



# Branch Leadership

## Part 1

Hayssam Hulays  
Jason Kunin  
Esther Uhm



## Agenda

- **Branch President's Role as a School-Based Union Leader**
- **What's at Stake Politically**
- **Organizing Your Branch**

**In your experience, what is the primary role as a branch president?**

# Role of the OSSTF Toronto Branch President

- The Branch President is an essential leadership role within the OSSTF structure
- Serves as a direct liaison between the Branch members and the Bargaining Unit



# Role of the OSSTF Toronto Branch President

- Advocacy: Advocates for the rights and interests of members in the school, based on the Collective Agreement.
- Acts as the key representative for teachers at the school level
- Communication: Ensures effective communication between the Bargaining Unit Executive and the branch members.
- Works with the School Staffing Committee to monitor staffing procedures and compliance with collective agreements .

**What is one challenge you've faced recently in your role as Branch President?**

**How did you address or are addressing this issue?**

# What's at stake, and how did we get here?





*Once upon a time...*

- School board funding was raised locally through property taxes
- Trustees brokered between boards and communities to set the “mill rate”



- In 1997, the Mike Harris government passed Bill 160, which redirected all local education taxes directly into provincial coffers
- It then got doled back to the boards based on a stingy funding formula designed to starve the system
- By 2002, according to Mordechai Rozanski, the education system had lost \$2 billion





- Dalton McGuinty, who styled himself the “education premier,” reinjected some targeted funding to things such Special Education, ESL, French language instruction, etc. to ameliorate the meager funding formula
- They also expanded kindergarten to full-day
- Otherwise the Liberals left the Mike Harris funding formula in place, though it got rejigged as the “Grants for Student Needs” (GSNs), which are released every spring
- This got rejigged again in the spring of 2024 (now called “Core Funding”)

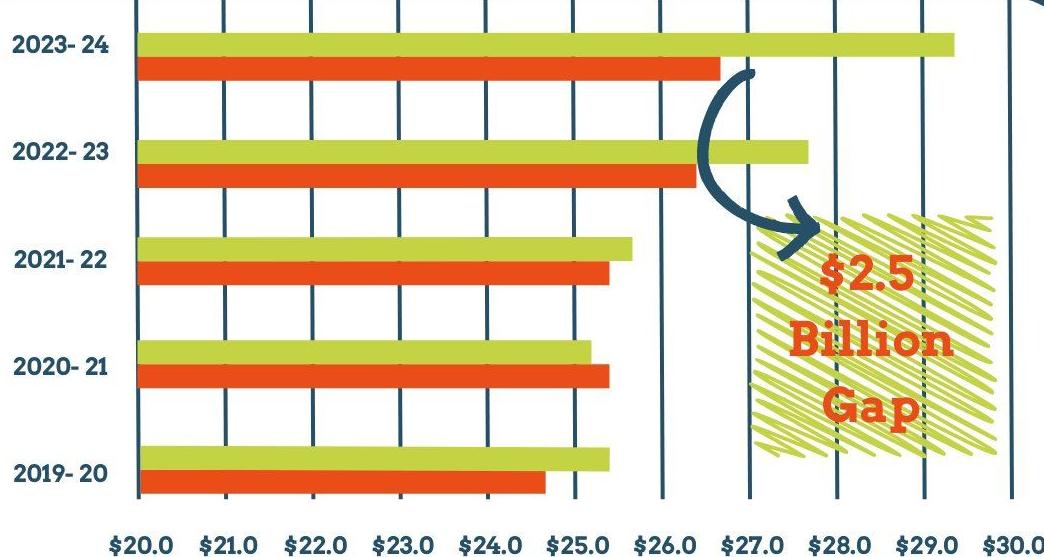


- In 2019, Doug Ford reduced the funded average for classrooms from 1 teacher for 22 to 1 teacher for 28 students, a move that would see school board funding slashed drastically
- As a result of successful political action, including strike action, that got us considerable public support, the Ford government was forced to walk that back to 1:23 students per class
- The resulting loss of funding has still been devastating, if slower to be felt
- Since 2018, funding per student has been reduced by \$1500

# SCHOOL BOARD FUNDING IN ONTARIO (GSN)

## WHAT IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN \* VS. WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS

\$ BILLION



\*What it should have been if 2018-19 GSN amounts had been adjusted for inflation and enrolment year after year

Source: Ministry of Education, GSN Projections 2022-23, 2023-24; Statistics Canada, Table: 18-10-0004-01; author's calculations

## Table 1: How many classroom educators will each school board have lost by the next school year?

Estimated total cuts in classroom staffing for the 2024-2025 school year due to funding changes since 2018-2019, board by board. Numbers represent classroom educators.

