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May 2024

# nea Today



## IS RELIEF IN SIGHT?

**6 HOURS IS TOO LONG TO WAIT FOR A BATHROOM BREAK. YOUR UNION CAN HELP.**

SEE PAGE 42

Virginia teacher Liz Boddy can't wait any longer for better bathroom access.

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PAGE 47

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ESP of the Year  
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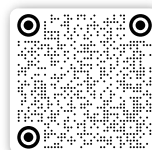
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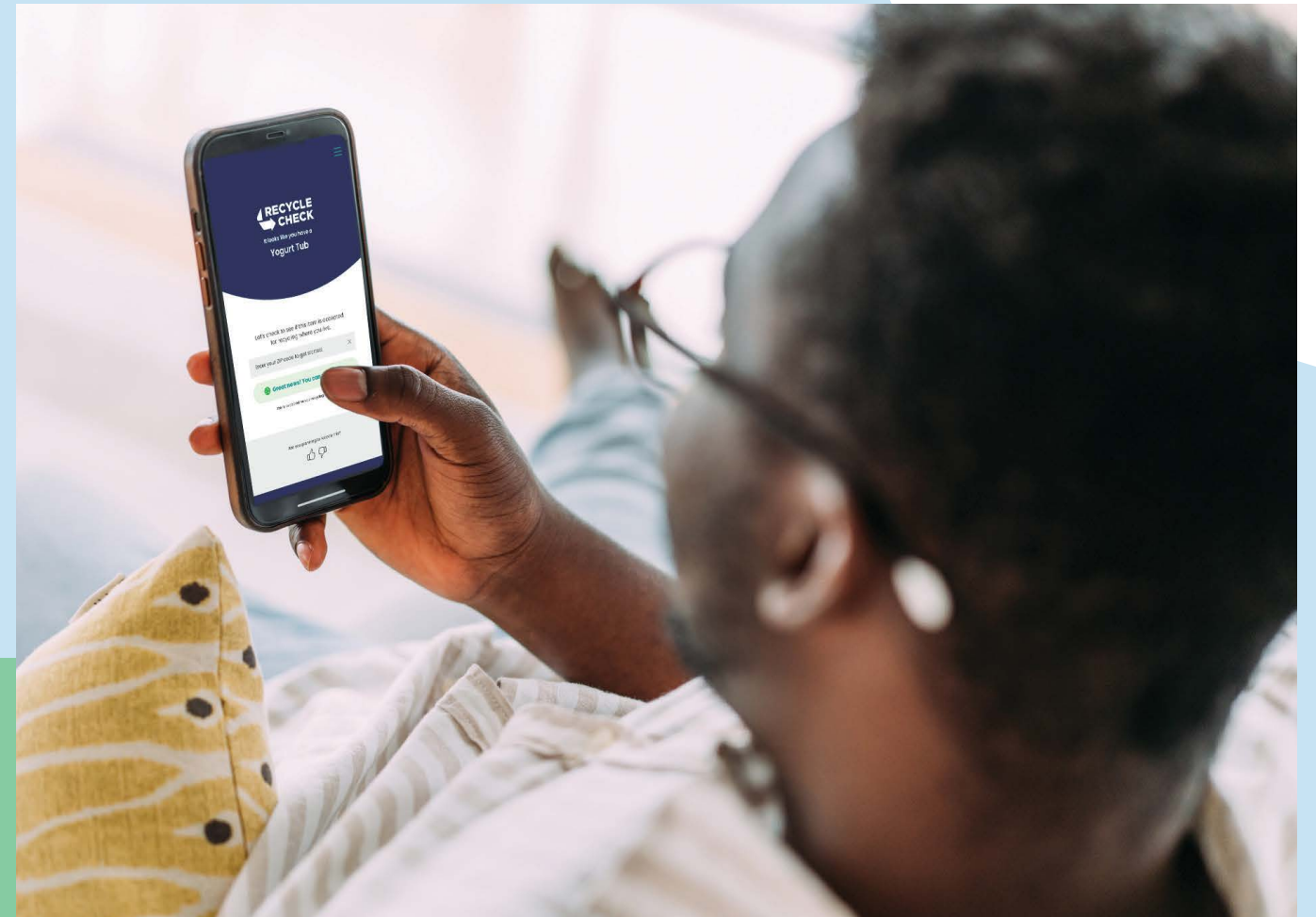
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COVER: JATI LINDSEY. ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JATI LINDSEY; TED WATHEN-QUADRANT; JATI LINDSEY; CHRIS PAIGE



