

# NEA Grants to Close Student Achievement Gaps, 2006-07 A Report from NEA Human and Civil Rights

National Education Association  
Human and Civil Rights  
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The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

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# Summary

This report highlights the accomplishments of 22 state affiliates that received NEA Grants to Close Student Achievement Gaps in 2006-07. The purpose of the grants is to secure public policy changes and associated funding for closing the gaps. NEA anticipated that at least 12 state affiliates would attain policy changes over a two-year period (2005-2007). The grantees exceeded this goal. Fourteen of the 22 succeeded in changing state policies, and overall, the grantees secured more than 40 policy changes. In many cases, they combined the \$20,000 grants with other funds.

The 22 state affiliates that received grants in 2006-07 were the:

1. Colorado Education Association \*\*
2. Connecticut Education Association \*
3. Education Minnesota \*\*
4. Florida Education Association \*
5. Illinois Education Association \*\*
6. Indiana State Teachers Association \*\*
7. Kentucky Education Association \*
8. Maine Education Association \*
9. Massachusetts Teachers Association \*
10. Michigan Education Association \*\*
11. Missouri NEA \*\*
12. NEA-New Mexico \*\*
13. Nebraska State Education Association \*\*
14. New Jersey Education Association \*
15. New York State United Teachers \*
16. North Carolina Association of Educators \*
17. Ohio Education Association \*
18. Oklahoma Education Association \*\*
19. Oregon Education Association \*
20. Pennsylvania State Education Association \*\*
21. South Dakota Education Association \*
22. Virginia Education Association \*

\*\* 2006-07 was second year affiliate received a grant.

\* 2006-07 was first year affiliate received a grant.

## Policy Successes

The grantees' individual policy successes changed states' policy environments so that Association members are better able to close achievement gaps. The successes included passage of legislation, changes in state rules and regulations, and modifications in the content or scope of local contracts/negotiated agreements.

More specifically, NEA Grants to Close Achievement Gaps were used to enhance funding for early childhood education and require mandatory kindergarten attendance, improve state poverty indices and aid formulas for students who are most at-risk of experiencing achievement gaps, and add instructional days during the summer for at-risk primary grade students to help ensure they are reading successfully by third grade.

The grantees' policy successes also included expanding literary programs, revising high school graduation requirements, increasing the compulsory school attendance age, improving state content standards, expanding physical education in high-poverty schools, reporting on minority students' access to Advanced Placement courses, aligning curriculum and professional development with state standards, defending class size limits, and blocking the expansion of school vouchers.

In addition, the affiliates used their grants to structure opportunities for creating new schools through district and union collaboration, establish districtwide learning communities, develop standards to guide the mentoring of beginning teachers, ensure that all new educators (including administrators) have access to a mentor, improve teacher salaries, and implement alternative salary schedules.

## Additional Outcomes and Products

NEA state affiliates also can use their NEA Grants to Close Student Achievement Gaps, 2006-07, to change state affiliate policy, conduct research, build coalitions, or conduct member-focused activities that will position the affiliate to take future statewide action to close achievement gaps.

Grantees supported local affiliates' implementation of school improvement plans in underperforming schools, worked with other state agencies to bring together school district teams to improve student achievement, and raised student achievement and teacher retention rates in selected schools. Several affiliates also built or strengthened coalitions with education, business, and community organizations.

As they carried out the scope of work in their grants, affiliates used grant funds to develop a teacher leadership certification program; a multiple-sequence course for low-performing schools on topics such as accountability mandates, data and school improvement, and bargaining for improvement; and training programs on mentoring, data analysis, and using technology to support professional learning communities in schools. Grantees also generated and disseminated policy reports, school improvement guides, publications on promising practices, DVDs, and bargaining language related to closing achievement gaps.

# Policy Successes Affiliates Attained with Grant Funds

NEA Grants to Close Achievement Gaps support three policy-related activities: 1) Secure state-wide legislation that will help close achievement gaps; 2) change state regulations to address issues related to closing achievement gaps; and 3) modify the scope or content of local contracts/negotiated agreements so they address issues that will help close achievement gaps.

Of the 22 state affiliates that received NEA Grants to Close Achievement Gaps, 14 secured state policy changes related to closing the gaps. Affiliates' policy successes are reported below.

**1. *Advanced a Requirement to Align Curriculum and Professional Development with State Standards.***

NEA-New Mexico supported legislation that requires school districts to align curriculum-related professional development, and curriculum in key subjects at each grade level (mathematics by 2008-09; language arts and science by 2009-10), with state standards

**2. *Attained Funds to Administer Teacher Survey of Working Conditions.***

The Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) secured \$200,000 in the Governor's supplemental budget to support implementation of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (called the "Teaching and Learning Survey" in MA). The Governor intends to use the survey results to inform policy proposals from his office. The first administration of the survey will be in the 2007-08 school year. MTA is working with the Governor's office, AFT-MA, and the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy to implement the survey.

**3. *Authorized Professional Development for School-Based Mentoring.***

The Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) successfully promoted legislation that authorizes the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation to provide professional development to school-based "residency committees" on how to best work with beginning teachers. Established in

1982, a residency committee is composed of the building administrator, the beginning teacher's mentor, and a higher education representative from the university from which the beginning teacher graduated. OEA has developed a professional development model that would be appropriate for training committee members.

**4. *Changed Definition of Poverty Index Funding to Include Closing Achievement Gaps.***

The Ohio Education Association included language in the state's biennial budget that expanded the definition of Ohio's Poverty Based Assistance funding index to include closing achievement gaps programs. School districts with significant gaps can use these funds to improve student performance, enhance teacher and administrator professional development, and recruit and retain teachers and administrators.

**5. *Created a Pilot Project to Provide Low-Income K-3 Students with Additional Instructional Days.***

NEA-New Mexico secured legislation that establishes the K-3 Plus Program, a six-year, \$7.5 million pilot project that will provide thousands of low-income students with 25 additional instructional days in the summer to help ensure that they are reading successfully by third grade. Program funding also supports targeted professional development for teachers.

**6. *Defeated Merit Pay Scheme.***

The Florida Education Association (FEA) galvanized school employees' and communities' opposition to the Special Teachers Are Rewarded (STAR) legislation, a merit pay plan that provided a monetary bonus of 25 percent of teachers based solely on Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores. STAR was passed by the legislature but never implemented. Following this successful campaign, FEA worked with policymakers to determine what a well-structured performance-based pay plan should look like.

