

Q&A Guide



A guide to answering questions potential members may have regarding **their Professional Association**

About this booklet:

Thank you for taking time to talk to others about our Association. Here are some tips and strategies for membership recruitment. Our Association has much important work to do and the larger our group; the stronger our voice.

Two important tips:

1. The relationship you develop with potential members is key. Help them know they are important to you as a fellow educator. Also, let them know the Association is important to you because we are the collective voice of educators.
2. Use the "Feel... Felt... Found" response when responding to potential members. It acknowledges their current reality and feelings, and yet gives you an opportunity to provide more information. Keep the dialogue open.

For example: "Why should I join? I really don't have a say in the Association."

Your response: "I understand how you might feel that way, but I've found just the opposite is true. Let me bring you some information on how you can get involved."

Remember... Feel, Felt, Found

*I just don't think the
Association can help me...*

*I can understand how you
might FEEL that way...*

I also FELT that way once, but...

REMEMBER!

Feel ... Felt ... Found ...

**This tells the potential member that you
are listening and that you understand.**

I've FOUND they really have a lot to offer me!

“The Association keeps bad teachers in the classroom.”

I understand how you feel, I once felt that way, too. What I've found is:

- The Association guarantees that every employee has a fair process for evaluation. The Association has worked with school districts to help struggling teachers be more successful. In addition to representation, oftentimes the Association helps find mentors and other resources for a teacher who is struggling. After all avenues have been exhausted, and a teacher is unwilling or unable to improve, the Association may counsel the teacher out of the profession. An employee who will not, or cannot, improve to a level of professional competency can and should be dismissed, according to a fair process. When this happens, the Association negotiates the terms of resignation. This is a win-win for everyone.., especially students.
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"Why should I join? I get all the benefits anyway."

I understand how you might feel that way. I feel differently. This is what I've found:

Our local Association and the UEA/NEA are well-run associations that provide services and benefits for members. Without dues paying members, there would be no public voice and advocate speaking from and for the unique perspective of our profession, our students, or our public schools. As a non-member you are standing on the sidelines. It is true that non-members benefit from improvements to our contract, but that's all they get. The Association provides so much more! As a member I have:

- Training on education issues such as classroom management & district policy, accountability & assessment, and other school reform issues.
 - A network of other professionals to help me advance my career
 - A full time staff advocate to help with school problems, contract issues, and similar concerns.
 - Help with legal representation and advice relating to anything about my job.
 - Member discounts, life & long-term care insurance, low interest loans and other financial benefits.

Because there are so many benefits of membership, I more than make up the cost of my dues when I utilize what is offered. As a member, I know I'm supporting public education and my profession, and that makes me feel like a professional.

“UEA doesn’t really care about kids.”

I understand how you might feel that way. I might feel that way, too, if I didn’t know about many of the UEA programs. I’ve found that:

- ❑ The UEA champions many causes that not only improve the working conditions of educators, but also improve the learning conditions for students. UEA understands that educator working conditions and student achievement are inseparable. For instance, lower class size means more individualized attention for students which, in turn, improves student achievement. Smaller class size, adequate textbooks and supplies, up-to-date technology, school counselors, and other support personnel are just some of the factors that help students be successful.
 - ❑ The UEA has been educating the public on important education issues affecting children. The UEA shares information on how investing in public education pays off for Utah’s economy and Utah’s future.
 - ❑ The UEA has its own foundation called the Children at Risk Foundation. Members make voluntary contributions to the Foundation and business partners give money as well. This money funds projects and scholarships to assist at-risk children. This foundation is staffed by educator volunteers so donations go directly to helping kids.
 - ❑ The UEA participates in the NEA sponsored Read Across America event. Leaders represent UEA on the Governor’s Initiative for Families Today, the Utah Family Center, PTA, and other child oriented organizations.
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"I like my local, but what does UEA do for all the dues I pay?"

