

**National Education Association
Policy Statements
2023-2024**

2024 Representative Assembly

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A Policy Statement shall set forth NEA’s position with regard to a particular subject, and may include expressions of opinion, intent, or belief; may call for actions that are specific in nature and terminal in application; and may indicate support for or opposition to federal legislation. An adopted Policy Statement shall continue in force unless and until further action is taken with regard to that Policy Statement by a subsequent Representative Assembly. The statements are arranged chronologically by year of initial adoption. Dates for the first year adopted and last year amended are shown following the statement title. If only one year is shown, the statement has not been revised by the Representative Assembly.

***Proposed Policy Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education**

In May 2024, the NEA Board of Directors voted to approve the submission of the proposed *Policy Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education* to the 2024 Representative Assembly for consideration and action.

A. Proposed NEA Policy Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education

To be considered and acted on by the 2024 NEA Representative Assembly

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a rapidly advancing technology, actively changing how we teach, learn, work, and live. This Policy Statement sets forth principles regarding the use of AI in education and specifies the Association’s role in supporting and advocating for students and educators in this domain.

Definitions

For purposes of this Policy Statement, the following definitions apply:

1. **Algorithmic bias:** “Systematic, unwanted unfairness in how a computer detects patterns or automates decisions,”¹ often based on characteristics and identities such as age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, location, nationality, political affiliation, race, and/or sexuality.
2. **Artificial intelligence (AI):** Machine-based systems designed around human-defined objectives to perform tasks that would otherwise require human or animal intelligence.
3. **AI literacy:** Understanding what it means to learn with and about AI while gaining specific knowledge about how artificial intelligence works, the skills necessary to master AI tools, and how to critically navigate the benefits and risks of this technology.
4. **Data governance:** A set of practices that ensures that data assets are formally managed throughout a system/enterprise and that define the roles, responsibilities, and processes for ensuring accountability for and ownership of data assets.
5. **Educators:** People employed by an institution dedicated to pre-K–12 or higher education, namely teachers, faculty, education support professionals (ESPs), and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP).
6. **Generative AI:** Artificial intelligence tools that generate novel text, images, videos, or other content based on existing data patterns and structures.
7. **Transparency:** Open disclosure of how AI systems work, including how they reach decisions and the data used to do so.

Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Educators must remain at the center of education

Learning happens, and knowledge is constructed through social engagement and collaboration, making interpersonal interaction between students and educators irreplaceable.² The use of AI should not displace or impair the connection between students and educators, a connection that is essential to fostering academic success, critical thinking, interpersonal and social skills, emotional well-being, creativity, and the ability to fully participate in society. AI-enhanced tools that undermine any of these critical aspects of teaching and learning should not be employed.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning: Insights and Recommendations* (Washington, DC, 2023), <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/ai-report/ai-report.pdf>.

² Cecilia Ka Yuk Chan and Louisa H. Y. Tsi, “The AI Revolution in Education: Will AI Replace or Assist Teachers in Higher Education?,” *arXiv*: 2305.01185 (2023), <http://arxiv.org/pdf/2305.01185>; Cathy McKay and Grace Macomber, “The Importance of Relationships in Education: Reflections of Current Educators,” *Journal of Education* 203, no. 4 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220574211057044>; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.17226/24783>.

1 AI-enhanced technology should aid educators, but it cannot and should never aim to replace them.
2 Educators at all levels and in all positions should be included in decision-making regarding AI vetting,
3 adoption, deployment, and ongoing use to guarantee that these tools are used to improve job quality and
4 enhance performance.

5
6 AI technology tends to reflect the perspectives—and biases—of the people who develop it. Furthermore,
7 developers may not notice when their tools are biased against or do not adequately reflect the needs of
8 people who differ from them demographically or in other ways. Notably, technology developers are
9 overwhelmingly younger, White, cisgender, heterosexual, male, and people without disabilities. Actively
10 involving a diverse and intersectional array of educators, including those with disabilities, in the deve-
11 lopment, design, and evaluation of AI systems ensures technology that is not only compliant with acces-
12 sibility standards but also genuinely user-centric. Including the diverse and intersectional perspectives
13 and experiences of people who are Native, Asian, Black, Latin(o/a/x), Middle Eastern and North African,
14 Multiracial, and Pacific Islander, LGBTQ+, and from all economic backgrounds and abilities is essential
15 if this technology is to be effective in its educational purpose.

16
17 Artificial intelligence should not be used to undercut educators by exposing them to unnecessary surveil-
18 lance, undermining their rights, or taking over core job functions that are best done by humans. These
19 tenets should be reflected in and protected through collective bargaining, labor-management collabora-
20 tion, and state laws.

21
22 AI-informed analyses and data alone should never be used for high-stakes or determinative decisions.
23 While such data might be included among several other factors, the degree of its importance, weight, and
24 reliability must be carefully considered in matters concerning items such as, but not limited to: employee
25 evaluations; student assessment, placement, graduation, and matriculation; disciplinary matters; diagno-
26 ses of any kind; and matters of safety and surveillance. These decisions must rely primarily on the profes-
27 sional expertise and judgment of humans, who must consider equity, diversity, access, human rights, and
28 other appropriate contextual considerations.³

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30 **PRINCIPLE 2**

31 **Evidence-based AI technology must enhance the educational experience**

32 Artificial intelligence should only be adopted once there is data supporting a tool’s appropriateness and
33 efficacy with potential users and, for instruction-focused AI, its alignment with high-quality teaching and
34 learning standards and practices. This evidence should come either from research conducted and revie-
35 wed by independent researchers or from industry-sponsored research that adheres to the same standards
36 of methodology and peer review as independent research. If such research is unavailable, AI may be
37 adopted on a pilot or trial basis if the evidence is being collected and analyzed in a timely manner, with
38 an agreement in place to cease the use of the technology if the results of the research do not show the
39 intended benefits or do not serve educational goals.

40
41 Close attention must be paid to the needs of our most vulnerable learners, including students with disa-
42 ilities, early learners, and emergent multilingual learners. AI technology must not conform to a purely
43 ableist and privileged standard that neither serves nor adapts to the educational needs of students with
44 disabilities. User cases that aid in the development of effective AI tools in education must be based on
45 a range of disabilities (i.e., learning disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments, etc.). While
46 some AI technology may improve accessibility and enhance these students’ educational experiences,
47 these students are the most susceptible to harm if AI is used inappropriately. There must be dedicated
48 research and the establishment of clear guidance to help our schools ensure that AI-enabled technology
49 is effective and appropriate for these students.

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54 ³ See also, NEA’s *Policy Statement on Teacher Evaluation and Accountability*.
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1 Assessment of AI efficacy must not end after a tool is adopted. Innovations in technology, pedagogy, and
2 content are ongoing, and AI tools must be reassessed regularly by educators to ensure they continue to
3 provide the intended benefits and have not created unanticipated problems. Educators must be involved in
4 both the initial and ongoing assessment of AI tools so that AI is used only if it will enhance, rather than
5 detract from, students' educational experiences and their well-being. Educator involvement is critical to
6 ensure that AI is implemented in ways that are both effective and appropriate for learners at all levels.

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8 **PRINCIPLE 3**

9 **Ethical development/use of AI technology and strong data protection practices**

10 Artificial intelligence is far from flawless and requires human oversight, checks, and balances. Primary
11 areas of concern include algorithmic bias, inaccurate or nonsensical outputs, violations of student and
12 educator data privacy, and the considerable environmental impact of AI energy use. AI tools must be
13 carefully vetted prior to deployment and monitored after implementation to mitigate these hazards, gua-
14 rantee ongoing transparency, and confirm that tools comply with current local, state, and federal laws.
15 States, local districts, and higher education institutions should evaluate (and strengthen where necessary)
16 their existing data governance plans prior to adopting AI tools. Particular attention must be paid to AI
17 tools that aim to play any role in assessing/evaluating students or educators or would have monitoring or
18 surveillance functions. AI tools proposed for any of these purposes should be approached with caution;
19 evaluated, understood, and agreed to by appropriate interest holders (including students, educators, and
20 families); and used with the understanding that AI data models and programming are biased, incomplete,
21 quickly become outdated, and can result in unreliable and harmful results.

22

23 Educators, parents, and students must be made aware of what and how AI tools are used in schools and
24 on campuses. Educators must receive ongoing learning opportunities that enable them to identify ethical
25 hazards and how to handle them effectively if they arise. Institutional structures, such as review boards
26 or scheduled audits, should also be put in place to enforce high-quality standards for the use of AI. Data
27 collected through AI should be subject to protocols providing transparency about the types of data being
28 collected and how the data is stored, utilized, and protected. These protocols must also clearly articulate
29 whether and to what degree AI is used for any form of monitoring or surveillance in educational settings
30 and how this data will be governed. Additionally, these protocols must ensure the proprietary rights of
31 students and educators in their original work.

32

33 **PRINCIPLE 4**

34 **Equitable access to and use of AI tools is ensured**

35 Gaps in educational opportunities, resources, and funding negatively affect student outcomes. This has
36 become clear regarding educational technology, an area where students and educators in under-resourced
37 schools and institutions have struggled to achieve equity. Deploying AI tools will further widen this digi-
38 tal divide if measures are not taken to guarantee access to all students and educators, from early child-
39 hood to higher education, regardless of ZIP code. Education systems must not only provide AI tools but
40 also guarantee the technical support, devices, and internet infrastructure necessary to reliably access and
41 use AI in the classroom and at home.

42

43 Artificial intelligence must also be used in equitable ways in schools and on campuses. All students must
44 have access to learning opportunities that use AI to promote active learning, critical thinking, and crea-
45 ative engagement. Educators must be cognizant of the potential for some students, particularly high-need
46 learners, including students with disabilities and emergent multilingual learners, to be relegated to using
47 AI only for rote memorization, standardized assessment, or finding answers to factual questions. Policies
48 and procedures must be in place to guarantee that all students—not only the most advantaged or most
49 advanced—are able to take full advantage of AI technology.

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1 **PRINCIPLE 5**

2 **Ongoing education with and about AI: AI literacy and agency**

3 Effective, safe, and equitable use of AI technology in education requires that students and educators
4 become fully AI literate and develop a greater sense of agency with this technology. The use of artificial
5 intelligence extends into countless aspects of our personal and professional lives, and AI literacy must be
6 part of every student’s basic education and every educator’s professional preparation and development.

7
8 Artificial intelligence is a vital component of the computer sciences but extends far beyond the computer
9 science curriculum. Curricular changes should be made to incorporate AI literacy across all subject areas
10 and educational levels so that all students understand the benefits, risks, and effective uses of these tools.
11 These student learning experiences should be developmentally appropriate, experiential (allowing stu-
12 dents to engage with various forms of AI-enhanced technology), and help students think critically about
13 using AI-enhanced technology.

14
15 Educators must be afforded high-quality, multifaceted, ongoing professional learning opportunities that
16 help increase their AI literacy and understand what, how, and why specific AI is being used in their
17 educational settings. Learning opportunities must be provided to educators in all positions and at all
18 career stages. Educators must know how to use AI in ways that are pedagogically appropriate within
19 their content areas and for all learners, including early learners, students with disabilities, and emergent
20 multilingual learners. These learning opportunities must also help educators research and assess available
21 evidence about effective AI uses in education; understand AI bias and know strategies for reporting and
22 mitigating the harmful impacts of AI bias; and understand the ethical and data privacy hazards associated
23 with AI-enabled technology and appropriate policies and standards in use by their educational institu-
24 tions. Educators should be positioned to lead professional learning about the use of AI tools in
25 educational settings.

26
27 **Association Advocacy and Action**

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29 NEA believes that artificial intelligence has the potential to transform the educational experience for our
30 students and the professional experience of educators. Therefore, it is imperative that NEA play a leading
31 role in ensuring that the transformation is a positive one.

