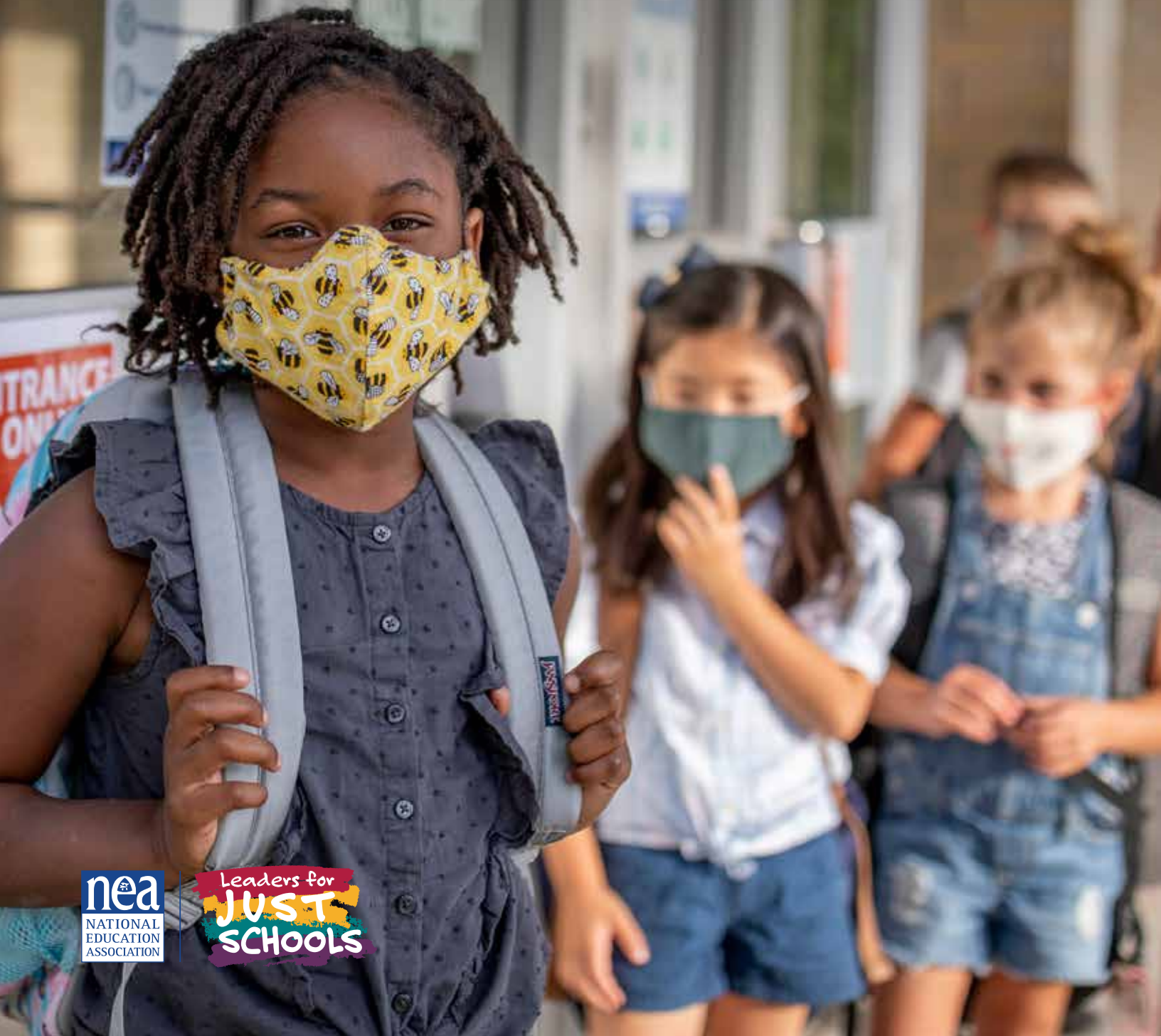


VOICES OF LEADERS FOR JUST SCHOOLS:
**EDUCATION JUSTICE THROUGH
AND BEYOND THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC**



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing more than 3 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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Introduction

NEA member leaders are advocating on behalf of students nationwide because every child—no matter who they are, what they look like, or where they are from—deserves a fully resourced public school that supports their growth, spurs their creativity, and fosters confidence and success.

