

What is Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB)?

Interest-based bargaining (IBB) is a powerful approach that school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and educational audiologists (Ed AuDs) can use to work more collaboratively with their teacher unions during negotiations. SLPs and Ed AuDs bring critical, specialized skillsets to their school teams. Using interest-based bargaining is a great way to make sure their needs are heard while supporting the larger mission of equitable, high-quality education.

IBB (also called mutual gains bargaining) is a negotiation strategy that:



Focuses on **shared interests**, not rigid positions



Encourages **collaboration** rather than confrontation



Seeks **win-win solutions** by understanding everyone's underlying needs

Why It Matters for SLPs and Ed AuDs

SLPs in schools often have unique roles and challenges that aren't always fully understood or prioritized in traditional teacher contracts. **IBB gives SLPs a voice at the table by:**



Highlighting their specific concerns like caseloads, documentation time, etc.



Building alliances with teachers and the district around shared goals



Focusing on solutions rather than demands

Key Things SLPs and Ed AuDs Should Know



Know Your Interests (Not Just Your Demands)

Instead of saying "I want a lower caseload," frame it as:

"I need a caseload that allows me to provide legally required services and effective therapy for all students."

Interests are about **why** something matters—not just what you want.



Understand the Interests of Others

- The district might be focused on budget constraints.
- Teachers may be concerned about how special education affects general ed workloads.
- Unions want to ensure **fair and equitable treatment** for all members.
- Understanding these perspectives helps you **build common ground**.



Be an Active Union Member

- Attend union meetings and get involved in committees.
- Advocate for an SLP representative or special education voice at the bargaining table.
- Educate union leadership about the scope and impact of your role.



Frame Proposals Around Shared Values

Unions and districts often agree on:

- Student success
 - Legal compliance
 - Staff retention
 - Work-life balance
- Example: "Reducing excessive caseloads isn't just about my workload—it's about giving students the communication support they need to access their education."



Use Data to Back Up Your Interests

- Caseload size vs. utilizing a workload approach
- Time studies on documentation and therapy prep
- Compliance risks for unmet IEP services
- SLPs and Ed AuDs armed with **evidence** are more likely to be taken seriously during bargaining.