



NEA hosts its First Virtual Leadership Summit

On March 12-14, the National Education Association (NEA) designed and delivered the first ever virtual NEA National Leadership Summit! This impactful 3-day virtual Summit brought together nearly 2,000 member leaders from across the country who participated in over 70 breakout sessions designed by practitioners and staff who are subject matter experts in one or more of the domains in the NEA Leadership Competency Framework.

The theme of this year's Summit was "Our Democracy. Our Responsibility. Our Time!"

The virtual Summit was designed as a unified, strategic, and interdisciplinary approach to leadership development that reinforces and supports key leadership competencies in seven



"Designing a large scale, leadership development training for thousands of educators is challenging, exciting, and requires a lot of work and planning."

– NEA Vice President Princess Moss

strategic areas – Advocacy, Communication, Governance and Leadership, Leading Our Professions, Organizing, Social and Emotional Intelligence, and Strategy and Fiscal Health. The Summit is one of many vehicles to support the integration of a competency-based framework that is designed to foster the development of the next generation of union activists and education leaders, while establishing a distinctive leadership brand for the NEA.

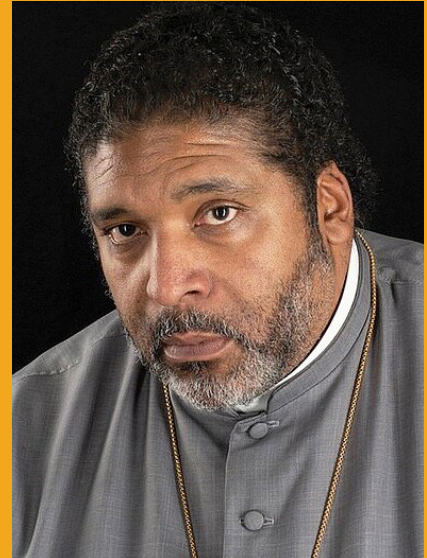
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Nancy MacLean



Dr. Andre Perry



Reverend Dr. William J. Barber, II

Throughout the weekend, NEA members attended plenaries and breakout sessions, along with sessions that focused on health and wellness.

Keynote speakers included:

- ▶ Nancy Maclean, historian, professor, and author of “Democracy in Chains: The deep history of the radical right’s stealth plan for America.”
- ▶ Dr. Andre Perry, senior fellow at The Brookings Institution, author of “Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America’s Black Cities.”
- ▶ Reverend Dr. William J. Barber, II, president and senior lecturer at Repairers of the Breach and Co-Chair of the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.

Other Summit participants included:

- ▶ 2021 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year [Takeru Nagayoshi](#)

- ▶ [Mecca Verdell](#), youth poet
- ▶ [Natalie Acosta](#), youth organizer with Voces de la Frontera
- ▶ [Malcolm Jamal Warner](#), actor, director, musician, and producer

The 2022 NEA National Leadership Summit is scheduled for March 11-13. To learn more about the NEA National Leadership Summit, visit www.nea.org/leadershipsummit.



Rachel Poppe
2021 Summit Presenter

“As an NEA member, being able to participate in the 2021 National Summit with educators that share a passion for our profession was an amazing experience. I learned that we all are the experts in our field and we can learn from each other.”

—Rachel Poppe,
NEA member and Summit presenter/participant



Shawna Mott-Wright

The Power and Promise of Leadership Development

Developing educators into activists and leaders is critical to NEA's mission of creating great public schools for every student.

The vision for leadership development for the NEA is to build a distinctive leadership brand that includes a competency-based framework that assists educators in developing skills, knowledge, and abilities in seven areas (known as competencies): Advocacy, Communication, Governance and Leadership, Leading Our Professions, Organizing, Social and Emotional Intelligence, and Strategy and Fiscal Health.

NEA is doubling down on its investment in leadership development, working to ensure that it is integrated into every campaign, program, and project and it provides leadership development opportunities to members to assist them on their leadership journey.

