

APPENDIX I:

NEA WORK ON CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

NEA's work on closing achievement gaps focuses on policy and practice. In the policy arena, an NEA grants program funds state affiliates' efforts to change state public policy environments to better support members' efforts to close the gaps. We also conduct annual policy summits on the educational status of traditionally underserved student groups. In the practice arena, NEA offers a variety of professional development sessions for members, and state and local staff to help them gain the knowledge and skills required to close achievement gaps. We also produce a number of publications on the achievement of diverse students that serve as training and resource documents for affiliates and members.

State Grants to Close Achievement Gaps

One of the primary goals of NEA's work in this area is to secure state-level public policies and associated funding to close achievement gaps. Therefore, in 2005-06, we initiated a new grants program, NEA Grants to Close Achievement Gaps.

To date, 22 NEA state affiliates have received grants which they are using to help close achievement gaps by: a) securing statewide legislation; b) changing state regulations; c) modifying the scope or content of local contracts/negotiated agreements; and/or d) changing state affiliate policy, conducting research, building/enhancing coalitions, or conducting member-focused activities to position the affiliate for future statewide action to close achievement gaps. Key policy successes using grant funds include the following:

Illinois: Passed two pieces of legislation in 2005-06 that will enhance the skills of Illinois educators: A state-of-the-art teacher induction program that will serve teachers throughout the state; and a one-year, required coaching experience for new school principals.

Maine: Bargained a contract in the state's largest local, Portland Public Schools, that provides an alternative pay scale based on a professional development ladder and incentives for teachers to become more skilled in meeting the needs of the diverse learners.

Missouri: Embedded language in the state's professional development guidelines that encourages schools to create opportunities for schools to use their examination of student work to inform teaching, increase student achievement, and close achievement gaps.

New Mexico: Secured local contract language that requires the ongoing bargaining of professional and instructional issues throughout the contract year.

Nebraska: Passed a constitutional amendment that allows the use of the interest from the school lands trust fund, and triggers private endowment money, to pay for early childhood programs in public schools. This implements a policy success from the 2005-06 legislative session that established an early childhood endowment, which will now be funded.

Ohio: Passed legislation to establish school district committees that will develop local strategies for closing achievement gaps.

Oklahoma: Passed a state law that requires districts to focus professional development activities on closing achievement gaps.

In addition to these state grants, NEA's foundation (The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education) provides substantial funding to three local affiliates (Seattle, Chattanooga, and Milwaukee) to support their work in closing achievement gaps.

Policy Summits on Traditionally Underserved Students

NEA conducts annual educational summits on the educational status of traditionally underserved student groups. The summits invite practitioners, researchers, and community members to share research, examine best practices, and develop recommendations for policy, programs, and practice. NEA distributes summit proceedings and recommendations widely. Summit reports that are currently available on www.achievementgaps.org are:

- *A Report on the Status of Hispanics in Education: Overcoming a History of Neglect*
- *Status of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Education: Beyond the "Model Minority" Stereotype*
- *The Status of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Education*

Key NEA Publications

- *C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps*, a resource for classroom teachers and other educators, focuses on closing the gaps by examining research on working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. The guide looks at the research on cultural, language, and economic differences, as well as at unrecognized and undeveloped abilities, resilience, and effort and motivation. Copies may be downloaded at: www.nea.org/teachexperience/careguide.html
- *Closing Achievement Gaps: An Association Guide*, a resource for NEA's affiliates and leaders, provides them with research and information, tools, "success stories" of state and local affiliates engaged in the work of closing achievement gaps, and examples of policy, programs, and practice for closing achievement gaps. Copies may be downloaded at: www.achievementgaps.org/nea/Associationguide.pdf

Training for Leaders, Staff, and Members

NEA supports state affiliates that are developing teams of trainers who introduce members to the research and strategies in *C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps*. Nineteen states currently have teams of trainers.

NEA also provides training and support for public engagement projects in which local educators and community stakeholders focus on what they can do to close achievement gaps and make sure that all students learn. In addition, NEA offers training to educators on how to build family, school, and community partnerships to close the achievement gaps.