- 7. *Defended Class Size Limit and Blocked Expansion of Vouchers.*** The Florida Education Association successfully lobbied the legislature to defend the state's class size reduction amendment and to block initiatives that would increase voucher programs.
- 8. *Elected Pro-Education Candidates.*** The Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA) elected 17 of 20 NSEA-endorsed candidates for state legislative seats and four NSEA-endorsed state board of education members.
- 9. *Enhanced High School Graduation Requirements, Assessments, and Coursework.*** NEA-New Mexico successfully promoted legislation that changes graduation course requirements, raises the dropout age to 18, eliminates student work permits to attend high school part-time, replaces the existing high school competency exam with a standards-based assessment or portfolio, adds requirements for coursework that emphasizes college and workplace readiness (including a language other than English), and increases funding for new high school teacher mentoring programs.
- 10. *Ensured That a Percentage of National Board Candidates Are from Hard-to-Staff Schools.*** The Oklahoma Education Association's legislative success included a law that requires at least 25 percent of Oklahoma's National Board for Professional Teaching Standards candidates to be employed in hard-to-staff schools (i.e., high-needs schools in which at least half of the students receive free and reduced-cost lunch.)
- 11. *Established a Pilot Program to Create New Schools in Collaboration with the Union.*** The Connecticut Education Association (CEA) secured legislation that establishes a pilot program to create up to 12 CommPACT Schools (modeled loosely after the Boston Pilot Schools). CEA secured \$500,000 in funding for the schools in the second year of the state's biennial budget. The legislation establishes, for the first time in Connecticut, schools that are initiated through collaboration between the district and the teacher's union. CommPACT schools will have high levels of autonomy and will be grounded in research-based models.
- 12. *Established a District Learning Community Structure.*** The Nebraska State Education Association's successful legislative season included passage of the Omaha Learning Community Bill, which establishes a learning community structure for 11 school districts in the Omaha area.
- 13. *Established a Reporting Requirement on Students' Access to Advanced Placement Courses.*** Due to the Indiana State Teachers Association's efforts, the state will require the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to prepare a report on minority students' access to, and participation in, Advanced Placement courses.
- 14. *Expanded Elementary Physical Education in High Poverty Schools.*** NEA-New Mexico supported legislation that addresses "the whole child" by expanding opportunities and funding for physical education programs in elementary schools, particularly in high-poverty schools.
- 15. *Enlarged Literacy First Programs.*** The Oklahoma Education Association secured legislative expansion of literacy first programs and increased annual funding by \$500,000.
- 16. *Fully Funded Three-Tiered Minimum Salary Structure.*** NEA-New Mexico ensured adequate funding for a minimum statewide salary of \$50,000 for Level III teachers. Licensure and salary levels in New Mexico are tied to teachers' years of experience, education levels, and the completion of standards-based dossiers. The salary minimum for Level I teachers is \$30,000; Level II teachers, \$40,000; and Level III teachers, \$50,000 (up from \$45,000).
- 17. *Increased Compulsory High School Attendance Age.*** With the support of the South Dakota Education Association, the legislature increased the compulsory school attendance age to 18.

- 18. Improved School Funding Formula for Economically Disadvantaged Students.** The Indiana State Teachers Association changed the school funding formula to increase the “poverty factor” for allocating funds to school corporations with high concentrations of students who are eligible for free lunch. Per-pupil allocations almost doubled. The funding formula now recognizes poverty as a primary determinant of school funding.
- 19. Made Sure All New Educators Have a Mentor.** Working with partners, the Oregon Education Association secured legislation that provides all beginning teachers, principals and superintendents with the support of a mentor during their first two years on the job. The estimated cost per year of the Oregon New Educator Mentor Program is \$5,000 per new educator. The program will be phased in over four years. Five million in 2007-09 will fund start-up and enable one-third of eligible teachers and principals to participate in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 20. Maintained Funding for National Board Candidates’ Applications.** The Pennsylvania State Teachers Association maintained \$5 million in funding to cover application fees for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Teachers in high-poverty schools and districts and hard-to-staff content areas are priority recipients of these funds. In addition, a portion of the funds finance candidate support centers across the state.
- 21. Modified Terms of New Teacher Probation.** The Florida Education Association supported legislation that lengthened the probationary period for beginning teachers from three years (with an annual contract) to five years.
- 22. Negotiated a Professional Salary Schedule.** With the support of the Maine Education Association (MEA), Portland negotiated a professional learning salary schedule that will take effect in 2008-09. Under the new schedule, all teachers currently employed in the district will be placed on a salary lane or step that is identical to or higher than the salary they would have made on the district’s experience-based salary schedule. The experience-based salary schedule will only be used for new hires. To advance one salary lane on the professional learning salary schedule, teachers must accumulate 225 approved salary contact hours defined as follows: a) One university or college credit equals 15 salary contact hours; b) one continuing education unit equals 10 contact hours; and c) one approved contact hour equals 1 contact hour.
- 23. Obtained Additional Funding for Mentoring.** The Illinois Education Association secured additional funding for teacher and principal mentoring programs.
- 24. Passed Indian Education Act.** The South Dakota Education Association secured passage of the Indian Education Act of 2007. The law codifies several existing programs and assures that they can only be modified with legislative approval. It includes provisions for an Office of Indian Education; an Indian Education Advisory Council comprised of tribal-council nominees from the state’s nine tribes; a pilot South Dakota American Indian language revitalization program; a requirement that teachers who are new to the state, or were certified after 1993, take a three-hour course in South Dakota Indian Studies; and development of curriculum and coursework related to South Dakota American Indian history and culture.
- 25. Passed New State Aid Law.** The Nebraska State Teachers Association met its legislative goal of establishing new state aid sources for students of poverty, English Language learners, teachers who have masters’ degrees, K-8 class size reduction, and staff development for teachers who work with diverse students. The state aid increases will take effect in 2008-09.
- 26. Put Process in Place to Set High School Graduation Requirements.** The Colorado Education Association’s legislative wins included a law that establishes a State Graduation Guidelines Development Council that will convene a commission to develop a set of comprehensive guidelines for establishing high school graduation requirements.
- 27. Required the Development of Mentoring Standards.** Missouri NEA’s (MNEA) legislative successes included passage of legislation requiring the state to establish mentoring standards in rule and regulation that will govern the quality of local mentoring programs. Three MNEA members will serve on the mentoring standards committee, which meets for the first time in August 2008.

- 28. *Required the Use of an Outside Evaluator to Assess Selected State Activities.*** The Colorado Education Association secured legislation that requires the use of an outside evaluator to assess the Colorado Department of Education's use of data, its data collection system, and its work with districts to identify achievement gaps and growth models.
- 29. *Retained Alternative Teacher Pay System.*** Education Minnesota maintained the state's Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System statute in the face of challenges.
- 30. *Revised State Content Standards.*** The Maine Education Association's successes included unanimous legislative passage of a regulation that establishes content standards for math, reading, and science and technology. The standards provide a clear, coherent, and essential perspective on the knowledge and skills required for students' success in college, careers, and as citizens in the 21st century. Feedback from Maine educators, professional associations, and parent groups indicates that these standards will be useful to Maine's educators, especially entry-level professionals, and will serve as an effective tool for curriculum development in schools.
- 31. *Secured Funding for Early Childhood Education.***
- Restored 2003 funding cuts to key programs, such as Head Start and School Readiness. Funded a range of pilot programs for early childhood literacy. (Education Minnesota)
  - Secured \$32.5 million for all-day, every-day kindergarten. While this is only a portion of the total cost for a fully funded statewide program, it is a positive step forward. (Education Minnesota)
  - Secured approval of the first substantial legislative appropriation to fund full-day kindergarten (\$57 million in 2007-2008; \$110 million in 2008-2009). (Indiana State Teachers Association)
  - Passed a constitutional amendment that allows interest from the Education Lands Trust Fund to help fund early childhood programs for children from birth to three years of age. (Nebraska State Teachers Association)
  - Supported legislation that provided \$75 million in new funds for access to high-quality early childhood education. (Pennsylvania State Education Association)
- 32. *Set Up a Commission on Longitudinal Student Achievement.*** The Colorado Education Association established (in legislation) a commission that will recommend a model for measuring the longitudinal growth of student achievement.
- 33. *Shaped a State Grant Program to Close Achievement Gaps.*** The Ohio Education Association influenced the development of The Leadership Development Model Grant to Close Achievement Gaps for Students with Disabilities and Other At-Risk Learners. The grants require local partnerships between schools and service agencies to provide coordinated services that are designed to close achievement gaps.
- 34. *Won and Defended Mandatory Kindergarten Attendance.*** The South Dakota Education Association played an active role in securing mandatory kindergarten attendance. A component of the Governor's 2010 Initiative, mandatory attendance will take effect in 2010.
- 35. *Won Guaranteed Salary Increases with Local Flexibility for Implementation.*** NEA-New Mexico secured a five percent average salary increase for teachers and other school employees. The average increase provides local affiliate bargaining teams and school districts with flexibility to address recent variations in pay increases resulting from the implementation of New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system.
- 36. *Helped Shape Law That Provides Additional Support to High-Needs Schools.*** After the first state National Board Summit (Aug. 2005), which the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) organized, NCAE followed up on the summit's theme, Staffing High-Needs Schools, with National Board staff to successfully advance legislation that will afford high-needs schools innovative ways to use accomplished teachers.