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We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

**DEMOCRACY.**  
We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

**PROFESSIONALISM.**  
We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due to all professionals.

**PARTNERSHIP.**  
We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.

**COLLECTIVE ACTION.**  
We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

**NEA TODAY** (ISSN 0734-7219) is published four times a year by the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-3290. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *NEA Today*, Attn: NEA Membership Management Services Address Change, Suite 510, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-3290. Copyright 2023 by the National Education Association of the United States. All rights reserved.

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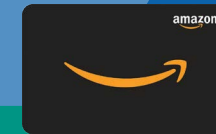
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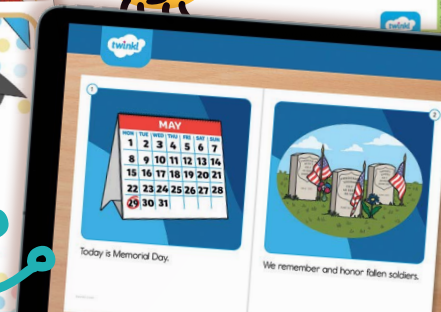
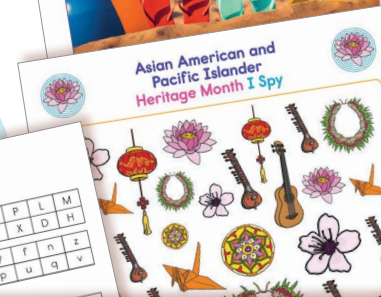
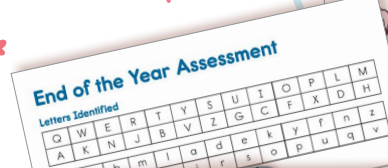
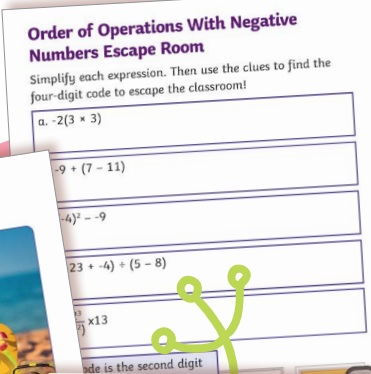
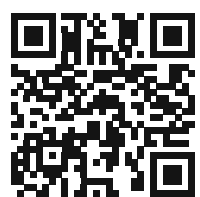
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## EDITOR'S *note*

Editor-in-Chief **Giovanna Bechard**

### My Union Bathroom Pass



Bechard, in 2009

When I was pregnant with my first child, who is now a freshman in high school, I had to get a doctor's note to have regular bathroom breaks at work. I was a TV news reporter and taking a "bio break" wasn't always possible. There are no restrooms on the side of a road when you're covering a snowstorm or a house fire.

To avoid bathroom emergencies, I stopped drinking water. Then, six months into my pregnancy, I ended up in the hospital with severe dehydration. I was literally making myself sick and putting my baby in danger.

The absurdity of it all forced me into action. I went to my union leaders and explained that something needed to be done. The solution for me? Prove that for medical reasons I always needed access to a bathroom. This meant my boss couldn't schedule me on assignments that were too remote or where I didn't have a vehicle to drive to a restroom. The problem was solved thanks to help from my union.

