

## UNDERSTANDING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: WHAT'S AT STAKE

### WHAT IS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING?

Collective bargaining is the legally defined process through which teachers, represented by their local union, negotiate as a group with their school district to determine wages and wage-related benefits. This structured process is governed by Indiana law and involves specific timelines, procedures and requirements to ensure accountability and transparency.

Elected leaders of the local union, supported by ISTA, lead the bargaining process. ISTA provides legal expertise, data analysis and strategic guidance to strengthen local negotiations. Together, local and state-level efforts ensure educators have a unified and professional voice in decisions that directly impact their livelihoods and their ability to provide a high-quality education for students.

### HISTORY OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN INDIANA

Collective bargaining for Indiana teachers was established in 1973 under Republican Governor Otis Bowen. At the time, schools faced widespread unrest and inequities. Recognizing the need for stability and fairness, Gov. Bowen supported the law, which granted teachers the right to bargain collectively. This helped professionalize teaching and ensured schools could better serve students.

### WHY DOES BARGAINING MATTER?

- **Protects Fairness:** Bargaining ensures all educators are treated fairly, with pay and benefits that reflect their dedication and expertise. Without it, pay decisions could become arbitrary or subject to favoritism.
- **Supports Teacher Retention:** In a time of critical teacher shortages, bargaining helps schools recruit and retain high-quality educators.

### THE REALITY IF BARGAINING RIGHTS ARE LOST

#### Teachers Will Be on Their Own

- Without the ability to bargain collectively, teachers will lose their unified voice in pay and benefit decisions. Instead, each teacher will be left to negotiate individually, with no guarantee of fairness or consistency.

#### Lower Pay and At-Will Decisions

- Pay decisions could become arbitrary, leading to lower salaries and unequal compensation. Teachers could be subject to favoritism or sudden pay cuts, creating financial uncertainty and instability for their families.



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### A Return to Inequity

Before bargaining rights were established, inequities in teacher pay and working conditions were rampant:

- Male teachers were often paid more than female teachers for the same work.
- Favoritism determined pay and promotions, creating widespread resentment and instability.
- A lack of transparency led to chaos in salary and hiring practices, harming teacher morale and school operations.

### Increased Turnover and Shortages

- More educators would leave the profession without bargaining rights, worsening Indiana's teacher shortage. Schools would face even greater difficulty attracting and retaining high-quality teachers, directly impacting students' learning conditions.

### Harm to Students

- When teachers face instability and inequity, students suffer. Losing experienced educators disrupts classrooms and diminishes the quality of education students receive.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Stay Informed:** Learn about the potential threats to bargaining rights and how they could affect you and your colleagues.
- **Speak Out:** Share your story about how bargaining has impacted your life or your students' success.
- **Stay United:** Together, we can protect our rights and ensure a brighter future for Indiana's educators and students.
- **Join ISTA:** Strength in numbers matters. If you're not already a member, join ISTA and your local today to be part of the collective voice defending educators and public education. Visit [ista-in.org/JoinNow](http://ista-in.org/JoinNow) to sign up and learn more.