## Additional Outcomes Affiliates Attained

**N**EA state affiliates can also use their NEA Grants to Close Achievement Gaps to change state affiliate policy, conduct research, build coalitions, or conduct member-focused activities that will position the affiliate to take future statewide action that will help close achievement gaps. Grantees' accomplishments in this area are included here along with other outcomes noted in the affiliates' individual reports of 2006-07 accomplishments.

- The Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) supported local affiliates' implementation of school improvement plans to raise the achievement of underperforming student subgroups. ISTA locals participated in school improvement committees that examined instructional and curriculum practices and designed professional development activities to address achievement gaps. Three examples: The Fort Wayne Education Association developed school improvement plans that restructure the school day to provide more reading and mathematics instruction; the Indianapolis Education Association's school improvement plans restructure high schools into smaller learning units; and the Lawrence Education Association formed a community-wide committee to eliminate achievement gaps.
- The Kentucky Education Association (KEA) developed a consistent, criterion-referenced process that will be used to identify and secure mentors across the state.
- As a result of outreach using grant funds, the Maine Education Association has been accepted as a National Board THNI (Targeting High Need Initiative) site. The initiative's goal is to increase student achievement by supporting high-quality professional development in high-needs schools. Portland Public Schools will be a pilot site. The rest of the state will become involved later this year.
- The Michigan Education Association collaborated with the Michigan Department of Education to develop a year-long Reach and Teach for Learning Initiative that brought school district teams together to improve learning results for students who are hard to reach and/or hard to teach. The teams met several times during the year and developed plans to address professional learning and school improvement needs at their sites.
- The Nebraska State Teachers Association increased the number of members involved in the political process.
- The North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) was recognized by the State Board of Education for being a stakeholder in making a difference in public schools. In addition, student achievement and teacher retention increased in three high-needs high schools with which NCAE worked closely.
- The Oklahoma Education Association partnered with the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University to create the Oklahoma Education Consortium for Mentoring.



## Products Affiliates Developed with Grant Funds

As they carried out the scope of work in their grants, NEA state affiliates used grant funds to develop certification programs and training sessions, reports and publication series, DVDs, and bargaining language.

### Certification Programs and Training Sessions

- The Colorado Education Association (CEA) developed a teacher leadership certification program in conjunction with the state department of education and the University of Colorado at Denver. The program, which leads to certification in various areas or a master's degree, focuses on skill development of teacher leaders who remain in the classroom rather than seeking administrative or other positions. The program's seven modules are based on the seven roles of a teacher leader. CEA, and other state organizations it works with, will conduct the training for each module.
- The Illinois Education Association (IEA) worked with the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) to design the state's principal coaching framework and model. An approved provider of coaches for new principals, CEC/IEA also will work with the Illinois State Board of Education to provide technical assistance in designing the roll out of more high-quality teacher mentoring programs.
- The Massachusetts Teacher Association has developed a five-course sequence that it will offer to low-performing schools and districts as part of its professional development program beginning in the 2007-08 school year. The courses are:
  - Accountability Mandates
  - Data and School Improvement
  - Conditions for Improvement
  - School Improvement Plan
  - Bargaining about Imp Manual and Breaking the Trail: Building and Supporting Professional Learning Communities Training Manual.
- Education Minnesota produced *ATPPS [Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System] Using Data: Participant Manual*.
- The Oklahoma Education Association developed comprehensive participant and trainer manuals for a seven-day workshop in cooperation with the Oklahoma Education Consortium for Mentoring.
- The Pennsylvania State Teachers Association developed several new professional development sessions related to student achievement gaps.

### Reports and Publication Series

- The Massachusetts Teacher Association (MTA) produced a joint report with AFT-Massachusetts, *Fulfilling the Promise of Education Reform: Narrowing the Achievement Gaps, Closing the Staffing Gaps, Reducing the Funding Gaps*. MTA lobbyists have used the report to advance a number of budgetary items and bills that are focused on achievement and funding gaps. In addition, MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice is using the document with the Governor's education advisors to advance issues related to achievement and staffing gaps.
- The Pennsylvania State Teachers Association developed the *School Improvement Planning Guide*, a draft tool to help members who are engaged in ESEA-related school improvement planning within their districts.
- The Illinois Education Association was instrumental in writing a significant report, *The Burnham Plan*, with a number of partners. This comprehensive document defines fiscal reform, accountability, and educational reform in Illinois.
- In response to several member inquiries, PSEA developed two publication series. The *PDE School Improvement Series* informs members about the resources developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to help schools and districts close achievement gaps. The *Promising Practices Series* describes promising practices to close achievement gaps and addresses the questions and anxieties of some members related to school change.

## **DVDs**

- The Michigan Education Association (MEA) produced a DVD, “Closing the Achievement Gaps,” that serves as a mechanism for discussing this issue with stakeholders. MEA also developed a Human Rights Competency Model for closing the achievement gaps. The model creates a visual of the complex issues that need to be addressed in the work.
- Missouri NEA produced a 26-minute DVD in four segments to assist schools in developing a Professional Learning Community to examine student work, review assessment data, use KEYS, set goals, practice peer observation to change teaching, raise student achievement, and close achievement gaps.
- The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) conducted focus groups among newer younger teacher members to identify strategies to close achievement gaps and programs from NJEA’s new Center for Teaching and Learning to support teachers’ efforts to close the gaps. The focus groups used a new technology called “video marker” to create video clips of beginning teachers. The results from the focus groups and the video clips will be shared with local association leaders, NJEA staff, the Center for Teaching and Learning trustees, and NJEA committees to help bridge the gap between newer and experienced teachers.

## **Bargaining Language**

- The Florida Education Association developed the “Closing the Achievement Gaps Collective Bargaining Agreement Review Summary,” which includes bargaining language pertaining to achievement gaps for 20 of Florida’s 67 counties. The summary provides a snapshot of where locals are in the process of school reform and sample language for locals that have not yet started working on contract modifications.
- NEA-New Mexico (NEA-NM) generated language for collective bargaining agreements as part of its efforts to close achievement gaps through bargaining. The language focuses on recognition of certified employees’ professionalism and expertise, shared leadership, negotiations, agreement control, district committees, and professional development. NEA-NM also produced a report on tools for local negotiations.

# Affiliates'

## Individual Reports

### Colorado

#### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Continued coalition efforts with the state department of education to add achievement gaps language to school system review rubrics that assess schools on nine standards of effectiveness.
- Piloted new requirements in two schools, focusing on finding evidence of practice with the new indicators and using the results to adjust descriptors and indicators.
- Continued dialogue about adding rubric language to the district review process with 11 districts and numerous schools currently identified to undergo the review process.
- Based on district reviews, CEA convened a planning team to develop training and materials for standards-based instruction. The gaps grant will help cover the costs of designing materials, training, and bringing network partners together to develop agreements on statewide common language, a glossary, and training.
- Two staff attended the *C.A.R.E.* training of trainers. CEA will develop a statewide plan for offering this training to members.
- The statewide compact is on hold until the new Governor and Commissioner of Education outline their priorities.
- Coalition partners designed a Teacher Leader course.

#### Policy Successes

CEA passed legislation that created:

1. A state graduation guidelines development council that will convene a commission to develop and recommend a set of comprehensive guidelines for establishing high school graduation requirements.
2. A longitudinal growth commission that will recommend a model for measuring longitudinal growth of student achievement.
3. A data accountability requirement that the department of education use an outside evaluator to assess the department's use of data, its system of data collection, and its work with districts to identify achievement gaps and growth models.

### Products

Developed a teacher leadership certification program in conjunction with the state department of education and the University of Colorado at Denver. The program, which leads to certification in various areas or a master's degree, focuses on skill development of teacher leaders who remain in the classroom rather than seeking administrative or other positions. The program's seven modules are based on seven roles of a teacher leader. CEA, and other state organizations it works with in coalition, will conduct the training for each module.