More than a year ago, COVID-19 forced schools across the country to shut their doors and students and educators to abruptly shift to online learning. As our nation faced this global pandemic, a group of NEA members—who all participated in a leadership program built around racial, social, and economic justice—gathered to discuss how, in this unprecedented time, educators and policymakers could address inequities in education



and work to ensure a safe and just learning environment for every student across race and place. Born from these conversations was the first volume of *Voices of Leaders for Just Schools: Education Justice Through and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

A year later, we continue to address the ongoing challenges laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic while simultaneously working to embrace this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reconceptualize public education with equity and justice at the center of all we do. In February, NEA member

leaders reconvened to reflect on their experiences teaching through a global pandemic; to identify new challenges, barriers, and lessons learned; and to brainstorm equitable solutions to spur action in school communities across the country. Although, living through more than a year of the pandemic has taught educators that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for every family and school community, this group of NEA members isolated priority issues that we, as a country, must work together to address racial, social, and economic inequities; close achievement gaps; and transform education as we know it.

These conversations culminated in the second volume of *Voices of Leaders for Just Schools*.

POLITICIZING PUBLIC EDUCATION

As a country, we cannot allow political pressure to compromise what is most important: the success of all students. Those in leadership positions—many of whom do not have experience as educators—have created and implemented education policy that is often based on philosophy or what’s “the next big thing trending in education;” however, policy decisions must be informed by the expertise and experience of educators in classrooms and public schools across the country because they know firsthand what their students need.

In recent years, we have witnessed false equity narratives polluting our news cycles and media streams, repeatedly threatening the future of public schools. For example, the false narrative that school vouchers work, and families deserve choices, when, in fact, vouchers take funds from public schools and divert them to private schools; instead, we should be recommitting to the importance of strong public institutions.



Our educators discussed the impact of political interference in the educational spaces in which they teach and students learn—in person and virtual—and how it presents the opportunity for community division, much to the detriment of school communities across the country. As a result, student success becomes a secondary, rather than *the* primary, consideration when making critical decisions, like how to ensure safe in-person learning.

Together, we can create a vision of democracy that we share; one that centers on the unique needs and specific challenges that face each school community, an area in which educator feedback and action is invaluable to the process. Their rich experience and expertise must be sought, heard, and valued to create *real* reform and policy.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

For too long, schools have been deprived of resources by certain policymakers who failed to put the interests of students ahead of special interests. By **organizing our local affiliates and members around student-centered policies**—including understanding legislator outreach and communication—we can ensure educator voices are heard.

We must stand together across racial differences—educators, families, and community partners—and work as one unified voice in support of strong public



schools, **creating pro-public education policy goals and moving a collective agenda.** We must build community coalitions to encourage [school collaboration and partnership with community members and organizations](#) to strengthen the communities in which we live.

To ensure fair return on the work of our educators and safe and welcoming schools for our children, we must **prepare and train local affiliates and members to run for public office,** elevating every election.

We must **demand a voice in the local budgetary decision-making process.** By joining together across race and place, we can ensure every school has the engaging materials and up-to-date approaches, healthy meals, and emotional supports to prepare our students for future success. To begin this process, school administrators need to create a survey on funding and report the results, while being open and transparent about how much money is being spent, on what, and who is making those decisions.

To ensure every child—no matter what they look like or where they come from—has a safe and just school where they can thrive, we must **build strong and trusting relationships with the parents and families in our communities.** We need to reach out directly to [share facts backed by science, relevant health and safety information and updates, and helpful resources](#) so that entire school communities stay informed.

Educator stories that represent public education and public schools are so important. We need to [share our stories widely through social media platforms](#)—including Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook—to document the realities of a school day during the pandemic; to make intentional efforts to publicize facts; to highlight the inequities we see and demand we stand united for what is right; and to amplify the work educators are doing to meet the needs of students during the pandemic. **It is imperative that, when sharing our stories, we do not violate school board policies, state or federal law, or privacy laws or concerns.**

ONLINE INSTRUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly forced educators and students out of schools last year, and for many, there was little to no time to prepare for such a drastic and jarring transition. As the education system faced a paradigm shift to online instruction, much of the burden was placed on educators to not only adapt themselves but also acclimate their students to this new way of learning.

