Your local association empowers your voice for your students and your profession, and these days it is critically needed in policy and district decisions that impact your schools and classrooms. By tapping into the collective passion and power of educators, we are leading the country in fulfilling the promise of public education and preparing every student to succeed. YOU are a key part of that collective voice.

“We bring our expertise into the classroom so we can be the best for our students. I pride myself in reaching out to my students and being their mentor, advocate, and cheering squad, in addition to teacher. With more and more focus on testing and reforms, there is less time devoted to what really matters. It is so important for the voice of public educators to be heard.”


The NEA Center for Organizing has resources and support available for local leaders as they take the lead on implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and addressing other professional issues.
Across the country, educators are raising their hands to address issues that impact classroom instruction and student success in partnership with education support professionals, other staff, parents, and community members. These examples show that organizing works! And it’s our job to be public advocates for the conditions necessary to ensure that students can learn and educators can teach.

Kentucky
As an early adopter of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Kentucky has already worked through many of the implementation issues facing other states. The Kentucky Education Association has been successful in making sure members are at the center of the process of implementing the standards, and it has many members providing training across the state. KEA sees its support for the standards as part of its mission to be the preeminent voice for students and public education in Kentucky. With support from NEA and other partners, KEA has provided assistance to members in implementing the standards and aligning assessments and evaluations. www.kea.org

Oklahoma
In Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) is developing an alternative to high-stakes testing that is student-centered, pedagogically appropriate, and fair to educators. They have built a broad-based coalition of parents, community, and faith leaders that is working to impact future testing legislation. OEA’s organizing has led to thousands of one-on-one conversations with educators and community members, and increased accountability for elected officials regarding the important issues of changing the A-F grading system for schools and high-stakes testing. “Our children are more than just a test score or a letter grade. We should be spending our time and resources on ways to improve schools, not duplicate accountability systems,” said Linda Hampton, OEA President. www.okea.org

St. Paul, Minn.
Breaking the mold of traditional bargaining, the St. Paul Federation of Teachers—a merged NEA/AFT local—put forward proposals far beyond wage and benefits requests based on the recommendations that arose from study groups and listening sessions. Involving parents in discussions on the future of the profession and the schools in which educators serve was an important step in finding common ground and cooperation. They took the stance that issues often considered “management rights” belong in negotiations. Educators requested smaller class sizes and less standardized testing along with the hiring of additional librarians, nurses, social workers, and counselors. These requests were placed directly on the negotiating table as members advocated for issues that are as central to their working conditions and overall effectiveness in the classroom. www.spft.org
NEA believes the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) provide a foundation for every student to help them develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills they need to succeed in our fast-changing world. But high standards only work if implemented well, and it’s up to us as educators—in partnership with parents and other community and education leaders—to ensure that happens. And the key to successful implementation of new standards lies in large part at the local level.

What can your affiliate do to make sure that the standards are implemented well?

- Schedule stand-alone trainings on CCSS implementation for educators.
- Form a CCSS/Fair Testing Campaign Committee and develop a plan that may include school board resolutions, community outreach and engagement, meetings with elected officials, and media events.
- Build coalitions with school districts and departments of education to address implementation issues.
- Develop contract language or MOUs that address implementation issues: time for and/or access to grade-specific and subject-specific training; time to collaborate with colleagues to plan implementation at the classroom level; alignment of teacher evaluations, etc.
- Build an organizing campaign around CCSS and what your affiliate is doing to support educators in the implementation of the standards. Position your affiliate as the organization that is making sure all educators have the expertise and resources needed to implement the standards, and that the policies are in place to ensure successful and effective implementation.
- Build coalitions with parent and community groups to address the implementation of the standards in order to ensure that adequate resources are available, and that all stakeholders understand their role in making sure that implementation is successful. Schedule presentations at school board, PTA, Chambers of Commerce meetings and other community organizations to share information and raise the Association’s profile on professional issues.

The implementation of these standards and the assessments that are tied to them has to be done right! NEA encourages parents and community leaders to collaborate with the Association and its affiliates and be informed advocates so all children can benefit from the opportunity presented by Common Core State Standards. Members should continue to bring the voice of educators into standards implementation; identify your most important issues and push for implementation advisory committees that include the voices of students, parents, and educators.