Take Shawna Mott-Wright, a teacher in

Tulsa, Okla. She is the personification of the 21st century education leader.

In 2005, she started teaching and immediately joined the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association (TCTA). Soon after, she served in or was elected to a number of association leadership roles. In 2020, Mott-Wright says those experiences are what helped with her decision to run for a seat in the Oklahoma Senate.

"We were in the midst of a pandemic, and though the senator is a nice person, he was pushing vouchers. We needed an educator's voice in the Senate," says Mott-Wright.

The candidate she was running against outspent her six to one, mostly on paid media, in a race for a seat that has not been heavily contested before, says Mott-Wright. When the votes were counted, she lost by 3,500 votes.

Though disappointed by the results, she was proud of her efforts and understood that this experience is also a part of leadership – sometimes you set goals and take risks, but you do not achieve the results you want.

"You owe it to yourself to see what you are capable of," she says.

Leaders Need Role Models

For Mott-Wright, her earliest examples of leadership came from her parents. Her father was a member of the local Sheet Metal Workers union. Her mom is a special education teacher of 43 years and serves as secretary of TCTA.

Her parents exposed her to political and collective action early on. Beginning at the age of 4, Mott-Wright had a front row seat when TCTA and Oklahoma Education Association conducted candidate interviews. And by the time she was 19, she marched

with thousands of educators who demanded higher wages during Oklahoma's 1990 teacher strike. The state legislature subsequently passed a bill to increase teacher pay, reduce class size, offer more resources for early childhood programs, address accreditation, among other things, that same year.

Mott-Wright also fondly recalls one of her mom's favorite slogans that she

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*–Shawna Mott-Wright,
Tulsa, Oklahoma*

used when advocating for students with disabilities: "Can't never could 'till can't tried," which she believes is also applicable to educators who, today, are frustrated over not being involved in decisions that impact students and educators.

In her early twenties, Mott-Wright interned with the OEA, where she worked with lobbyists. After graduating high school, she thought becoming a lawyer was the best way to make a difference.

One day, Mott-Wright recalled hearing God say, "You are going to advocate for teachers and kids." But she got a job as a legal secretary anyway and even took the Law School Admission Test. "But I could not escape [teaching]," Mott-Wright shares.

Her focus shifted. She earned a teach-

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ing certification and secured her first teaching job in 2005. With that, came her first time stepping into association leadership - she ran for building representative and won.

What followed was a leadership journey that Mott-Wright says fulfilled her purpose. She served on her local's bargaining team (alongside her mom), and was later elected to the TCTA Board of Directors. Additionally, Mott-Wright served as vice president of TCTA from 2014-2020. In 2018, she won a seat on the NEA Board of Directors.

These early experiences, among others, gave her "purpose," Mott-Wright says, adding that she was "called to serve."

Leaders Need Opportunities

Mott-Wright believes she has been successful because of the many opportunities she's received through the union.

"I have been so fortunate to be a member and a leader. The organizing conferences and the NEA Summit... all challenged me to up my game," she explains. I have also been supported by so many [other] leaders... with affirmations [and] being accessible when I need them," says Mott-Wright.

Ongoing support and coaching coupled with training are three components of successful leadership development. The NEA National Leadership Summit provides participants with training opportunities to develop new skills, strength existing skills, and how to put those skills into practice.

"When I attend the Leadership Summit, I feel empowered and it's like I am with family," says Mott-Wright.

Mott-Wright attended the first ever virtual NEA National Leadership Summit, during which 1,800 NEA

members took part in trainings based on one or more of the NEA leadership competencies.

Leaders Lead Others, With Others

In addition to serving, Mott-Wright says that her leadership journey has taught her that leadership requires you to work with others.

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Tulsa, Oklahoma*

"Everything is about relationships. I have to build my bench and build my people up, so we can have a massive impact."

Almost 30 years after standing with her mom and other educators, Mott-Wright was one of the organizers who led educators to the Oklahoma state capitol building to demand more funding for schools, recalling fondly the activism of educators who helped to stage the 2019 walkouts across Oklahoma. According to The Oklahoman's Ben Felder, the walkout forced 200 of 512 school districts to close.