Our educators emphasized how challenging it was to adjust to this new environment and acknowledged the significant impact the shift had on them, their students, families, and entire school communities, exacerbating racial inequities and placing a disproportionate burden on communities of color throughout the country. School communities faced



technological and connectivity issues and a lack of infrastructure, including broadband and personal devices; and educators had to learn how to use new platforms while also adjusting their curriculum to fit the new environment in which they had to teach. However, even with appropriate access, our educators highlighted a host of technical issues that impede instruction and slow progress. These issues include difficulty connecting to or accessing live stream, audio, video, or software critical to a lesson or course, all of which result in the loss of opportunity to learn.

Even more than a year later, as many school communities have already returned to in-person instruction, school leaders and educators must anticipate the possible need for asynchronous learning days and a return to remote learning in case of viral outbreaks or other issues. During asynchronous learning, educators must rely on students—with the support of their family—to use their time effectively on independent work, which too easily can result in learning gaps.

DIGITAL INEQUITIES

For students to continue learning during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis, high-speed broadband internet and personal devices are critical to their success; however, many students have been left in the dark—particularly, Native students, students of color, and students who live in rural areas—underscoring the urgent need for a national effort to close the digital divide. Challenges related to technology also have been intertwined with concerns about communication with students and families.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

By joining together across race and ZIP code, we can ensure every school and every student has the resources they need. We must demand that policymakers **make affordable, high-speed broadband internet available for all in the United States**—akin to a public utility like electric or water—with intentional access to rural areas.

Our public schools keep our communities connected. We must work with policymakers and school leaders to **ensure our schools receive proper funding through programs like the E-rate expansion, which provides emergency connectivity and devices for schools and libraries.**

Each of us must do our part to create safe and just learning environments for all students—no matter what they look like or where they are from. As educators, we must **focus on core learning standards across grade levels and subject areas while also gathering information and feedback from our students to help guide planning.**



EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES LEARNING NEW PLATFORMS

All students, regardless of race or place, have the right to learn. As schools faced abrupt closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many district leaders quickly pivoted educators and families to online learning. In most cases, educators and families received little to no training before being forced to overhaul every aspect of their daily life, and some lacked the technology and proper home setup to make the transition.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

Every educator—no matter who they are, where they teach, or what they look like—deserves to work in an environment that provides the resources and tools necessary to support student success.

We must **work together to identify the unique needs of our students and educators** and demand that policymakers and district leaders provide funding for professional learning, training, guides, and resources to ensure everyone can succeed.

Online learning platforms are not one-size-fits-all. District leaders need to **assess the technological needs and familiarity of students, educators, and families in each school community** and customize a plan for those needs. They must include educators in the decision-making process to prioritize needs over cost and quality over quantity. When choosing learning platforms, schools must ensure the protection of student data privacy and educator rights to the materials they create and share.

Supporting our families across race and place is essential to student success. We must **build learning opportunities for families** to ensure they understand how to use learning platforms so that students can continue to learn and thrive.

REMEMBERING WE ARE ALL GUESTS IN ONE ANOTHER'S SPACES

The shift to online learning raised many questions and concerns about how student and educator privacy is changing with the digital environment. This quick transition pushed many schools that were unfamiliar with education technology and online learning to move to new platforms in haste, leaving educators and families unprepared.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

Every child—Black, Brown, and White, Native and Newcomer—deserves a safe and welcoming learning environment where they are free of judgment. We must **give one another grace—both students and educators—by making cameras optional and allowing for audio-only participation.**

To ensure safe, just, and healthy learning environments for every student, we must **establish norms that work for all**; this applies to both in-person and remote learning.

School is a place where childhood happens. School leaders must **put school policies in place that outline discipline best practices in online learning environments that keep restorative justice in the forefront** and work to address individual issues in ways that do not add harm to a



student's opportunity to learn and thrive. By using restorative discipline strategies, educators promote a student's desire to act more responsibly and respectfully.

Every child needs a school that cultivates critical thinking and encourages unbiased participation. To foster this engagement in an online environment, we must **use digital tools, such as polls and chats, which allow students to immediately connect and collaborate with their educators and peers**, creating a sense of community.