32
33 The expansive role that artificial intelligence plays in our education systems continues to grow, and it will
34 impact us all in ways that we have yet to fully understand. NEA and its state and local affiliates should
35 call for and actively engage in coalitions, research, commissions, and committees studying and making
36 recommendations about AI adoption, effectiveness, and safety in education. Artificial Intelligence
37 technology offers intelligence without consciousness, and NEA must ensure that the interpersonal human
38 connection between students and educators is of primary importance, along with well-being, safety,
39 equity, and access.

40
41 Racial and social justice are deeply held core values of the Association, and we cannot tolerate a wider
42 spread of discrimination, inequity, and injustice in our education systems for any reason, including for
43 reasons related to biases in artificial intelligence algorithms. Students and educators with disabilities,
44 people of color, Native and indigenous peoples, or those who represent marginalized groups and identities
45 are more likely to be negatively impacted by biased and incomplete AI data and tools and the decisions
46 that can result from them.

47
48 Understanding the technology is critical but it is absolutely essential for all educators and administrators
49 to have ongoing opportunities for the types of professional development described in the *NEA Policy*
50 *Statement on Safe, Just, and Equitable Schools (2022)*. That is, educators and administrators must have
51 quality professional opportunities that allow them to develop “cultural competence and responsiveness
52 including awareness of one’s own implicit biases and trauma, understanding culturally competent peda-
53 gogy, and becoming culturally responsive in one’s approach to education and discipline/behavior.”

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1 This skill and knowledge will position educators and administrators to be able to select inclusive AI
2 tools while also applying their pedagogical expertise to ensure the tools are effective and meet the needs
3 of their diverse learners. Further, this knowledge can help educators see and understand biases that may
4 result from AI tools and develop appropriate remedies or approaches to help students succeed.

5
6 The NEA will advocate at the federal, state, and local levels to prevent the design, adoption, and use of
7 AI tools and data that are unsafe or harmful, and the Association will be vigilant in applying its core
8 beliefs to its advocacy.

9
10 NEA will advocate at the federal, state, and local levels for the ethical, safe, and appropriate use of
11 effective AI tools and related data and for equitable access to this technology. Further, NEA will develop
12 guidance to help affiliates and members advocate in bargaining and non-bargaining contexts. A critical
13 component of the Association’s advocacy must be to ensure that the voices of students and educators
14 with disabilities, Native and indigenous peoples, people of color, and those representing marginalized
15 groups and identities are meaningfully engaged in policy development, rulemaking, and implementation
16 efforts. Working in partnership with allies, particularly students and parents, will further strengthen the
17 Association’s ability to influence positive policy and practice.

18
19 NEA, in partnership with allied organizations, should also develop high-quality learning opportunities
20 for its members on AI literacy, using AI in instructional contexts, and issues of AI ethics and equity.
21 These opportunities should be multifaceted in terms of their format to have the greatest reach.

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B. Affirmative Action Policy for Ethnic Minorities and Women

Adopted by the 1997 Representative Assembly

Preamble

*Because the effects of ethnic and gender discrimination by particular employers and by society in general cannot be remedied simply by ending discriminatory practices and utilizing employment practices that treat people equally regardless of ethnicity or gender, affirmative action may be necessary to achieve true equal employment opportunity.**

Definitions

For purposes of this Policy Statement, the following definitions apply:

1. The term “affirmative action” means any measure, beyond simply terminating and prohibiting discriminatory practices, that may be used to increase or maintain the percentage of ethnic minorities or women in an educational or other public employer’s workforce, or a particular segment of an educational or other public employer’s workforce.
2. The term “discrimination” means denying an employment opportunity or benefit, or taking any adverse employment action, against ethnic minorities or women solely on the basis of their ethnicity or gender.
3. The term “diversity” means the inclusion of a specified percentage of ethnic minorities or women in an educational or other public employer’s workforce, in order to obtain the educational benefits of an ethnically or sexually diverse workforce, to provide ethnic minority or female role models for all students, or to alleviate the effects of societal discrimination.
4. The term “education or other public employee” means a person employed in a professional or education support position by an educational employer or in any position by another public employer.
5. The term “educational or other public employer” means a public school district, a college or university, any other public entity which employs education employees, or any other public employer.
6. The term “ethnic minority” means those persons designated as ethnic minority by statistics published by the United States Bureau of the Census. This designation shall specifically include American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Black, and Hispanic.
7. The term “qualified” means that the person meets the legal requirements for holding the position, and has the skills necessary to perform the functions of the position.
8. (a) When affirmative action is used to cure the effects of past ethnic or sexual discrimination by a particular educational or other public employer, the term “underrepresented” means that the percentage of ethnic minorities or women in an educational or other public employer’s workforce is significantly below the percentage of qualified ethnic minorities or women in the relevant labor market;
(b) When affirmative action is used to achieve or maintain diversity in an educational or other public employer’s workforce, the term “underrepresented” means that the percentage of ethnic minorities or women in an educational or other public employer’s workforce is significantly below the percentage that is necessary to achieve the educational and societal benefits of ethnic or sexual diversity.

*NEA’s current policies reflect a concern with the fact that there traditionally has been a disproportionately low percentage of men employed as teachers in elementary schools, and support the use of affirmative action to cure such underrepresentation. The failure to address this concern in this Policy Statement does not in any sense mean that NEA is altering its position in this regard. To the contrary, it remains the position of NEA that, in appropriate circumstances, affirmative action should be used to increase the percentage of male elementary school teachers. However, because the historical and legal variables involved in the underrepresentation of male elementary school teachers are so markedly different from those involved in regard to ethnic minorities and women, NEA believes that the problems should not be dealt with in the same Policy Statement.

1 Principles

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1. NEA reaffirms its strong support for the use of affirmative action in employment (a) to cure the effects of past ethnic or gender discrimination by the particular employer involved, and (b) to achieve or maintain ethnic or gender diversity in an employer’s workforce.
2. When necessary for the above purposes, affirmative action should be used with regard to recruitment, training, employment, assignments, transfers, promotions, layoff, recall, and other aspects of the employment relationship.
3. The employment of a non-ethnic minority or male employee should not be terminated solely for the purpose of curing the effects of past discrimination by the particular employer involved, or achieving or maintaining diversity in an employer’s workforce. When a fiscal exigency, a reduction in student enrollment, or other bona fide factor requires a reduction in an employer’s workforce, affirmative action may be appropriate to maintain—but not to increase—the pre-existing percentage of ethnic-minority or female employees in the workforce.
4. Affirmative action should be used, in certain circumstances, to make choices among qualified individuals. An ethnic-minority or woman applicant who is not qualified for the position in question should not, on the basis of ethnicity or gender, be given preference over a qualified non-minority or male applicant. An employer should be allowed to use affirmative action training programs and take other ethnic- or gender-conscious actions in order to expand the pool of qualified ethnic-minority or female applicants for employment positions.
5. The use of affirmative action is appropriate when ethnic minorities or women are underrepresented in an employer’s workforce as a whole, or when they are underrepresented in the professional educator, education support, or administrator/supervisor categories of an educational employer’s workforce. Whether the use of affirmative action is appropriate to deal with the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities or women at a school building, in an operational department, or in some other segment of an employer’s workforce should be determined on a case-by-case basis after assessing all of the relevant factors.
6. (a) Decisions as to the use of affirmative action in employment including decisions as to the relationship between affirmative action and seniority—should be made voluntarily by the employer and the local employee organization through collective bargaining or other form of bilateral decisionmaking.
(b) Although NEA urges its affiliates to support the use of affirmative action in employment as recommended in this Statement of Policy, affiliates are free to decide for themselves what positions to take in this regard. Accordingly, the NEA will not deny support to an affiliate that is seeking to enforce contractual or statutory employment rights solely because those rights are contrary to positions recommended in this Statement of Policy.
7. (a) Whether NEA participates in litigation involving affirmative action will be determined on a case-by-case basis after considering all of the relevant factors, including, among others, the NEA policy on the issue presented, the position (if any) taken by NEA affiliates, and the precedential effect of the litigation.
(b) NEA will participate in litigation involving the relationship between affirmative action and seniority only with the approval of an NEA governing body (i.e., Representative Assembly, Board of Directors, or Executive Committee).
(c) A court should have the power to impose an affirmative action remedy that is contrary to the seniority rights of employees only when there has been a judicial finding that the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities or women in the workforce is attributable to unlawful discrimination by the particular employer involved, and then only to the extent that the remedy is necessary to cure the effects of the unlawful discrimination.

C. Privatization and Subcontracting Programs

Adopted by the 2000 Representative Assembly, amended 2023

Preamble

Certain forms of private sector involvement have the potential to adversely affect public education and other public services and impair NEA's ability to achieve its organizational goals and objectives. This Policy Statement (1) sets forth the criteria that are used by NEA in order to determine whether and under what circumstances it will oppose or support private sector involvement in public education, and (2) based upon those criteria, indicates the position taken by NEA with regard to certain commonly-used forms of such involvement.¹

Definitions

For purposes of this Policy Statement, the following definitions apply:

1. The term “public school” means a preK program, an elementary school, or a secondary school that is supported by tax dollars; that is under the jurisdiction of and subject to comprehensive regulation by a governmental entity; that, subject to reasonable pedagogically-based distinctions, provides access to all resident students; that is financially and educationally accountable to the public or its elected representatives; and that seeks to inculcate in its students basic values that are rooted in the democratic and egalitarian traditions of our country;
2. The term “privatization program” means a private school tuition voucher program, a private school tax credit/deduction program, or other program pursuant to which public funds are used—directly or indirectly—to subsidize preK–12 private school education;
3. The term “subcontracting program” means an arrangement pursuant to which private sector entities are used to perform functions—either support or professional—that traditionally have been performed by public elementary and secondary school employees, public higher education employees, or other public employees;
4. The term “private school tuition-voucher program” means a program pursuant to which public funds are used to pay, in whole or in part, the tuition for a student to attend a private school—either by direct payment to a private school, or as reimbursement to a student’s parents;
5. The term “private school tuition tax credit/deduction program” means a program that provides a tax advantage—either in the form of a credit against income tax, or a deduction in computing income tax—to persons who pay for, or contribute to, the cost of private education;
6. The term “sectarian private school” means a private school that is affiliated with a religious group, institution, or organization, or that includes a religious component in its educational program;
7. The term “economic security” means the right to continued employment in the same or a substantially equivalent position, with the same or substantially equivalent compensation, benefits, and working conditions;
8. The term “whole student approach” means that in order for effective learning to take place, every student must be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged;
9. The term “public-private partnership” means an arrangement between private investors and a public entity regarding the financing and/or operation of public projects;
10. The term “social impact bond” means an arrangement between private investors and a public entity in which the private investors pay the up-front cost of providing the service and the government repays the costs—with interest—only if goals are met.

¹ This Policy Statement does not deal with all forms of private sector involvement in public education. Thus, for example, charter schools are not addressed. The position that NEA takes with regard to charter schools is set forth in the Policy Statement on Charter Schools adopted by the 2017 Representative Assembly.

1 **Principles²**

2
3 **A. Criteria**

4 NEA reaffirms its strong and historical commitments to (1) promoting the cause of public education,
5 (2) preserving the principle of separation of church and state, (3) protecting the economic security of
6 public employees, and (4) achieving racial integration in the public schools and preventing resegregation.
7 Consistent with these commitments, NEA is opposed to any privatization or subcontracting program that:

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- 9 1. Has the potential to reduce the resources that otherwise would be available to achieve and/or
- 10 maintain a system of quality public education, or the potential to otherwise negatively impact on
- 11 public education;
- 12 2. Allows public funds to be used for religious education or other religious purposes, or otherwise
- 13 weakens the wall of separation between church and state;
- 14 3. Places the economic security of public employees at risk, without regard to individual job perfor-
- 15 mance, so that the services in question can be performed by private sector employees; or
- 16 4. Has the purpose or effect of causing or maintaining racial segregation, including institutional or
- 17 systemic racism, in the public schools.
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19 **B. Application of Criteria**

20 **1. Private School Tuition Voucher Programs**

21 a. NEA opposes private school tuition voucher programs that pay for students to attend
22 private or home schools *in order to obtain educational services that are readily available*
23 *to them in public schools to which they have reasonable access*. School voucher programs
24 reduce the resources that otherwise would be available for public education, and otherwise
25 impair the ability of the affected public school districts to provide a quality education.

