



CASE STUDY FACT SHEET:

Labor-Management-Community Collaboration in Springfield Public School

About Our Case Studies

With each Case Study, we conduct an in-depth examination of a single initiative to extract lessons learned and promising practices. The Case Study series is another way in which the Rennie Center focuses attention on key issues, provides insight and perspective, and helps shape an effective public agenda in Massachusetts.

Springfield's Challenge

Springfield public schools face daunting challenges: the sixth poorest city in the United States; a high percentage of low-performing schools; and high rates of teacher flight and superintendent turnover. Despite these unfavorable conditions, the report, *Labor-Management-Community Collaboration in Springfield Public Schools*, finds that Springfield Public Schools and the local teachers' union (Springfield Education Association) have made progress on several fronts:

- Fostering a culture of collaboration focused on student achievement;
- Institutionalizing district- and school-based collaboration to sustain progress through education reform;
- Developing a definition of successful schools focused on achievement and establishing clear goals for success; and
- Implementing a rigorous new teacher evaluation system and new school-based professional development system.

Labor-Management-Community Collaboration

The Rennie Center worked as a third-party facilitator to help Springfield address its challenges through intensive labor-management-community collaboration focused on the shared goal of improving student achievement. Specific practices included:

- A Joint Labor-Management Initiative (JLMI) team was formed, comprised of union members, district representatives and school board members.
- The JLMI team created a common definition of success for public schools in Springfield and conducted a survey to determine how effective the system was in meeting the criteria for success.
- A Steering Committee was formed to address three indicators critical to student success: high expectations for student learning, school safety, and opportunities for shared decision-making.
- District and union leaders now serve together on the Instructional Leadership Team, Budget Committee, and Senior Leadership Team.

Lessons Learned

The case study details five lessons for collaborative practice applicable to districts across the state.

1. Use data to maintain focus and drive action plans that center on student needs.
2. Expect unexpected disruptions to collaboration, and do not give up when they occur.
3. Build collaborative structures that extend beyond the superintendent's office.
4. Rely on third-party facilitators to keep conversations productive and maintain momentum.
5. Involve community leaders in district leadership teams.