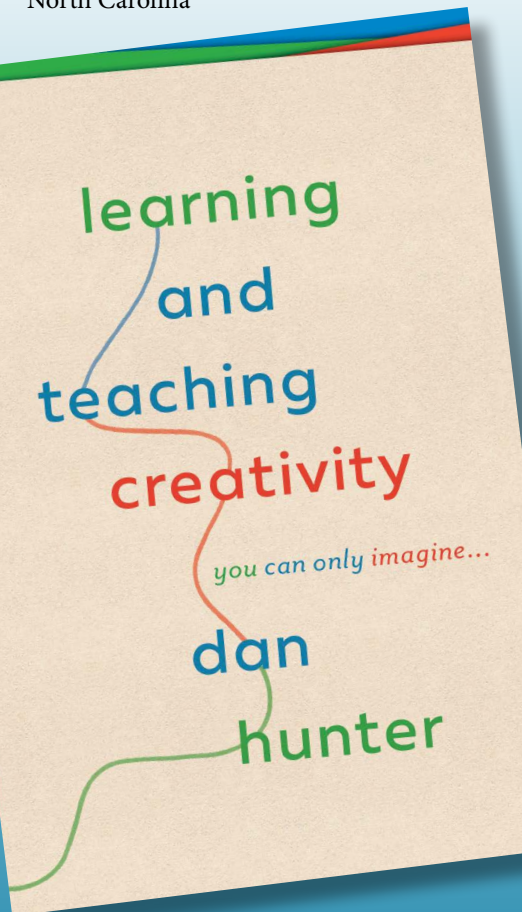
My name is Giovanna Bechard, and I am the new editor-in-chief of *NEA Today*. I know, this story is a heck of an introduction to who I am, but my story is a reality for so many of our members. That's why we made "Give Me a Bathroom Break" (Page 42), by Mary Ellen Flannery, this month's cover story.

As educators, I'm sure many of you experience this reality every day. This article shows the severe, long-term health consequences of a lack of bathroom breaks, and how educator unions can create solutions for their members. I urge you all to read the story and share it with your local union leaders so they can start advocating for bladder health for you and your colleagues. We've even shared sample contract language to help you in the negotiation process. Your collective voice has the power to change things in your workplace!

Just like I had a union to help me 14 years ago, you have NEA and your state and local affiliates to help you negotiate for bathroom breaks, higher salaries, your professional development, and more. We're in this together! We kind of have to be now, I just told you about my personal potty problems.

*"my students are thriving because of this book.... worth every minute spent in its pages."*

Les Schofield, Microlit Almanac, teacher, writer & artist, North Carolina



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PUBLISHER AND SENIOR DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS  
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Brenda Álvarez  
Mary Ellen Flannery  
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COPY EDITOR  
Judy Rowe

PROGRAM AND PRODUCTION SPECIALIST  
Tammy Funderburk

NEA.ORG/NEATODAY  
Tim Walker

SR. CONTENT STRATEGIST, NEA.ORG  
Michelle Chovan

DESIGN AND ART DIRECTION  
Groff Creative LLC

ADVERTISING SALES  
Carson Helsper  
chelsper@neamb.com  
301-527-2195

CONTRIBUTORS  
Cinda Ackerman Klickna  
Aniya Greene-Santos  
Jacqui Murray  
Madelaine Vikse

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK:

MAIL: NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036

EMAIL: [neatoday@nea.org](mailto:neatoday@nea.org) PHONE: 202-822-7207 FAX: 202-822-7206 FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/neatoday](https://www.facebook.com/neatoday)

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# Joy, Justice, and Excellence

## In the News

"Books that once lined the shelves of the library in a Jacksonville, Florida, elementary school are now stored in boxes. The school librarian spends her days vetting titles to comply with new censorship laws passed by the state. ... When access to these titles is lost, our students lose the opportunity to build empathy toward others who might not look, or live, like them. Every student deserves to see themselves in the books they read. It is how they learn that their stories and their lives matter."

