Implementation Spotlight: Interest Based Bargaining in Medfield: Communication, Collaboration, and Focus on Improvement

This month’s Spotlight focuses on how the school committee, district administrators, and union leaders in Medfield used Interest-Based Bargaining to negotiate a new contract. The process allowed the parties to work through complex areas of bargaining in a manner that fostered collaboration. Co-authors: Jeffrey J. Marsden, Superintendent of Schools; Madeline Chamberlain, President of Medfield Teachers’ Association; and Joan Dion, Past President of Medfield Teachers’ Association

In the fall of 2013 the Medfield School Committee, Medfield Teachers’ Association and Superintendent decided to explore the idea of using Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) to negotiate a successor agreement for their contract ending in June of that school year. This was a departure from the longstanding model the parties utilized for contract negotiations. The timing seemed right as a new superintendent and a new union president were looking to change the long held culture of focusing negotiations only on compensation and avoiding discussion of how to improve contract language in other areas. The process helped the Medfield Teachers’ Association establish a solid cooperative relationship with the new superintendent and address the needs and concerns that had been bubbling beneath the surface. IBB also helped the teachers and the new superintendent to get a clear sense of each other’s values and needs. The parties first agreed to participate in 16 hours of IBB training supported by the Massachusetts Education Partnership. At the conclusion of the training the parties needed to decide if they would proceed with IBB or revert back to a traditional bargaining model.

The IBB training was focused on raising well defined “issues” (or problems) and then moving toward each side’s “interests” and “options.” The group brainstormed solutions and eliminated “options” that were not viable for either side. One of the most valuable training sessions occurred when we participated in a negotiation simulation that forced the group to go through the entire IBB process. It not only gave us a window into the process, but also a deeper understanding of how different a simple issue looks through the lenses of school committee, teachers and administrators. Everyone agreed that there were times where the training seemed redundant, but the establishment of positive relationships and trust during the training proved beneficial for the entire contract negotiation process.

Issues around “equity”, “communication”, “professional development”, “school calendar”, “educator evaluation” and “compensation” dominated our conversations. Each of these items was addressed using the IBB process and we were able to make significant changes to 16 articles in the contract.

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Given the amount of contract language that needed updating, a traditional model of exchanging proposals would have been frustrating, if not outright impossible. IBB is time consuming, but working together created solutions to contract issues neither side could have fully developed on their own. Both sides feel that collaboration created the best solutions. We are satisfied with our contract’s updated language and, perhaps in the spirit of IBB, our newly established collaborative committees.

Our advice to other districts would be to take a close look at IBB as a process to work through issues that are particularly difficult. IBB allows for the conversations to get beyond the superficial and identify root causes of problems. Most of these root causes would never surface through a traditional bargaining model. For example, issues around district-determined measures (DDMs) and Student Impact Ratings can be discussed beyond the typical sound bites that each side uses.

A few considerations for colleagues considering IBB:

- Commitment to training and use of a facilitator are critical in this process.
- It is important for the union to communicate with the membership throughout the entire process. IBB is such a departure from the norm; it sometimes can leave people skeptical of the intent and process.
- Interestingly, we found IBB to very cumbersome when trying to finalize compensation. We actually finished compensation using a traditional model.

Clearly IBB is not for every district. If you are looking for a quick process with few conversations, and little accountability for your proposals and beliefs then IBB is not for you. However, if you have a supportive school committee, along with a leadership team and teachers’ union that want to collaborate for improvement, then IBB is worth the time and effort.

Interested in learning more about IBB? Contact the Massachusetts Education Partnership about the no-cost Interest-Based Bargaining Institute that Medfield attended or download the application here.

**Video Resource Library and Calibration Protocols**

ESE’s Educator Effectiveness Video Resource Library is a consolidation of all the video content produced by ESE’s Center for Educator Effectiveness in one place to support districts in building knowledge and expertise across all levels of the educator growth continuum. Highlights include:

- The TEEM Video Series, a profile of transformative educator evaluation implementation in four MA districts;
- The Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework Video Series, a nuts-and-bolts overview of the key features of the five-step evaluation cycle and the two ratings;
- Videos on teacher leadership, high quality professional development, developing common measures, and collecting student and staff feedback; and
- The newest resource in the collection, a Calibration Video Library of 42 videos of classroom instruction in K-12 in four content areas. The library includes calibration protocols and activities that can be used with the videos, such as a new workshop designed to help educators develop a shared understanding of quality practice and evaluators to provide consistent, accurate evaluation experiences.
Flexible Forms of Feedback

Regularly reflects on the effectiveness of lessons, units, and interactions with students, both individually and with colleagues, and uses insights gained to improve practice and student learning.

- MA Model Teacher Rubric, Element IV-A.1. Reflective Practice, Proficient Level

What does reflective practice look like? For educators in Massachusetts, incorporating student feedback into the evaluation process has been an opportunity to home in on that definition. After gathering student feedback via survey last year, Aaron Stone, of Boston Public Schools, said, “For the first time in my career, goal setting actually meant something. I was able to use data from the students who are impacted by my practice each day. Further, students stood witness to observe their feedback being implemented.” You can read Aaron’s longer reflection on using student feedback in the December 3rd issue of Teachers’ Top 3 from ESE.

ESE is happy to share a number of new resources designed to support reflective practice through the collection of student and staff feedback. We have revised the Massachusetts Model Student Feedback Surveys, developed a series of mini-forms of just 8-10 items each, and developed an Adapted Model Survey to use with students with more significant cognitive disabilities.