HIGH-STAKES TESTING

Since their inception—and long before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—high-stakes standardized testing often has functioned as an instrument of racism and a biased accountability system. Testing abuse—or the pressure to raise test scores at the expense of quality instruction—and the excessive weighting of test scores to measure school quality have demonstrated the detrimental effects of high-stakes assessments, with students of color, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from under-resourced communities suffering the brunt of the consequences. Instead



of protecting and supporting the students in greatest need, high-stakes testing policies punish students and limit their opportunities to reach their goals. For example, the pressure to improve test scores can be directly associated with the widespread use of zero-tolerance policies, causing these vulnerable populations to be pushed out of school and driven toward the juvenile and criminal justice system.

Now, more than a year into the pandemic, educators are raising concerns about not only the viability of the data associated with conducting statewide high-stakes standardized

testing and their damaging effects but also the logistics of delivery. By relying on assessments to target resources and supports to those communities in need, we oversimplify the barriers that may prevent our schools from reestablishing communities during and beyond the global health crisis and assume the participation of students who are most in need of individualized academic and nonacademic accommodations, services, and supports.

As we continue to grapple with COVID-19, we must focus our attention on ensuring the continuous availability of school-based food services to alleviate food insecurity; equitable distribution and integration of digital tools to begin to close the digital divide; and the time and space for our school communities to cope with and heal from the extreme stress and trauma brought on by the pandemic. Our attention must be on supporting student achievement, growth, and safety—all areas that are not informed by high-stakes standardized testing.

Our educators are sounding the alarm: Misplaced dependence on standardized test scores fails to measure what matters and exacerbates the segregating effects of high-stakes testing, which has already been used to classify and punish students, educators,

and schools across the country. Conducting statewide assessments runs counterintuitive to the priorities of supporting individual student achievement and targeting resources and supports across schools, districts, and states.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

We must **place the health and safety of our students and educators of every color, background, and ZIP code at the center of all decisions.** We know that schools will face a host of logistical challenges, like deciding how to test remote learners, allocating appropriate space to accommodate social distancing, and finding sufficient support to supervise testing when staffing is already an issue.

Our public schools are more than a place where kids take tests. They are what tie our communities together and shape our children's lives. We must **seek and participate in opportunities to develop alternatives to high-stakes standardized testing and eradicate stress bias and content bias often inherent to high-stakes assessments.** Our future priorities should include working at the school, district, and state levels to advocate for increased funding for the development of authentic assessment systems, conducting assessment audits, and discontinuing ineffective assessment practices, such as the overreliance on high-stakes standardized test scores.



STUDENT AND EDUCATOR BURNOUT AND TRAUMA

Pandemic learning and teaching have been emotionally and physically draining for students and educators. The effects of this global crisis have stretched educators thin and flooded school communities—particularly, students—with feelings of isolation, loneliness, stress, sadness, anxiety, and trauma. More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, educators across the country are experiencing immense challenges—not to mention, reasons for exhaustion—as they attempt to provide normal instruction for students in conditions that are anything but normal.

The challenges our educators have highlighted, however, were not exclusive to teaching and learning. They also talked about social, emotional, and mental health challenges; sudden financial stresses and food insecurity; psychological tolls that will affect generations; the surge in violence in homes and communities nationwide; and increased racial stigmas, discrimination, and injustices targeting People of Color. The trauma and adversity that school communities have faced has made it even more difficult for educators to effectively teach and students to effectively learn.



The pandemic has exacerbated the stress on educators—making many of them more likely to leave the profession or retire early—due to the demands and expectations of transitioning between in-person, remote, and hybrid instruction. Because we, as a country, were unable to predict this abrupt change, many schools lacked the resources to help educators adapt their classroom lessons for online and hybrid learning formats and prepare students for this new reality.

And even now, more than a year later, some districts still lack a clear plan for the future. There is nothing more disconcerting than the unknown, but uncertainty about the path forward is a reality for far too many school communities across the country.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

Every student across race and place deserves to learn from patient, authentic, and prepared educators. We must insist that school leaders **recognize the added expectations of our educators and provide support** to ensure they are not expected to juggle endless added responsibilities while also teaching in more than one format, sometimes, simultaneously.

When our educators are prepared for the demands of the classroom—virtual, hybrid, and in-person—our students thrive. We must demand district and school leaders **build professional learning experiences for future eLearning**

opportunities and ensure our educators have relevant and consistent support, including resources and supplies essential to the safe delivery of in-person instruction and appropriate technology for remote learning.