Search in table

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School board/Conseil scolaire	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12	Total per board
Thunder Bay Catholic DSB	-4	-3	-8	-15
Toronto Catholic DSB	-55	-40	-109	-204
Toronto DSB	-173	-110	<b>-295</b>	<b>-578</b>
Trillium Lakelands DSB	-12	-8	22	-42
Upper Canada DSB	-20	-13	-34	-67
Upper Grand DSB	-26	-17	-45	-87
Waterloo Catholic DSB	-21	-13	-31	-65
Waterloo Region DSB	-47	-30	-83	-160
Wellington Catholic DSB	-6	-4	-10	-20
Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB	-14	-10	-32	-56
York Catholic DSB	-24	-22	-75	-122
York Region DSB	-72	-64	-173	-309
Provincial Totals	-1,412	-984	-2,594	-4,990



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Source: Education Funding Technical Papers 2018-19 and 2024-25; Core Education Funding Projections for the 2024-25 School Year; EFIS Revised Estimates 2023-24; calculations by the author. • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)



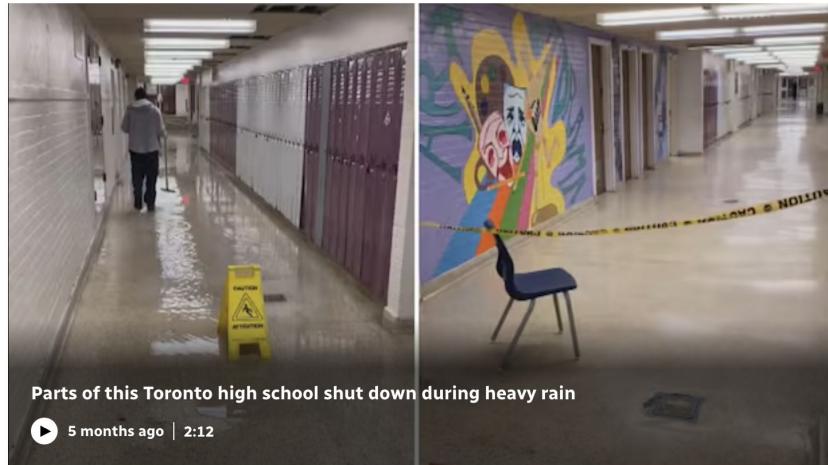
Ricardo Tranjan

# Ontario needs to tackle \$16.8B school repair backlog: advocates

Minister of education says school boards need to 'do their job'



Vanessa Balintec · CBC News · Posted: May 29, 2024 2:11 PM EDT | Last Updated: May 29



Parts of this Toronto high school shut down during heavy rain

▶ 5 months ago | 2:12

Sticky Video

## Schools don't have provincial funds to remove roof panels that closed Ontario Science Centre

OCTOBER 13, 2024

Roughly one in 12 Ontario schools have concrete panels in their roofs that are made of the same material that the Ford government said put parts of the science centre at risk of collapse. Despite that, the Ministry of Education isn't giving school boards special funding streams to remove the...

[Read more](#)

[Home](#) [Early Years](#) [Elementary School](#) [High School](#) [Adult Learners](#) [Parents & Caregivers](#) [Community](#)

### About Us

- ▶ Director of Education
- ▶ Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression
- Urban Indigenous Education Centre
- Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement
- ▶ Human Rights
- ▶ Accessibility
- School Year Calendar
- Professional Activity (PA) Days
- ▶ Policies, Procedures & Forms
- ▶ Business Services
- ▶ Employment
- ▶ School Cash Online
- ▶ Facility Services
- Open Data at TDSB
- ▶ Strategy & Planning

## TDSB's Repair Needs Backlog Hits \$4 billion

The Ministry of Education hires external consultants to inspect each school every five years. That means that 20 per cent of our schools are inspected every year. As part of this assessment, components that need to be repaired or replaced are identified.

The TDSB uses this information for capital renewal planning purposes, to refresh the Facility Condition Index (FCI) at each location inspected and update the Renewal Needs Backlog (RNB) information. We have traditionally updated the backlog in September of every year, based on information gathered in the previous round of assessments.

The Ministry of Education has now moved to a calendar year. As a result, the TDSB will now update its RNB in January of every year instead of September.

We have completed the calculations based on the 2017 assessments and as of January 2018, our RNB is \$4.05 billion.

Although we continue to address issues through various funding grants (Renewal, School Condition Improvement, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, etc.), our renewal needs continue to exceed our funding; therefore, our backlog continues to grow.