I understand how you feel. I've had similar questions, too. What I've found is:

- ❑ While our local leaders focus on the concerns of our local and UniServ, UEA leaders tackle the statewide issues on our behalf. They are involved in legislative hearings, education coalition meetings, state school board meetings, and a host of other forums where our issues are discussed. They provide us with vital information, often even before superintendents have been notified.
 - ❑ We have UniServ offices throughout the state. A UniServ is a regional structure which provides services to local associations and members across the state. UniServ staff provide information and assistance on topics ranging from negotiations to leave policies. Our UniServ offices and staff are funded almost entirely through dues paid to NEA and UEA. We could not afford the advantage of having professional staff without the support of the national and state organizations.
 - ❑ Forty-seven percent of dues paid to UEA come back to us here in our UniServ. In addition, we receive other state and national monies through various services, programs, and grants.
 - ❑ The remaining 53% of dues paid to UEA provides for our legal counsel, public relations program, specialized professional staff with expertise in issues important to us, publications, research, and professional development. The state affiliate is what connects us all together. Otherwise, we'd be 43 different local associations all reinventing the wheel; all working in isolation. Together we have more support, information, and influence.
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“I don’t plan to teach very long/I might be moving in a year or two.”

I understand how you feel. I know many beginning teachers feel that way. What I’ve found is:

- ❑ There are many good reasons to become a member of the Association **right now**. Let me share several with you.
 - ❑ You are a professional. Every profession has a set of rights and responsibilities, including education. The Association defends your professional rights and helps you fulfill your professional responsibilities. More than likely you became an educator because you wanted more than just a job; you wanted a career-- and not just any career, but a professional career that makes a difference. Being a member of the Association allows you to make a difference for children across the state and across the nation. The Association advocates for the kinds of reforms that will have positive effects on student achievement and on children’s lives. Your membership strengthens our advocacy for educators, students and public schools; even if you are not in the profession as a lifetime career.
 - ❑ The Association provides for your professional needs. Your needs aren’t put on hold while you decide what to do. You really can’t afford to wait to join. Association members have access to a variety of financial and professional benefits that non-members do not. Many members find that they save enough through member benefits to offset their dues AND they have the satisfaction of knowing they are supporting the important work of their professional association. Members also receive representation, information and support from your UniServ (regional) offices around the state.
 - ❑ The Association provides for your professional growth. Members are informed and updated on educational issues and events, and consulted about their ideas and recommendations. In addition, the Association offers practical training on curriculum and classroom management as well as educational leadership and educational issues training.
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"I want to belong to a Union (or) a Professional Association"

I can understand how you feel. I've had feelings about the same thing. What I've found is that we don't have to choose:

- ❑ The Association was created in 1875 when educators united together to promote the profession and to end the isolation of teachers. By 1900, the Association broadened its scope to include improved working conditions and fair employment practices.
- ❑ In the 1960's, the elements of advocacy included enhanced compensation and benefits, job protection, involvement in school decision making, and the emergence of political activism.
- ❑ The 1990's brought the Association's emphasis to protecting and defending public education, raising standards of the profession, promoting effective school reform, and improving student achievement.
- ❑ Members in need of the advocacy of a union representative during the course of their career can find that advocacy from the Association. Likewise, members wanting to improve their teaching and leadership skills, seeking information about educational issues, or looking for advice about their career can have their needs met by the Association as well.

NEA/UEA is both a union and a professional association

"I don't think the Association should be involved in Politics."

I understand that you might feel that way. I wondered the same thing and this is what I've found:

- ❑ Since virtually every decision made about education is made by elected officials, we think it's in the best interests of our members and the profession to elect people who support public education. It is the elected policymakers who make decisions about our working conditions, salary and benefits, conditions of employment, and all factors pertaining to our public schools.
 - ❑ The Association interviews candidates for office and focuses on issues directly related to public education. When a recommendation is made on any race, the recommendation is exactly that: a recommendation to educators that the candidate's position on education issues is aligned with our priorities as a professional organization. You are, of course, free to support whomever you choose.
 - ❑ No dues money is used for political candidates or political parties. All financial support for the Association's political activities comes from voluntary contributions by members. The UEA's separate political action committee pools small contributions to make a significant difference in local and state races for education-friendly candidates and ballot initiatives.
 - ❑ Many members appreciate the efforts of their Association colleagues who interview each candidate. They don't have time or desire to do so themselves, so they rely on their leaders to provide them with the information.
 - ❑ Recommended candidates are not given direct cash donations. They are issued a line of credit and must submit receipts to receive reimbursement for campaign expenses. Only some recommended candidates access this line of credit. The value of the recommendation is not necessarily monetary. It is the strength of the UEA that is often the greatest value.
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"I can't afford it. I have too many bills."