Creating safe, healthy, and just schools takes all of us—educators, families, and students— doing our part but first, we must **collectively acknowledge that we are**



not living in “normal” times, and we need to take that into consideration in regard to meetings, professional development expectations, and educator evaluation processes. We need to take care of one another and provide our students and educators with reliable structure in uncertain times. We need to **ensure social and emotional learning is at the forefront and integrated into teaching and learning every day.**

Every student deserves a quality education with well-prepared educators. To

accomplish this, we must **afford our students and educators the time and space to take care of themselves.**

Our schools and communities are stronger, safer, and healthier when we come together across race and ZIP code to [overcome shared challenges and develop collective solutions](#). Together, we must **push back against practices that do not support our students** and their mental health and well-being; for example, advocating for alternatives to testing to measure student progress.

Our public schools should inspire imagination, cultivate critical thinking, and prepare students to live fulfilling lives. In this time of crisis, we must **combat burnout for both students and educators by promoting [social and emotional learning time and support](#)**. We need our educators—who know their students best—to inform decisions that impact their school and district.

When we work together across race and place, our school communities thrive. We must **support one another through programs like a buddy or mentor system**, where student and educator pairs can have regular check-ins and can share encouraging words through email, text, or written notes. It is imperative that we come together as the world stands divided.

LOSS OF OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

COVID-19 caused an unprecedented nationwide interruption in education. Over the last year, schools across the country have run up against concerns that reopening school buildings would lead to further spread of the virus and put our students and educators at increased risk. At the same time, educators and families have voiced concern about the impact that online-only instruction has had on student achievement and well-being. They found that one of the most critical opportunity gaps for students and educators has been the uneven access to devices and high-speed broadband internet, which has made it virtually impossible for some of our most vulnerable students—particularly, Native students, students of color, and students in rural communities—to learn during the pandemic. But that’s not the only factor in play. The pandemic has impacted every aspect of daily life, introducing and exacerbating financial instability, food insecurity, and stress and trauma for educators, students, and their families.



As a country, we must come together to create a system that can withstand extended shutdowns like those imposed by the pandemic. By joining together, we will ensure our students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally now and beyond COVID-19. We know that essential next steps to achieve this goal include assessing individual student needs; supporting our most vulnerable student populations; expanding learning and planning for summer academics and enrichment; ensuring professional excellence for learning and growth; and making decisions with equity and excellence at the forefront.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

By coming together—school leaders, educators, students, and families—we are able to work toward common goals that benefit the success of our public schools in every ZIP code. We must ensure our educators have the time and opportunities to **collaborate with one another to discuss practices and strategies that are working well and to identify those that have caused students unnecessary harm**; district and school administrators must check-in regularly with our educators to determine what support and resources our educators and students need.

Together, we can advocate for the schools our students and educators deserve. We must **demand opportunities for increasing the time students spend engaged in guided learning with a qualified professional**. Such opportunities include extending the school day, extending the school year, restructuring the school day,

and providing other tutoring and enrichment opportunities with school district employees and retired or aspiring educators. To achieve this goal, school and district leaders must **prioritize increased staffing to make abundant use of small-group learning** to increase time on task, personalized instruction and feedback, and relationship-building during the regular school day and in extended learning settings. We must demand state-elected officials provide the necessary funding to ensure that schools are able to keep classes small.

Every student has the right to a high-quality public education. The pandemic introduced a host of challenges that impeded that right. This is why, as we recover from a nationwide disruption to in-person learning, we must **increase learning opportunities so that students can meet grade-level benchmarks**. We need to ensure our highest-need and most underserved students—including young children, English language learners, and students with special needs—receive a maximum amount of interactive, intensified one-on-one instruction, prioritizing additional tutoring and support, whether virtual or in person.



Our schools need educators who are well-prepared, supportive, and engaged inside and outside the classroom. We must demand our district and school leaders **provide the funding, time, and space for educators to pursue high-quality professional learning opportunities that prioritize student success, equity, and racial and social justice**. We must seek opportunities that establish the importance of family and community engagement and cultural competence in the shaping and evolution of the school environment, advocate for restorative best practices, and promote educator self-care, providing the necessary supports to foster it.

We need public schools that support every student and their individual needs. To best prepare our students for success, we must demand our school and district leaders **ensure our schools are adequately resourced and educators are trained and prepared to continue remote learning for students who are successful in that model**, using lessons we've learned in the last year to help with future students. We also need to **ensure the caregivers in our school communities are provided with training and resources on how to best support their child**.