The walkout was organized after the state legislature signed a bill that gave teachers an average raise of \$6,100, provided a \$1,250 raise for education support professionals, and allocated \$50 million to the state's budget for education. Oklahoma Education As-

sociation President Alicia Priest told PBS NewsHour that the bill was "a good first step."

However, Mott-Wright and other educators organized the action because their students needed more funding.

The walkout was one of dozens of actions across the U.S. in what has become known as the Red For Ed movement. In cities and states, education activists, leaders, parents, students, and coalitions mobilized to demand greater voice in decision-making at the local, state, and national level.

Mott-Wright says of the protests: "You've got to get engaged in the fight. Don't sit on the sidelines and gripe and complain"

Mott-Wright attributes the collective action of educators in defeating attempts to push through voucher legislation in Oklahoma during the 2020 session; the bill was introduced by the incumbent she would later challenge during her run for a seat in the Oklahoma Senate.

Leaders Assume Responsibility for Leading Organizations

In her 2014 book, "How Organizations Develop Activists: Civic Associations & Leadership in the 21st century," Hahrie Han argues that organizations that are successful understand their activists and leaders.

Activists, Han proposes, need consistent opportunities to engage, and will volunteer discrete amounts of time, but may not assume responsibility for the organization. Leaders, says Han, understand this dynamic: leaders assume responsibility for identifying activists; they understand the need to move activists to leaders, and respect

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those who wish to remain activists. Those same ideas are embedded in the progression levels in the NEA Leadership Competency Framework. An agenda-driving leader, or level 3 leader, has a deep understanding of the competencies, accepts that the role of the leader is to influence and provide opportunities for others, and use their skills and experiences to drive transformational change transformational organizations, and lead systemic change. Mott-Wright says that it is important that others recognize their agency and use their leadership, especially in the union.

She has been a part of a leadership team at the local and state level to position the union to lead on racial and justice issues. In addition to reading books and other resources, Mott-Wright says

the organization has been examining internal structures and processes, including renaming and redefining the purpose of some committees. The local has been pushing NEA's Justice for Black Lives movement, and helping to convince delegates at the OEA Delegate Assembly to pass a resolution denouncing white supremacy culture.

"When we first began having these conversations, it was hard. It took a few years, but we did it and I have seen a change in our members and the association," says Mott-Wright.

TCTA has continually shifted the way it engages with members to meet their needs. For example, the union dedicates resources to providing a food pantry for educators and others in the community and trains others to learn how to engage in the political process.

Additionally, TCTA's work has helped lead to the creation of a department to address equity within the district.

Still, Mott-Wright is not naïve about the need to continue to grow her own leadership, along with others, to transform the union to capitalize on their successes and handle the challenges facing educators and students, now, and in the future.

Quoting NEA President Becky Pringle, Mott-Wright says, "I am going to keep plugging away."

This is the work required of agenda-driving leaders and evidence of why leadership development is integral for building the union's capacity to transform the lives of educators, the profession, and the broader world.



Ellen Olsen

Ellen Olsen

NEA – ESP At-Large
Sign Language Interpreter
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Saint Paul Federation
of Educators

The language of complaint starts with they. The language of solutions starts with I.

This article is a reflection on the most relevant things I have learned as an educator during my leadership journey. In my role as a sign language interpreter, it became apparent that the skills and attributes that helped me reach this particular point were not necessarily the ones that would enhance my skills/influence as a leader. The six lessons below are a summary of my reflections during my tenure as a leader within my union.

LESSON NUMBER ONE – Don't just join the union – learn what it's all about.

I will never forget, when I started working for my school district, there was a lead teacher that was encouraging

"My role as a sign language interpreter, helps young adults that are deaf understand what is being said in a variety of situations."

