

PFT/PUSD Interest Based Problem Solving (IBPS)

The Beginning of a New Way of Bargaining (1996):

After much angst and turmoil in our district over negotiations (angry teacher protests, refusal to attend Back-to-School Night, mud-slinging and name calling) our then School Board (1996) took Board action to engage in a new bargaining process, Interest Based Problem Solving (IBPS). The collective commitment to IBPS included district management, union leadership and the Board of Education. After formal training in IBPS, our District and Federation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to “Negotiate Using IBPS” June 1998.

IBPS Defined: Interest-Based Problem Solving is a process that enables traditional negotiators to become joint problem-solvers. Team members commit to focus on the “issue” rather than people (personalities), their positions, or the past. Key to the success of our IBPS process is the use of data for decision-making. *PFT/PUSD use the IBPS process for both fiscal and professional issues.*

Principles of our IBPS Fiscal Negotiations include an agreement to meet regularly throughout the year. In a nutshell, using PUSD budget data, we follow these steps:

1. We have an agreed upon formula to determine the percentage amount of new unrestricted dollars allocated to teachers in the PFT bargaining unit.
2. As a team (PFT/PUSD), we make projections for the following year on both new revenue and expenditures.
3. Based on the budget data, we begin our discussion around the allocation of resources towards a total compensation package for teachers. We take into account the “available” resources and a “fair share” proportion of those resources to begin a joint recommendation for settlement.
4. Our resources/revenue and expenditures change every year. Therefore, every year we track the percentage amount allocated to teachers so we’re able to use this data over time in our negotiations.

Our process is more *unique* in that the parties agree to revisit their assumptions used in the previous year’s contract negotiations when the unaudited actuals (required document in the budget process to show the real dollar amounts) for a “true-up” procedure that tests our assumptions and upon mutual agreement, we adjust the terms, up or down, upon ratification of each side.

This process for negotiations is not the norm in public school employee unions. It requires a transparent budget system, an open exchange of data, and substantial knowledge of school budgets.

IBPS Culture: Given the history (17 years) of the relationship and the results in both good and bad times. IBPS is a process that provides confidence and stability, even with a change in leadership.

IBPS and Professional Issues - Focused on Quality: Teacher Quality, Instructional Quality, Professional Learning and Curriculum Quality. Using the IBPS process, PFT and

PUSD created PPAP, TLC/PLAB, Alternative Evaluation, Standards-based report card, K-5 Assessment, Time and Learning (homework policy), Literacy Councils, and Teacher Leadership Salary Schedules.

Concluding Thoughts on IBPS: Generally a smarter way to do our business and serve students. Requires a commitment to behave in a trustworthy manner (“trust” may be a byproduct); Requires training and facilitation; Involves taking risks by all parties; Anticipate push back from traditional forces; Strength of leadership across the organization is key: Board, Superintendent, and Union.