



# EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

## **RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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*Walter P. Reuther, UAW President, unveiling the UAW Education Center at Black Lake to UAW leadership, media, and other guests in March 1970. Tragically, two months later and before the Center's official opening, Reuther, his wife May, Center architect Oskar Stonorov, and three others were killed in an airplane crash en route to Black Lake. In honor, the Center was renamed the Walter and May Reuther UAW Family Education Center.*



# UAW Standing Committees

Local union standing committees are the tools through which the policies and programs aimed at strengthening our union are put to work. Article 44 of the UAW Constitution requires each local union to establish these eleven identified standing committees:

- Citizenship and Legislative (CAP)
- Civil and Human Rights
- Community Services
- Conservation and Recreation
- Constitution and Bylaws
- Consumer Affairs
- Education
- Organizing
- Union Label
- Veterans
- Women's

Our union has a strong view of these committees because we have always looked at members as a whole: We represent people with lives and interests that continue long after leaving work. Members live in communities, are consumers, and need clean water and air. We are affected by the decisions of politicians, and we believe in fairness for all. Our standing committees reflect these values.

In addition to fulfilling our union's goals, another benefit of standing committees is that they are also helpful tools for building solidarity. Many rank-and-file members become activists through standing committees. The Education Committee has a vital role in helping members navigate that journey.



## ARTICLE 44 - Local Union Committees:

*The Local Union shall have the following standing committees: Citizenship and Legislative, Civil and Human Rights, Community Services, Conservation and Recreation, Constitution and Bylaws, Consumer Affairs, Education, Organizing, Union Label, Veterans, and Womens, and other such committees as they deem necessary. All committees should be appointed or elected, subject to the discretion of the local union or unit workplace organization in the case of an amalgamated local union.*



# Education: Essential to Our Union

All eleven UAW standing committees do important work. However, participation in local union education committees can be especially gratifying.

Education is one of the oldest standing committees. In fact, it is one of the original four that were named in our first convention. Our founding members realized that our union's power came from members who were motivated and active. For that to happen, we had to stress education and awareness.

The importance of education was enshrined in the UAW Constitution during our founding convention in 1935. Resolution 198 stated:

“One of the express purposes of organization of the United Auto Workers is that of education of its members, and a sound organization is dependent on an informed membership and a trained leadership, therefore, be it resolved that the UAW ensure an adequate educational program.”

Because education was enshrined during the first convention, it was crucial to include language in our constitution to fortify its importance. Article 2, Section 4 of the UAW Constitution defines education's significance to our union:

“To educate our membership in the history of the Labor Movement and to develop and maintain an intelligent and dignified membership; to vote and work for the election of candidates and the passage of improved legislation in the interest of all labor. To enforce existing laws; to work for the repeal of those which are unjust to Labor...”

Article 27, Section 1 of the UAW Constitution then lays out the essential subjects of education necessary for a strong, informed union membership:

“Education shall be a mandatory part of the business of the International Union and each Local Union, particularly education in labor history, labor problems, the objectives of the International Union and the problems of the International Union, its members, and their families.”

Finally, Article 27, Section 5 of our UAW Constitution further defines the education committee's role. It states:

“It shall be mandatory that each local union set up an Education Committee. The duties of this Committee shall be to promote all branches of education affecting the welfare of the individual members, the Local Union, the International Union, and the labor movement.”



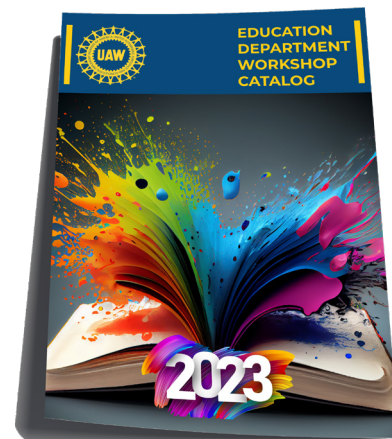
# The Work of Education Committees

Local union education committees are responsible for building the labor movement's power through educating and training our members. There are many tools at your disposal, including:

- Facilitating workshops and new member orientation programs
- Writing articles for local union newsletters and creating educational content for social media and local union websites
- Planning and facilitating “labor in schools” programs to educate future workers
- Holding education fairs and sponsoring union booths at community events
- One-on-one conversations with members by initiating or participating in Member-to-Member (M2M) communication programs
- Supporting collective action to enact positive change
- Working with other standing committees to help bridge the gap in education. For example, education committees sometimes work with union label committees to educate members about buying union-made products

