

Sparks

What is it?

A course for teachers and other school employees who have six or fewer years' experience in public schools and little or no experience with their association.

What is the purpose?

To make a positive connection with WEA's newer members. This is not a leadership development program - though some people bill it that way. Participants gain a better understanding of their Association while learning skills and making connections that help them in their jobs.

How do we do it?

We survey each participant ahead and design the class around what they want to learn or gain. It is almost all inquiry (Socratic) method. You will not see staff instructors stand up for a long time and pour information into the Sparks' brains. Instead, we let them make discoveries about their union on their own, related to their own priorities. They make those discoveries while learning about the issues relevant to them.

What else is different?

Sparks participants teach one another. They participate in a research project where they have to come back and teach others what they have learned.

We keep in touch with them after Sparks is over. We remind them that we are here to support them. We also ask them to participate in engaging other members their age.

Why do they like it?

We honor them. We spoil them. We listen to them. We create a safe environment for them to share scary issues. They are thrilled to find out they are "not the only one" going through the perils of being new in this career.

How do you become a Spark?

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