ENSURING SAFE IN-PERSON LEARNING

All school communities—regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or ZIP code—deserve safe, just, and healthy places for students to learn and educators to teach. It is imperative that school leaders in every district prioritize the safety and well-being of the school community at large and weigh heavily the voices of our educators in the decision-making process.



Specific protections to keep COVID-19 under control include vaccines; detection procedures; appropriate accommodations for high-risk individuals; strong mitigation measures; distancing; cleaning and disinfection; quarantine, isolation, and notification procedures; educator and family involvement; monitoring and enforcement; and planning through a racial and social equity lens.

School leaders must ensure thorough protocols and strong mitigation measures are in place, which include the following:

- A requirement that everyone wear appropriate face coverings or respirators, and that the employer provide those face coverings and respirators.
- A requirement that students, staff, and visitors wash their hands for 20 seconds several times a day and, where doing so is not possible, are provided with hand sanitizer of at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Plexiglass protections installed, where necessary, to address droplet transmission.
- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems inspected and if necessary, modified to increase air flow, air filtration, and the circulation of clean air and other methods of addressing indoor air quality must be considered; areas that cannot be properly ventilated should not be occupied.
- Sufficient classroom supplies and consumables are provided so that each student has their own.

Educators from school communities across the country discussed challenges and concerns around their own health and safety as well as the health and safety of their students and families. Among those concerns were lack of clear guidance, up-to-date resources, education, and communication about mitigation strategies to help stop

the spread of COVID-19; shortage of supplies and funding to fully implement the mitigation strategies; and inequitable distribution of essential information about policies and procedures.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

Every student and educator—whether Black, Brown, or White, Native or Newcomer—deserves a school that prioritizes their health, safety, and well-being. We must all work together—across schools and districts—to demand policymakers **fully fund the mitigation and safety measures for every school, which vary greatly depending on need, to ensure all students and educators in every ZIP code have a safe, healthy, and just environment in which they can teach and learn.**

Every child, regardless of race or place, has the right to live in a safe and just community with schools that support the whole child. We need our state and local policymakers and school leaders to **implement clear, structured, well-written, and transparent guidance to ensure all students have the resources they need to thrive**, including mental health services, meals, and technology. Our district and school leaders must produce plans on how to continue learning for those students required to quarantine, ranging from access to devices and asynchronous learning materials to family engagement liaisons. These plans must include input from educators and parents.

To achieve safe and healthy learning environments, everyone—students, educators, school leaders, families, and communities—must work together, because without public schools, millions of children cannot learn, let alone thrive. We must **continue to educate students, families, community members, and ourselves on how to model and enforce the mitigation strategies**, following CDC guidelines. We must ensure school pandemic response teams that include at least one educator and school nurse from each school are in place to share information and communicate with staff.

The strength of our communities is grounded in our ability to work together. We must **partner with our fellow educators, families, and community members and organizations to employ and enforce the prevention measures that reduce the spread of COVID-19** and demand—as one voice—that our state-elected officials provide the funding and resources necessary to do so. With the passing of the American Rescue Plan Act, nearly \$170 billion has been dedicated to public education funding. This money can be used to purchase technology for students to aid in their digital learning interactions; reduce class sizes and modify spaces to comply with social distancing; modernize HVAC systems; hire more school custodians, nurses, and counselors; and facilitate social distancing on transportation services with additional buses and drivers.

Every student and educator—regardless of ZIP code—deserves a school that protects their health and safety and provides essential support during and beyond the health crisis. We must demand district and school leaders **prioritize regular meetings with local associations to discuss ongoing COVID-19-related needs and concerns** and include educators and association leaders on state and local response teams to facilitate timely and accurate information-sharing. We must join together to advocate for COVID-19 leave that allows students, educators, and staff with symptoms the appropriate time to quarantine, based on CDC guidelines. This is essential to the safety of the entire school community. The American Rescue Plan Act has established an emergency fund for federal employees to take up to 15 weeks of emergency leave for COVID-19-related issues, including, but not limited to, the inability to work due to federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation orders; required self-quarantine; experiencing symptoms and seeking medical diagnosis; and caring for a family member incapable of self-care or a child whose school has been closed.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Educators have long known that establishing connections between home and school has far-reaching benefits for both students and school communities at large. Family engagement has become even more critical over the past year; educators have had and continue to rely heavily on family contributions of time and support with so many students learning virtually for at least some portion of the school week. This comes at a time when the pandemic has caused massive disruptions to everyday life, redefining the role of a parent and caregiver to include teacher, tutor, IT specialist, counselor, and daycare.