–Ellen Olsen,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

everyone to join the local union - the Saint Paul Federation of Educators Local 28. She shared the purpose and importance of becoming a union member. She also shared that unions provide support, guidance and advice; how unions allow you to have a voice in educational trends, debates and topics that you feel strongly about. After learning about the union, I did just that – joined. Prior to this, I didn't know much about

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the union. My dad is a retired educator and a lifetime NEA member, but he and I never had conversations about what it meant to be a union member.

LESSON NUMBER TWO – Work in your passion. Your passion is your Why.

My role as a sign language interpreter helps young adults that are deaf understand what is being said in a variety of situations. I must understand the subject matter of discourse so that students can accurately learn to translate what is being spoken into sign language. I work in a program that focuses on special education for ages 18-21. The school's program is committed to preparing our students for successful lives in a competitive world. The program is tailored to meet our students' individual aspirations and post-secondary plans whether they chose to pursue a college degree or immediately enter the workplace. It's such a joy to work with young people on these things that seem really relevant to them ... and I love it! I also realized that my leadership journey was parallel to my local's mission. The Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, has a long history of advocating for policies that improve public education for their students and their members through collective action. Over time my local began to strengthen its organizing efforts and offer professional development training for Education

“The school's program is committed to preparing our students for successful lives in a competitive world.”

*–Ellen Olsen,
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Support Professionals. One of the trainings was about the NEA Leadership Development Framework.

Confucius said, “choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life”

LESSON NUMBER THREE – Growing in my leadership

One of the first tasks I did after the leadership competency training was to take the self-assessment. The self-assessment helped me think about the many skills and attributes of leadership, including the ones I already possess, and the ones I would like to develop. After taking the self-assessment, I was able to develop my goals for my own personal development plan.

Soon, I began to strengthen my leadership skills through practice and performing deliberate acts of leadership. I realized that I could use my leadership skills - specifically in the Advocacy, Communication, Leading Our Professions, and Governance and Leadership domains - to become more involved in supporting our members.

LESSON NUMBER FOUR – Develop resilience

In my local, we have the licensed [certificated classroom teachers] unit and two ESP units, and we used to negotiate for each unit on a different schedule.

My local decided it was more powerful if we negotiated on the same schedule. Together, we increased our leverage for a couple of bargaining cycles. However, during the last bargaining cycle, when our ESP units were getting stalled by the district negotiators, our executive board voted to merge our three teams into one. So, all teachers, educational assistants, and all school and community service professionals, were on the same team. We became a team of

“Our team organized and advocated together which showed that we were mutually supportive of one another.”

*–Ellen Olsen,
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

35 people, and when we showed up at the next bargaining meeting, the district had a different reaction. Our team organized and advocated together which showed that we were mutually supportive of one another. So, if we're advocating for more librarians, we're also advocating for more educational assistants to help those librarians.

LESSON NUMBER FIVE – Put your plan into action

It takes a lot of confidence to step out of your comfort zone. Sometimes new ideas can often look like distractions. In order to accomplish your goals, the most important thing is to have a written plan and put your plan into action. You should revisit your plan and challenge yourself. Be open to learning something new. And, remember that you are not the only one that needs to improve.

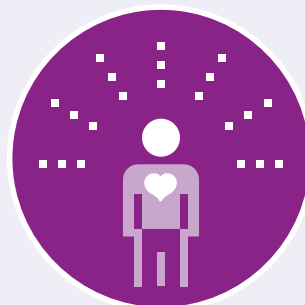
LESSON NUMBER SIX – Self-care and reflection

My local invited me to participate on a Social and Emotional Committee where we discussed the importance of recognizing emotions, self-awareness, social awareness, vulnerability and self-management. As a result of my participation on the committee, I was invited to facilitate a restorative practice session during one of our meetings. I learned that it is important to take time for yourself, reflect on what it is that you want to do, and stand up for what you believe in.



