

What Is Collaborative Bargaining?

Collaborative (or interest-based) bargaining is:

- an alternative style of negotiating which recognizes the interests of both parties and emphasizes cooperation between them;
- a problem-solving process conducted in a principled way that creates effective solutions based upon available data while improving the relationship between both parties;
- often takes place through committees of the bargaining team; and
- is often compared and contrasted with more adversarial models of collective bargaining in which the parties may regard each other as enemies.

Synonymous terms are:

- Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB)
- Integrative Bargaining
- Principled Bargaining
- Mutual Gains Bargaining
- Win-Win

Adversarial collective bargaining often leads to lingering resentments. Collaborative bargaining, conversely, is a problem-solving approach to contract negotiations based on common interests and mutual respect. ... Elements that help to foster cooperation are trust and respect for colleagues. For school districts to incorporate collaborative bargaining in their negotiations, they should obtain information and resources about what others using this approach have done; attend courses or workshops; and establish joint committees to work on school problems. ... Collaborative bargaining is built on the premise that both sides – the school board and teachers – want to cooperate to achieve a satisfactory contract settlement. That means participants must first collaborate to establish agreed-upon ground rules and to set time limits for negotiation. This early cooperation helps to set the tone for interaction at the bargaining table. [Liontos, D. (1987). Collaborative bargaining in education, ERIC Digest Series, Number 20; retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED284372>]

Although conventional collective bargaining has helped teachers achieve greater professional status, its win/ lose approach causes participants to overlook shared educational objectives. Since the first experiments in win/ win bargaining, the acrimony generated by the adversarial process has led an increasing number of school districts to incorporate trust, problem-solving, and cooperation into their bargaining procedures. [Smith, S., (1990). Working together: The collaborative style of bargaining; retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED321341>]

Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB) provides an alternative set of tactics, strategies, and behavioral methods from those commonly employed in traditional negotiations for addressing these integral components of bargaining. Whereas traditional bargaining is often portrayed as a purely distributive exercise, where parties play tug of war over how to “slice the pie,” IBB is, by contrast, offered as a way to turn distributive contests into opportunities for mutual gain, where separate interests and needs are integrated into a satisfactory outcome. It is less reliant on the use of power to determine negotiation outcomes, and emphasizes the development of relationships and behaviors that will lead to a greater concern for shared success. [Klingel, S. (2003). Interest-based bargaining in education; retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=reports>]