### Connecticut

#### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Gained significant credibility in the urban reform arena.
- Formed an alliance that includes teacher unions, the state superintendent's association, the urban superintendents, the administrator's association, and the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut.
- Filed comprehensive legislation called the "Urban Initiative," which included the formation of CommPACT schools.
- Legislation was adopted initiating a pilot of up to 12 CommPACT Schools and designating the Neag School of Education as the agency responsible for developing a support system for these schools. The legislation is funded at \$500,000 in the second year.
- Adopted a set of by-laws forming the Connecticut Alliance for CommPACT Schools.
- Gene Chasin, former director of the Accelerated Schools Project, has been appointed as the full-time lead person for the project.

#### Policy Successes

Established, for the first time in Connecticut, schools initiated through collaboration between the district and the teacher's union. These schools will have high levels of autonomy and will be based on research-based models. Most importantly, they will be within the district.

#### Products

- CommPACT Schools: Statutory Language
- Analysis of CommPact Schools Statute
- Connecticut Alliance for CommPACT Schools Bylaws

## Florida

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Collected approximately 70,000 cards from members and others in the “I Pledge a Commitment to Public Education” Campaign, engaging members, potential members, and local communities around education issues in the 2006 campaign.
- Galvanized opposition of school employees and communities throughout Florida to the Special Teachers Are Rewarded (STAR) legislation, a merit pay plan that centered on providing a monetary bonus to 25 percent of teachers based solely on Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores. STAR was passed by the legislature but never implemented.
- Developed “One Plus One” proviso language as an example of a school reform model that is closely aligned to FEA’s philosophy and that of its locals.
- Provided professional development opportunities through the 2006 Delegate Assembly Pre-Conference and the Professional Development Summer Institute, with trainings on NEA’s C.A.R.E. and ELL modules, as well as other topics.
- Hosted a working meeting of staff and local leaders to discuss using the collective bargaining agreement to address closing the achievement gaps. Developed a database of contract language on achievement gaps issues for locals to use.

### Policy Successes

- Opposition to STAR led to the Merit Awards Plan (MAP). FEA worked with policymakers to determine what a well-structured performance-based pay plan would look like.
- Successfully lobbied the legislature to defend the class size reduction amendment and blocked initiatives to increase voucher programs.
- Implemented the World Class Education Standards PCB law, which details the process for creating “world class education” standards and corresponding “world class education” professional development courses. In addition, the law allows the “enhanced” FCAT to replace some college-entrance exams and would establish a system that recognizes a student’s FCAT achievement on that student’s diploma.
- Supported a bill that lengthened the probationary period for beginning teachers from three years with an annual contract to five years before obtaining a professional certificate.

### Products

1. “Closing the Achievement Gaps Collective Bargaining Agreement Review Summary” includes bargaining language pertaining to closing the achievement gaps for 20 of Florida’s 67 counties. The summary provides a baseline snapshot of where locals are in the process of school reform and sample language for the locals that have not yet started working on contract modifications.
2. An “I Pledge” website that provides visitors with in-depth information on critical education issues.

## Illinois

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Secured additional funding for teacher and principal mentoring.
- Through the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC), a network of IEA locals and their districts, IEA was one of four partner organizations that designed the statewide principal coaching framework and model.
- CEC/IEA was designated an approved provider of principal coaches.
- CEC/IEA will work with the Illinois State Board of Education to provide technical assistance in designing the roll out of more high-quality teacher mentoring programs.
- Moving forward with a unionized charter for African-American boys in Rockford.

### Policy Successes

- Played an instrumental role in writing with partners a significant report, the Burnham Plan, a comprehensive document that defines fiscal reform, accountability, and educational reform.
- Increased funding to support intensive, high-quality teacher mentoring programs.
- Secured adequate funding to support mentoring for first year principals.

### Products

The Gaps Grant initiative helped inform the Burnham Plan.

## Indiana

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- During 2006-2007, ISTA's primary strategy to eliminate achievement gaps was supporting the efforts of NEA/ISTA local affiliates to implement school improvement plans that focused on strategies to raise the academic achievement of historically underperforming student subgroups. Throughout the state, NEA/ISTA local affiliates participated in school improvement committees that examined instructional and curriculum practices and designed professional development activities addressing achievement gaps. Three examples:
  - A. Fort Wayne Education Association—School improvement plans restructure the school day to provide more reading and mathematics instruction.
  - B. Indianapolis Education Association—School improvement plans restructure high schools into smaller learning units.
  - C. Lawrence Education Association—Formed a community-wide committee to eliminate achievement gaps.
- Continued to work with the Indiana Black Legislative Caucus and the Indianapolis Urban League to educate the public about solutions to eliminate and prevent achievement gaps through such events as:
  - A. The Black Legislative Caucus Education Conference, which highlighted efforts to eliminate achievement gaps.
  - B. Indianapolis Urban League Education Summit, which highlighted the accomplishments of minority students.

### Policy Successes

- During 2006-07, ISTA accomplished the following state policy changes to address achievement gaps:
  - A. Full-day Kindergarten: The first substantial legislative appropriation to fund full-day kindergarten was approved (\$57 million in 2007-08; \$110 million in 2008-09).
  - B. School Funding Formula: The school funding formula was changed to increase the “poverty factor.”
  - C. Advanced Placement Courses: The Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education have been directed to prepare a report regarding access to, and participation in, Advanced Placement courses by minority students.

## Kentucky

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Developed a consistent, statewide criterion-referenced process to identify and secure mentors.
- Sent an electronic bulletin to all KEA members informing them of the “Take One!” mentor teacher initiative explaining the process, contact information, and financial assistance.
- Communicated about the “Take One!” initiative with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the Kentucky Educational Professional Standards Board.
- Received a commitment from the NBPTS to help move this initiative.

### Policy Successes

Kentucky already has legislation in place to include at least one Nationally Board Certified teacher per school. This grant will help make this a reality.

### Products

NBPTS - *Take One!*—Mentorship Qualifications/Process/Guidelines

## Maine

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- With the support of the Maine Education Association (MEA) and staff time funded by MEA's NEA Grant to Close Achievement Gaps, Portland negotiated a professional learning salary schedule that will take effect in 2008-09. Under the new schedule, all teachers currently employed in the district will be placed on a salary lane or step that is identical to or higher than the salary they would have made on the district's experience-based salary schedule. The experience-based salary schedule will only be used for new hires. To advance one salary lane on the professional learning salary schedule, teachers must accumulate 225 approved salary contact hours defined as follows: a) One university or college credit equals 15 salary contact hours; b) one continuing education unit equals 10 contact hours; and c) one approved contact hour equals one contact hour. Portland's interest in pursuing this line of bargaining began with information MAE provided the district from a 2005 NEA meeting on closing achievement gaps.

- The legislature unanimously passed Maine Department of Education Regulation 131: The Maine Federal, State and Local Accountability Standards. The law establishes content standards for math, reading, and science and technology and provides a clear, coherent, and essential perspective on the knowledge and skills required for students' success in college, careers, and as citizens in the 21st century. The content standards provide an explicit progression of student knowledge up the grade levels, which is a significant change from the previous standards that often left teachers wondering what they needed to teach. Feedback from Maine educators, professional associations, and parent groups indicates that these standards will be more useful to educators, especially entry-level professionals, and will serve as an effective tool for curriculum development in the schools.
- As a result of support from MEA, the Maine Principals Association, the Maine School Management Association, and the Maine Department of Education, an MEA staffer will be on loan to the Commissioner of Education's Leadership Team. This staffer, Ellen Holmes, has been named as Distinguished Educator with her primary duties being to lead the state's development of a comprehensive system of professional learning communities. This project is a direct result of the ground work made possible by the gaps grant. In this role, Ellen will be overseeing such projects as Maine's Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, National Board Certification, Teaching Quality and Equity Plan, and the aforementioned development of a statewide system for professional development that is equitable and accessible to all teachers in Maine.
- MEA is now officially part of the Teaching and Working Conditions survey group. As closing achievement gaps was discussed, issues surfaced about school quality and relationships that allow for high levels of teaching and learning. Working with a large group of stakeholders, Maine will conduct its survey this fall and will use the survey data to drive policy decisions that affect teaching and learning outcomes in the upcoming legislative session. Maine's survey will be called Maine Te.L.L.S.—Teaching, Leading and Learning Survey.
- As a result of outreach from the gaps grant, Maine has been accepted as a National Board THNI (Targeted High Need Initiative) site. The goal of this work is to increase student achievement by supporting high-quality professional development in high-needs schools. The pilot site is Portland Public Schools. The rest of

the state will become involved later this year.