## How to Become a Member of an Education Committee

According to the UAW Constitution, all committees should be appointed or elected at the local union or unit workplace's discretion. Local union bylaws determine whether standing committee members are elected by local union members or appointed by the local union president. Under Article 40, the local union president is an ex-officio member of all local union committees. Most education committees have a chair, co-chair, recording secretary, treasurer, and committee members. Most try to meet regularly. Committees should be diverse and reflect the makeup of the local union.



*The UAW Education Department workshop catalog, available at [uaw.org](http://uaw.org), lists more than 60 courses available for local education committees to present to their membership.*





# The National Education Program

Education committees get assistance from the National Education Department. Under the International President's jurisdiction, the National Education Department carries out the union's education goals through the National Education Program. This program develops and delivers member education through:

- **Conferences and institutes.** The Education Department facilitates regional and national conferences and institutes, summer schools, fall schools, the Fellowship Program, and Family Scholarship week. Many of these events occur at the Walter and May Reuther UAW Family Education Center in Onaway, Michigan
- **Workshops and publications.** The Department is continually developing and updating materials to help all in our union play a role in making the labor movement stronger
- **Supporting local union committees.** The Department is very busy ensuring UAW members, locals, and committees have the support and resources necessary to succeed

The National Education Department also includes the following International Union, UAW departments (and their related standing committees, where applicable): Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Community Services, Conservation and Recreation, Consumer Affairs, and Union Label.

## Successful Education Committees

Education is about building confidence and empowering our members to build the future of the labor movement. Often, our fellow members are aware of the problems they face in their everyday lives. What they are often denied, however, is the knowledge that many of these problems are not unique to them but are part of larger issues in the workplace and society. Successful union education committees expose the “big picture” and clarify that we can overcome these challenges. We do this by being conscious of how we educate members. Rather than just hosting workshops, collecting school supplies, or supporting scholarship award programs for members' kids, effective committees motivate members to step into action. We do this by following this three-step process:

- 1) **Connect to members' experiences.** Committees should link members' experiences with new knowledge and deepen their understanding of the information they provide.
- 2) **Provide the “why.”** Successful education committees do not just tell members what they should do (for example, wear red shirts on Wednesdays). They help explain why it matters (a sign of solidarity to demonstrate our power to the boss to enact a specific change, like achieving a bargaining goal).
- 3) **Call members into action.** Ultimately, successful committees build power to enact change.

# Supporting Our UAW Core Values

The work of the education committee supports our UAW core values. These values explain where we came from and where we are going; they tell the world who we are. Our values have been constant for over 80 years, but we have learned to adapt to the conditions and circumstances we face.

## **UAW CORE VALUE #1: BUILD AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS IN CONTRACTS**

The benefits we have bargained for in our contracts for over 80 years have given UAW members and our families better lives. It is not just about pay raises; but about quality of life and ensuring that future members have a seat at the table. Education committees often take on the essential role of assisting local union leadership to educate members during the collective bargaining process. When members understand their rights and responsibilities, we are more successful in achieving bargaining gains.

## **UAW CORE VALUE #2: ALL ARE EQUAL**

One of our union's fundamental principles is that all people are equal, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, skill, or education level. A struggle over whether unskilled labor had a right to be organized led to our union's formation. In our diverse society, education is vital in bridging gaps and breaking barriers to actualize our founding ideals.

## **UAW CORE VALUE #3: WE FIGHT FOR EVERYONE, NOT JUST OURSELVES**

We are all connected. All working people deserve respect and dignity on the job and fair wages to raise families. But this goes beyond the workplace. It is about our communities and our world. We were there in 1963 with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the March on Washington. We supported Cesar Chavez and Delores Huerta and the United Farm Workers. We advocated for the release of Nelson Mandela from imprisonment in South Africa. Knowledge is power; through education, we activate our members to act on behalf of common causes.

## **UAW CORE VALUE #4: THE BREAD BOX IS CONNECTED TO THE BALLOT BOX**

Too often, the gains we make at the bargaining table are put in peril by Congress or state legislators. That is why our union has a robust political action program to protect members' interests, such as labor rights, workplace safety, and Social Security. Education committees often work with our CAP committees to inform members about the importance of political activism.