—Becky, with co-authors Caroline Tung Richmond and Ellen Oh, in their *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* op-ed, Nov. 30

## Who I've Been Talking With

A few months ago, I connected with Maryland music teacher Keith Kelsey as part of my "Honesty in Education" Instagram Live series. Keith is one of the few people who knows I played violin as a child—and made the all-city orchestra in Philadelphia! However, the main topic of our conversation was not the enormous value of music education, but rather how community schools improve educator retention and student outcomes. "We're the ones who know what our neighborhoods need and what our children need," Keith told me. I know that's right! Learn more about community schools and NEA's efforts to expand their numbers at [nea.org/communityschools](https://nea.org/communityschools).



Stay connected with me through X @BeckyPringle.



Dear NEA members, I am honored to serve as your president.

United, we will reclaim public education as a common good and transform it into a racially and socially just system that actually prepares every student—not one, not some, but every single student—to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world. Onward!

*Becky Pringle*

Becky Pringle  
NEA President



“

"We must—and we will—continue to unabashedly promote public education as the foundation of this or any democracy, and to defiantly protect public education from privatizers and voucherizers and eduvultures. We also must strengthen public education so it is a system designed around the joy of teaching and learning."

—Becky, at the Congressional Labor Caucus, January 30

## Face to Face With NEA Members


"What's your why?" That's the question I asked Adriana, Alissa, K'Sean, and other members of The Student South Carolina Education Association (The Student SCEA) this winter when I traveled to Columbia, S.C., with first lady Jill Biden. Why a career in public education? Their answers inspired me, and I advised them to keep them always in mind. When we hear about yet another book ban or voucher scheme, those reasons will fuel our fire. When we see teachers attacked for teaching the truth about our nation, those reasons will keep us strong. As NEA members, our collective "whys" tie us together and empower our union. They provide hope that we will make public education what it should be for every student. Ask yourself, "What's your why?" And let your answer guide you in making our world a better place.



(Top, from left) I want to thank these leaders of The Student SCEA, Adriana Perez, Alissa Pressley, and K'Sean Dotch, for their welcome and insight. (Bottom) Everyone in this photo—including Jill Biden!—believes public education is the foundation of an inclusive democracy, and will support Joe Biden and candidates like him who stand up for educators.

## JOIN ME

### 3 Things To Do For Yourself and Your Union

- 1. Raise Your Voice!** Concerned about book bans? About attacks on public education? Attend a Public Schools Strong Training—and join educators and parents around the U.S. in learning how to show support for well-resourced and inclusive public education. Scan this code for more info. 
- 2. Appreciate and be appreciated.** Teacher Appreciation Week is May 6–10. To participate in NEA-led activities, visit [nea.org/TAW](https://nea.org/TAW).
- 3. Find Junie Kim.** Celebrate May's Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month with books that open windows into AAPI culture and mirror AAPI people. For example, try the book *Finding Junie Kim* by one of my favorite authors (and writing partner!) Ellen Oh. For additional recommendations, visit [nea.org/readacross](https://nea.org/readacross).

Find out how NEA is working every day for educators, students, and public schools in "NEA in Action" (Page 10).



## NEA Helps Striking Educators Win!

Thousands of Portland, Ore., educators went on strike for three weeks in November to fight for better working conditions. NEA President Becky Pringle rallied alongside educators, parents, and community members. NEA also provided strategic counsel and game-changing organizing support on the ground. The result? Victory!

- A 13.75 percent cost-of-living raise.
- Mental health support for students.
- 410 minutes of guaranteed planning time each week for elementary and middle school educators.
- A \$10 million investment to address extreme temperatures in schools.
- More pay for educators with large class sizes.

For more NEA wins, go to [nea.org/Wins](https://nea.org/Wins).