Many educators have said that they need:

- Adequate professional development, including mentoring and classroom support
- An end to the over-use of high-stakes testing—time to teach, time to learn!
- A fair evaluation process
- Planning, collaboration, and prep time
- Reduced paperwork

Which of these issues is most urgent for your district, school, or members? Use surveys to help you gather information quickly and identify your priority issues.

Survey Monkey is a free tool that lets you quickly get information that matters to your members. You’ll find more information on it at www.surveymonkey.com.

Based on your survey results, frame your campaign to address successful implementation of the standards:

1. Know what you want, and be specific
2. Determine who can say “yes” to what you want
3. Engage colleagues and create activities that raise the visibility of your issue and campaign
4. Organizing Tip: start small. The more specific you are the more likely you are to win.
The thread that ties all educators together—those in Common Core states and those in non-Common Core states—is time. We are clamoring for more time to collaborate and more time for teaching and learning instead of testing and test prep. Similarly, parents are passionate about the need for schools to prepare students for lifelong learning and want schools to stop over-testing their children.

So what can you do? One of the ways you can send a message about the need for time to teach and time to learn is by working to get your local school board to pass a resolution.

**Draft School Board Resolution**

Support for Common Sense Implementation of Common Core State Standards

Time is of the Essence!

WHEREAS, student readiness for meaningful postsecondary opportunities requires high expectations for their learning and success, universal access to rigorous academic content, access to broad curricular offerings including fine arts and physical education, digital literacy and 21st century skills, safe school environments, and class sizes that allow for individualized attention,

WHEREAS, a broad array of education stakeholders support common core state standards, including educators, parents, civil rights advocates, superintendents, and elected officials,

WHEREAS, common core state standards are designed to provide educators the flexibility to use their professional judgment to design instruction aligned to the standards,

WHEREAS, students, educators, parents, and communities need time to collaborate and increase understanding of their roles in and the impact of implementation of common core state standards,

THEREFORE, let it be resolved that the [insert local School Board name] commits to working with educators to ensure sufficient time to collaborate with each other both across grades and within their subject area teams—to effectively plan and implement new curriculum and lessons aligned with the common core state standards;

Let it also be resolved that the [insert local School Board name] will ensure ongoing access to high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers, education support professionals, and specialized instructional support staff related to Common Core State Standards implementation; and

Let it also be resolved that the [insert local School Board name] will provide flexibility during the transition to the new standards to ensure sufficient time exists for meaningful teaching and learning before any consequences associated with new, aligned state-standardized tests are applied to students, educators, or schools.

**Talking Points**

School Board Common Core State Standards Resolution

- This Resolution reiterates our support for the goals of Common Core State Standards to help ensure that all students develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills they need to succeed in our fast-changing world.

- We must get implementation of Common Core State Standards right. There's too much at stake for our children and for our country to risk getting this wrong.

- The Resolution affirms our commitment to making sure that the common sense recommendations of our teachers and Education Support Professionals (ESP) are at the center of our efforts to develop aligned curriculum, assessments, and professional development relevant to their students and our local community.

- As local education leaders, we're committed to working with educators to ensure that they have sufficient time to collaborate with each other—both across grades and within their subject area teams—to effectively plan and implement new curriculum and lessons aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

- We're also committed to ensuring ongoing access to high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers, education support professionals, and specialized instructional support staff related to Common Core State Standards implementation.

- Finally, we understand that our teachers and ESPs need the time and resources to get implementation right. This Resolution confirms that we will provide educators with flexibility during the transition to the new standards, and will ensure that there is sufficient time for meaningful teaching and learning to occur before any consequences associated with new, aligned, state-standardized tests are applied to students, educators, or schools.

**And then what?** Once you pass the Resolution, your work isn’t over. Work with School Board members to share the Resolution with state and federal legislators, using it as a starting point for a conversation around implementation issues and legislative support for education. Build on this action to develop a deeper partnership on education issues with the Board and other community groups. Form work groups to jointly address the components of the Resolution, and be sure to include new member activists’ voices in those groups—this is a way to engage more members. Make this part of your campaign to raise your hand for great public schools!
High-Stakes Testing

The NEA believes that in any state that is field-testing and validating new assessments, there must be a moratorium on using the results of the new assessments for accountability purposes until at least the 2015-2016 school year. In the meantime, states still have other ways to measure student learning during this transition period, such as other assessments, report cards, and student portfolios.