To learn more about the TDSB's Renewal Needs Backlog and Facility Condition Index, please visit: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Accountability/Renewal-Needs-Backlog-and-Facility-Condition-Index>.

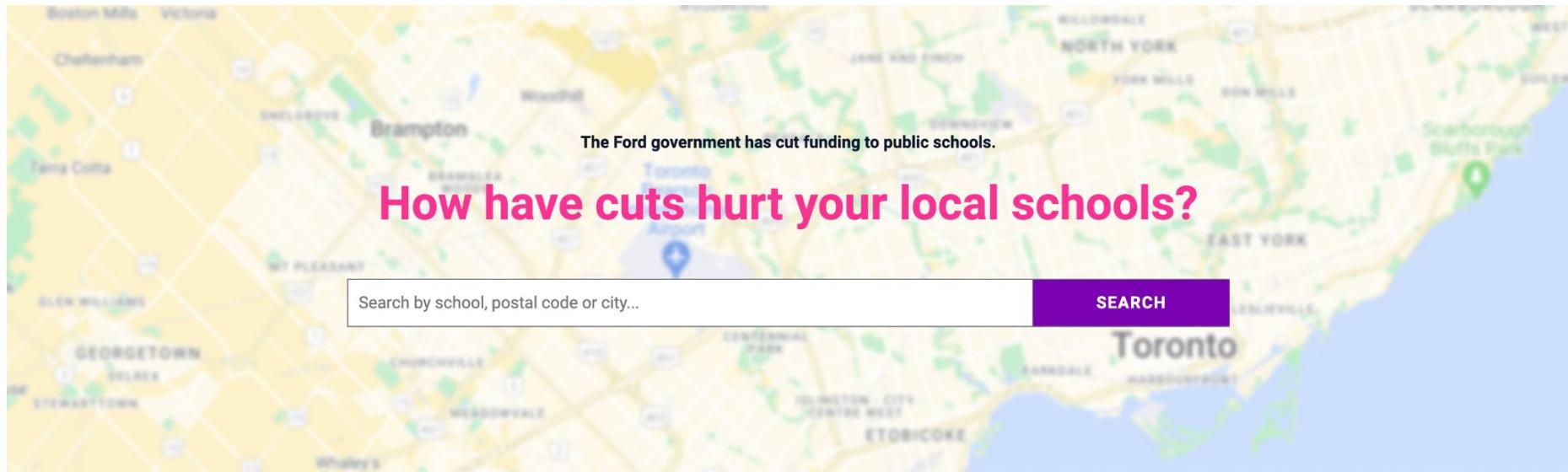
# \$400,000



**“While everyone is entitled to their own political opinions, they are not entitled to disseminate political biases into our classrooms.”**

- Jill Dunlop

<https://www.buildingbetterschools.ca/>



# Campaigns





2024-2027

## Strategic Action Plan

### Three pillars:

#### 1. Promote & Protect Public Education

- Pressurizing public support for public education funding
- Mobilizing to defeat the Conservatives in 2026
- Post-election strategy for a pro-education Ontario
- Broadening international coalitions

#### 2. Defend & Support Members

#### 3. Mobilize Members & Engage Communities

- Engaging Members to build capacity and community power
- Transforming Member engagement



# SPEAK UP!

**FundOurSchools.ca**



We  our schools!

**BUT** THERE ARE PROBLEMS THAT NEED URGENT ATTENTION!



**Tell your story. It's important!**

As we ramp up our efforts to pressure the government to take effective action on education, raising awareness of the situation in our schools is a priority. The campaign has the data needed to make our case, however first-hand information, straight from our schools, is needed as well. That's why stories from people throughout the education system are so important.

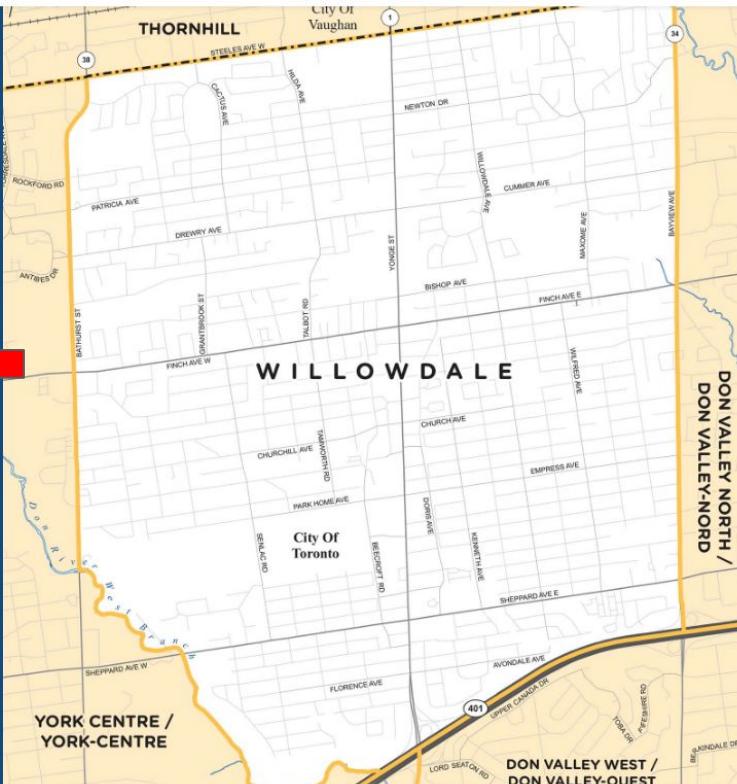
[www.fundourschools.ca](http://www.fundourschools.ca)