- MEA worked with the Maine Department of Education to become part of the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. Ellen Holmes will be the Department of Education's liaison to the national Partnership, which will enable MEA to influence this initiative.

## Policy Successes

- Passage of Chapter 131 (see above).
- Adoption by the MEA Board of Directors' of a new vision and mission, "Great Public Schools for All Maine's Students and Teachers." The focus of this vision is making excellent teaching and significant learning a reality for all of Maine's teachers and students.
- Status of Chapter 118: Statewide new teacher mentor program. It became clear that this rule would be a mandate with no funding. Therefore, MEA could no longer support the passage of this rule, but it was able to hold off its full implementation until full funding is in place in 2010. Until that time, the Department of Education will continue to train mentors, with the goal of having one mentor in place in each school district by the end of 2008.

## Products

- Using Technology to Support Professional Learning Communities Training Manual
- Breaking the Trail: Building and Supporting Professional Learning Communities Training Manual

## Massachusetts

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- In November 2006, MTA released a joint report with AFT-Massachusetts, *Fulfilling the Promise of Education Reform: Narrowing the Achievement Gaps, Closing the Staffing Gaps, Reducing the Funding Gaps*. The report is now being used by MTA lobbyists to advance a number of budgetary items and bills that are focused on achievement gaps and funding gaps. In addition, MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice is using the document with the Governor's education advisors to advance issues related specifically to achievement gaps and staffing gaps.
- Developed and completed an all-day training in December for all Affiliate Services (UniServ Directors) and large local leaders on the elements of school accountability. MTA developed a three-case study model (one large urban, one mid-sized quasi-urban,

and one small rural district) to use as the basis of the training. Others who actively participated in the training were the executive director, president and vice president, and staff from Legal, Communications, and Government Relations.

- Developed a five-course sequence for low-performing schools/districts as part of MTA's professional development program beginning in the 2007-08 school year. The courses are: 1) Accountability Mandates; 2) Data and School Improvement; 3) Conditions for Improvement; 4) School Improvement Plan; and 5) Bargaining about Improvement.

### Policy Successes

- MTA is working with the Governor's office, AFT-MA, and the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy to implement the Teachers Working Conditions Survey (called the "Teaching and Learning Survey" here). The Governor added \$200,000 to his supplemental budget to support this work. The Boston Foundation, Nellie Mae Foundation, and the Davis Foundation made pledges of financial support. The first iteration of the survey will be implemented in the 2007-08 school year. The Governor wants to use the survey results to inform policy proposals from his office.

### Products

- *Fulfilling the Promise of Education Reform: Narrowing the Achievement Gaps, Closing the Staffing Gaps, Reducing the Funding Gaps*, can be accessed at [http://www.massteacher.org/news/headlines/headlines\\_2006-11-30.cfm](http://www.massteacher.org/news/headlines/headlines_2006-11-30.cfm).
- Syllabi for the five-course training sequence

## Michigan

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Provided significant leadership in elevating MEA's and the Michigan Education Alliance's voice throughout the state around the topic of achievement gaps.
- Conducted two statewide conferences and numerous local trainings that focused on strategies for closing the gaps.
- Produced a comprehensive MEA messaging DVD, "Closing the Achievement Gaps," that provides a mechanism for discussing this issue with all stakeholders. Facilitated the distribution of this DVD throughout the state to the educational and governmental

community, including the Office of the Governor.

- Conducted community forums on closing the gaps in the Flint and Southfield school districts.
- Collaborated with the Michigan Department of Education to develop a year-long REACH and TEACH for LEARNING initiative that brought school district teams together to improve learning results for students who are hard to reach and/or hard to teach. The teams met several times during the year and developed plans to address professional learning and school improvement needs at their sites. Plans are underway to conduct a follow-up study to determine results and outcomes.
- Used KEYS 2.0 as a school improvement analysis tool to focus on pressing needs for closing the gaps. Partnered with Illinois and Wisconsin to offer a conference for school teams.
- Developed a Human Rights Competency Model for closing the Achievement Gaps. The model creates a visual of the complex issues that need to be addressed in the work.

### Policy Successes

Advanced cultural competency standards, which are currently in final development.

### Products

A DVD titled "Closing the Achievement Gaps"

## Minnesota

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Held a successful statewide member lobby day on February 27, 2007. Grassroots advocacy teams made powerful connections with their policymakers at the Capitol. Members personally met with 80 legislators from the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate. Valuable information was gained on these legislators' positions on voluntary all-day, everyday kindergarten and early childhood education funding. In addition, members delivered dozens of personal letters to other elected officials including the Governor. Nearly every legislator received communications from one or more member. Whether it was a meeting or a handwritten note, members made a personal contact with nearly every single one of the state's 201 legislators.
- Conducted training with two locals on *Using Data in ATPPS Plans*. Using data from each of the districts, teacher teams learned how to use student data to iden-

tify instructional goals. The training manual will be used with other locals in the future.

- Hosted a conference in April for leaders from locals that are implementing or considering implementing ATPPS. Conference goals included legislative updates and learning from colleagues about using student data and professional development to positively impact student learning and achieve learning goals. Twenty-seven locals were represented with approximately 60 members in attendance. Several NEA staff also attended the conference. Following the conference, an additional session was held with the NEA staff and Education Minnesota leaders and staff to discuss the ATPPS initiative and its implications for improving teaching and learning. This conference was well received and will be an annual event.

### Policy Successes

- Education Minnesota was successful in maintaining the status quo on Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System legislation. However, it did not prevail in its efforts to clarify language around the definition of “reform” of a salary schedule.
- Secured \$32.5 million for all-day, everyday kindergarten. While this is only a portion of the total costs for a fully funded statewide program, this is a positive step forward.
- Restored 2003 funding cuts to ECFE, Head Start, and School Readiness. A range of pilot programs for early childhood literacy also were funded.

### Products

- One-page issue brief used with members: *All-Day, Everyday Kindergarten*
- *ATPPS Using Data: Participant Manual*

## Missouri

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Promoted Learning Communities (PLCs) to close achievement gaps statewide.
- Administered KEYS and created PLCs in an elementary school.
- Created a video documenting the PLC process so it can be replicated in other districts. Teachers from the school where the video was taped will share their experiences at state conferences throughout 2007-08.

### Policy Successes

Secured legislation that requires the state to establish, in rule and regulation, mentoring standards to govern the quality of the state’s local mentoring programs. This current policy success relates to MNEA’s previous success in 2005-06 that embedded language in Missouri’s Professional Development Guidelines that encourages schools to create PLCs that examine student work to inform teaching. MNEA believes the PLC model is an excellent way for beginning teachers to interact with their mentors. MNEA will have three members on the mentoring standards committee, which meets for the first time in August 2008.