# Strategic Planning

Success takes more than hard work – it takes strategic planning. Strategic planning is developing unique and insightful ideas to advance toward an outcome. Education committees must plan both inwardly and outwardly. Inward planning is about ensuring your committee functions correctly – having enough members, resources, and a structure. Outward planning is about ensuring your committee designs educational programs that fit the needs of your membership. There are nine steps to strategic planning for standing committees, and they apply to both inward and outward functions.

## Step One: Assess What Your Committee Has

Take an inventory to find out what your committee has. When we say this, people often think an inventory is of materials, such as books or computers. But your list should also include:

- Lists of committee members, current and past. Do you know how to contact them? When are they available?
- Do you have documentation of what has been done in the past? Were any reports given to the president or published in your local's newsletter? Do you have records of past workshops?
- Equipment belonging to the committee and equipment available to the committee
- What commitments has your committee made – both specifically and historically? Is there an expectation that your committee will plan or participate in an event?

While gathering this information, you may discover other areas worth exploring. At the end of this process, you will know one of two things; exactly what is on hand, or, how much is unclear because records are now lost, or the members who had the information are now gone.

## Step Two: Assess Your Committee's Communications Structure

After your first assessment, you must drill down further and assess your communication structure. As a committee, you must determine:

- How do you communicate with your fellow union members?
- When was the last time the contact information was updated?
- When was the last time the contact information was tested?

Testing is essential – it is what tells you if the system is working or not. There are easy ways to test lists – sending out holiday greetings, for example. The challenges you flag are likely also challenges for other standing committees in your local. This is a good





# Strategic Planning

project for your committees to work on with your local leadership.

## Step Three: Know the Laws and Rules

You must know the laws and rules that cover your committees' activities. If any laws apply specifically to your committees' activities, make sure you understand them. UAW Administrative Letters and our Constitution also give clear instructions on matters such as fundraising, dealing with vendors, and our conduct as union representatives. If you need guidance, ask your local leadership to ask your region if specific pieces of training or documents can help your committee.

## Step Four: Assess Needs and Create Goals

You must assess the memberships' needs when creating educational goals. An excellent place to start is talking to your local union leadership. Speak to them about their concerns for the future of the local. For example, are you experiencing an influx of new members who need union orientation? Is your local having trouble getting people to participate in union meetings? Do you need more activists? Are you ready to start mentoring the next generation of union leadership? Once you interview your local leadership, you can assess your current education program (if you have one). Identify past trainings, how they were conducted, who was responsible, and if they were successful. Concurrently, evaluate current or ongoing trainings and determine if they should continue or change based on attendance and feedback.

## UTILIZING SURVEYS

Another way to assess members' needs is by surveying the membership. Surveys are valuable for not only collecting data but getting buy-in from members and giving them a voice in your program. When developing a survey, keep in mind the following:

- **The purpose/goal of the survey** – What is the purpose, who will receive the survey, how will you use the results, and when will it happen
- **Design the survey** – Once you understand what information you want to gather from the survey, determine the best way to ask the members the questions
- **Pilot the survey** – The only way to know if a survey will get the results you are looking for is to pilot or “test” the survey with a sample group. Make necessary changes from the test and get approval from your leadership before publishing the survey
- **Distribute and collect** – Determine the distribution and collection method and communicate it to all those involved
- **Tabulate and analyze the results** – Format your results into graphs, charts, or other easy-to-read figures. Record how many surveys were distributed and how many surveys were returned
- **Report the findings** – Communicating the survey results to the people who took the time to complete the survey is essential

For more information, see UAW Publication No. 507 – Survey Design.



## GOAL SETTING

Once you document your members' needs, you must create goals. It is helpful to think along two tracks – long-term and short-term. If you make only short-term goals, your committee will be task driven. That is, its guiding principle will be the completion of tasks. On the other hand, if you also have a long-term vision of the committee (to create a robust year-long series of workshops, for example), you can also assess whether your short-term goals help achieve the long-term objectives.

Good goals are **SMART**:

- **Specific:**

What is your goal? A goal should be specific, not open-ended or undefined. For example, if the goal is “do better.” Instead, it should be “improve participation by better promoting our workshops.”