26 NEA also opposes the foregoing type of private school voucher programs because they
27 have the potential to reduce the student population in the affected school districts, which in
28 turn could result in the displacement of public education employees. This places the eco-
29 nomic security of public education employees at risk, without regard to individual job per-
30 formance, so that the services in question can be performed by private sector employees.

31 To the extent that sectarian private schools participate in voucher programs of this
32 type, public funds are used to pay for religious education and other religious activities.
33 NEA opposes such participation because it weakens the wall of separation between
34 church and state.

35 b. NEA does not take a categorical position for or against private school tuition voucher pro-
36 grams that pay for students to attend private schools *in order to obtain educational services*
37 *that are not available to them in public schools to which they have reasonable access*—
38 such as, for example, secondary schools for students who reside in school districts that
39 operate only elementary schools, or specialized services for students with disabilities.

40 If the unavailable services are provided by sectarian private schools, NEA would oppose
41 the program to the extent the public funds are used to pay for religious education and/or
42 other religious activities.

43 If the participating private schools are not sectarian, or if the funds made available to
44 sectarian private schools are used only for secular purposes, the acceptability of the pro-
45 gram would depend on whether it is feasible for the public schools to provide the services
46 in question, related actions of the school district, and other such factors. Because these
47 factors can best be assessed in context, NEA defers to the judgment of the relevant state
48 and local affiliates.

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53 ² These Principles are set forth in summary terms. The underlying analysis, and the rationale for the positions taken, are con-
54 tained in the May 2000 Report of the NEA Special Committee on Educational Privatization.

1 **2. Tuition Tax Credit/Deduction Programs**

2 Because education tuition tax credits/deductions have the same potential financial impact on
3 public education as the direct payment of public funds, tuition tax credit/deduction programs are
4 the functional equivalent of tuition voucher programs. Accordingly, the position that NEA takes
5 with regard to tax credit/deduction programs is the same as the position that it takes with regard
6 to tuition-voucher programs.
7

8 **3. Privatization Programs Pursuant to Which Public Funds are Used to Provide Services, Ma-**
9 **terials, and/or Other Assistance to Private Schools or to Students Who Attend Such Schools**

10 NEA does not oppose the use of public funds to provide services, materials, and/or other
11 assistance to private schools or to students who attend private schools in all circumstances.
12 Such assistance may be acceptable if the services, materials, and/or other assistance (a) are not
13 part of the basic educational program that is provided by the private school, but are ancillary to
14 that program, (b) as a general matter, do not in and of themselves provide an incentive for pub-
15 lic school students to transfer to private schools,³ (c) do not negatively impact on the ability of
16 public schools to implement their own educational programs, and (d) are secular in nature and
17 are incapable of diversion to religious use—such as bus transportation or secular library books,
18 as opposed to tape recorders, computers, etc. NEA’s position regarding programs of this type will
19 be determined on a case-by-case basis, after considering the structure, financial implications, and
20 operation of the program in question.
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22 **4. Subcontracting Programs Pursuant to Which Private-Sector Entities Are Used to Provide**
23 **Public Services**

24 NEA will oppose specific subcontracting programs under which private-sector entities are
25 used to provide public services if it determines that the programs have a negative impact on
26 public education, reduce or eliminate the number of staff employed that currently provide that
27 educational service, reduce pay and/or benefits from existing staff providing that educational
28 service, or have a negative impact on the whole student approach to education, or if—because
29 sectarian entities are engaged to provide the services—faith-based discrimination is enabled by
30 the contract. NEA’s position with regard to programs of this type will depend in most cases on
31 two issues. First, is a contractor capable of providing employees who have the professional devel-
32 opment, commitment, character, and workplace stability to participate in the whole student ap-
33 proach. Second, whether they place the economic security of public education employees at risk,
34 without regard to individual job performance, so that the services in question can be performed
35 by private-sector employees.

36 On this latter basis, NEA opposes the use of private-sector transportation companies if it
37 results in the displacement of publicly-employed school bus drivers, the use of private-sector food
38 service companies if it results in the displacement of publicly-employed school cafeteria work-
39 ers, and any other program that simply replaces public education employees with private-sector
40 employees. NEA opposes the use of private-sector companies that are hostile to labor unions or
41 that interfere with employees in the exercise of their right to organize and bargain collectively.
42 NEA opposes no-bid contracts with private-sector companies. NEA opposes requests for propos-
43 als (RFPs) that do not affirmatively provide opportunities for female- and minority-owned busi-
44 nesses to compete. NEA opposes contracts with faith-based providers who discriminate against
45 employees or program participants on the basis of religion.
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53 ³ The qualification “as a general matter” is necessary because the result might be otherwise in a particular case. Thus, for
54 example, a student might attend a private as opposed to a public school if publicly funded transportation were available.
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1 NEA’s position regarding subcontracting programs and pilot programs under which the
2 use of private-sector entities does not result in the displacement of public employees because
3 the services in question have not traditionally been performed by public employees cannot be
4 determined in the abstract. The acceptability of such programs can best be determined in con-
5 text—after considering such factors as the economic and programmatic feasibility of using public
6 employees to provide the services, related actions of the school district or employer, the nature and
7 track record of the particular private-sector entity involved, and whether the local Association has
8 been consulted. Should pilot programs be deemed successful, the employees in said program shall
9 be accreted into the appropriate bargaining unit. NEA does not take a categorical position for or
10 against programs of this type, but defers to the judgment of the relevant state and local affiliates.
11

12
13 **Privatization by Attrition**

14 NEA opposes the privatization of employees based on hire date in which employees with more seniority
15 may remain employees of the district, and newer employees are employees of a private-sector entity.
16 While this method mitigates the immediate damage of privatization, it creates an incentive for forcing
17 older employees out, and ultimately ends with an entirely privatized group of employees and inferior
18 services for our students.
19

20 **Social Impact Bond**

21 NEA generally opposes Social Impact Bonds (SIBs), also known as pay for success bonds, which
22 allow private investors to finance government services. Investors receive a negotiated return rate when
23 providers achieve contractually determined benchmarks. When SIBs are promoted to fund social servi-
24 ces at little to no risk, promised cost savings are too often achieved by cutting personnel costs, either by
25 employing non-union labor or understaffing services. SIBs may cost more than traditional funding due to
26 the extra administrative and transaction costs. In evaluating whether to support a specific social impact
27 bond funding proposal, local associations should require a comprehensive cost analysis that incorporates
28 both short- and long-term expenses, as well as short- and long-term savings, and a plan for maintaining
29 programming after the term of the contract. Proposals to achieve savings by displacing public employees
30 should be rejected.

31 Social Impact Bond contracts frequently shield providers from public oversight and accountability,
32 including the accountability measures inherent in the public bonding process. Contracts, which should
33 be open for public review and comment prior to execution, should confirm that all documents related to
34 a SIB-financed program are public records. All parties and agents to SIB bidding and contracting should
35 also be required to disclose conflicts of interest. Providers should be required to provide regular progress
36 reports conducted by an external evaluator. Such reports should be publicly available. The government
37 party to the contract should retain the right to audit the project. Providers should also be subjected to the
38 same civil rights requirements as a public employer.

39 Furthermore, using social impact bonds to finance social services may displace innovative and experi-
40 mental approaches to social problems. Investors will not fund projects for which returns may not be
41 measurable within the term of the program and will not fund programs that target populations most in
42 need of intervention, due to the risk of not meeting benchmarks. SIBs should not be used to maintain
43 successful programs that have been eliminated due to budget cuts; instead, public funding should be res-
44 tored. SIBs should be reserved for truly innovative programs, in which investors bear actual risk.
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D. Kindergarten and Prekindergarten

Adopted by the 2003 Representative Assembly, amended 2013

Introduction

The term “early childhood education” is used by educators to refer to educational programs provided for children from birth through age eight. Within this eight-year span, there are four separate developmental age groups: infants and toddlers (i.e., children from birth to age three); prekindergarten children (i.e., children age three and up who have not yet entered kindergarten); children in kindergarten; and children in the primary grades (i.e., grades one through three). Because there are significant differences in the patterns of growth and learning of the children in each of these developmental age groups, it is appropriate to deal with each group separately rather than consider early childhood education in the aggregate.

This Policy Statement sets forth NEA’s positions with regard to kindergarten and prekindergarten.¹ For purposes of discussion, the positions are grouped into two categories—relating to the availability and financing of kindergarten and prekindergarten, and the educational quality of kindergarten and prekindergarten.

Availability and Financing

A. Kindergarten

1. Availability

Because of the proliferation of prekindergarten programs, kindergarten may no longer be the primary bridge between home and formal education. But it still serves an important transitional function: in kindergarten children are expected to learn the basic academic and social skills that prepare them for the demands of first and subsequent grades. In order to ensure that this expectation is met, kindergarten attendance should be mandatory, and all states should offer a publicly-funded, free, high-quality, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive kindergarten program.

Wide age spans in kindergarten classes can make it difficult for teachers to implement a curriculum that accommodates children’s substantially different levels and paces of learning. In order to reduce the age span, there should be a uniform entrance age for kindergarten. This means that there should be both a minimum and maximum cut-off date: children should not be allowed to enter kindergarten before they reach a minimum age, or if they are above a maximum age. In terms of the uniform age itself, children should be required to have reached age five at the beginning of kindergarten and should be required to enter kindergarten not later than their sixth birthday.

The minimum and maximum entrance ages should generally be applied; however, there should be a mechanism that allows for exceptions on a case-by-case basis. This mechanism should not simply accommodate any parents who wish to enroll their children in kindergarten before they are five years of age or delay the entrance of their children until after they are six years of age. The mechanism should rather include specific criteria for determining whether an exception is warranted, and the final determination should be made by the school district after appropriate consultation with the parents and the kindergarten teacher. Because these criteria can best be determined in context, NEA defers in this regard to the judgment of its affiliates, with the following caveat: because of the problems that it generally creates for kindergarten classes, parents who seek to enroll children who are not yet five years of age should bear a particularly heavy burden of persuasion.

¹ These positions are set forth in summary terms. The underlying analysis, and a more complete rationale for the positions taken, are contained in the April 2003 Report of the NEA Special Committee on Early Childhood Education.

1 **2. Financing**

2 The public schools should be the primary provider of kindergarten, and—as a component part of
3 the public school program—should be financed in the same manner as the rest of the public school
4 program. But the money should come from “new” funding sources. This does not necessarily mean
5 that additional taxes must be imposed, but that the funds necessary to finance mandatory full-day
6 kindergarten—including the money to recruit and adequately compensate qualified teachers and edu-
7 cation support professionals—should not be obtained at the expense of other educational priorities.