Looking to administer the Model Survey online? The logistics of administering the Model Surveys just got a lot easier, as well. The ESE Model Feedback Surveys, including the new mini-forms, are now available through Google Templates for easy, individualized administration.

Finally, remember that surveys are not the only way to gather staff and student feedback. Additional guidance and resources are available on ESE’s Student and Staff Feedback website. The Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice also includes a series of alternate approaches to gathering feedback including student and staff feedback discussion protocols.

Developing Effective Mentors and Supervising Practitioners

In November, ESE hosted five regional meetings focused on aligning educators’ experiences from pre-service to employment. Over 200 participants from Massachusetts districts and educator preparation programs attended the meetings. The meetings focused on the similarities and differences between teacher leaders serving as mentors and supervising practitioners (also known as cooperating teachers). Discussions highlighted opportunities for collaboration as districts and preparation programs consider the selection, training, and ongoing support of educators in these roles.

Additionally, participants received an overview of the new Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP) and how it aligns with the 5-Step Cycle, evidence collection practices, and the rubric used for educator evaluation. Districts were able to see how the expectations and outcomes from CAP can be used to target their mentoring and induction programs. For example, CAP does not focus on Standard III: Family and Community Engagement since not all teaching candidates will have extensive interactions with families during their student teaching experiences. This provides a signal to districts that beginning teachers will need more targeted support in this area and can build that into their mentoring and induction programs. An overview of mentoring and induction requirements, along with a reminder about the annual report districts will submit to ESE in July, were also shared during the meetings.

ESE is committed to supporting district and preparation programs partnerships to strengthen the alignment of pre-service and in-service expectations and to ensure all of our educators are ready to be effective with students on day one of employment. Materials from the regional meetings are available on the Induction and Mentoring webpage.

Educator Surprised with $25,000 Award

Michelle Ryan, a social studies teacher at Randolph High School, was in tears November 13 after being surprised with a 2015 Milken Educator Award, which includes a $25,000 check from the Milken Family Foundation. Secretary of Education James A. Peyser and Dr. Jane Foley, senior vice president of the Milken Educator Awards, presented Ms. Ryan with the award at a school assembly where she was cheered on by her students and previous Massachusetts Milken winners, including Jasmine Lellock, who won the award in 2005 when she, too, was a teacher at Randolph High.

Ms. Ryan is one of up to 40 recipients across the country this year. "I am only here in this school today because of these students," she said. Watch a video of the surprise award assembly and read more online.
Apply to be an Ed Prep Reviewer!

Reviewers are responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and evaluating evidence of educator preparation program effectiveness. Together with ESE, reviewers help to guarantee that educator preparation in MA results in effective educators ready to support the success of all students.

This is an exciting and selective opportunity to engage in a meaningful professional learning opportunity, earn PD points, and collaborate with education leaders and professionals.

Application deadline is Wednesday, February 24: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/reviewers/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/reviewers/)

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**Update on the Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL)**

In October, ESE launched full implementation of the Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL) following a field trial of the assessment in 2014-15. All principal and assistant principal candidates seeking licensure are now required to complete and pass four performance tasks that closely reflect the work of school leaders. The performance tasks will be scored by external scorers who will use cut scores set by ESE to determine success on the tasks.

Principal candidates are now able to register for PAL and to upload their task work products to be scored. Resources, such as the Candidate Assessment Handbook, are available by accessing the new “Sign Up to Learn More” featured on [ma-pal.com](http://ma-pal.com).

To support school leaders who are mentoring principal/assistant principal candidates, ESE staff and the Principal Advisory Cabinet developed the PAL Toolkit for School Leader Mentors. This toolkit provides brief overviews about the assessment, convenient references to PAL resources, and descriptions of what implementing PAL looks like in a school. This toolkit, along with other resources and information regarding PAL, is available on our website.

If you have questions regarding PAL, please email: [PAL@doe.mass.edu](mailto:PAL@doe.mass.edu).

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**Questions or Comments are Always Welcome at EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu**

Contact the Educator Evaluation Team

Claire Abbott, Evaluation Training Program, Implementation Support, Student and Staff Feedback
Susan Berglund, Evaluation Liaison to Level 3 and Level 4 Districts
Matt Holloway, Evaluation Training Program, Evaluator Capacity, Student and Staff Feedback
Kat Johnston, Teacher Leadership, Communications, Implementation Support
Simone Lynch, Assistant Director, Center for Educator Effectiveness
Ron Noble, Educator Evaluation Manager
Craig Waterman, District-Determined Measures, Evaluator Capacity

Contact the Educator Development Team at EducatorDevelopment@doe.mass.edu.

Contact the Educator Preparation and Assessment Team at EdPrep@doe.mass.edu.

Contact the Office of Educator Licensure at 781-338-6600 (Monday-Friday 9am-12pm & 2pm-5pm).

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is committed to preparing all students for success in the world that awaits them after high school. Whether you are a student, parent, educator, community leader, taxpayer, or other stakeholder interested in education, we invite you to join us in this endeavor. **We are guided by this mission...** “To strengthen the Commonwealth’s public education system so that every student is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education, compete in the global economy, and understand the rights and responsibilities of American citizens, and in so doing, to close all proficiency gaps.”

And by these goals...

- Strengthen curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Improve educator effectiveness
- Turn around the lowest performing districts and schools
- Use data and technology to support student performance
- Support the social, emotional, and health needs of students and families