## NEA Delivers on Student Loan Relief



In response to relentless advocacy by NEA members, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have taken major steps to provide student loan relief.

Their latest effort? In early spring, the administration canceled student loans for almost 153,000 additional borrowers enrolled in the Saving on a Valuable Education Plan (SAVE), adding to a combined total of at least \$138 billion in student debt cancellation for almost 3.9 million borrowers since the administration took office.

To sign up for SAVE and check if you're eligible for early loan forgiveness, visit [studentaid.gov/SAVE](https://studentaid.gov/SAVE).

## NEA Supports Your Mental Health

During Mental Health Month and every month, take time to learn how to protect your well-being.

NEA has resources to help you get started at [nea.org/MentalHealth](https://nea.org/MentalHealth).



## NEA Bolsters State's Voucher Lawsuit

NEA provided legal guidance and strategic communications support to The South Carolina

Education Association in filing a voucher lawsuit. The suit asks the state's Supreme Court to strike down a voucher program that siphons millions of dollars in state tax revenue to pay for private school tuition.

Parents and the NAACP South Carolina State Conference have also joined in filing the lawsuit.

Learn how voucher programs hurt students and educators at [nea.org/Vouchers](https://nea.org/Vouchers).

**Correction:** In "NEA in Action, in the January 2024 issue, we incorrectly stated that NEA is taking six states to court over censorship laws. The correct number of states is five.



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**NEW BOOK:**  
**PARENTS ARE MOBILIZING AGAINST EXTREMISM**

Attacks against public schools are nothing new, but today the very idea of public education is being threatened. How did we get here? In her new book, *School Moms: Parent Activism, Partisan Politics, and the Battle for Public Education*, education journalist Laura Pappano explores the rampant disinformation that's fueling the so-called "culture wars." A line has been crossed, she told *NEA Today*, and we are no longer debating real education ideas and policies.

**What compelled you to write this book?**

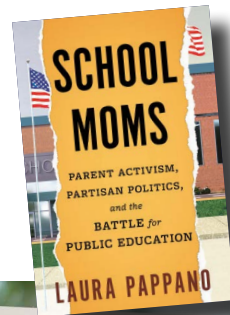
**Laura Pappano:** As a reporter, I saw things happening that involved schools but were not really about education. There's a lot of misinformation about inclusion, what kids are being taught, and what books they should read. We're in a moment right now where these sorts of attacks have gained too much traction.

I'm concerned about a lot of things in our schools, but I am not concerned at all with this nonsense that students are being indoctrinated by critical race theory; that libraries are collecting pornography; or that we are changing the gender of children. Those are untruths that are distracting from the work of figuring out how do we educate everyone who walks in the door.

**Why were these attacks so successful, at least initially?**

**LP:** The far right is nationalizing our local experiences and our local conversations around schools. I covered a school board election in Idaho last November. One of the main issues in that race was transgenderism. I was hearing people claim that their candidate was going to keep boys out of girls' bathrooms.

That was not the problem with schools in that community. This district was entering its second year without a K-6 English language arts curriculum. They have huge budget shortfalls. There were mice running over children's feet in the classroom, because they didn't have money to hire a cleaning service for the school. But that's not what they were talking about in this election.



I do think many people were slow to recognize what was happening. So the far right got a bit of a head start. But we're seeing much more grassroots action—especially from parents' groups that are on the ground pushing back.

**In the book, you talk to pro-public education parent-activists. Has it been difficult for them to get colleagues and friends to take action?**

**LP:** Well, the support has long been there, but we didn't necessarily feel we needed to act on it. We tend to take our schools for granted.

We are learning that we need to be involved. We need to pay attention to the school board races. We may even need to run.

New parent groups, like Red, Wine, and Blue, are doing a tremendous, labor-intensive public service.

Moms have done this for years with little recognition. This is one of the reasons I call the book *School Moms*, because they are the people on the ground.

They may have jobs and other responsibilities, but they are also very involved in public schools and are experts at networking and organizing and motivating.