That's how some people feel. Sometimes it feels like that to me, too. Then I remember:

- ❑ Membership doesn't COST, it PAYS. UEA members make Association membership a priority because they realize Association membership is a two-way street: the Association supports you, your profession, and your students as much as you support the Association. The Association supports not only individual educators, but Utah public schools and students.
- ❑ Membership in the Association is like auto, home, health, and life insurance: it's value cannot be underestimated if the occasion arises when its needed. Likewise, Association membership is your job insurance; invaluable if a situation arises that requires legal, or other professional help. You can't pay bills without a job.
- ❑ Members utilizing the wide variety of member benefits programs and discounts often save more than their total Association dues.
- ❑ Divide your dues by 365 days and figure the cost to you on a daily basis. It amounts to a little more than a dollar a day. That's a bargain when you realize what you get for the money:
 - A voice in issues that are important to your career.
 - Protection of your rights as an employee.
 - Educator Liability Insurance and timely access to representation.
 - Federal, state, and local lobbying to improve working conditions.
 - Professional development opportunities.
 - Publications offering information on a wide variety of current educational issues.
 - Professional staff to assist you with employment needs.
 - Comprehensive Professional Library.

And the most important benefit: The power to make positive changes in your profession.

"I like my local and UEA, but I don't like NEA."

I understand how you might feel that way, and others have felt that way, too. What I've found is:

- ❑ Because of our affiliation with the NEA, we have a national voice on critical national issues like the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (the so-called "No Child Left Behind Act"), IDEA and many other concerns that affect us right here in Utah's classrooms.
 - ❑ The NEA provides us with data, research, and national perspectives. For example, the NEA brought together much of the research on the economic advantages of investing in public education for UEA's "NO EXCUSES" campaign. Also with the NEA's help and resources, school trust lands are now more effectively managed and are providing additional resources to Utah public schools.
 - ❑ In addition with almost 3 million members, we are able to offer a 1.25 million dollar liability policy, professional staff available on a daily basis, and our own legal counsel. We are also able to provide many member benefits that we could not offer without a national affiliation.
 - ❑ Because of our national affiliation, our local and state leaders receive leadership and issues training and have the opportunity to network and share ideas with educators from around the country. As members, we benefit from this in each and every local.
 - ❑ As a smaller state affiliate, Utah receives substantial funding from the NEA to fund programs and projects we otherwise could not provide.
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The truth about the NEA

The following information is taken from an NEA booklet called **The Truth About NEA** and is intended to provide our members and potential members with responses to the most common criticisms leveled at the NEA.

- ❑ By advocating effectively and persistently for a strong public education system, the NEA has stepped on the toes of several powerful groups trying to dismantle public education in favor of a “for profit” system. It is not surprising, then, that there are attempts to discredit our organization with rumors or myths. We, the members the Association, determine Association resolutions and policies through open, fair, and democratic processes. The NEA and its almost 3 million members has and always will speak for itself.
- ❑ **Deception 1:** **The NEA wants to keep parents and communities out of schools.**
Truth: **The NEA encourages parental and community involvement in schools.**
- ❑ The NEA believes education is a team effort and educators know that children perform better in school when they receive support from home. The NEA works closely with a number of parent organizations, including the National PTA, that are diligent about building strong family-school-community partnerships. The NEA also welcomes alliances with businesses and organizations that support public education.
- ❑ **Deception 2:** **The NEA opposes parental choice and is out to destroy private and parochial schools.**
Truth: **The NEA believes in a strong public education system and supports schools that are held to the same standards of accountability as traditional schools.**
- ❑ The NEA believes in strengthening the nation’s public school system rather than expending money for alternatives. The Association believes that parents should be able to substitute or supplement education in privately supported schools, non public schools- but at their own expense. Public funding should only be used to support public schools. Like most Americans, the NEA opposes tax credits and other schemes that divert public funds to private and/or for-profit schools.
- ❑ The NEA supports charter schools that have the same standards and accountability as other public schools. But according to national studies, students attending many charter schools face less experienced teachers and get weaker instructional support. A number of charter schools have had serious legal and/or financial problems and poor academic track records. These situations can only harm students and the reputation of our public schools.

