support yourself by working ONE job! (from day one!)

## 2. BUY-IN

- From members, UniServ and State Affiliate.
- Build mutual support **within the local** and **statewide**.
- **It takes more than just the usual “handful” of members...**
- This is a campaign for all of the members, not just the local leaders and the UniServ!
- Everyone should have a chance to contribute and feel ownership. In actuality, a salary campaign builds stronger, more independent and knowledgeable locals.

## 3. TIMELINE

- W.A.T.E? (What About The Economy)
- Is this a good time for a Living Wage Campaign?
- YES!!! There is never a better time than now! The lowest paid ESP's are struggling to survive in this economy.
- Don't Wait! It takes a good year – 18 months to prepare for a well thought out LW campaign. Whether it's bargaining, advocating or lobbying your legislators. When the economy does start to get better you're just that much further ahead, prepared to start your campaign, and not starting from square one!
- Build your membership, form a committee, survey members, develop a plan, hold training sessions, list possible activities (incremental), member recordkeeping (contact info, involvement info), calendar all meetings. Constantly revisit and adjust. Evaluate!!!

## 4. ACTION PLANS AND GOALS

- Plan WAY Ahead.
- Conduct a “SWOT” analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
- Write a strategic plan.
- Plan how to finance the campaign.
- Include assignments and responsibilities.

- Affirm your salary philosophy.
- Adopt ambitious salary objectives.
- Same Old, Same Old..." What makes you think we're going to get anything better this time?" Definition of Insanity Doing the same thing, in the same way, over and over again and expecting different results. You HAVE to start thinking differently!
- Take control and set the agenda rather than being reactive, powerless, and victimized.

## 5. GATHER DATA

- Engage members in research. (Surveys)
- Gather, solid reliable data.
- Gather strong arguments for professional pay.
- Document your employer's role in economic development.
- Hold 1:1 conversations with all members.
- Don't let comparable pay be the districts argument. Poverty Pay is Poverty Pay, even if it is what the surrounding districts get paid – it's just not right!
- Economic Development- includes faculty and ESP local spending power, institutional purchasing power and direct ties between quality local education, housing values, corporate site selection decisions, creation of rural entrepreneurs.
- Research – ***"The district always says that we make what surrounding districts make."*** Help verify current payroll data but don't let comparable pay be the districts argument.
- Document regional living costs –it's the districts problem to find the money.
- Look at management spending priorities, waste, etc.
- Quality... highest salaries attract highest quality applicants.

## 6. INTERNAL ORGANIZING

- Target well-organized locals, work on your membership numbers!
- Display faculty-ESP solidarity.
- Find, recruit, and train new leaders/members and volunteers.
- Have a strong building rep system, a broad base of active members and community ties (survey your members).
- Build a sense of solidarity: Within your local, your neighboring districts and statewide.

## 7. EXTERNAL ORGANIZING

- How Do I Build Community Coalitions?
- Assess your standing in the community.
- Survey members to spot their community connections.
- Build coalitions AHEAD of time —with allies such as parents, other unions, community and religious leaders.
- "Reciprocal" view of coalition building. You need "their " help, they'll need yours.
- Identify "key communicators" in the community who are potential supporters.

## 8. MESSAGING and PR

- Develop a clear and simple salary message.
- Select member spokespeople.
- Create a theme, message and a media “buzz”.
- Communication - NO MORE SECRETS!! Do not hide the districts dirty little secrets (poverty wages) anymore and the other secret that the community doesn't know – TAXES should not now, not ever create or perpetuate poverty!
- Humanize your members, tell their stories, video your members.
- Have the state affiliate provide communication training for the local and help provide arguments, messages and talking points.
- Learn to write a press release, plan for a press conference or speak at a board meeting.
- Take control of communications and communicate constantly.
- Establish educators as real people with real needs.
- It's time to speak out. Prepare educators to tell stories about financial struggles and work with students.
- Publicize your members' good, often-hidden work.
- “Humanize” your members, tell their stories.
- Educators are way too modest about the work they do. They MUST start speaking out! Nobody knows how much they make! Help them understand and believe they are worth it BUT if they don't speak out about it nothing will change.
- Taxes should not create or perpetuate poverty!
- BRANDING - Create a theme, a message and a media “buzz”. Use visuals- promotional items, bumper stickers, t-shirts. Develop a clear and simple salary message:
  - We're Proud to Say, We're Worth Professional Pay!
  - We're Worth It!
  - Professional Pay...Here and Now
  - We Deserve a Fair Shake
  - Got Living Wage?

## 9. FOLLOW THROUGH

- Know when to... Turn Up the HEAT!!
- Surround decision-makers and apply incremental pressure on the employer.
- Approach every educator, engage every member and reach every likely supporter.
- Engage every member- 1:1 conversations and a job for everyone, spread the work out to prevent burnout
- Supporters: community allies-parents, students, other unions, religious leaders, college faculty, community organizations
- Incremental Pressure – candlelight vigils to full blown rallies, protests

## 10. CELEBRATE

- Don't wait for "the end", celebrate small victories along the way.
- Celebrate, plan for the future and keep organizing!
- Keep improving salary schedules, keep organizing and plan for the future.
- You settled—the local is now "a force to be reckoned with." You may not be the districts favorite local president or association but they know you are a force to be reckoned with, you have the communities support. You're now a player, where before you weren't even in the game.

# If Not You...WHO?

# If Not Now...WHEN???



We are proud to say  
We're worth professional pay!  
[nea.org/pay](http://nea.org/pay)

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Oklahoma Education Association  
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