8 NEA recognizes and respects the right of parents to send their children to private kindergarten—
9 just as it does the right of parents to send their children to private elementary/secondary schools. The
10 issue, however, is whether public funds should be used to pay for private kindergarten. Based upon
11 the NEA Policy Statement Regarding Privatization and Subcontracting Programs, NEA’s answer to
12 this question is “no.”
13

14 **B. Prekindergarten**

15 **1. Availability**

16 There is no longer any serious doubt about the value of prekindergarten. Children who partici-
17 pate in high-quality, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive prekindergarten programs
18 perform better academically and exhibit better cognitive and social skills—on both a short-term
19 and long-term basis—than similar children who do not participate in such programs. And, this is
20 true for all children, not just those from disadvantaged backgrounds. NEA supports the establish-
21 ment in every state of a non-mandatory “universal” prekindergarten for all three- and four-year-old
22 children—i.e., all such children whose parents want them to enroll should have access to, but not be
23 required to attend, a publicly-funded, free, quality prekindergarten program.²

24 There are specific advantages to public as opposed to private prekindergarten, and the public
25 schools should be the primary provider. Criteria should be designed to ensure program quality (essen-
26 tially the same requirements that would apply to public school prekindergarten) and preserve the
27 principle of church/state separation.
28

29 **2. Financing**

30 The existing pattern of financing for prekindergarten differs from K–12 education in that the
31 federal contribution is substantially greater and exceeds that of the states. This difference derives
32 from the fact that prekindergarten—including Head Start—has focused on children from disadvan-
33 taged families, and the federal government traditionally has played a special role in providing educa-
34 tional access and opportunity for such children. Consistent with this tradition, the federal government
35 should provide funds sufficient to make prekindergarten available for all three- and four-year-old
36 children from disadvantaged families. State (including as appropriate local) governments should be
37 responsible for providing the additional funds necessary to make prekindergarten available to all
38 three- and four-year-old children. Both the federal and state governments should use “new” money to
39 fund prekindergarten—not money taken from other areas of education and childcare which also have
40 important unmet needs.
41

42 **Educational Quality**

43 Although the positions taken with regard to early childhood education should reflect the different
44 patterns of growth and learning for each of the four developmental age groups included within the
45 definition of early childhood education, there is an affinity between kindergarten and prekindergarten
46 with regard to the criteria for a quality education program. Accordingly, in order to avoid redundancy,
47 this Policy Statement discusses kindergarten and prekindergarten together, noting as appropriate the
48 relevant differences.
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52 ² The reference to three- and four-year-old children assumes that when children reach five years of age they will be enrolled in
53 kindergarten. But this is the recommended minimum entrance age for kindergarten, and some children may not enter kinder-
54 garten until after they have reached that age. Such children should be eligible to attend the prekindergarten program.
55

- 1 A. NEA supports full-day—as opposed to half-day—kindergarten and prekindergarten.³ There is
2 ample evidence to demonstrate that the subsequent academic performance of children who attend
3 full-day kindergarten and prekindergarten is better than that of similar children who attend half-
4 day programs, and that they also make significantly greater progress in learning social skills.
5 This is true not just for children from low-income families, but for all children. Nor is it the mere
6 increase in hours that leads to these positive effects, but rather what children experience during
7 the day.
- 8 B. The curriculum and pedagogy in kindergarten and prekindergarten should foster all areas of a
9 child’s development—(i.e., cognitive, social/emotional, linguistic, approaches to learning, and
10 physical skills). Toward this end, the curriculum and pedagogy should incorporate components
11 of both the “child-centered” and “didactic” approaches. In an effort to avoid “curriculum
12 shovedown” in kindergarten— i.e., an attempt to push expectations from the primary grades
13 down into kindergarten—academic skills should be properly integrated into the overall
14 kindergarten curriculum, and taught in a manner that is developmentally appropriate for the
15 children involved. The curriculum and pedagogy for prekindergarten should not be identical to
16 that in kindergarten, but should reflect the developmental differences between three- and four-
17 year-old children and five-year old children that may tip the balance in prekindergarten even
18 further away from didactic academic instruction. NEA’s basic position with regard to size is set
19 forth in Resolution B-12. After opining “that excellence in the classroom can best be attained
20 by small class size,” the Resolution states that “[c]lass size maximums must be based on the
21 type of students, grade level, subject area content, and physical facilities.” Consistent with this
22 statement, NEA does not recommend any specific number as the optimum size for kindergarten
23 and prekindergarten. The reference in Resolution B-12 to “optimal class sizes” is intended to
24 apply to classes at all educational levels, and is not tailored to kindergarten and prekindergarten.
25 As regards kindergarten and prekindergarten, it is relevant to note the research consensus that,
26 in order to achieve the greatest academic gains, children should be taught in small classes at the
27 earliest possible point in their school careers.
- 28 C. Resolution F-28 provides that all “classroom teachers should be provided with support staff
29 to assist in the educational process.” When dealing with kindergarten and prekindergarten
30 children—who because of their age require assistance in performing various life skills, pose
31 unique health and safety concerns, etc.—the primary need is for additional adult supervision
32 in the classroom. Accordingly, kindergarten and prekindergarten teachers should have the
33 assistance of a full-time classroom aide. The purpose of this classroom aide should be to assist
34 the classroom teacher—and, as indicated in Resolution F-28, NEA “believes that the employment
35 of education support professionals should not be a rationale for increasing class size.”
- 36 D. Assessment of kindergarten and prekindergarten students should be holistic, and involve all
37 developmental domains (i.e., cognitive, social/emotional, linguistic, approaches to learning, and
38 physical skills). Multiple sources of information should be used (i.e., information from families,
39 direct observations, anecdotal notes, portfolios, and developmental screening tools), and children
40 should be given an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in different ways, allowing for
41 individualized variability in learning pace and for different cultural backgrounds. For this reason,
42 the use of large scale, standardized tests is inappropriate. And, because the development of young
43 children is uneven and greatly impacted by environmental factors, standardized assessment
44 results are not reliable until they are in the third grade or beyond.

50
51 ³ As used in this Policy Statement, the term “full-day” is not intended to refer to a specific number of school day hours, but
52 means rather that the starting and ending times for kindergarten and prekindergarten are keyed to the regular school day.
53 Implicit in our support for full-day kindergarten and prekindergarten is support for “full-year” programs—i.e., programs that
54 operate for the regular school year.
55

1 The purpose of any assessment of kindergarten and prekindergarten students should be to
2 improve the quality of education, by (1) providing information that will enable kindergarten
3 and prekindergarten teachers to work more effectively with the children, and first grade or
4 kindergarten teachers, as the case may be, to individualize the curriculum to facilitate learning,
5 (2) identifying children with disabilities, developmental delays, and health problems (i.e., vision
6 and hearing), and (3) developing baseline data against which future data can be compared.

- 7 E. Teachers, education support professionals, and administrators who work in kindergarten and
8 prekindergarten should be qualified to perform their functions effectively. These employees
9 should be considered qualified if they hold the license and/or certificate that the state requires for
10 their employment.

11 Although this same basic rule should apply with regard to kindergarten and prekindergarten
12 teachers, the two situations are somewhat different. Because “a teaching license should signify
13 that an individual entering the teaching profession is competent to teach,” Resolution G-3, and
14 because all states require public school kindergarten teachers to be licensed, any concerns
15 regarding the qualifications of teachers at the kindergarten level are adequately addressed. In
16 many states, however, public school prekindergarten teachers are not required to have a state
17 license, but can be employed if they have some type of training in child development and obtain
18 some type of certification in early childhood education. There should be appropriate mechanisms
19 to ensure that prekindergarten teachers who do not hold a state license possess the requisite
20 knowledge and skills and are working towards full prekindergarten licensure in states where such
21 licensure exists.

22 Consistent with Resolution D-16, it is NEA’s belief that “continuous professional development
23 is required for education professionals to achieve and maintain the highest standards of student
24 learning and professional practice.” And, consistent with Resolution D-16, NEA believes that
25 “continuous professional development is required for education support professionals to achieve
26 and maintain the highest standards of professional practice in order to meet the needs of the
27 whole student.” This professional development should be relevant to early childhood curriculum
28 and pedagogy, support the elements of developmentally appropriate practice, and provided at
29 school district expense.

- 30 F. Resolution A-5 expresses NEA’s belief that “parents/guardians who are active participants in the
31 education of their children increase the likelihood of the achievement of educational excellence.”
32 Because kindergarten and prekindergarten are critical transition points for children—
33 prekindergarten is generally a child’s first organized educational experience, and kindergarten
34 is the bridge to the more structured environment of first and subsequent grades—such family
35 involvement is particularly important at these levels. Training programs should be made available
36 to families to prepare them to take an active role in the education of their kindergarten and
37 prekindergarten children, and provide them with an understanding of the expectations that
38 will be placed on their children, and the new policies and procedures that their children will
39 experience, in kindergarten and prekindergarten.

40 This Policy Statement refers simply to kindergarten and prekindergarten children and makes
41 no special mention of children with disabilities or other exceptional needs. In Resolution B-1,
42 NEA “advocates the establishment of fully funded early childhood special education programs,”
43 and states that “[t]hese programs and necessary services should be readily accessible for children
44 with disabilities and staffed by certified/licensed teachers, qualified support staff, and therapists.”
45 Implicit in this Policy Statement is the unqualified endorsement of the foregoing positions with
46 regard to kindergarten and prekindergarten.

E. Teacher Evaluation and Accountability

Adopted by the 2011 Representative Assembly, amended 2022

Introduction

Consistent with NEA's belief that the "teaching profession is a cornerstone of society," "composed of individuals meeting the highest standards" of "evaluation" and "accountability," (NEA Resolution D-1), and recognizing that evaluation and accountability systems too often leave teachers without the feedback or support needed to enhance practice and advance student learning, NEA sets forth below the criteria for the types of teacher evaluation and accountability systems necessary to ensure a high quality public education for every student.

I. High Quality Teacher Evaluation Systems

NEA believes that our students and teachers deserve high quality evaluation systems that provide the tools teachers need to continuously tailor instruction, enhance practice, and advance student learning. Such systems must provide both ongoing, non-evaluative, formative feedback and regular, comprehensive, meaningful, and fair evaluations. Such systems must be developed and implemented with teachers and their representatives, either through collective bargaining where available, or in partnership with the affiliate representing teachers at the state and local level.

a. All teachers should be regularly evaluated by highly trained evaluators on the basis of clear standards as to what teachers should know and be able to do. Such standards should be high and rigorous and define the rich knowledge, skills, dispositions, and responsibilities of teachers. Such standards may be based on national models such as the NEA Principles of Professional Practice, the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Model Core Teaching Standards, the Standards developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, or statewide standards for the teaching profession.

b. Evaluations must be comprehensive – based on multiple indicators to provide teachers with clear and actionable feedback to enhance their practice – and must include all three of the following components:

i. **Indicators of Teacher Practice** demonstrating a teacher's subject matter knowledge, skill in planning and delivering instruction that engages students, ability to address issues of equity and diversity, and ability to monitor and assess student learning and adjust instruction accordingly. Such indicators may include the following indicators or others chosen by a local or state affiliate: classroom observations, proof of practice (e.g., lesson plans, curriculum plans, student assessments, minutes from team planning meetings, curriculum maps, and teacher instructional notes), teacher interviews, and self-assessments.

ii. **Indicators of Teacher Contribution and Growth** demonstrating a teacher's professional growth and contribution to a school's and/or district's success. Such indicators may include the following indicators or others chosen by a local or state affiliate: completion of meaningful professional development that is applied to practice; structured collaboration with colleagues focused on improving practice and student outcomes (e.g., by way of professional learning communities and grade or subject teams); evidence of reflective practice; teacher leadership in the school, district, or educational community; collaborative projects with institutions of higher education; and positive engagement with students, parents, and colleagues.

iii. **Indicators of Contribution to Student Learning, Growth, and/or Development** demonstrating a teacher's impact on student learning, growth, and/or development. Such indicators must be authentic, recognize that there are multiple factors that impact a student's learning which are beyond a teacher's control (which must include, but not be limited to, learning challenges and poor attendance), and may include the following indicators chosen by a local or state affiliate: student

1 learning objectives developed jointly by the teacher and principal/evaluator; teacher-selected
2 assessments; student work (papers, portfolios, projects, presentations); and/or teacher defined stu-
3 dent development objectives. High quality, developmentally appropriate teacher-selected assess-
4 ments that provide valid, reliable, timely, and meaningful information regarding student learning,
5 growth, and/or development may be used for quality, formative evaluation. Standardized tests,
6 even if deemed valid and reliable, may not determine any part of an educator’s evaluation or be
7 used to support any employment action against a teacher.