- **Measurable:**

Can success be quantified? The only way to define success is to have a yardstick to measure it against. Do not have a goal of “more people showing up at our workshops.” The goal should be “35 members coming to our workshops or 20% more participating than last year.”

- **Attainable:**

Are you setting up your committee for success? Your goal should have a reasonable chance of success. Nothing is more disappointing or frustrating than setting goals that are not met. It is a surefire way to have people walk away from your program.

- **Relevant:**

Does it reflect the values of the committee? Do your leadership and membership support it? Buy-in from everyone is what creates the extra effort and sense of responsibility that ensures success.

- **Timed:**

Are deadlines clear? The goal should have a start date, an expected pace of work, and a target date of completion.



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## **Step Five: Create a Plan and Implement your Plan.**

After determining goals, you need to move to project planning. That means thinking critically about the steps necessary to achieve your goals. Good project planning is specific; who, what, when, where, and how. When designing a training program, first identify who you need to train and on what. Different groups of people need specialized training that might not apply to everyone. Your audience for a particular training could be your local's leadership, new members, other standing committees, your bargaining committee, or even the general public. Consult the UAW Education Department's Workshop Menu to determine what new classes match your needs. You can find the workshop menu at [uaw.org/members/standing-committees/education-committee](http://uaw.org/members/standing-committees/education-committee). In the workshop menu, you will find courses in different categories.

- The “Building Our Union” series, designed to be taught to rank-and-file members
- The “Leading for Change” series, for those in leadership
- The “Standing Together” series, for standing committees
- “General Education” has workshops for everyone

Regional education representatives are also excellent sources of information on a vast range of topics. Always follow the proper protocol (Local Union President > Servicing Representative > Regional Director) when requesting help.

Sometimes you will not need to host formal workshops. Instead, letters for your local union newsletter or informal discussions through Member-to-Member may suffice. Member-to-Member is a communication method used to talk to members one at a time, face-to-face, about important issues targeted by the local union. As a part of the process, members are given information and then asked for their opinions, which are then fed back up the leadership chain. You can use Member-to-Member for many educational topics such as health and safety, collective bargaining issues, political action, or other necessary issues. It should be a cornerstone in the educational process of your local union. It's an additional tool to engage with members who might not necessarily attend your workshops or meetings.

Publications can also help. Look at what is available from the International Union Supply Booklet, located on LUIS. You may also have to look to outside resources for classes. Some universities have excellent labor studies programs.

Once you have a plan, report to your local leadership, and respond to their suggestions. Remember that plans are a work in progress and may need to be adapted. You may also have to respond to new or immediate changes in circumstances.

Work with your leadership to promote your committee's programs. Utilize your local's newsletter, social media pages, union meetings, flyers, signs, and your internal communication network (like Member-to-Member.)

# Strategic Planning

## Step Six: Grow Your Committee

Education committees need volunteers – and that is true whether you have a full committee or not. Remember, one of your committee's goals should be to serve as an entry point for new members getting active for the first time. Keeping your committee's doors open and welcoming all volunteers is a crucial part of getting that job done. New members bring new energy and new ideas, and that is a good thing. Potential volunteers and new committee members are all around you.

Here are some places you might start:

- Members with skills relevant to the committee: Program development, computer skills, excellent reading and writing abilities.
- Local Union Discussion Leaders (LUDLs). LUDLs are active members selected by their Regional Director to complete a rigorous Fellowship Program. The National Education Department trains LUDLs to facilitate workshops at their local unions, regional conferences/schools, and national conferences. LUDLs should be active in their local's education committee.
- Past volunteers: This is where sign-in sheets are beneficial!
- Members who organize birthday or retirement celebrations or are outgoing people. These are the natural organizers at work, and they make great additions to your education committee. Same with people who tend to be involved with your local's charitable, community outreach, or recreational activities.
- Check out who is following your local or region's social media pages. That shows an interest in your union, which can easily be translated into participation. You must ask!
- Retirees are a great source of knowledge and energy – plug them in!
- Who is wearing red to show solidarity? If your local does Red Shirt Wednesdays, it's a great day to go up to people with flyers and talk to them about the education committee.