They're doing what is necessary to protect the public schools. Parents and educators can be a powerful force when working together.

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK IMAGES

**SCHOOL BUS DRIVER SHORTAGE PERSISTS**



Like many school staff positions, school bus driver employment remains far below pre-pandemic levels. In September 2023, there were approximately 192,400 bus drivers working in K-12 schools, down 15.1 percent from September 2019, according to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).

School bus drivers remain a vital part of the education system. Roughly half of school children rely on bus services to get to school. Interrupted services and instability can disrupt learning time and contribute to absenteeism.

EPI reports that further wage increases are necessary in order to recruit new drivers.

In 2021, 7.8 percent of school bus drivers had incomes below the poverty line. That's greater than the 5.6 percent of private-sector workers and the 3.4 percent of public-sector workers who live in poverty.

Students who vape tend to earn lower grades over time.

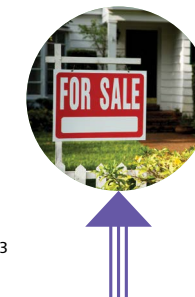
"We need to train and prepare our educators to be trauma-informed, but we also have to look at workload, lack of planning time, and lack of respect. We need to look at all the root causes why our profession is asking educators to go beyond their limits."

—Donna Christy, president, Prince George's County Educators' Association, Maryland

12%

The percentage of homes for sale that the average teacher can afford within commuting distance of school. The average teacher can afford only one-quarter of available rentals.

SOURCE: REDFIN, 2023





## LAW HELPS BREASTFEEDING WORKERS

Congress approved new regulations for pumping breast milk in the workplace in December 2022. The Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act, or the PUMP Act, extends the rights of nursing mothers—including those who are educators—to have time and a private space to pump breast milk at work.

While the legislation passed more than a year ago, implementation is ongoing, and conditions are expected to improve for breastfeeding workers.

The measure closed loopholes in the Fair Labor Standards Act that excluded nearly 9 million women. That included more than 1 million Black women, 976,000 Hispanic women, 825,000 Asian women, 6 million White women, and 185,000 women of other races.

The PUMP Act also allows working women to take legal action and seek monetary remedies if their employer fails to comply. A lack of breastfeeding protections has led to economic harm, sexual harassment, and job insecurity.



**LEARN MORE** To learn more about protections under the PUMP Act, visit [nea.org/Pump-Act](https://nea.org/Pump-Act).

## Trust in School Librarians Remains High

Across the country, book-banning campaigns attempt to sow mistrust in the dedicated librarians who work in public schools and libraries. But librarians are trusted by families of various backgrounds and income levels and are valued in society.

A new survey, conducted by Book Riot and the EveryLibrary Institute, found that parents and guardians also believe libraries foster safe, engaging environments that support learning and creativity.

“Pro-censorship groups do not represent the vast majority of parents or guardians in their beliefs about librarians, reading, education, and civil society,” the report concludes.



**92%** of parents and guardians trust children’s librarians to select appropriate books and materials for the library.

**92%** trust librarians to recommend age- and content-appropriate books and materials to them and their children.

**90%** say they feel comfortable allowing their children to select their own materials (books, magazines, movies, audiobooks, games, etc.) from the library.

**96%** say they feel their children are safe in the library.

## RURAL SCHOOLS: BY THE NUMBERS



**7.3 million public school students** are enrolled in rural school districts. That’s more than 1 in 7 students across the United States.