The truth about the NEA (Continued)

- ❑ **Deception 3: The NEA promotes homosexuality**
Truth: The NEA believes that schools should be safe for all students and teachers regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- ❑ The Association opposes discrimination and/or harassment against any group of students or employees. The Association believes schools should work to create learning and work environments free from anti-GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-gender) harassment and abuse. The Association believes schools should teach students to respect others and should intervene when any student is bullied or harassed.

- ❑ **Deception 4: The NEA supports abortion.**
Truth: The NEA supports reproductive freedom without government intervention.

- ❑ The NEA does not have a pro-abortion policy. Period. NEA's policy statement reads: "The National Education Association supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom." This means supporting the constitutional rights of all women to decide for themselves if they should have children, whether they are pro-choice or anti-abortion.

- ❑ Throughout the years, the NEA has defended a number of members who were harassed or terminated because they made the decision to have children-against the will of school authorities. One case involved a woman who became pregnant after being raped. She decided to have her child even though school administrators threatened to fire her. Here's an interesting fact: While the NEA has spent tens of thousands of dollars defending the rights of its members to choose childbirth over abortion, it has not spent one penny under its legal services program defending their right to have an abortion.

- ❑ **Deception 5: The NEA favors banning all guns and disarming citizens.**
Truth: The NEA supports common sense limits on the use and distribution of certain kinds of guns including handguns and semi-automatic rifles.

- ❑ The NEA isn't trying to ban all guns or stop recreational hunting by responsible adults. The NEA cares deeply about student safety and supports policies and programs that protect students from weapons and violence. Through its Gun Safety Campaign, the NEA is trying to reduce the incidence of gun violence and prevent school tragedies.

UEA'S Mission and Goals – The Strategic Plan

UEA's Mission Statement:

UEA's mission is to advance the cause of public education in partnership with others: strengthen the teaching profession, promote quality schools for Utah's children, and advocate the well-being of members.

□ UEA Strategic Plan Overview:

Goal 1.0: Advance the Well-Being of Members.

Goal 2.0: Strengthen the Teaching Profession.

Goal 3.0: Engage in Meaningful Partnerships that Promote Quality Public Schools.

Goal 4.0: Build Organizational Capacity.

□ **For more information please visit our web site www.utea.org or call the UEA office or call your UniServ Office:**

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Membership Recruitment Tips

Use these tips when talking to potential members:

- ❑ *Use your own story and reasons for joining. An enthusiastic, caring member is the best person to persuade a colleague to become part of the organization.
- ❑ *Listen You don't have to agree or disagree. Just say, "I hear what you're saying."
- ❑ *Keep asking and keep providing information. You don't have to have all the information in your head. Say, "I will bring you some information on that concern" or "I will find out and get back to you."
- ❑ *Use the suggestions in this book to respond to questions, concerns or objections.
- ❑ *Share your own stories and experiences.
- ❑ *Remember this is a conversation about being a part of our own professional organization, not a debate. An association is a group of people with a common purpose and UEA's mission of advocating for students, educators and public schools will ring true for almost every potential member. This is especially true if you can help the potential member connect what they would like for themselves and their students with the work of our association. A good place to start is to ask:

"What do you like about being an educator?"

Tip: Listen and share your experiences and thoughts.

"What are your frustrations?"

Tip: Here's where you can toot the Association's horn. No one else is working to improve public education like our Association.

- ❑ **Suggestions for keeping the dialogue going:**

"That was in the past. What can we do about it now?"

"I'll accept that."

"I hear what you're saying."

"Even if that were true..."

...what can we do to change it?"

...we will accomplish more together."

...I believe the Association is our best chance to change it."

...why don't you join us and help us change that?"



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