In 2020, in the midst of a global health pandemic, and racial, social, and political unrest, it was evident that the leadership competencies needed to be revised to meet the current needs of education leaders. NEA members and staff worked to update the NEA Leadership Competency framework to include a new competency, Social-Emotional Intelligence. This seventh competency brings attention to the social and emotional intelligence skills educators need to lead healthy and thriving lives, and ensure these practices are integrated into their workplace and association culture.

Social and Emotional Intelligence





Yulil Alonso-Garza

Yulil Alonso-Garza

8th Language Arts Teacher

Calexico Unified School District and Enrique Camarena Jr. High School Calexico, California

“Go Big or Go Home!” That’s Yulil Alonso-Garza’s motto and she adapts it to everything she does. When Ms. Alonso-Garza began thinking about her leadership goals, she didn’t necessarily see herself running for a seat on the Imperial Valley College Board of Trust-

ees. But, like any good journey, she was open to what possibilities lay ahead.

Ms. Alonso-Garza didn’t know much about the California Teachers Association (CTA) or the National Education Associate (NEA) until she became an educator. However, she was eager to get involved as she came from a family of union workers. She stated that “Unions have been the fabric of my family. My maternal grandparents were United Farm Worker members and my family on my paternal side have all been involved in the SNTE Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educacion in Mexico. Therefore, when I was given an application I was ready to continue the work my family had established with union leaders”.

Being directly involved in the work of CTA at their quarterly meetings and NEA’s Annual Representative Assembly, encouraged her to take a proactive approach to teaching. She understood that as part of a union, her voice has a direct impact in her classroom. Ms. Alonso-Garza stated that her commitment to the union has strengthened and

evolved into a more on hands approach. She no longer just supports the work, but is an active participant as a delegate and surrogate for union policies.

One of the issues she is most involved in addressing is raising awareness about the prevention of gang activity

“We must continue the work for future education colleagues and students because they’re our future.”

*–Yulil Alonso-Garza,
Retired Madison Wisconsin*

in schools and communities. CTA has featured the work she has established with Mothers and Men Against Gangs Coalition to deter youth from joining gangs. During the 2019 NEA Representative Assembly, a colleague encouraged her to get involved with NEA’s

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Leadership Development



Leadership is more than an event, moment, or position. It’s a journey! And NEA is with you, every step of the way.

Looking to advance your leadership skills? NEA has a course for that!

The National Education Association believes that every educator is a leader. [The NEA Leadership Competency Framework](#), is a competency-based model and tool, designed to assist educators in becoming stronger practitioners and Association leaders. To deepen educators’ awareness of the framework, NEA has developed an online course: Leadership Development 101: A Foundational Course for Activists and Leaders. This course defines for participants what it means to be a 21st century education leader and helps educators chart their individual leadership journey and/or assist others in their development. [Click here](#) to create your account and access the course. Please note that anyone can sign-up to take this course free of charge. Any questions with accessing the course? [Contact LeadersDevelop@nea.org](mailto:ContactLeadersDevelop@nea.org).

leadership development work and to take the online leadership competency self-assessment. Ms. Alonso-Garza stated that “one of the skills I realized I’m very passionate about is the advocacy work surrounding social justice issues”. Since beginning her leadership development journey, she decided to run for an elected seat on the Imperial Valley Community College District Board of Trustees to disrupt the K-16 school to

prison pipeline. “One of the values I learned was to not give up in talking to CTA and NEA members about the policies that are impacting our classrooms and the neighborhoods where we live” said Alonso-Garza. Her advice to other educators and colleagues looking to get involved in taking their leadership to the next level is ... use their platform as a union member to increase services for the students they serve on a daily basis.

There are several issues that members have advocated for in the past to make our profession successful. Educators must continue the work for future education colleagues and students because they’re our future.”

“I would encourage everyone that hasn’t started their leadership journey, take the NEA leadership development self-assessments. This is where it all began for me,” said Alonza Garza.