**More U.S. students** attend rural schools than attend the nation’s 100 largest school districts combined.

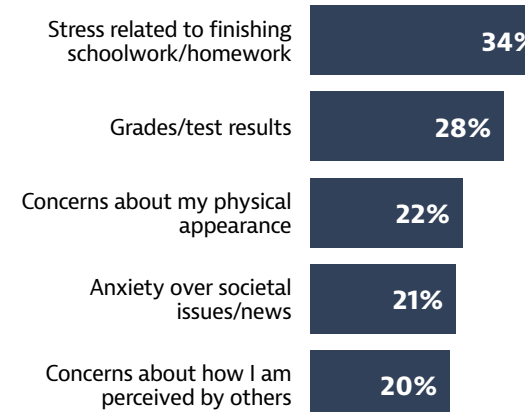
**In 13 states, at least half of public schools are rural.** In 14 other states, at least one-third of all schools are rural.

**Nearly 1 in 7 rural students** experience poverty; 1 in 15 lack health insurance; and 1 in 10 have changed residence in the previous 12 months.

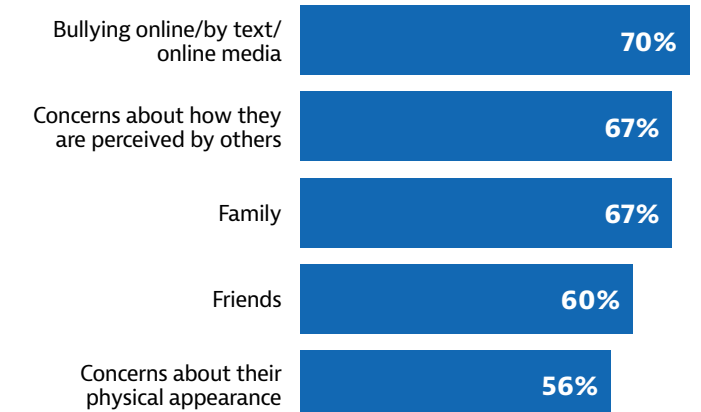
SOURCE: *WHY RURAL MATTERS 2023*, NATIONAL RURAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

## What Factors Have the Most Impact on Students’ Mental Health?

### ACCORDING TO STUDENTS



### ACCORDING TO EDUCATORS



SOURCE: EDWEEK RESEARCH CENTER SURVEY, 2023

## WHAT REDUCES INCOME INEQUALITY? UNIONS!

By Amanda Litvinov

**L**aurel Smith-Doerr, a professor and organizational sociologist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, studied the pay gap at her own university with mostly satisfying results: Female professors at the top of the pay scale make as much or even more than men in similar positions—which is not usually the case in higher education.

“That’s because the faculty union, the Massachusetts Society of Professors (MSP), spent decades working with the university administration at the bargaining table to support equal pay for women and policies that help them stay in their jobs—like paid leave and subsidized child care,” Smith-Doerr explains.

About 25 years ago, MSP successfully bargained for equity pay raises, which benefited professors of color as well as the women teaching there, who were often paid less than their White, male colleagues. Those negotiations left a legacy of fairer salaries for all who came after.

### Unions are key to higher wages

Now, a first-of-its-kind report by the U.S. Department of the Treasury confirms that unions help reduce income inequality and help both union and non-union workers earn higher wages.



Prompted by the Biden administration, the Treasury Department set out to answer two key questions: Do policies that strengthen unions actually help the middle class? And do unions help the economy as a whole?

The answer to both questions is yes. The Treasury report confirms that unions help solve problems that plague the middle class, such as stagnant wages and reduced generational mobility. When the middle class has well-paying, stable jobs, the economy is less fragile.

The researchers also state that non-union workers benefit from union bargaining wins. Non-union employers often increase wages to keep employees from leaving for union jobs.

**Laurel Smith-Doerr**

### All workers deserve a voice

President Joe Biden has called on Congress to pass the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, which would ensure that all public employees—including educators—can come together through their unions to negotiate salaries, benefits, and working conditions.

NEA affiliates are working to elect leaders who support unions and to repeal state laws that take away workers’ rights. ✊

**TAKE ACTION**

Find out how unions lift educator voices at [nea.org/collectivebargaining](https://nea.org/collectivebargaining).