### Products

A video (26-minute DVD) in four segments to assist other schools in developing a PLC to examine student work, review assessment data, use KEYS, set goals, practice peer observation to change teaching, raise student achievement, and close achievement gaps

## Nebraska

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Increased the number of members involved in the political process.
- Passed a constitutional amendment to allow public educational land funds to be combined with private trust funds to finance early childhood programs (See Policy Successes).
- Built coalitions with ethnic minority groups in the Omaha area.
- Introduced numerous legislative bills to further the ability of Nebraska teachers to close achievement gaps.
- Lobbied legislative issues to increase state aid for students of poverty, English language learners, and students receiving special education services.
- Built support in the community for an educational trust fund that would dedicate the tax from internet sales to education funding.
- Supported legislation that will study the alignment of preschool through kindergarten programs; make recommendations for funding, licensure, and accreditation; and identify where gaps exist for services to children from birth to age five.
- Hosted an orientation for all new state legislators and their staffs on the economic impact of education spending on the Nebraska economy

## Policy Successes

- Passed a constitutional amendment that allows interest from the Education Lands Trust Fund to help fund early childhood programs for children from birth to three years of age.
- Passed the “Omaha Learning Community Bill,” which establishes a learning community structure for 11 school districts in the Omaha area and new state aid sources for students of poverty, English language learners, teachers with masters’ degrees, K-8 class size reduction, and staff development for teachers who work with diverse students. The state aid increases will take effect in the 2008-09 school year.
- Elected 17 of 20 of NSEA-endorsed candidates for state legislative seats and four NSEA-endorsed state board of education members.

## New Jersey

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

Conducted four focus groups of newer younger teachers (fewer than 5 years of teaching experience and under the age of 30). Topics addressed included support needed to close achievement gaps, professional development experiences, teacher leadership, collaboration on professional issues, and ideas for NJEA’s new Center for Teaching and Learning. NJEA used a new technology called “video marker,” which will allow it to show video clips of new teachers in upcoming meetings with local association leaders, NJEA staff, Center for Teaching and Learning trustees, and NJEA committees. A report summarizing the results of the focus groups is available.

### Products

Video clips of young teachers for use in meetings with local presidents, NJEA committees, staff, and trustees of the Center for Teaching and Learning

## New Mexico

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- October, 2006 NEA-NM’s Annual Fall Educational Issues Conference featured a session for teachers presented by NEA-NM legal counsel outlining provisions in New Mexico’s Public Employees Collective Bargaining Act that make professional and instructional issues a mandatory subject of bargaining.
- February, 2007 Meeting of the NEA-NM Task Force

on Closing Achievement Gaps through Collective Bargaining. Representatives of participating local affiliates met and identified the top three issues to be negotiated to address achievement gaps, including professionalism, student discipline, and inclusion/special education.

- March, 2007 Conclusion of 2007 Session of the New Mexico Legislature during which NEA-NM successfully lobbied for policy language and salary funding to support efforts to close achievement gaps.
- April, 2007 NEA-NM hosted its annual Spring Budget Workshop, which included a session summarizing and sharing the work of NEA-NM’s Task Force on Closing Achievement Gaps through Collective Bargaining. NEA-NM leaders, staff, and legal counsel explained how specific issues relevant to closing achievement gaps can be successfully negotiated at the local level.
- April, 2007 The Task Force’s draft document was distributed to group members for use in negotiating 2007-08 local collective bargaining agreements.
- April – June, 2007 NEA-NM local affiliates successfully negotiated contract language related to priority issues identified by the Task Force.
- June, 2007 NEA-NM’s Summer Advocacy Retreat on Collective Bargaining featured information on negotiating professional and instructional issues under the state’s bargaining law and strategies for organizing local affiliates around such issues and taking those issues to the bargaining table for inclusion in local contracts. Local leaders received information about the importance of coordinated bargaining, especially on issues that address achievement gaps. Planned for fall training and follow-up.

### Policy Successes

- **K-3 Plus Program.** This six-year, \$7.5 million pilot project will provide thousands of low-income students with 25 more instructional days in the summer to help close the opportunity gap by providing the extra time some need to read successfully by third grade. Program funding also will support targeted professional development for teachers and staff who provide instruction and support to participating students.
- **New Mexico High School Redesign.** High schools will implement major reforms as a result of this legislation. The new law changes graduation course requirements, raises the dropout age to 18, eliminates student work permits to attend high school part-time, replaces the

existing New Mexico High School Competency Exam with a standards-based assessment or portfolio, adds requirements for coursework that emphasizes college and workplace readiness and includes a language other than English, and increases funding for new teacher mentoring programs.

- **Targeted Elementary Physical Education.** NEA-NM supported legislation to address “the whole child” by expanding opportunities and funding for physical education programs at the elementary level, particularly in high-poverty schools.
- **Guaranteed Salary Increases with Local Flexibility for Implementation.** State lawmakers approved a five percent average increase for teachers and other school employees. By mandating an “average” increase, the state provided flexibility to local affiliate bargaining teams and school districts to appropriately distribute funding for salaries to address recent variations in pay increases resulting from the implementation of New Mexico’s three-tiered licensure system.
- **Final Implementation of Three-Tiered Minimum Salary Structure.** NEA-NM ensured adequate funding to implement the final, minimum salary of \$50,000 for Level III teachers. Licensure and salary levels are tied to teachers’ years of experience, education levels, and the completion of standards-based dossiers. The salary minimum for Level I teachers is \$30,000; Level II teachers, \$40,000; and Level III teachers, \$50,000 (up from last year’s \$45,000).
- **Professional Development Aligned with Curriculum.** NEA-NM supported legislation that will require school districts to align curriculum at each grade level for mathematics by school year 2008-2009 and for language arts and science by school year 2009-2010. It also will require school districts to align curriculum-related professional development for teachers and educational assistants to relevant state standards.

## Products

- Sample language for collective bargaining agreements. The language focuses on recognition of certified employees’ professionalism and expertise, shared leadership, negotiations, agreement control, district committees, and professional development.
- Report on tools for local negotiations from the NEA-NM Task Force on Closing Achievement Gaps through Collective Bargaining.

## New York

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

#### *Regional Parent and Student Forums*

- Contracted with Fact Finders, a marketing and opinion research company to conduct regional focus forums as part of a qualitative research study on the perceptions of students who have dropped out of high school, are at risk of dropping out, or are currently enrolled in alternative educational programs such as high school equivalency programs. This study will also assess the perceptions of parents whose children did not complete their high school programs. To encourage participation, a cash incentive will be offered to each forum participant.
- Met with Fact Finders staff to design the survey instrument that will be used to collect information on, but not limited to, experiences related to the rigor and relevance of the high school experience; perceptions regarding the quality and appropriateness of relationships among students, parents and, school personnel; perceptions of the school environment physical plant, culture, and safety; specific recollections regarding transitions to and from high school, including why individuals did not finish in four years or why they opted to attend an alternative learning environment; and perception of the Regents examinations and state graduation requirements. Fact Finders will use a screening questionnaire to identify eligible students and parents residing in five regional areas of the state: Rochester, Capital Region, Elmsford, New York City, and Long Island. A total of 10 to 12 participants will be recruited for each of the five interview sites. All forums will be moderated by Fact Finders staff.
- Will share survey findings with the members of the High School Initiatives Task Force, who will consider the information as well as the findings of other research in developing their recommendations for improving high school graduation rates.

#### *High School Initiative Task Force*

- In June 2007, the NYSUT Board of Directors appointed a High School Initiative Task Force comprised of 20 NYSUT members who represent the racial, gender, and geographical diversity of New York State, as well as a wide range of subjects and support services. The Task Force will examine issues affecting high school completion rates, including, but not limited to: relevance of the curriculum,

Regents examination requirements, demographics of high schools with low and high graduation and dropout rates, and the effects of alternative educational programs such as career and technical education and technical high schools. The Task Force will advise NYSUT officers and the Board of Directors on policy initiatives consistent with NYSUT's commitments to help close the achievement gap and advocate for social justice.

## Policy Successes

NYSUT policy initiatives will come from the report of the High School Initiative Task Force.