# Our Community

## WILLOWDALE

[CLICK TO VIEW FULL MAP](#)



**Drewry, Earl Haig, Newtonbrook**



**Won by  
2115 votes  
in 2022.**



# Our Community

SCARBOROUGH CENTRE

[CLICK TO VIEW FULL MAP](#)



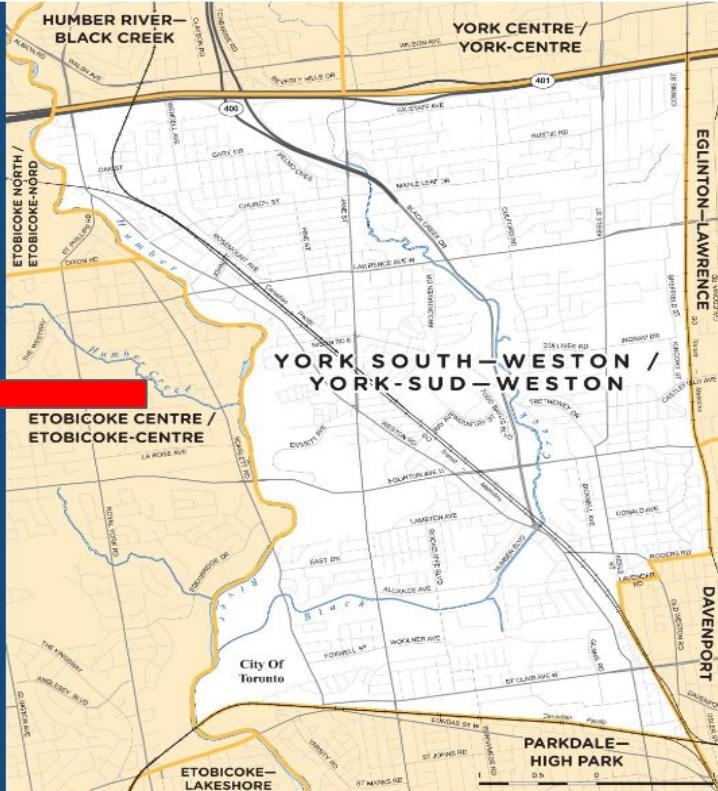
**Won by  
1793 votes  
in 2022.**

**David & Mary Thompson, Wexford CI,  
Winston Churchill, Parkview Alt**



## Our Community YORK SOUTH-WESTON

[CLICK TO VIEW FULL MAP](#)



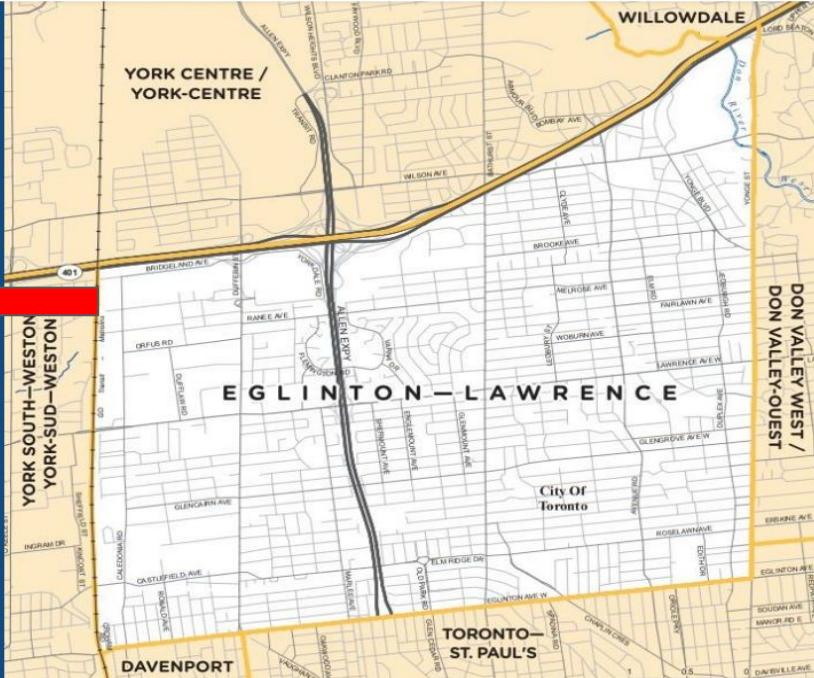
Won by 796  
votes in  
2022.