8
9 c. Evaluations must be meaningful, providing all teachers with clear and actionable feedback linked
10 to tailored professional development. Such feedback should include regular non-evaluative formative
11 feedback – meaning feedback that serves only to inform practice and that does not contribute to for-
12 mal evaluation results – as such feedback is often the most effective way to improve teacher practice.
13 Such non-evaluative feedback may include self-reflection, peer observation and/or teacher approved
14 surveys of students to assess engagement and learning behaviors.

15
16 d. Evaluations must be fair, conducted by highly trained and objective supervisors or other evaluators
17 as agreed to by the local affiliate, whose work is regularly reviewed to ensure the validity and reliabil-
18 ity of evaluation results. If an evaluation will be the basis for any action relating to a teacher’s employ-
19 ment, ratings by more than one evaluator must be provided in support of the action. Where a teacher
20 believes an evaluation does not accurately reflect the respective level of practice, the teacher must have
21 the right to contest the evaluation, and have access to the information necessary to do so.

22
23 e. To satisfy these requirements, evaluation systems must be adequately funded and staffed, and fully
24 developed and validated, including by training all teachers on the new systems, before they are used
25 to make any high stakes employment decisions. NEA recognizes that our schools do not currently
26 have enough staff trained to provide meaningful evaluative and non-evaluative feedback to teachers.
27 To expand the number of people who can do so, the Representative Assembly directs NEA to examine
28 existing mentorship, peer assistance, and peer assistance and review programs, and report back to the
29 October 2011 NEA Board meeting regarding those programs, their compliance with the requirements
30 set forth in D-11 (Mentor Programs) and D-13 (Peer Assistance Programs and Peer Assistance & Re-
31 view Programs), and to make programmatic recommendations as to whether to expand such programs
32 or develop others in partnership with state and local Associations.

33 34 **II. High Quality Teacher Accountability Systems**

35 NEA believes that teachers are accountable for high quality instruction that advances student learn-
36 ing. High quality teacher accountability systems, developed and implemented with teachers and their
37 representatives either through collective bargaining where available, or in partnership with the affiliate
38 representing teachers at the state and local level, should be based on the following principles.

39
40 a. All teachers are responsible for providing a high quality education to students and supporting
41 the efforts of colleagues and their school as a whole to do the same. To fulfill that responsibility,
42 teachers have the right to a safe and supportive working environment including ongoing non-
43 evaluative feedback on their practice that supports teachers’ efforts to innovate and the right to
44 regular, confidential evaluations.

45
46 b. All teachers have the responsibility to continually enhance their practice and to stay current in
47 subject matter and pedagogical approaches by reflecting and acting on feedback received, ac-
48 cessing professional development opportunities provided, and collaborating with colleagues to
49 enhance instruction. To fulfill that responsibility, teachers have the right to increased autonomy
50 over instructional practices, time during the school day for collaboration with colleagues, a
51 decisionmaking role in professional development, the right to have such development tailored
52 to enhancing skills identified as needing improvement in both non-evaluative feedback and in
53 evaluations, as well as the ability to pursue advanced coursework and degrees as part of profes-
54 sional development.

1 c. If, through a high quality evaluation system, a teacher's practice fails to meet performance
2 standards, a teacher should be provided with clear notice of the deficiencies and an improvement
3 plan should be developed by the teacher, local Association, and employer. The improvement plan
4 should provide the teacher with a reasonable opportunity – including time, high quality profession-
5 al development, and support – to meet expectations. In addition, the teacher should receive regular
6 and frequent feedback from the district and the local Association regarding progress during the
7 support program period. What constitutes a reasonable opportunity will depend on the nature of
8 the deficiencies identified, but in no event should an improvement plan exceed one school year.
9 During the period in which a teacher is implementing an improvement plan, the district shall pro-
10 vide a support program mutually agreed upon by the district and the local Association, which shall
11 include the assignment of an accomplished teacher to assist the teacher not meeting performance
12 standards in improving practice and to ensure a quality education for that teacher's students.

13
14 d. If a teacher fails to improve despite being given a reasonable opportunity to do so, or other-
15 wise fails to meet expectations, the teacher may be counseled to leave the profession or be subject
16 to fair, transparent, and efficient dismissal process that provides due process. Such a process
17 should include: notice to a teacher of the basis for the dismissal; early disclosure of all evidence
18 on which the dismissal is based; an early mandatory meeting between the teacher, employer, and
19 the teacher's representative to discuss possible resolution; and, failing such resolution, a prompt
20 hearing before an impartial third party, such as an arbitrator, on the charges.

21
22 e. NEA believes that it is appropriate and fitting for accountability systems to continue to differenti-
23 ate between the rights and responsibilities of probationary teachers, meaning those teachers in their
24 initial years of employment who may be nonrenewed upon notice at the end of a school year, and
25 career teachers, meaning those teachers who have successfully served through the probationary
26 period and may be dismissed only for cause as defined by state law or local agreement or policy.

27
28 • Probationary teachers should receive ongoing support for at least the first two years of their
29 employment from locally developed and fully supported induction programs. The focus of
30 such induction programs should be supportive and non-evaluative, designed to provide begin-
31 ning teachers with the support they need to learn and thrive in the teaching profession. Dis-
32 tricts should be encouraged to partner with colleges and universities to develop joint induction
33 programs. No beginning teacher should go for weeks, much less years, without receiving any
34 feedback on their practice.

35
36 • Probationary teachers should become career teachers if they meet or exceed expectations at the
37 conclusion of their probationary employment period as defined by state law. A probationary
38 teacher should have the right to require that the school district conduct the necessary evaluations
39 within this time period, so that an appropriate determination can be made as to career status.

40
41 • Probationary teachers who meet or exceed expectations at the conclusion of their probationary
42 employment period as defined by state law, and who are not granted career status, should have
43 the right to contest that denial before an impartial third party, such as an arbitrator.

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45 • Once a probationary teacher has attained career status, that status should not be lost and
46 should be portable from one school district to another within a state. If a career teacher's
47 performance fails to meet expectations, the teacher may be counseled out of the profession or
48 dismissed pursuant to a fair, transparent, and efficient dismissal procedure that provides due
49 process before an impartial third party, such as an arbitrator.

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- Career teachers have the responsibility to reflect upon and enhance their own practice and to support and enhance the practice of their colleagues, particularly probationary teachers. NEA encourages local affiliates to institutionalize opportunities for career teachers to provide such support and enhance the practice of their colleagues by way of including in collective bargaining agreements or local policies provisions supporting professional learning communities, partnerships with local/regional institutions of higher education, and mentorship and peer assistance programs.

III. The Role of the Association in High Quality Evaluation and Accountability Systems

The development, implementation, and enforcement of high quality evaluation and accountability systems are top priorities of NEA and its affiliates, presenting new opportunities and work for the Association and its affiliates. The Representative Assembly therefore directs that NEA support that work by providing the training and resources (including model fair dismissal procedures and other model language) needed to develop, implement, and enforce high quality evaluation and accountability systems that enhance instruction and improve student learning.

F. Digital Learning

Adopted by the 2013 Representative Assembly, amended 2018

In the fast-paced, worldwide, competitive workplace we now live in, our traditional school models are not capable of meeting the needs of the 21st century student. All students—preK through graduate students—need to develop advanced critical thinking and information literacy skills and master new digital tools. At the same time, they need to develop the initiative to become self-directed learners while adapting to the ever-changing digital information landscape.

This shifting landscape creates new opportunities for NEA, our affiliates, our members, and our profession in preschools, public elementary and secondary schools, and postsecondary institutions. The appropriate use of technology in education—as defined by educators rather than entities driven by for-profit motives—will improve student learning, quality of instruction, and education employee effectiveness, and will provide opportunities to eradicate educational inequities.

Digital technologies create new opportunities for accelerating, expanding, and individualizing learning. Our members and students are already actively engaged in building the schools and campuses of the future—including quality online communities. Increasingly, educators (including teachers, librarians/media specialists, faculty, and ESP staff) are becoming curriculum designers who orchestrate the delivery of content using multiple instructional methods and technologies both within and beyond the traditional instructional day. Teaching and learning can now occur beyond the limitations of time and space.

NEA embraces this new environment and these new technologies to better prepare our students for college and for 21st century careers.

Ensure Equity to Meet the Needs of Every Student

NEA believes that educational programs and strategies designed to close the achievement and digital gaps must address equity issues related to broadband Internet access, software and technical support, and hardware maintenance. Also, technical support must be adequate to ensure that digital classrooms function properly and reliably for both educators and students. Under our current inequitable system of funding, simply moving to a large scale use of technology in preK–12 and postsecondary education will more likely widen achievement gaps among students than close them. For example, school districts with lower income populations simply will not be able to provide or maintain appropriate and relevant digital tools and resources for their students. We as a nation must address the issues of equity and access in a comprehensive manner in order to see the promise and realize the opportunities that digital learning can provide.

To that end, NEA believes that student learning needs can best be met by public school districts and postsecondary institutions working in collaboration with educators and local associations to develop comprehensive and thorough digital learning plans that address all the elements of incorporating technology into the instructional program. These plans should be living documents, constantly reviewed and adapted as changing circumstances require, but always keeping the focus on student learning. Implementation of these plans should honor experimentation and creativity as part of the learning process for both educators and students, while always maintaining support for the professional judgment of educators. It is of critical importance that the use of technology is recognized as a tool that assists and enhances the learning process, and is not the driver of the digital learning plan.

These plans also should include the provision of adaptive technologies to meet individual students' needs, including assistive technology to support students who are English Language Learners and students with a variety of disabilities or challenges.

Support and Enhance Educator Professionalism

NEA believes that the increasing use of technology in preK to graduate level classrooms will transform the role of educators allowing the educational process to become ever more student-centered. This latest transformation is not novel, but part of the continuing evolution of our education system. Educators, as professionals working in the best interests of their students, will continue to adjust and adapt their instructional practice and use of digital technology/tools to meet the needs and enhance the learning of their students.

1 All educators are essential to student learning and should have access to relevant, high-quality, inte-
2 ractive professional development in the integration of digital learning and the use of technology into
3 their instruction and practice. Teachers need access to relevant training on how to use technology and
4 incorporate its use into their instruction, ESPs need access to training on how best to support the use of
5 technology in classrooms, and administrators need training to make informed decisions about purchasing
6 equipment, technology use, course assignments, and personnel assignments. School districts and postse-
7 condary institutions need to ensure that they provide interactive professional development on an ongoing
8 basis, and to provide time for all educators to take advantage of those opportunities. The training needs
9 to address both the basic preparation on how to make the technology work, and how to most effectively
10 incorporate it into the educational program.

11 Educator candidates need problem-solving and creativity experiences and should have the opportunity
12 to learn different strategies throughout their pre-service education and regular professional development
13 so they are prepared for using not only the technology of today, but of tomorrow.

14 In these changing roles, it is important to protect the rights of educators, and to fairly evaluate the
15 accomplishments of educational institutions as a whole. For example, the use of supplemental, remedial,
16 or course recovery online instruction can affect the hours, wages, and working conditions of all educatio-
17 nal employees, but can dramatically affect college and university faculty and staff.

18 Educators and their local associations need support and assistance in vetting the quality of digital course
19 materials and in developing or accessing trusted digital venues to share best practices and provide support.

20 Furthermore, education employees should own the copyright to materials that they create in the course
21 of their employment. There should be an appropriate “teacher’s exception” to the “works made for hire”
22 doctrine, pursuant to which works created by education employees in the course of their employment are
23 owned by the employee. This exception should reflect the unique practices and traditions of academia.

24 All issues relating to copyright ownership of materials created by education employees should be
25 resolved through collective bargaining or other process of bilateral decisionmaking between the employer
26 and the affiliate.

