

Educational Excellence: Nine Principles

The 1984 NEA Representative Assembly adopted An Open Letter to America on Schools, Students, and Tomorrow, which called for a total restructuring of American education.

The Representative Assembly also called for the development of an action plan to implement the Open Letter and directed that the plan be submitted to the NEA Board of Directors. In December 1984 the Board adopted the Action Plan for Educational Excellence, which spelled out nine principles that should guide the NEA's continuing efforts to raise the quality of American education. The nine principles are as follows:

Principle One **Students must master what is taught.**

The objective of education should be a demonstrated grasp of fundamentals, the competent use of skills, and command over subject matter, not mere passing grades. Mastery of what is taught must be America's standard of educational excellence, and schools need to offer the comprehensive curriculum and provide the time and resources that can make this mastery an achievable goal.

Principle Two **Students must be active participants in learning.**

Students must become questioners and explorers, not just passive recipients of information. That active involvement demands learning environments free from disruptive behavior and learning activities designed to encourage student initiative.

Principle Three **Full learning opportunity must be available for all students.**

All students must be provided learning opportunities that enable them to fully realize their individual potential, regardless of their economic, social, physical, or psychological condition.

Principle Four **Learning should occur throughout life.**

Appropriate opportunities for learning must be available in all school districts for all age groups.

Principle Five **Authority must be vested in the local faculty.**

Key decisions about teaching and learning should be made by those closest to students and the community, not by large bureaucracies whose assembly-line

approach diminishes expectations of students and teachers.

Principle Six
School staff must be professionally compensated.

Salaries in education must become commensurate with those in comparable professions if the nation is to attract and retain the best teachers.

Principle Seven
There must be high standards for teacher preparation and practice.

Professional competence must be rooted in intellectually stimulating and demanding teacher preparation programs, rigorous personnel evaluation procedures,

and meaningful professional and staff development programs.

Principle Eight
School/community resources must be coordinated to benefit students.

Problems that affect students' ability to learn must be resolved by school/ community collaboration and coordination.

Principle Nine
Financial support to achieve educational excellence is required.

Excellence in education depends on the combined resources of federal, state, and local governments.