Michael Carvella

I Have to Work Differently to Change Mindsets

Michael Carvella

Curriculum and Technology Coach

My first year of teaching was rough. I wasn’t prepared for the realities of what was happening inside and outside of my classroom. There was a lack of resources needed to provide my students with the education they deserved. On top of that, the housing developments

across the street from the school were being demolished. Kids literally looked out the window every day and saw their neighborhood being torn down. They were being displaced to other parts of the city. I wasn’t prepared to deal with the social and emotional

“ I wouldn’t be in the position I am in my district, both position-wise and leadership-wise, without the guidance and support, I’ve received from the Tennessee Education Association and the NEA.”

–Michael Carvella,
Curriculum and
Technology Coach

needs of the students and the families living in this situation.

I felt powerless in that situation as a new educator because I knew I needed to do more. Then I went to a conference on social justice and teaching. I had a conversation with someone and

shared how I was frustrated because I couldn’t align social justice with the materials I was given to use. I walked away from that conversation with a new focus.

After my first year, I immediately began receiving support as a member of my local association.

Being an NEA member has been the biggest influence on my career and on my ability to advocate for my students. NEA has been critical in my development as a teacher leader. I wouldn’t be in the position I am in my district, both position-wise and leadership-wise, without the guidance and support, I’ve received from the Tennessee Education Association and the NEA.

The majority of the teaching workforce in the United States is white women, from middle-class backgrounds, it’s important to recognize that our students are more diverse with different lived experiences than those of their educators. I sometimes get resistance in my district and elsewhere, from those who don’t or won’t, understand white privilege, and who don’t comprehend how systemic racism is built into everything. As disheartening as this can be, it means I have to work harder and work differently to change their mindsets.



Tucker Quetone

Tucker Quetone
 High School English Teacher
 Minnesota

Transforming Local Education Systems With NEA

My grandparents on my dad’s side were Cherokee and Kiowa. They experienced forced assimilation and cultural disinheritance while attending a government boarding school. They were forced to

speak English, and after my grandparents left school, they did not teach their Native languages to my father or his siblings.

Hearing my grandparents’ stories—and those of others—and seeing the challenges for some of our marginalized students today, has long motivated me to include my voice at the table as an educator.

Many Native American students feel invisible and relegated to the past. They don’t see themselves in school as a current, ongoing culture. Compounding this is a lack of culturally responsive resources or some people failing to realize the cultural experiences certain students bring with them.

I knew what I could do within my classrooms, but I could see how the systems weren’t working for some of our marginalized students. I wanted to help the systems become better for our students and taking on different leadership roles within the Rochester Education Association allowed me to do that.

“Some of our major wins included getting three community schools up and running, which meant more community partners and staff to work with

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*–Tucker Quetone,
 High School English Teacher,
 Minnesota*

them. Our local has also negotiated contract language for more school counselors, social workers, and mental health practitioners.”

Recently, working with other educators, community members, and Native American groups, we were able to get the school district to revamp its Thanksgiving curriculum to make it more historically accurate, age-appropriate, and offer multiple perspectives of historical events.

Working with the union has really transformed my teaching and my work in educational systems quite a bit.

Today is for You: Five Steps to Begin Your Leadership Journey

The NEA leadership competency self-assessments were designed to help NEA leaders identify their areas of strength, as well as where they can improve. Individuals are strongly encouraged to take the self-assessments often to identify the areas in which they want to grow. Below are 5 steps to start creating your leadership journey plan today!

Step 1: DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEA LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK – Read each competency and become familiar with how each can support you in your leadership growth.

Step 2: SELF-ASSESSMENT – Take the self-assessments to assess your leadership and identify your areas of growth.

Step 3: IDENTIFY LEADERSHIP GOALS – Use what you learn from the self-assessments to set goals for your leadership journey.

Step 4: WORKING TOWARDS YOUR GOALS – Develop a written plan, with clear actions and dates, which increases the likelihood that you will be successful. Enlist the support of an accountability partner to help you along the way.

Step 5: POST SELF-ASSESSMENT – Develop the habit of reflection by continuing to assess your growth and impact; this helps you set new goals and determine future actions.

Click the QR code to begin your journey.