Frank Oake, Weston CI, York Humber, York Memorial

# Our Community

## EGLINTON—LAWRENCE

[CLICK TO VIEW FULL MAP](#)



Won by only  
524 votes in  
2022.

Forest Hill CI

John Polyani

Yorkdale ALC

**Conservative education funding for 2024-25 is  
BELOW THE RATE OF INFLATION!**  
This means even deeper cuts to staffing and programs in our schools.



Stan Cho  
MPP for Willowdale  
103 Sheppard Ave E  
North York, ON M2N 1R7  
416-732-9278  
stan.cho@pc.ca

- MPP Stan Cho has FAILED to deliver education funding urgently needed by schools in Willowdale.
- Please tell him: "This is NOT OK!"



**Conservative education funding for 2024-25 is  
BELOW THE RATE OF INFLATION!**  
This means even deeper cuts to staffing and programs in our schools.



David Smith  
MPP for Scarborough Centre  
29851 Lawrence Ave E  
Scarborough, ON M1R 2Z4  
416-295-0070  
david.smith@pc.ca

- MPP David Smith has FAILED to deliver education funding urgently needed by schools in Scarborough Centre.
- Please tell him: "This is NOT OK!"

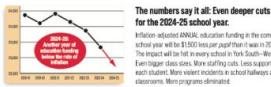


**Conservative education funding for 2024-25 is  
BELOW THE RATE OF INFLATION!**  
This means even deeper cuts to staffing and programs in our schools.



Michael Ford  
MPP for York South-Weston  
1000 Yonge St, Suite 1000  
Toronto, ON M5B 1W8  
416-343-7984  
michael.ford@pc.ca

- MPP Michael Ford has FAILED to deliver education funding urgently needed by schools in York South-Weston.
- Please tell him: "This is NOT OK!"



**Conservative education funding for 2024-25 is  
BELOW THE RATE OF INFLATION!**  
This means even deeper cuts to staffing and programs in our schools.



Robin Martin  
MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence  
29851 Lawrence St.  
Toronto, ON M3B 3S6  
416-295-0070  
robin.martin@pc.ca

- MPP Robin Martin has FAILED to deliver education funding urgently needed by schools in Eglinton-Lawrence.
- Please tell her: "This is NOT OK!"



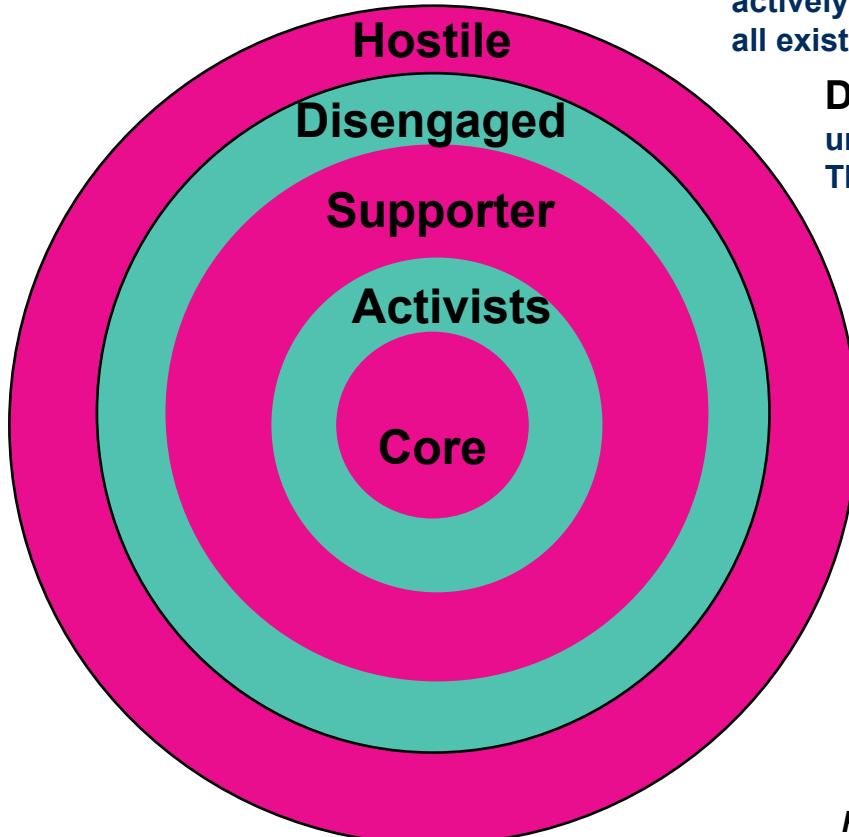
# What we've done:

- Collected stories
- Flyered target ridings
- Held rallies
- Supported school walk-ins
- Met with supportive trustees

# **The goal of worksite organizing is...**

- To build collective power.**
- To practice for the “big fights.”**
- To share the work.**
- To move workers closer to the centre of the bullseye.**

# Towards the Bullseye



**Hostile** -> People who are outside the circle who aren't just actively hostile to union who physically want it to be removed from all existence.

**Disengaged/Unengaged** -> People who don't see the union as a factor in their lives so they don't participate. OR They've never been engaged or made aware

**Supporters** -> People who will wear a button or sign a petition, but don't take responsibility for getting anyone else involved

**Activists** > People who can be counted on to help when an issue heats up. They will take responsibility to get the word out and will ask other people to take action too

**Core** -> People who are always thinking about organizing and how to get others involved, even on their time off (elected leaders or worksite representatives)

# Intersectional Organizing

**"Organizing people as workers is not enough. What happens to workers on the job is intimately connected to what happens in their communities, in their schools, and in their lived environments. It is also connected to their gender, race ethnicity, ability, and citizenship... In reality, intersectionality is a straightforward description of the complex challenges real-life people are facing every day."**

**(Smiley and Gupta, 2022: 61-62)**

# Scenario

An email from your Principal announces the school board's directive for an immediate adoption of a new exam supervision schedule.

While the new schedule complies with the collective agreement, it doesn't align with the needs of staff or students, leading to dissatisfaction among many staff members.

Additionally, the schedule appears inequitable, with some staff having lighter duties while others are disproportionately affected. For a few staff, including yourself, the extra supervision duties are creating personal challenges. Overall, the changes are causing confusion, as the previous schedule seemed to work effectively.

# Identifying your priority member

We are going to introduce you to 4 members at your branch who you are considering bringing onto a team to fight the exam supervision schedule.

Work with your group to determine which of these members is your priority for bringing towards the bullseye.

Who is next on your list?

Who would be last?

What are the criteria you are using to choose your priority member?

# Scenario

05:00

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Additionally, the schedule appears inequitable, with some staff having lighter duties while others are disproportionately affected. For a few staff, including yourself, the extra supervision duties are creating personal challenges, such as increased daycare costs, which impose a financial strain. Overall, the changes are causing confusion, as the previous schedule seemed to work effectively.

# Todd

I was active in the union early in my career, carrying the flag on the strike line. But then I had three kids and got busy. I recently started joining several committees at school. For so long, I was just clocking in, and now I figure I have to do something to make a good impression on management, or they're going to keep taking advantage of me.

I'm also unsure about some of the social justice ideas the younger members are discussing. I believe unions should focus on protecting members, negotiating contracts, and getting rid of that exam supervision schedule.

Lee

I don't have time for union stuff. I'm five years away from retiring, and I've worked in over eight schools across the board. I have been the chair of the Social Committee at all of those schools, so that's a lot of retirement parties that I'm planning and attending.

And I like to keep things cheerful. Union conversations always seem confrontational.

# Kulbir

I've been at 9 schools in 5 years. I finally got a contract after reorganization this Fall. I'm exhausted from interviewing over and over again and volunteering for extras and always trying to make a good impression on administrators.

I'm thinking of giving up teaching entirely, but I've worked so hard and the kids make it bearable. I didn't think the job would be this hard, but there's so many things wrong with our working conditions. Don't even get me started on the exam supervision schedule. Who thought of that?

I don't know if anything will fix the system. Do you?

# Anna

I'm not afraid to speak my mind, I'll tell you that. Not with administrators, not with my time release union staff. Sometimes it means I make enemies, but so what? The flaws in the system need calling out.

And my ideas make a difference — the new signs in the parking lot, for example. I thought about going into administration for a while, thinking maybe that would be a way to make a change, but our school board is so toxic right now.

Speaking of toxic, what is the union going to do about this exam supervision schedule?