Stakeholders must develop complete assessment and accountability systems. It takes more than one piece of evidence to paint a picture of what students are learning. Testing should be one way to inform effective teaching and learning—not a way to drive it.

Here are some potential actions you can take to advocate for a common sense approach to assessments.

Federal-Level Action

Require states to stop giving the old, NCLB-mandated standardized tests that everyone knows are not aligned with the Common Core State Standards or with what educators are now being asked to teach children. There are competing interests in the law: students must take an annual assessment, but the law also requires that assessments be aligned. There are certainly other district and school assessments that provide evidence of student learning during this interim period, and these could count if the Department of Education believes in providing actual flexibility to states.

Take action now and HYPERLINK “http://www.capwiz.com/nea/issues/alert/?alertid=63141046&type=CO” email your member of Congress. Ask them to support H.R. 4172. The Student Testing Improvement and Accountability Act, introduced by U.S. Reps. Chris Gibson (R-NY) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ.). This bill changes the current federal mandates from annual to grade-span testing - so once in elementary, once in middle and once in high school. With this change, the number of federally-mandated standardized tests students take during their K-12 years would drop from 14 to six.

State-Level Action

Ban standardized tests for students until they reach third grade.

Eliminate outdated NCLB-mandated tests that are not aligned with the new standards and not based on what is being taught to students in the classroom.

Guarantee transition time between old and new tests. In any state that is field-testing and validating new assessments, institute a moratorium on using the results of the new assessments for accountability purposes until at least the 2015-2016 school year.

District-Level Action

Build community advisory committees that include the voices of students, parents, and educators to collaboratively develop plans to make sure assessments provide useful information to students, parents, educators, and schools.

Ensure time for educators to develop robust student performance tasks (like projects and portfolios) that paint a richer picture of student learning.

For Any and All Levels

Conduct a study. The state department of education/school board/etc. should survey all educators to ascertain how many tests they administer in an academic year, and disaggregate the data by grade level and district. The study should determine how many formative and summative assessments are given, disaggregated by whether each is a state-mandated assessment, district-mandated assessment, educator-designed assessment (either at school or district level), or classroom-based assessment designed by that particular teacher.
This toolkit is intended to support or start you on your way in advocating for what educators and students need in the classroom. But we know issues can be complicated and other support might be needed.

For more information, resources, or training requests, contact the High Standards-Fair Testing Team in the NEA Center for Organizing.

Campaign Lead, Sarah Markey smarkey@nea.org
Mid-Atlantic Region: Linda Bacon lbacon@nea.org
Midwest Region: Mike Asmus masmus@nea.org
Northeast Region: Sejal Babaria sbabaria@nea.org
Pacific Region: Jim Meadows jmeadows@nea.org
Southeast Region: Lynn Malarz lmalarz@nea.org and Cory Wofford cwofford@nea.org
Western Region: Tim McCluskey tmccluskey@nea.org
NEA Organizing Director, Secky Fascione sfascione@nea.org

Other Common Core State Standards Resources:

The NEA Education Policy and Practice Department has created a detailed Common Core toolkit that includes information and links to resources on curriculum and instruction, professional development, assessment, English Language Learners, and Students with Disabilities. It can be found at www.nea.org/commoncore.

Lessons: There are more than 3,000 Common Core-aligned lessons from 130 Master Teachers in the NEA and BetterLesson project, with lessons for every K-12 level for Math, English Language Arts, and Literacy. They can be found at http://cc.betterlesson.com/mtp. In addition, Achieve the Core is a website with free content designed to help educators understand and implement Common Core State Standards; go to http://achievethecore.org.

Parents: The NEA Education Policy and Practice Department worked with the National PTA to develop two parent guides to help educators and families work together to help students during the transition period (English and Spanish) that can be found at www.nea.org/commoncore. National PTA also has a number of other CCSS resources to help parents understand the standards and how to help their child. They can be found under the “Advocacy” tab at www.pta.org.

Networking: the GPS Network is a place where teachers, parents, support professionals, and community members share ideas and resources to improve student success. It includes a number of facilitated groups for both math and ELA where you will find conversation and resources on the standards. Join at www.gpsnetwork.org.