

Collective Bargaining in Public Education and State-Level Policy

Increased expectations for student outcomes – and higher standards of accountability – challenge policy-makers to examine how collective bargaining impacts education. It is time for a new dialogue between state policy-makers and teacher organizations. This conference is designed to engage key state policy-makers, national experts, union leaders, and educators to identify how state policy and the collective bargaining process may support the goal of improving student achievement.

Collective bargaining shapes much of education policy in school districts: for example, how resources are allocated, how teachers are assigned to schools and classes, the content of professional development, and the nature of teacher evaluation. Although bargaining is a district-level activity, it occurs within the scope of the state collective bargaining laws.

A contract provision negotiated in one district may have a ripple effect in other districts throughout a state. Alternatively, a state collective bargaining policy or education regulation may encourage (or discourage) local districts and unions to adopt (or refrain from) a bargaining outcome that the state desires.

Shaping local bargaining through state policy represents a central opportunity for state policy-makers to influence local negotiated outcomes. Collective bargaining should not only be the concern of superintendents and local union leaders, it must be on the policy radar screen of governors, state legislators, and state education commissioners.

A New Dialogue: Collective Bargaining in Public Education offers a first step toward examining the role of state policy-makers, teacher unions, and local school districts in creating the conditions and supports essential to promoting student success. As co-sponsors of this conference, we invite you to share your experiences and insights to enrich and deepen this critical dialogue.

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