# Choose your fighter!

- Apathy does not exist
- Our problem solving might be leaving members disengaged
- Our work and solution is to find out what our members care about
- Build relationships and invite them to make change
- Taking Action

# The Organizing Conversation

**Organizing conversations  
are tactical and focused on  
a goal.**

**They move members  
towards taking collective  
action and building worker  
power.**



# Hosting an Organizing Conversation

**Keep to open-ended questions**

**Ensure you are actively listening 80/20**

**Find the access point - what issues matter to the member?**

# Check-In

- Introduce yourself to members and contextualize the conversation
- Assess where a member stands on an issue and listen to their answer

What did it feel like when that happened?

What's work like this school year for you?

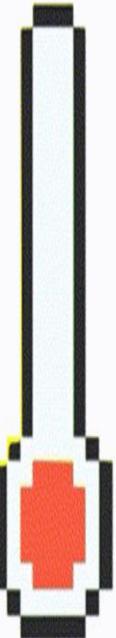
Wow. How long's that been going ... is that okay with you?

# What's a Structure Test?

**Organizing actions occur within the context of a union. Individual members self-select whether to be a part of your organizing structure by participating in actions.**

**A “structure test” is any action where organizers ask membership to participate as a way of both building member capacity and courage. It also helps determine how many members have self-selected into the union’s organizing structure.**

**Structure tests help you identify gaps in your organizing structure, so you can move towards having more members included in future actions.**



# What's a Structure Test?

**Large:** a “hot” commitment with an element of personal cost. E.g., bringing someone with you, attend a rally in another town, protest outside your school, delegating your board

**Medium:** may involve taking time out of your workday and being public facing. E.g., sending a letter or email, going to a union meeting about the issue

**Small:** a structure test that should be easy for most members to complete. E.g., signing a petition, wearing a sticker, taking action on a grievance