## Step Seven: Train your Committee.

The surest way to drive away committee members/volunteers is to have nothing for them to do. Just think about yourself – how frustrating is it to volunteer for something and never get to do anything? That means that even if you do not have any upcoming programs, you should keep your committee's structure intact. So, if your committee only hosts workshops during the summer, that does not mean you should suspend your committee for the rest of the year. Use that time to train or plan other educational opportunities like a "labor in schools" program in your community. Use meetings during the rest of the year to brainstorm and consider input from committee members.



# Strategic Planning

Education committee members should try to attend the Education Committees Conference held at the UAW Walter and May Reuther Family Education Center in Onaway, Michigan. This week-long conference is a great way to learn presentation skills, learn about the history of UAW education, and build your committee. Members who complete the “Effective Educator” training taught at this conference gain access to workshops to teach at their locals. These workshops are available in curriculum kits developed by the National Education Department. Each kit includes a PowerPoint presentation, a leader’s guide, and handouts. Educators must use them as written and not modify them. For more information, please have your local union leadership contact your region.

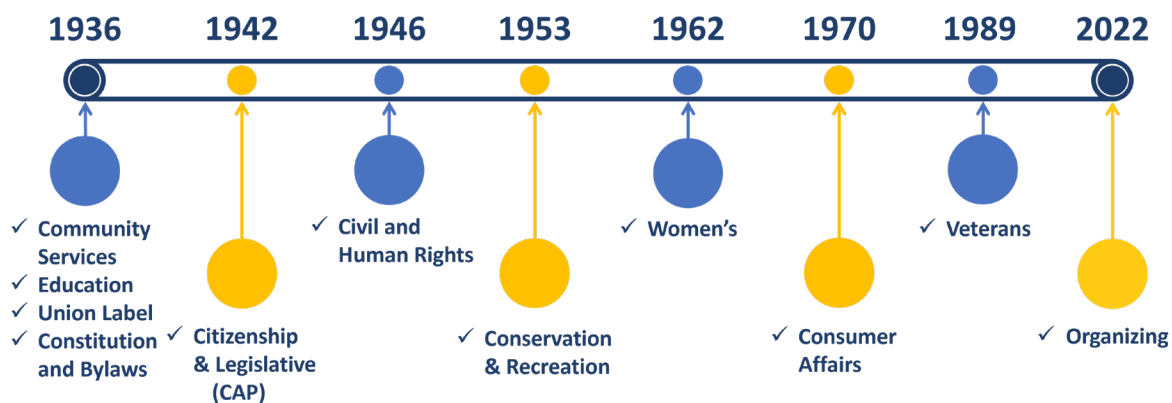
## Step Eight: Support Committee Members

Committee members represent a spectrum of experience and skill. A best practice is that you want everyone to feel victorious, so do not set someone up to fail. We make people feel successful by starting with easier assignments and building them up to challenging ones. We also guarantee success when we check in on people to see how they are doing and make sure they are getting their questions answered. And, if an assignment is not a good fit, find another task. If someone loves educating their co-workers but feels uncomfortable in front of a room, perhaps they can volunteer to make flyers!

## Step Nine: Debrief and Improve

Strategic planning requires a clear vision of our goals and plan. But we must also constantly assess and track our results. Always bring your committee together after workshops and events to share ideas and feedback. If your goal is to get 20 people to a workshop, but only ten show up, ask why – and adjust.

## Mandated Standing Committees



*The Education Committee is one of the oldest standing committees – in fact, it is one of the original four that were named in our first convention in 1936.*





# Resources

As an education committee member, you play a crucial role in labor education efforts by becoming a catalyst for change and empowering members. With the tools and skills presented in this handbook, combined with your unique abilities, you are building the power of our union.

For more information, we encourage you to visit [UAW.org/members/standing-committees/education-committee](https://uaw.org/members/standing-committees/education-committee), which has resources you can tap into, from roles and responsibilities to tips for running your committee. You can browse the current UAW Education Department workshop menu to find classes in different categories to fit your local's needs.

Please also check out the following International Union, UAW sites to stay on top of current topics:



[uaw.org](https://uaw.org)



[facebook.com/uaw.union](https://facebook.com/uaw.union)



[twitter.com/uaw](https://twitter.com/uaw)



[instagram.com/uaw.union](https://instagram.com/uaw.union)



[youtube.com/uaw](https://youtube.com/uaw)



**UAW Smartphone App**



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