



It's Time to Start Listening

Transformation is both an opportunity and a challenge. For the National Education Association, our transformation is being fueled by the rapid pace of change—the extraordinary demographic shift—now happening in our public schools. Millions of educators are entering the workforce. More than two million new hires are expected to enter public schools over the next five years. And our schools are ill-equipped for this opportunity and challenge.

Here's what we know: this new generation of educators have vastly different experiences, and different expectations, from our current crop of dedicated members. What once worked for our union so well isn't enough anymore. If our Association is to remain a force for advancing public education, we must become relevant to this new generation.

We must help them meet the changing needs of their students. We must help them transition from novices to successful, experienced educators. And we must tap into their idealism and commitment to bettering their students' lives. This work is pivotal to our collective future and requires that we tackle it with urgency.

NEA recently convened listening sessions with early career educators, and a consistent theme emerged—they are struggling, discouraged, dissatisfied with their working conditions, and desperate for more support. NEA is uniquely suited to giving these educators a greater voice in their professions, but they must see us as indispensable partners in their fight. So we set an ambitious goal: to talk to every single new hire in our public schools and universities—every education support professional, every teacher, and every higher education faculty member.

In an unprecedented, unified effort, NEA and our affiliates launched the New Educator Engagement, Recruitment, and Supports Campaign (New Ed) in the 2017–2018 school year. Through one-on-one conversations, we aim to build strong relationships with the

next generation of educators, provide them with the support they need to succeed, and elevate their voices on issues impacting student learning, instruction, and pro-public education policies.

Our intentional focus on early educators is straightforward and simple. It is the largest generation of new educators in our history. And we know these educators are being failed at every turn. With tailored professional support, our Association is cultivating relationships with new educators and leading the way to professional and student success.

Listening to our members and engaging new educators where they are is one of the most important steps we can take to build, grow, and thrive. It is one of the most significant ways that we can leave a strong, vibrant, and powerful union to the next generation—one that gives voice to all students, regardless of their zip code, and one that gives voice to what our educators need to take back our professions.

Change is inevitable. Progress is not. To change the course of our schools, our Association can't wait for someone else to lead or take the reins—it must start with us.

John C. Stocks, *executive director*