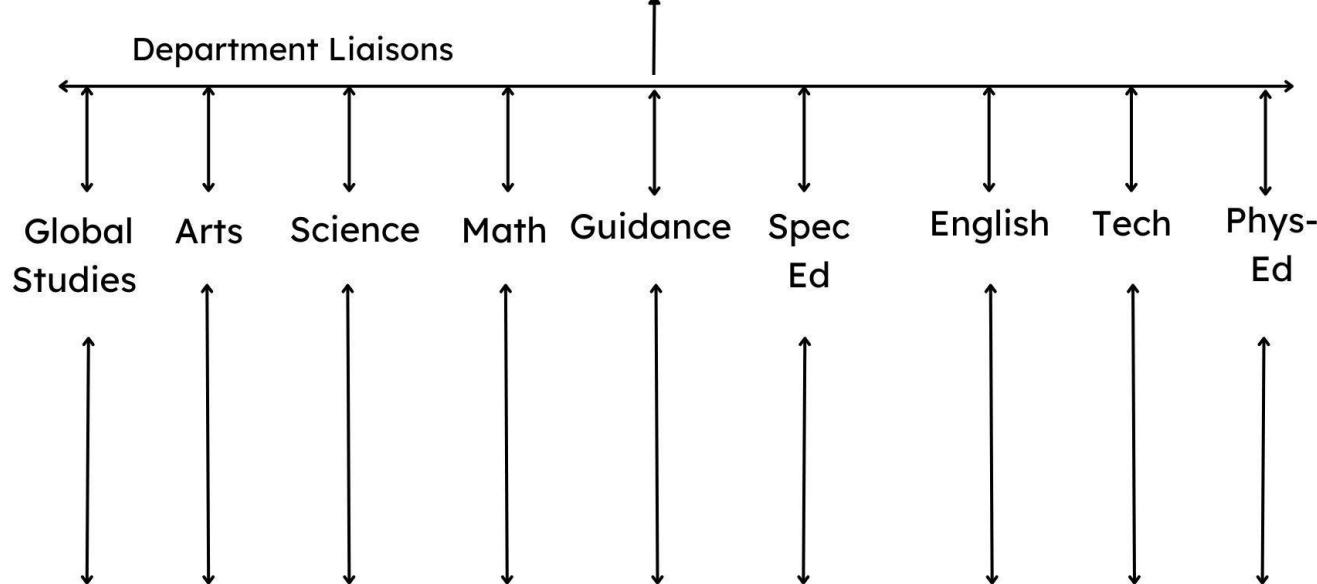
# Member Mapping

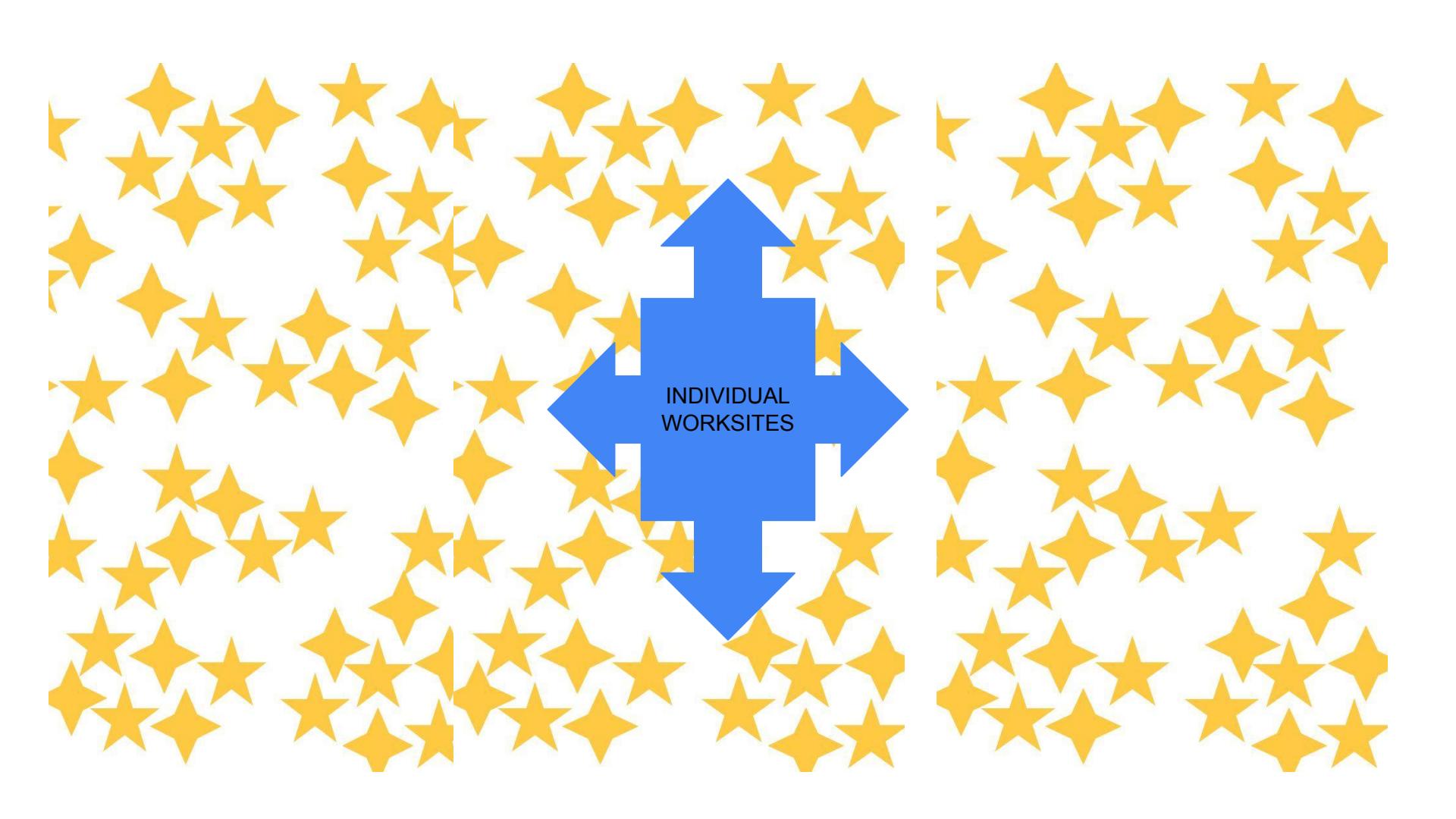
Who can we bring toward the core?

Good question. Who should have the organizing conversation?



# Branch President





INDIVIDUAL  
WORKSITES

Main Building



Phys Ed Gyms

Art Building



# Where and When Organizing Conversations Could Take Place

## Workplace

- Consider different spots in workplace
  - Where do staff congregate? Where is their office?
- Central work spots
  - Breakroom, lunchroom, parking lot
- When ?
  - Before work, at break, after work
- Other considerations
  - Before and after a staff meeting
  - Social gathering outside of work

# When organizing at your Branch

## Don't ...

- Reveal confidential information about staff or students
- Direct staff to take “job action”
- Work in isolation

# When organizing at your Branch

## Do...

- Loop in your Executive Officer and Jason Kunin the Communication and Political Action Committee Liaison
- Think strategically
- Think collectively

- 1) What are your top 3 takeaways from this presentation?**
- 2) How do you plan to use this information to begin organizing in your branch?**

# What can you do?