## North Carolina

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Using NEA and NCAE resources, conducted year-long sustained professional development at two of three NEA gaps project schools. Topics covered included classroom instruction that works, differentiation, stress and time management, classroom management, motivation strategies, rigor and relevance in lesson planning, inclusion, working as a team, and biology jump start for teachers in 12 high-needs schools.
- Invited NCAE members from each NEA-supported school to send a team to the NCAE fall instructional conference and Gates and New Schools Project sessions. The teams took strategies back to their schools to share with their peers.
- Worked with the local associations at each of the three school sites and had some success in gaining new business and community support, including the NAACP, PTA, local faith communities and, in one community, the military and law enforcement. NCAE sponsored Saturday Parent/Guardian Academies as well as Saturday and after-school tutoring sessions.
- Addressed communication issues using the School Improvement Team (SIT) process, an e-mail list serve, and NCAE-created "Tip Cards." The tip cards contained strategies or thought-provoking quotes that the NCAE building representative places in all staff mailboxes on Mondays. Many teachers and principals stated that the tip cards generated good conversations. The goal is to continue this service to support professional learning conversations/communities at the three schools.
- Enhanced the SIT process by creating a CD-ROM to support all schools, not just the three with which

NCAE worked closely. NCAE springboarded the SIT CD-ROM into a policy issue by training a cadre of staff and members to support the SIT process in their school communities. NCAE also created "good news" postcards for each school. The PTA or each school provided postage so that teachers could mail home good news for students who often do not receive attention outside of school.

- Shared policy and strategies and supported student learning through workshops by sponsoring members to attend conferences and supplying useful books for staff reading/conversation. The State Board of Education recognized NCAE for making a difference in public schools. This recognition and NCAE's work to conduct a biology workshop for members in the high-needs schools have led to partnerships with the Department of Public Instruction.
- School principals in the NEA Gaps Project schools noted that scores went up and fewer teachers left at the end of the year. The principals requested help in biology, and while scores are not where they need to be, they are moving up.
- Two of the principals provided NEA/NCAE with great PR. Other administrators asked NCAE to support and/or adopt their schools. A few teachers shared that they worked hard to create engaging lessons and that they appreciated NCAE support. Overall, educators see that NEA and NCAE care about student achievement and good teaching.

## Products

- Professional development modules to meet specific school needs
- Good news postcards for teachers to send to families
- CD-ROM for school improvement teams
- Flyers, agendas, and materials for the topics covered at Parent Academies
- Colorful banners adorn each of our three schools; the school mascot and colors are flying proudly with the statement, "NEA and NCAE Support Smith Eagles."

## Ohio

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- **Ohio NBCT Summit:** With support from NEA and in partnership with other Ohio education organizations, OEA sponsored a Summit of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) on November 16, 2007. Over 550 NBCTs from across Ohio explored ways to close

achievement gaps and staff high-needs schools. The teachers developed 32 recommendations in five key areas: (1) creating conditions for closing achievement gaps; (2) connecting teachers to their students, families and communities; (3) developing administrators (and teachers) who value and utilize teacher leadership; (4) ensuring high-quality professional development for experienced and novice teachers; and (5) recruiting and growing NBCTs for high-needs schools. A report of the summit is available on OEA's website.

- **OEA Closing Achievement Gaps Conference on April 27-28 in Columbus, Ohio:** Over 100 OEA members, parents, and administrators attended the conference, some in school or district teams. The conference expanded participants' knowledge about how effective practice, programs, and policy can close achievement gaps.
- **OEA's Training Cadre:** OEA sent five people (two staff members and three governance leaders) to NEA's August 2007 C.A.R.E. training of trainers to build OEA's capacity to provide training to members in selected local associations.
- **Community Outreach:**
  - OEA hosted a sorority lobby day for members of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority from across the state to engage Ohio legislators in discussions about critical education issues, including the need to address achievement gaps. Sorority members followed-up with legislators through office visits, district meetings, and grassroots activities to urge support for increased funding to close the gaps.
  - OEA member volunteers and members of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority provided tutoring services bi-monthly over a nine-month period to students as a coordinated intervention activity between the association and the sorority.
  - The OEA vice president and the secretary/treasurer of the Ohio AFL-CIO talked with junior and senior high school students about the important work of their organizations and about opportunities for leadership.
  - OEA used a concert by Earth, Wind and Fire, which was attended by more than 8,000 people, to promote its "Every Ohio Child Has a Right to Learn" Campaign.

## Policy Successes

- Supported the Ohio Department of Education's *Schools of Promise* and *Schools of Distinction* awards program that recognizes schools that have raised achievement and reduced achievement gaps.
- Made the issue of closing achievement gaps a priority of the Governor. OEA is working in partnership with the Governor's newly appointed special assistant on closing the gaps.
- Included language in the state's biennial budget (House Bill 119) that expanded the definition of Ohio's Poverty Based Assistance (PBA) funding index to include closing achievement gaps programs. School districts with significant gaps are encouraged to use PBA funding to improve student performance, recruit teachers and administrators, and conduct professional development.
- Influenced the development of the state department of education Leadership Development Model Grant to Close Achievement Gaps for Students with Disabilities and Other At-Risk Learners. This grant requires local partnerships between schools and service agencies to provide coordinated services to close achievement gaps.

## Oklahoma

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Partnered with the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University to create the Oklahoma Education Consortium for Mentoring. Offered a training of trainers' session for a seven-day Mentoring Professional Development Institute and conducted training for 35 urban and 20 mentor teachers.
- Facilitated four community conversations on closing the gaps using bilingual facilitators and recorders trained by OEA. Our work to foster community conversations in the Hispanic Community resulted in the formation of alliances with that community.
- Formed an Alliance Group for Closing the Gaps in Altus, Oklahoma that consists of multiple education, civic, and religious groups.
- Components of C.A.R.E. and NEA's closing the gaps training were incorporated in multiple workshops in each geographic area of the state.
- Delivered "Closing the Gaps" workshops to two rural school districts, and delivered week-long professional development to a consortium of small, rural schools.

## Policy Successes

- Legislation authorizing the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation to provide professional development for school-based “residency committees” (established in 1982) on how to best work with beginning teachers. OEA has developed a professional development model that would be appropriate for training committee members.
- Legislative expansion of literacy first programs (\$500,000).
- Legislation ensuring that at least 25 percent of NBCT candidates in the Education Leadership Oklahoma Class are employed in hard-to-staff schools.

## Products

- Created and distributed closing the gaps posters for lobbying purposes. The posters highlighted the need for funding for mentoring training, professional development around teaching to diverse needs, school improvement grants (including supporting and staffing high-needs schools), literacy programs, and expanding mathematics professional development institutes.
- Developed an introductory presentation for a mentoring workshop, and comprehensive participant and trainer manuals for a seven-day workshop, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Education Consortium for Mentoring.

## Oregon

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Formed a partnership to promote the teaching and learning survey from the Center for Teaching Quality with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, the Oregon School Boards Association, Employers for Education Excellence, and Chalkboard.
- Center for Teaching Quality staff reviewed the survey, answered the group’s questions, and met with the Governor’s Chief of Staff. The Governor’s office is interested in being a part of the project.
- NEA’s C.A.R.E. training was presented at the 2007 Oregon Education Association (OEA) Minority Affairs Conference. Two OEA staff and an OEA member attended NEA’s August C.A.R.E. trainer of trainers’ session in August.

## Policy Successes

Working with other partners, OEA passed legislation creating the Oregon New Educator Program, which will provide all beginning teachers, principals, and superintendents in Oregon a strong mentor during their first two years on the job. The legislation authorizes \$5 million in the next biennium to begin reviving Oregon’s dormant educator mentoring program. The program will be phased in over four years and will be paid for with funds administered by ODE. The agency will work with a stakeholder committee to develop a request for proposal for school districts to implement mentoring programs with research-based components, or continue/expand current research-based programs that are achieving results. The estimated cost per year is \$5,000 per new educator. The Governor allocated \$5 million in his 2007-2009 budgets (within the ODE budget) to fund program start-up by June 30, 2008, and enable one-third of eligible teachers and principals to receive mentorship in the 2008-2009 school year.