27 The ownership rights of education employees who create copyrightable materials should not prevent
28 education employees from making appropriate use of such materials in providing educational services to
29 their students.

30

31 **Enhance and Enrich Student Learning**

32 Optimal learning environments should neither be totally technology free, nor should they be totally
33 online and devoid of educator and peer interaction. The Association believes that an environment that
34 maximizes student learning will use a “blended” and/or “hybrid” model situated somewhere along a con-
35 tinuum between these two extremes.

36 NEA believes there is no one perfect integration of technology and traditional forms of delivering edu-
37 cation for all students. Every class will need to be differentiated, and at some level every student needs a
38 different approach. Professional educators are in the best position and must be directly involved in deter-
39 mining what combination works best in particular classes and with particular students.

40 Students’ maturity and developmental status determines how students adapt to the use of digital tech-
41 nology as they continually face more challenging materials. The use of technology in the classroom will
42 help build self-reliance and motivation in students, but it must be appropriate to their developmental and
43 skill level, as determined by professional educators.

44 As different digital tools are created and used, the impact of technology on traditional socialization
45 roles must be considered. The face-to-face relationship between student and educator is critical to in-
46 creasing student learning, and students’ interactions with each other are an important part of their social-
47 ization into society.

48 Additionally, assessment and accountability systems need to be carefully developed to ensure academic
49 integrity and accurately measure the impact on students. Sensible guidelines and strategies should be used
50 to ensure students are completing their own online assignments and taking the appropriate assessments.

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1 **The Role of the Association in Promoting High Quality, Digital Learning**

2 The development and implementation of high quality digital learning must be a top priority of NEA
3 and its affiliates. The Representative Assembly, therefore, directs that NEA demonstrate its support of
4 digital learning by providing leadership and sharing learning opportunities to develop and implement
5 high quality digital learning that enhances instruction and improves student learning. The Representative
6 Assembly strongly encourages NEA to do this work in the field of digital learning in partnership with
7 trusted organizations and experts who can work at the national, state, and local levels to assist states,
8 school districts, colleges and universities, and local associations in developing their capacity for high
9 quality digital learning.

10 The Representative Assembly also directs NEA to encourage its members and utilize their expertise to
11 engage in professional learning that enhances their understanding of how to creatively and appropriately
12 integrate digital tools and high quality digital learning into their instruction. Such professional learning
13 should include sharing of expertise by members who can serve as valuable mentors and professional part-
14 ners for other members who are new to digital instruction.

15 The Representative Assembly further directs that NEA work with stakeholders, including parents,
16 students, and policy makers, to seize the opportunities that digital technologies provide. Some educators
17 now have access to the technological tools to further professionalize teaching, vastly enhance and enrich
18 student learning, and meet the individual needs of every student. It is time to ensure that ALL educators
19 have access and are prepared to use these digital tools.

20

21 **Addendum**

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23 **Blended and/or Hybrid Learning**

24 Blended and/or hybrid learning is an integrated instructional approach in which a student learns, at
25 least in part, at a supervised physical location away from home and through online delivery where the
26 student has control over at least some aspects of the time and place of accessing the curriculum. The
27 Policy Statement supports maximizing student learning by using both technology and real life educators
28 in the process. It rejects the idea that effective learning can take place completely online and without
29 interaction with certified teachers and fully qualified faculty.

30

31 **The Definition of Fully Qualified Educators**

32 The term “educator” includes teachers, librarians/media specialists, and education support professio-
33 nals in preK–12 public schools, and faculty and staff of higher education institutions. Educators should
34 be fully qualified, certified, and/or licensed to teach the subjects they are teaching, including in online
35 instructional settings.

36

37 **Technology as a Tool**

38 Technology is a tool to enhance and enrich instruction for students, and should not be used to replace
39 educational employees who work with students or limit their employment.

40

41 **Special Education Services**

42 Use of virtual learning to provide instruction to students receiving special education services for beha-
43 vioral/self-regulation needs will be determined by the IEP Team. The enrollment in a virtual school will
44 not be used as a behavior consequence.

45

46 **Data Privacy**

47 Safeguarding personal data must also be a top priority of NEA and its affiliates. NEA needs to
48 demonstrate its commitment to protecting data privacy. Educators need to be informed about FERPA and
49 state data privacy laws, regulations, and policies. NEA believes that professional development needs to
50 include instruction about data privacy, including responsibilities and the rights of whistleblowers in the
51 event of reporting a violation.

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G. Charter Schools

Adopted by the 2017 Representative Assembly, amended 2021

Introduction

Charter schools were initially promoted by educators who sought to innovate within the local public school system to better meet the needs of their students. Over the last quarter of a century, charter schools have grown dramatically to include large numbers of charters that are privately managed, largely unaccountable, and not transparent as to their operations or performance. The explosive growth of charters has been driven, in part, by deliberate and well-funded efforts to ensure that charters are exempt from the basic safeguards and standards that apply to public schools, which mirror efforts to privatize other public institutions for profit.

Charters have grown the most in school districts that were already struggling to meet students' needs due to longstanding, systemic, and ingrained patterns of institutional neglect, racial, and ethnic segregation, inequitable school funding, and disparities in staff, programs, and services. The result has been the creation of separate, largely unaccountable, privately managed charter school systems in those districts that undermine support and funding of local public schools. Such separate and unequal education systems are disproportionately located in, and harm, students and communities of color by depriving both of the high quality public education system that should be their right.

As educators we believe that "public education is the cornerstone of our social, economic, and political structure," NEA Resolution A-1, the very "foundation of good citizenship," and the fundamental prerequisite to every child's future success. *Brown v. Bd. of Ed. of Topeka, Shawnee Cty., Kan.*, 347 U.S. 483, 493 (1954). The growth of separate and unequal systems of charter schools that are not subject to the same basic safeguards and standards that apply to public schools threatens our students and our public education system. The purpose of this policy statement is to make plain NEA's opposition to the failed experiment of largely unaccountable privately managed charter schools while clarifying NEA's continued support for those public charter schools that are authorized and held accountable by local democratically elected school boards or their equivalent.

I. NEA supports public charter schools that are authorized and held accountable by public school districts.

Charter schools serve students and the public interest when they are authorized and held accountable by the same democratically accountable local entity that authorizes other alternative school models in a public school district such as magnet, community, educator-led, or other specialized schools. Such charters should be authorized only if they meet the substantive standards set forth in (a) below, and are authorized and held accountable through a democratically controlled procedure as detailed in (b) below.

a. Public charter schools should be authorized by a public school district only if the charter is both necessary to meet the needs of students in the district and will meet those needs in a manner that improves the local public school system. Public charters, like all public schools, must provide students with a free, accessible, non-sectarian, quality education that is delivered subject to the same basic safeguards and standards as every other public school, namely, in compliance with: i) open meetings and public records laws; ii) prohibitions against for-profit operation or profiteering as enforced by conflict of interest, financial disclosure and auditing requirements; and iii) the same civil rights, including federal and state laws and protections for students with disabilities, employment, health, labor, safety, staff qualification, and certification requirements as other public schools. When a charter is authorized in a public school district that has an existing collective bargaining agreement with its employees, the authorizer will ensure that the employees will be covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Discrepancies between the existing collective bargaining agreement and the newly authorized charter bargaining agreement need to be reported to the members. Those basic safeguards and standards protect public education as a public good that is not to be commodified for profit.

1 In addition, charter schools may be authorized or expanded only after a district has assessed the
2 impact of the proposed charter school on local public school resources, programs, and services,
3 including the district's operating and capital expenses, appropriate facility availability, the likeli-
4 hood that the charter will prompt cutbacks or closures in local public schools, and consideration of
5 whether other improvements in either educational program or school management (ranging from
6 reduced class sizes to community or magnet schools) would better serve the district's needs. The
7 district must also consider the impact of the charter on the racial, ethnic and socio-economic com-
8 position of schools and neighborhoods and on equitable access to quality services for all district
9 students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. The impact analysis
10 must be independent, developed with community input, and be written and publicly available.

11
12 b. Public charter schools should only be authorized by the same local, democratically account-
13 able entity that oversees all district schools such as a locally elected school board or, if there is no
14 school board, a community-based charter authorizer accountable to the local community.

15 Maintaining local democratic control over decisions as to whether to authorize charters at all,
16 and if so, under what conditions, safeguards community engagement in local public schools. A
17 single local authorizing entity also ensures comprehensive consideration of whether each option,
18 and the mix of options offered in a district, meets the needs of all students and the community
19 as a whole given the resources and facilities in the district. A single entity also permits effective
20 integrated oversight of all schools, including charter schools, and a central mechanism for identi-
21 fying and sharing successful innovations throughout local public schools.

22 The overall goal of the authorization and review process must be to improve the education
23 offered to all students. That goal cannot be accomplished with a diffused authorization system,
24 comprised of multiple different entities, with differing partial views of the students served by a
25 district and the overall scope of its educational offerings.

26 The local authorizer also must ensure that parents and guardians are provided with the same
27 information about charters that is provided to parents and guardians about other district schools,
28 as well as information about any significant respects in which the charter departs from district
29 norms in its operations including the actual charter of the school.

30 The state's role in charter authorization and oversight should be limited to ensuring that local
31 school districts only authorize charters that meet the criteria in (a) above and do so by way of a
32 procedure that complies with (b). To that end, the state should both monitor the performance of
33 districts as charter authorizers and hold districts accountable for providing effective oversight
34 and reporting regarding the quality, finances, and performance of any charters authorized by the
35 district. In addition, the state must provide adequate resources and training to support high qual-
36 ity district charter authorization practices and compliance work, and to share best authorization
37 practices across a state. States should entertain appeals from approvals or denials of charters only
38 on the narrow grounds that the local process for approving a charter was not properly followed or
39 that the approval or denial of a charter was arbitrary or illegal.

40
41 c. Unless both the basic safeguards and process detailed above are met, no charter school should
42 be authorized and NEA will support state and local moratoriums on further charter authoriza-
43 tions in the school district.

44 45 **II. NEA opposes as a failed and damaging experiment unaccountable privately managed charters.**

46 Charters that do not comply with the basic safeguards and standards detailed above and that are not
47 authorized by the local school board (or its equivalent) necessarily undermine local public schools and
48 harm the public education system.

49 The theory that charter competition will improve public schools has been conclusively refuted.
50 Charters have a substantial track record that has been assessed in numerous research studies. Those
51 studies document that charters, on average, do no better than public schools in terms of student learning,
52 growth, or development. And those charters that do perform better are not incorporated into district-wide
53 school improvement efforts.

1 In fact, at their worst, charters inflict significant harms on both students and their communities. Of the
2 charter schools that opened in 2000, a full fifth had closed within five years of opening and a full third
3 had closed by 2010. Because the very opening of charters often prompts cutbacks and/or closures in local
4 public schools, these alarmingly high charter closure rates subject students and communities to cycles of
5 damaging disruption. Such disruption can leave students stranded mid-year. Even closures that occur at
6 the year's end disrupt students' education and unmoors communities that previously had been anchored
7 by the local public school.

8 Charters that are not subject to the basic safeguards and standards detailed above also open up the local
9 public schools to profiteers. Such charters operate without any effective oversight, draining public school
10 resources and thereby further harming local public schools, the students, and communities they serve.

11 Finally, one particular form of unaccountable privately managed charters deserves specific discussion.
12 Fully virtual, online, or non-classroom based charter schools cannot, by their nature, provide students
13 with a well-rounded, complete educational experience, including optimal kinesthetic, physical, social, and
14 emotional development. Accordingly, they should not be authorized as charter schools.

15 **III. Organizing Communities for Quality Public Education**

17 NEA stands for our students wherever they are educated. Relegating students and communities to
18 unaccountable privately managed schools that do not comply with the basic safeguards and standards
19 detailed above has created separate systems of charters that are inherently unequal. To counter the threat
20 to public education of such charters, NEA supports both communities organizing for quality public
21 education and educators working together to improve charter schools.