Nationwide, many families are overwhelmed, having experienced loss and trauma. They are struggling to juggle more than their fair share while also trying to meet their basic needs. Like educators, families had little to no time to prepare for school buildings to shut down. In a matter of days, the systems that supported each school community—through meal plans, child care, and education—had closed their doors, leaving vulnerable families even more vulnerable.

The pandemic impacted every school community and every family in the country, and educators were faced with another set of challenges: how to ensure students and families have everything they need to learn, grow, and thrive; how to reach families with limited or no technology; how to communicate updates that everyone in the school community can access and understand; and how to facilitate family-school partnerships to stay socially connected while remaining physically distant.

Get Involved and Get Organized.

Every child deserves uninterrupted support for their family. We must advocate for student success and demand our district and school leaders **develop and disseminate standard operating procedures for successful and effective online and hybrid learning for both families and school staff.** This should include providing the essential technology and support to families in anticipation of future school closures due to weather-related and public health crises.

When educators and families work together across race and place, they provide students with unified and consistent support. We must **develop trusting relationships with the families in our school communities,**



relationships in which parents, family members, and caregivers feel comfortable openly sharing feedback and concerns and educators have the space and opportunity to respectfully respond.

Effective communication builds understanding and trust. During and beyond the pandemic, we must work together—district and school leaders, educators, and staff—to **keep families aware of what is happening within schools and in the district**. To reach every member of our community, we must utilize multiple modes of communication, including, but not

limited to, Zoom meetings, phone calls, mailers, newsletters, text messages, and partnerships with community organizations.

CLOSING

The National Education Association works to ensure our member voices are heard while educating through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Created from conversations between our member leaders from the Leaders for Just Schools (LJS) program, Volume 2 of *Voices of Leaders for Just Schools* highlights the experience and expertise of these member leaders who understand equitable and just practices in schools and what we, as a country, need to do to promote them.

More than a year has passed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and educators have faced challenges and barriers that felt unsurmountable. However, the last year has taught many of us that we are resilient and that we are stronger when we come together across race and place to take collective action.

Leaders for Just Schools program participants are members of affiliates throughout the country; more than 200 LJS member leaders are spearheading this important equity work nationwide.

If you are interested in getting involved, reach out to the NEA by emailing essainfo@nea.org to connect with an LJS member leader in your state who can contribute to these critical equity conversations and planning through and beyond the pandemic.

RESOURCES

[Bargaining for the Common Good: Sample Demands for Safe In-Person Learning](#)

Use these criteria to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and families in your community.

[Leaders for Just Schools](#)

Find out more about Leaders for Just Schools, a three-year program that gives participants the historical, legal, and educational tools to transform policy and practice at the local, state, and national levels.

[Learning Beyond COVID-19: A Vision for Thriving in Public Education](#)

Read about the necessary elements—as defined by the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association—to effectively understand and address the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted students’ academic and developmental experiences and a vision for the path forward.

[NEA Issue Guidance: Assignments and Staffing During COVID-19](#)

Check out suggestions for ongoing labor-management conversations related to changes in assignments and staffing.

[Safe and Just Schools in 2021 and Beyond](#)

Explore helpful resources and guidance on how to rebuild schools with an emphasis on equity, return to the classroom safely, protect the most vulnerable students, and help fellow educators navigate the rights and responsibilities amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

[Support for Families](#)

Check out these NEA-endorsed activities and resources that will keep students engaged and will reinforce learning at home.

[Teaching Children from Poverty and Trauma](#)

Learn about the impact of poverty on teaching and learning and strategies for overcoming its impact on the brain and learning.

[Take Action Today](#)

Sign up to learn more about the fight for students, educators, and public schools and the coalition of parents and community members who are on a mission to increase opportunities for students in their neighborhood.

[Voices of Leaders for Just Schools: Education Justice Through and Beyond the Pandemic, Volume 1](#)

Check out the first volume of *Voices of Leaders for Just Schools*, which highlights insight from NEA member leaders at the onset of the pandemic and discusses a path forward for learning and education justice through and beyond COVID-19.

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