## Pennsylvania

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Convened three PSEA governance committees in joint meetings to develop an action plan based on the recommendations of the 2006 PSEA Action Group on Student Achievement Gaps. PSEA governance committees continue to build member awareness of achievement gap issues. For example, the Instruction and Professional Development (IPD) Council focused its “innovative teaching grant” program on examples of innovative teaching that address achievement gap issues. The Intergroup Relations Commission (IRC) is focusing this year on building support among members for early childhood education quality and funding initiatives. PSEA’s Higher Education Committee has joined with IPD and IRC in examining student gaps in access to higher education. PSEA is holding a conference examining the future of community colleges (including the achievement gap issue) in the fall. Joint committee planning meetings are continuing through the fall of 2007.
- Created print materials that tie achievement gaps to programs and initiatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and governor’s office. These publications have helped PSEA build strong relationships with key staff at PDE around issues related to

student achievement and closing the gaps. The publications also have helped PSEA members understand and engage in state-sponsored achievement gaps initiatives. PDE staff commented that as a result of these publications, they view PSEA more positively as an organization that supports positive school change.

- Began discussions with other stakeholders about closing achievement gaps. Key stakeholders include district administrators; principals; groups that represent migrant, homeless and ESL students, the PTA; and various statewide school-related groups. Stakeholders have shared activities and strategies and developed a preliminary plan for how to move forward. Several also worked together to support new early childhood funding in the Commonwealth.
- Testified in support of Governor Rendell's proposed expansion of public funding of high-quality early childhood education.
- Testified in support of several legislative proposals relating to teacher quality and support for teachers, specifically for teachers working in urban and hard-to-staff schools.
- Provided several professional development sessions to introduce members to achievement gap issues and to discuss the union role in reducing gaps. Session topics included best practices in school improvement, the role of the union in closing achievement gaps, the role of pupil services in closing the gaps, resiliency and student achievement, teaching reading in the content areas (to close the gaps), best practices in reading and mathematics instruction, and introduction to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Member response to these sessions has been uniformly positive.
- Engaged over 100 members in a four-day discussion at PSEA's Summer Professional Issues School of several of teaching and learning areas that are directly related to closing student achievement gaps. These areas included differentiated instruction, response to intervention, and data-based instructional decision making. Participant evaluations were overwhelmingly positive.
- Published an article in *Voice Magazine* describing the achievement gap initiative to members.

- Continued to work closely with PDE personnel to plan a statewide, coordinated effort to close student achievement gaps. PSEA has been participating for three years in a small-scale project sponsored by the State Board of Education, but discussions are now underway to plan next steps. PSEA has been a consistent voice in these discussions, which should culminate in a new coordinated statewide effort to close the gaps.

## Policy Successes

- **Early Childhood Education.** PSEA supported legislation that provided \$75 million in new funds for access to high-quality early childhood education.
- **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.** Despite a contentious fight over the budget this year, Pennsylvania maintained \$5 million in funding to cover application fees for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Teachers in high-poverty schools and districts, and those who teach hard-to-staff content areas, are priorities for the funds. A portion of the funds also supports statewide candidate support centers.

## Products

- **PDE School Improvement Series.** In response to several member inquiries, PSEA developed a series of publications designed to inform members about the resources developed by PDE to help schools and districts close achievement gaps.
- **Promising Practices Series.** PSEA is in the process of completing a series of brief publications that describe promising practices to close achievement gaps. The purpose of these publications is to address the questions and anxieties that some members have related to school change.
- **School Improvement Planning Guide.** PSEA produced a draft tool to help members who are engaged in ESEA-related school improvement planning in their districts.
- **Early childhood testimony.** PSEA provided testimony to support the Governor's successful effort to expand early childhood funding in the Commonwealth.
- **Professional Development Session Materials.** PSEA developed several new professional development sessions related to student achievement gaps.

## South Dakota

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- The Secretary of Education appointed SDEA's executive director and president to an Indian Education Advisory Board stipulated in the Indian Education Act of 2007.
- During the 2007 Lobby Day, SDEA members attended a hearing on establishing pre-kindergarten standards in South Dakota. Proposed legislation was tied to pilot programs that encourage low-income families to enroll their children in pre-school. Members also met with legislators to discuss support for increased education funding.
- SDEA's minority-at-large member was named to the Teachers' Compensation Assistance Program's (TCAP) oversight board. TCAP is a new program that allows school districts to apply for funding to "enhance" teacher pay. Having an SDEA board member on the oversight board ensures that South Dakota school districts are treated fairly regardless of location or minority population.
- SDEA became a member of the National Indian Education Association to advance its goal to provide more opportunities for Native Americans in South Dakota to enter the education field. Currently there are only 114 American Indian teachers in South Dakota or about 1.2 percent of the teaching force. SDEA can use the knowledge it gains through this national relationship to attract more Native Americans into teaching.
- SDEA provided programs on the importance of ESEA Title 7 programs at the Spring Representative Assembly.
- SDEA sent two individuals to NEA training last year on closing achievement gaps. While one of the members left the state, the other has provided training for over 100 members in Sioux Falls and Menno this past summer. SDEA will send additional members to future trainings.

### Policy Successes

- The South Dakota Education Association (SDEA) secured passage of the Indian Education Act of 2007. SDEA was part of an advisory committee that helped draft the legislation, which codifies several existing programs and assures that they can only be modified with legislative approval. More specifically, the Indian Education Act includes provisions for an Office of Indian Education; an Indian Education Advisory

Council comprised of tribal-council nominees from the state's nine recognized tribes; a pilot South Dakota American Indian language revitalization; a requirement that teachers who are new to the state, or who were certified after 1993, take a three-hour course in South Dakota Indian Studies; and development of curriculum and coursework related to South Dakota Indian history and culture.

- With the support of SDEA, the South Dakota Legislature also passed legislation to increase the compulsory attendance age to 18. This is a small victory and now we must work to get legislators to provide money for programs for alternative instruction for those students who do not excel in a traditional classroom setting.
- SDEA played an active role in passing a law that makes kindergarten attendance mandatory. A component of Governor Rounds' 2010 initiative, the law takes effect in 2010.

## Virginia

### 2006-07 Accomplishments

- Organized a Closing Achievement Gaps Conference, March 17, Northern Region, featuring Asa Hilliard.
- The York County Education Association organized a community event on the value of high-quality pre-K, which focused on the local association's 45 Million Word Project, and recruited early literacy volunteers.
- The Western Region Instructional Issues Series, which includes such titles as Working with ADHD Students, Creating Safe Learning Environments, Working Effectively with Parents and Families, and Behavior Influence Techniques.
- The Galax Education Association Early Literacy Project created a community coalition to provide books, training, and follow-up in family literacy for English-and Spanish-speaking families.
- Salary Initiative: While state-level results were disappointing, there were targeted local successes:
  - Russell County negotiated a five-year salary improvement plan with a five percent annual increase in teacher salaries or an increase of two percent more than the average of the surrounding counties' increases, whichever is greater. The county also won a four percent increase for ESPs.
  - Prince William County ran a successful TOO (Target of Opportunity) campaign that netted a significant membership increase of 140 and a two percent plus step salary increase.

- Roanoke County negotiated a four percent salary increase for every employee.
- Pittsylvania County negotiated a three percent salary increase, but more importantly, it conducted a successful organizing campaign that resulted in a significant increase in member and public engagement with a broad-based county coalition focused on local fall elections and a \$70 million bond referendum. The county's efforts brought the budget process into the sunshine.

### **Policy Successes**

The 2007 General Assembly appropriated \$2.5 million, considerably short of the Governor's request for \$4.6 million, to enhance the Virginia Pre-School Initiative (VPI). In addition to increasing funds for 12 pilot sites, the General Assembly ordered a study of VPI outcomes by the Joint Legislative Audit Review Commission. VEA continues to work with the Governor's Start Strong Council on the state's Pre-K Initiative.