22
23 a. NEA supports communities that are working to hold charters accountable whether that work
24 takes the form of state legislative initiatives, local school board resolutions and actions, or ef-
25 forts to raise local awareness of the need for charters to comply with the basic safeguards and
26 standards detailed above. NEA also will support state and local efforts to preserve public school
27 funding and services by eliminating such funding and services from unaccountable privately
28 managed charters that do not comply with those basic safeguards and standards.

29
30 b. NEA believes that all educators deserve the right to collective voice and representation, and
31 that an organized workforce is a better guardian of quality standards for students and educators
32 alike. For that reason, state affiliates that seek to organize charter schools may continue to seek
33 NEA's assistance in those organizing efforts.

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H. Community Schools

Adopted by the 2018 Representative Assembly

Introduction:

Consistent with NEA’s core values that “public education is the gateway to opportunity,” and that “all students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character,”¹ and recognizing that opportunity gaps in our society have resulted in an uneven and unjust public education system where some communities have public schools that provide “individuals with the skills and opportunities to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy”² and some do not, NEA believes all schools should use research-backed school improvement strategies designed to support a racially just education system that ensures that all students and their families have the support needed to thrive and grow. The Community School Model (CSM) has a strong track record of closing opportunity gaps, supporting a culturally relevant and responsive climate, and causing significant and sustained school improvement. NEA supports the use of the Community Schools Model in public schools where the local staff and community are supportive.

Definitions:

Public Community Schools: Public community schools are both places and partnerships that bring together the school and community to provide a rigorous and engaging academic experience for students, enrichment activities to help students see positive futures, and services designed to remove barriers to learning. Students engage in real-world problem solving as part of their curriculum. Community schools involve and support families and residents in the public school community and organize the wealth of assets that all communities have to focus on our youth and strengthen families and communities. Public schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone.

Community School Model: Any public school can use the community school model, which is intended to be tailored to the specific needs of an individual school’s students, staff, families, and community members. The community school model advanced by NEA is based on Six Pillars of Practice as implemented through four key mechanisms.

Stakeholder: Stakeholder refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, educators, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives. Stakeholders may also be collective entities, such as local businesses, local unions, organizations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions, in addition to organizations that represent specific groups, such as associations, parent-teacher organizations, and associations representing superintendents, principals, school boards, or educators in specific academic disciplines.³

¹ NEA Core value on Equal Opportunity. “We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.”

² NEA Core value on Democracy – “We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.”

³ Great Schools Partnerships. Glossary of Education Reform. Stakeholders

1 **Partners:** Partner refers to external organizations and individuals that form informal and formal relation-
2 ships with a school that is using the Community School Model to fill strategy needs. These organizations can
3 include locally-owned businesses, local unions, advocacy groups, educator associations, parent-teacher orga-
4 nizations, religious organizations, schools, institutions of higher learning, nonprofit organizations, and other
5 types of organizations that local stakeholders determine fill a strategic need and that align with NEA values.
6

7 **The Six Pillars include:**

- 8 1. ***Strong and Proven Culturally Relevant Curriculum:*** Educators provide a rich and varied academic
9 program allowing students to acquire both foundational and advanced knowledge and skills in many
10 content areas. Students learn with challenging, culturally relevant materials that address their learning
11 needs and expand their experience. They also learn how to analyze and understand the unique experi-
12 ences and perspectives of others. The curriculum embraces all content areas including the arts, second
13 languages, and physical education. Teachers and ESP are engaged in developing effective programs for
14 language instruction for English learners and immigrant students. Rigorous courses such as Advanced
15 Placement or International Baccalaureate are offered. Learning and enrichment activities are provided
16 before and after the regular school day, including sports, the arts, and homework assistance. The needs
17 of parents and families are addressed through programs like English-as-a-Second-Language classes,
18 GED preparation, and job training programs. These supports are based on identified needs.
- 19 2. ***High-quality Teaching and Learning:*** Consistent with NEA Resolutions, educators are fully li-
20 censed, knowledgeable about their content, and skillful in their practice. Instructional time focuses on
21 learning and the use of authentic assessment rather than high-stakes testing. Individual student needs
22 are identified and learning opportunities are designed to address them. Higher-order thinking skills are
23 at the core of instruction so that all students acquire problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning
24 skills. Educators work collaboratively to plan lessons, analyze student work, and adjust curriculum as re-
25 quired. Experienced educators work closely with novices as mentors, coaches, and “guides on the side,”
26 sharing their knowledge and expertise. ESP members take part in professional learning experiences
27 and are consulted and collaborate when plans to improve instruction are developed. Together, educators
28 identify the methods and approaches that work and change those that do not meet student needs.
- 29 3. ***Inclusive Leadership:*** Leadership teams with educators, the community school coordinator, and
30 other school staff share the responsibility of school operations with administrators. This leadership
31 team ensures that the community school strategy remains central in the decision-making process.
- 32 4. ***Positive Behavior Practices (including restorative justice):*** Community school educators emphasize
33 positive relationships and interactions and model these through their own behavior. Negative behaviors
34 are acknowledged and addressed in ways that hold students accountable while showing them they are
35 still valued members of the school community. All members of the faculty and staff are responsible
36 for ensuring a climate where all students can learn. Restorative behavior practices such as peer media-
37 tion, community service, and post-conflict resolution help students learn from their mistakes and foster
38 positive, healthy school climates where respect and compassion are core principles. Zero-tolerance
39 practices leading to suspension and expulsion are avoided.
- 40 5. ***Family and Community Partnerships:*** Families, parents, caregivers, and community members are
41 partners in creating dynamic, flexible community schools. Their engagement is not limited to a spe-
42 cific project or program, but is on-going and extends beyond volunteerism to roles in decision making,
43 governance, and advocacy. Both ESP and teachers are part of developing family engagement strate-
44 gies, and they are supported through professional learning opportunities. Their voices are critical to
45 articulating and achieving the school’s overall mission and goals. When families and educators work
46 together, students are more engaged learners who earn higher grades and enroll in more challenging
47 classes; student attendance and grade and school completion rates improve.
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1 **6. *Coordinated and Integrated Wraparound Supports (community support services):*** Community
2 school educators recognize that students often come to school with challenges that impact their abil-
3 ity to learn, explore, and develop in the classroom. Because learning does not happen in isolation,
4 community schools provide meals, health care, mental health counseling, and other services before,
5 during, and after school. Staff members support the identification of services that children need. These
6 wraparound services are integrated into the fabric of the school that follows the Whole Child tenets.⁴
7 Connections to the community are critically important, so support services and referrals are available
8 for families and other community members.
9

10 **Public Community School Implementation:**

11 Implementation of the Community Schools Model requires that dedicated staff and structures use proven
12 implementation mechanisms and should ensure that decisions made by collaborative bodies do not abro-
13 gate the contractual protections of any union member.
14

- 15 **1. *Community School Coordinator:*** Every community school should have a community school co-
16 ordinator that plays a leadership role at the school, is a member of the school leadership team, and is a
17 full-time staff member. The CSC has training and specialized skills that supports building and manag-
18 ing partnerships in diverse communities, creating and coordinating an integrated network of services
19 for students and their families, and optimizing both internal and external resources. The CSC connects
20 students and their families with services in the community.
- 21 **2. *Needs and Asset Assessment:*** The foundation for the community school model is a school-based
22 needs and asset assessment that assesses academic, social, and emotional needs and assets (including
23 staff expertise and community supports of the school and surrounding community). The needs and asset
24 assessment, facilitated by the CSC, is an inclusive process in which families, students, community mem-
25 bers, partners, teachers, ESP, administrators, and other school staff define their needs and assets. Prob-
26 lem-solving teams are established based on the needs determined in the needs and asset assessment.
- 27 **3. *School Stakeholder Problem-solving Teams:*** Every community school should have teams of school
28 staff and other stakeholders (families, parents) dedicated to solving problems that are identified in the
29 needs and asset assessment. The solutions identified by the stakeholder problem-solving teams change
30 the way things are done in and outside of school hours and, at times, involve partnerships with outside
31 organizations and individuals.
- 32 **4. *Community School Stakeholder Committee:*** The community school stakeholder committee (CSSC)
33 coordinates between school staff, partners (organizations, businesses, town and city service providers),
34 and stakeholders to ensure goals are achieved and obstacles are surmounted. The CSSC, which includes
35 families, community partners, school staff, students, and other stakeholders from the school's vari-
36 ous constituencies, works in collaboration with the school leadership team and supports coordination
37 across and among community schools within a school district.
38

39 **The Role of the Association in Advancing the Community School Model**

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41 **Awareness.** NEA believes that there must be increased awareness among its members and the public about
42 the large body of evidence that demonstrates the efficacy of the Community School Model in supporting
43 racial justice in education and closing opportunity gaps to achieve measurable school improvement gains.
44 NEA encourages schools and districts to use the community school model.
45

46 **Advocacy.** NEA has a responsibility to advocate for community school policies and procedures, legislation,
47 and practices that will result in school improvement gains. As educators, NEA is in the best position to
48 advance the adoption of community school policies.
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53 ⁴ A **whole child** approach, which ensures that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, sets the stan-
54 dard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success.
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I. Safe, Just, and Equitable Schools

Adopted by the 2022 NEA Representative Assembly

I. Our Vision for Safe, Just, and Equitable Schools

The National Education Association’s vision for safe, just, and equitable schools is of thriving spaces that are safe and welcoming for all students, discriminatory toward none, integrate the social, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of the whole student, and equitably and fully-fund the community school model with wraparound services and resources.

NEA’s vision is the recruitment and retention of educators who reflect the community, with relevant professional development and tools for cultural competence and responsiveness, prepared to center students’ needs and lived experiences, value all voices, and ensure voices that have been historically exploited, ignored, or silenced are empowered and heard.

NEA’s vision is to emphasize evidence-based behavioral practices centered in the philosophy of restorative justice over the criminalization and policing of students, and which dismantle and eliminate inequitable policies, practices, and systems that deprive many of our students of their futures and disproportionately harm Native, Asian, Black, Latin(o/a/x), Middle Eastern and North African, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial students, including those who identify as LGBTQ+, have disabilities, and/or are English language learners.

NEA believes all educators—which includes every adult working in our schools—are indispensable both for realizing our vision and for transforming our schools and the broader community so that we may end inequitable policies, practices, and systems to avert a crisis of criminalization of our youth and instead prepare every student to achieve their full potential and succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

This Policy Statement sets forth principles to guide the beliefs, actions, advocacy, partnerships, and other organization-wide efforts to achieve and sustain NEA’s vision for safe, just, and equitable schools for every student, educator, parent/guardian, and community.

II. Guiding Principles to Achieve Our Vision

NEA is committed to changing the policies and practices of the schools in which we work to ensure thriving spaces that are safe, just, and equitable. The Association is committed to beliefs, actions, advocacy, and partnerships for the removal of impediments that are entirely incompatible with our vision, such as institutional racism, white supremacy culture, inadequate and inequitable school funding, and the criminalization and policing of students¹ in our schools—all of which perpetuate the school-to-prison and school-to-deportation pipelines.²

The Association demands a transformative investment in the physical and mental health of all students, including Native students and Asian, Black, Latin(o/a/x), Middle Eastern and North African, Multiracial, and Pacific Islander students,³ LGBTQ+ students, and students from all economic backgrounds and abilities.

¹ *Criminalization and policing of students* refer to practices and enforcement of school disciplinary policies that criminalize students’ behaviors, subjecting students to potential penalties imposed by law enforcement instead of consequences imposed by educators.

