**Workshop Three**

**“How could we constitute an international story bank (e.g. Nobel prize winners)? How do we foster collaboration bridging national boundaries?”**

-- It’s critical that we establish some common themes through the calendar year that represent the work of our unions and members, but also enable us to show union teachers and their organizations as a global force.

 But a guiding principle in thinking through these common themes is that the strategy allows for multiple tactics and platforms that recognize the different capacities of EI affiliates.

-- So many of the daily experiences of our members provide excellent storylines regarding common experiences. London-based TES – one of the largest circulation independent education publications in the world - has invited EI affiliates to participate in their series “Day in the Life” that involves a full-page first-person opportunity for a teacher to share a ‘typical day.’

 ComNet Ask: build a bank of stories that we can share, which also builds a bank of “media ready” members to share the challenges and opportunities with the world.

-- Storyline brainstorm:

 Teacher Spending: Obvious from the presentation by our Belgian colleague. Teachers around the world reach into their own pockets and their own family budgets to provide for kids whose families can’t provide for them. Provides a messaging access point for issues like government accountability, inadequate resources, effects of poverty, and the empathy of teachers.

 Nobel Prize: The annual prize recognizes a variety of achievements, all grounded in academic excellence (well, maybe not Bob Dylan…). If each affiliate was to contact the winner(s) in their nation to ask if he or she would be willing to sit for an interview – for web, print, audio, video as available, to discuss a favorite teacher and what they owed the teachers in their lives, it could be a global story, with EI at the hub.

 Special Needs: the professionalism of teachers and the push of their unions to provide individualized attention to special needs students is the right way to support this population and show the everyday challenges and successes of our members.

 Shared Values: In an atmosphere of skepticism or anti-unionism, show what being organized means to members, students, families, communities in terms of resources, pay, working conditions, pensions; improvement of lives. Show and/or introduce audiences to the notion that unionism is a key booster of quality of life and the quality of education, and no one, especially those in the teaching profession, should take that for granted.

 First Day-Last Day: Juxtapose teachers at the beginning and

end of their careers and what lessons one has for the other, how things have changed. Broadens the audience for the issues of education “now” by having those who recall education “then” understand what the younger generation faces.

 Five-Year Itch: The impetus to leave the profession as a young teacher seems to come at the five-year mark for many of our members. Examining this could be a shared research project and addressing it could involve tips and special projects that could be shared across unions.

 Pedagogical Experiences: How many different ways are there to teach similar subjects to similar age groups or to deal with issues like classroom management or technology. This could be an early use of TEN Global.

The longest discussion focused on a virtual hijacking of World Teacher Day, freeing it from UNESCO, replacing the “happy talk, hug-a-teacher” vibe with a strong advocacy of the professionalism of teachers and the value of their unions. Teacher Day can become a recruitment tool for activism in a challenging era of growing right-wing pressures, persistent global poverty and lack of government accountability and funding of education. The slogan was mentioned, “When a teacher is fighting, he’s also teaching.” ComNet should make this a recommendation and position teachers on this media-focused day as advocates for social justice, standing up for their students and communities against things like defunding and privatization.

Critical steps:

 Persuade leaders: Without the active agreement and participation of staff and political leadership to move projects forward, Comms staff does not have the ability to involve members directly in international activity. And often, the activities of Comms are non-traditional, attempting to ‘cut through the clutter’ of media and persuasion with unfamiliar or even uncomfortable work, especially that involving humor (Like a Swede)

 Develop capacity to conduct online surveys and establish panels of members who can respond to surveys; people always willing to answer some quick questions (a qualitative survey)

 Find/develop people who can talk to the media: All of our unions need members who can speak to the media about their work and the value of the organization. Much of the credibility of Comms staff can come from the link they provide between media and the rank and file.

 Develop key media contacts for exclusives

Tools:

 WhatsApp – widely available

 Social Media

 Online Surveys and releases of results

 Paper Surveys in Meetings

 Humor

Needed:

 We must build the capacity of our communications efforts beyond what leaders say. Story bank/member bank: we can’t share stories we don’t have. We need to be more connected to members. Teachers need to be brought to meetings of the unions, not only leaders. They need to be exposed to the union and the Comms opportunities through workshops. Teachers make the leaders’ message stronger. This isn’t easy – must be part of the persuasion effort with leaders.