² *School-to-prison and school-to-deportation pipelines* refer to policies and practices that directly and indirectly push Native, Asian, Black, Latin(o/a/x), Middle Eastern and North African, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial students, including immigrant and undocumented youth, out of school and on a pathway to prison and/or deportation including, but not limited to: harsh school discipline policies that overuse suspension and expulsion, increased policing and surveillance that create prison-like environments in schools, and overreliance by educators on referrals to law enforcement, the juvenile and criminal justice system, detention, and potentially deportation proceedings.

³ Identities and their usage here acknowledges the *Report and Recommendations of the Racial Equity Language Review Stakeholder Group* adopted by the NEA Board of Directors in May 2020. Native People are named first, distinctly, recognized as the first people of this land with sovereign national and tribal status, and named together with Asian, Black inclusive of African American, Latin(o/a/x) inclusive of Hispanic and Chican(o/a/x), Middle Eastern and North African, Multiracial, and Pacific Islander people.

1 Policymaking that produces a frayed network of public services in our communities is incompatible with
2 our vision. When equitably and fully-funded, this network—which includes public schools, libraries, parks,
3 transportation, food security, access to health care and child care, affordable housing, and public service
4 infrastructure—energizes students, families, and their entire communities. The adoption of racial and social
5 equity principles at all levels of policymaking will encourage systemic solutions to these issues. Racial and
6 social justice in education and throughout the United States will be realized when we ensure fair treatment
7 resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for people of all races and backgrounds.

8 Our work to achieve our vision for safe, just, and equitable schools is guided by five principles:
9

10 **Guiding Principle 1:**

11 **Adopting a Restorative Justice Philosophy to Create a Thriving School Climate**

12 NEA’s vision integrates the social, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of the whole stu-
13 dent,⁴ in which students’ identities and lived experiences are centered within a thriving and nurturing
14 school climate.

15 Educators are critical to the development of evidence-based behavioral practices centered in a philo-
16 sophy of restorative justice that promotes caring, trusting, and positive relationships among students and
17 adults. Without the development of such practices, high quality teaching and learning cannot occur. The
18 Association’s vision for a restorative justice philosophy is comprised of practices and processes that proa-
19 ctively build healthy relationships and a sense of community. Restorative practices to address conflict and
20 wrongdoing, behavior, rule violations, and school climate can improve relationships between students,
21 between students and educators, and between educators whose behavior often serves as a role model for
22 students. They allow each member of the school community to develop and implement a school’s adopted
23 core values. Restorative practices allow individuals who may have committed harm to take full respon-
24 sibility for their behavior by addressing the individual or individuals affected by the behavior. These
25 practices represent a collective mindset that can help guide youth and adult behavior and relationship
26 management in schools.

27 Restorative justice practices and processes do not replace but rather complement existing initiatives
28 and evidence-based programs like Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) or social and
29 emotional learning models that assist in building a foundation and culture of caring.
30

31 **Guiding Principle 2:**

32 **Relevant Professional Development for Culturally Competent Educators**

33 NEA believes that educators—which includes every adult working in our schools—must be fully sup-
34 ported so they are better prepared to respond to the social and emotional needs of each student to ensure
35 development of the expertise and understanding of what it means to be culturally competent and respon-
36 sive.⁵ A culturally competent pedagogy connects students’ cultures, languages, and life experiences with
37 the school curriculum. Leveraging a student’s knowledge and experiences from their families and com-
38 munities helps them to access and connect with the curriculum and develop their academic skills.

39 Support of students who suffer from childhood trauma requires whole school involvement and trans-
40 formation. To achieve our vision, the Association and its affiliates must actively engage in developing
41 the means for schools and educators to address trauma and its implications for creating safe, just, and
42 equitable schools. Educators must be given ongoing opportunities to develop the expertise to work with
43 students from different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds, and to support those students who may
44 be affected by childhood trauma.
45

46 ⁴The *whole student* refers to the Whole Child tenets that call for all available educational resources to maximize the achie-
47 vement, skills, opportunities, and potential of each student by building upon individual strengths and addressing individual
48 needs. A Whole Child approach prepares students at all educational levels, including higher education, to thrive in a democra-
49 tic and diverse society and changing world as knowledgeable, creative, engaged citizens, and lifelong learners.
50

51 ⁵Cultural competence means the capacity to interact effectively and respectfully with people from different racial, ethnic,
52 and/or economic backgrounds. Such competence includes understanding that different cultures have different communication
53 codes and styles, being open to learning from others, to shift out of one’s own cultural paradigm, and to refrain from judging
54 people before honestly exploring what motivates their behavior.
55

1 The Association must fully engage and authentically partner with stakeholders to develop and imple-
2 ment, with fidelity, training that is relevant, proven, substantial, and ongoing, and professional deve-
3 lopment tools that are responsive to the needs of students and educators and are designed to build and
4 increase educators’ cultural competence over the course of their careers. At a minimum, these programs
5 must address:

- 6
- 7 A. Development of communications skills including strategies for peer-to-peer, educator-to-parent,
8 and educator-to-student communication.
- 9
- 10 B. Development of cultural competence and responsiveness including awareness of one’s own im-
11 plicit biases⁶ and trauma, understanding culturally competent pedagogy, and becoming culturally
12 responsive in one’s approach to education and discipline/behavior.
- 13
- 14 C. Training developed for, and delivered to, pre-service, early career, and experienced educators.
- 15
- 16 D. Understanding of trauma and its effect on a student’s education.
- 17
- 18 E. Knowledge and skills required to transform schools into trauma-informed environments.
- 19
- 20

21 **Guiding Principle 3:**

22 **Eliminating Disparities in Disciplinary/Behavioral Practices**

23 NEA is committed to ending harsh school discipline/behavioral policies that directly and indirectly
24 contribute to a crisis of criminalization of our youth, and disproportionately harm Native students and
25 students of color. National research shows that these policies specifically have a disparate impact on
26 Native, Black, and Latin(o/a/x) students, including those who identify as LGBTQ+, have disabilities,
27 and/or are English language learners. Regionally, Asian, Middle Eastern and North African, Pacific
28 Islander, and Multiracial students experience harm and disparate outcomes as a result of such policies.
29 NEA demands an end to school disciplinary/behavioral policies and practices that overuse suspension
30 and expulsion; employ zero-tolerance⁷ policies that criminalize minor infractions of school rules; increase
31 police presence and surveillance on school campuses that create prison-like environments; and encourage
32 school staff to impose exclusionary discipline or refer students to law enforcement, juvenile justice au-
33 thorities, and immigration services. Students who are suspended or expelled not only fall behind academi-
34 cally but are significantly more likely to drop out of school altogether, fail to secure a job, rely on social
35 welfare programs, and end up in prison or face deportation.

36 The Association will advocate for schools, school districts, and states, in ensuring public accounta-
37 bility to the communities they serve, to take appropriate steps to review their disciplinary/behavioral
38 policies and practices for any disparate impact on the basis of race, ethnicity, or other protected charac-
39 teristics; to take prompt and effective action to eliminate any disparate impact found; and to continue to
40 monitor disciplinary/behavioral policies and practices to ensure that they are fair and nondiscriminatory.

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49 ⁶ *Implicit bias* means the deep-seated attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an uncon-
50 scious manner.

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52 ⁷ *Zero-tolerance* refers to school disciplinary/behavioral policies and practices that set predetermined consequences or punish-
53 ments for specific offenses or rule infractions. Zero-tolerance policies forbid persons in positions of authority from exercising
54 discretion or changing punishments to fit individual circumstances.

1 **Guiding Principle 4:**

2 **Eliminating the Criminalization and Policing of Students in Schools**

3 NEA believes the criminalization and policing of students obstructs a thriving and nurturing school
4 climate. Native, Asian, Black, Latin(o/a/x), Middle Eastern and North African, Pacific Islander, and
5 Multiracial students, including those who identify as LGBTQ+, have disabilities, and/or are English lan-
6 guage learners are in greater jeopardy in schools with a presence of police and law enforcement.⁸ Schools
7 with police presence rely more heavily on exclusionary discipline, and exclusionary discipline falls dis-
8 proportionately on Black students and other students of color.

9 Ending the policing of students on school campuses is essential to ensure thriving spaces for all sta-
10 keholders and to facilitate policies that dismantle inequalities and eliminate the criminalization of youth.
11 The Association strongly opposes the policing of students in all of its forms which perpetuate the school-
12 to-prison and school-to-deportation pipelines.

13 NEA recognizes the significance of physical school facilities as a reflection of what educators want our
14 schools to be—welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environments for our students, parents/guardians,
15 and communities.

16 Therefore, the Association demands an end to:

17

18 A. Participation in federal 1033 programs which deliver unnecessary weapons, vehicles, surveil-
19 lance technology, and other equipment that unjustifiably militarize the police presence on school
20 campuses.

21

22 B. Overreliance by educators on referrals to law enforcement which increase the likelihood of con-
23 tact with the juvenile justice system.

24

25 C. Subjective and biased enforcement of disciplinary policies such as hair and dress codes.

26

27 D. Construction of prison-like school environments that employ metal detectors, random searches,
28 and other building and design elements that diminish a thriving and nurturing school climate.

29

30 **Guiding Principle 5:**

31 **Student, Family, Organizational, and Community Engagement**

32 NEA's vision is a safe, just, and equitable school in which all students' needs and lived experiences are
33 centered and voices that have been historically exploited, ignored, or silenced are empowered and heard.
34 The social, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of the whole student must be strengthened
35 and supported through education, family partnerships, and relationship building. Students, parents/guar-
36 dians, and other caregivers must be engaged and trained in problem-solving techniques, conflict resolu-
37 tion skills, mental health and wellness, and cultural competence. The development and implementation of
38 a restorative justice philosophy paired with restorative practices is essential for building healthy relation-
39 ships and communities to prevent and address conflict and trauma. Students must be invested in their
40 own success and understand that their actions and voices are critical in shaping and driving the decisions
41 that affect their school communities and help create inclusive, bias-free, and thriving school climates.

42 The Association must fully engage and authentically partner with a comprehensive range of stake-
43 holders that includes students, parents/guardians and family members, local and state affiliates, school
44 boards, school districts, peer mentoring groups, community-based organizations, alternative schools/
45 juvenile correctional institutions, mental health and wellness organizations, faith-based organizations,
46 law enforcement, professional associations and advocacy groups, and social justice stakeholders to iden-
47 tify policies, practices, and activities to achieve a shared vision for safe, just, and equitable schools.

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53 ⁸ *Police* or more specifically *law enforcement* refers to any sworn individual with the power to arrest, detain, interrogate, and
54 issue citations.

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1 **III. Implementing an Association-Wide Plan to Achieve Our Vision**

2 NEA will utilize the Framework for Racial Justice in Education to achieve our vision for safe, just, and
3 equitable schools through the identification of strategies, activities, stakeholders, and internal and exter-
4 nal levers of change required to influence sustainable transformation and learnings across school systems.
5 The framework identifies three strategies: awareness, capacity building, and action encompassed within
6 pre- and post-qualitative and quantitative evaluations. The framework also provides direction to focus the
7 identified strategies, tactics, and activities while determining partnerships needed to leverage systems of
8 change within the Association and institutions.

9 NEA will utilize the Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) to guide the development and imple-
10 mentation of Association-wide plan activities. The REIA is designed to ensure stakeholders are proacti-
11 vely working to prevent bias and racial inequities from appearing in identified solutions.

12 The goals of NEA’s plan are to:

- 13
- 14 A. Identify and support opportunities to engage, activate, and mobilize members and leaders
15 to organize to achieve safe, just, and equitable schools for every student, educator, parent/
16 guardian, and community.
- 17
- 18 B. Develop an Association-wide understanding of the issues and impacts of the criminalization
19 and policing of students.
- 20
- 21 C. Develop and strengthen NEA’s partnerships and coalitions with organizations, movements,
22 and legislators to advocate and organize for safe, just, and equitable schools.
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- 24 D. Integrate and align the safe, just, and equitable schools vision and criteria across the NEA
25 enterprise priorities and activities.
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Great Public Schools for Every Student