PHOTO: ISABELLA DELLOLIO



**TEAR IT & SHARE IT**

Post this in your break room and ask a colleague to join NEA. Scan to join!



**Unions raise the wages of their members by 10–15 percent.**

Union wins have a “spillover effect,” resulting in higher wages for non-union workers.



Unions reduce race- and gender-based wage gaps.



By reducing income inequality, unions contribute to overall economic growth and resilience.



Unions are enjoying their highest public approval rating in more than 50 years.



**A study of 4,000 workers**

found that **52%** of non-union workers want to be in a union.



But only **6%** of private sector workers are union members. That gap shows the need for policies that better protect workers’ right to unionize.



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ILLUSTRATION: SHUTTERSTOCK; SOURCE: “LABOR UNIONS AND THE MIDDLE CLASS,” U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, 2023



## MEET THE 2024 ESP OF THE YEAR!

'IMPROVING THE LIVES OF MY FELLOW ESPs IS MY WHY,' SAYS AWARDEE JEN BRAMSON.

By Cindy Long

When Jen Bramson hands out cinnamon sticks to her young students, it's not time for hot cocoa or warm apple cider. They use the sticks to learn how to hold a pencil and make marks and strokes on paper, and to practice naming and writing letters.

"I try to camouflage learning by making lessons active, engaging, and fun," says Bramson, who teaches preschool in Park City, Utah.

Known for the Sundance Film Festival and expensive ski resorts, Park City is an enclave of the superwealthy. It's also home to the working people who keep the international tourist destination running.

"My class is made up of children who haven't had the same opportunities, and they enter preschool on an uneven playing field," Bramson says. "I scaffold lessons to the individual child's needs."

Some of the most important lessons Bramson imparts to her preschoolers are about communication, listening, and problem-solving. Bramson models those same skills, making her an exceptional educator, union activist, and leader. Her accomplishments have earned her the title of 2024 NEA Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year.

"NEA and its 3 million members are proud to recognize Jen's dedication to her students, her school, and her union," said NEA President Becky Pringle when she announced the award, in March. "Jen represents the essence of ESPs and the critical role they play in our school communities, including in our rural areas. In her work with our youngest learners, she inspires joy in learning, meeting their curiosity, and ensuring they are prepared for elementary school. Jen sees the potential in every child."

### Finding solutions for learning challenges

Bramson has worked for the Park City School District since 2013 and also teaches at McPolin Elementary School. The Title 1 school has a diverse student population, a dual-language program in Spanish and English, and strong community involvement.

Bramson, who struggled with ADHD and dyslexia as a student, knew from an early age that she wanted to help students recognize their strengths and learn how to learn.

She helps English language learners reach required benchmarks, works with the district's special education

"We are making change every day," says NEA ESP of the Year Jen Bramson (at left, with union colleagues, and below, accepting the award). "We are demanding what we need for our students."

department to provide interventions, and collects data to get individualized education plans for students before they begin kindergarten. She has also taken behavior technician training.

Last year, a student joined her class after being kicked out of a previous day care. The young girl had boundless energy during quiet time and almost no impulse control.



Bramson worked with a special education teacher to develop a plan.

During whole group, the girl would jump on the trampoline. Other times, she would sit in the quiet area so she could reset before the next activity. She was given a wobbly stool and also the choice to stand if she wanted, and they played games like Operation and Jenga to practice self-control.

This creative problem-solving is a hallmark of Bramson's work, says fellow preschool educator Laura Holbrook-Jorgensen.

"Jen's talents really shine when she encounters a student with learning, social-emotional, health issues, or difficulties at home," shares Holbrook-Jorgensen.

"She approaches these challenges with fresh thinking and is always open to trying something new for the benefit of her students."

### Speaking out for school staff

Bramson's innovative thinking is helping her get more resources for the rural schools in her district, including her own elementary school.

As a board member of the Utah School Employees Association, representing ESPs across the state, she is developing a pilot program to bring seven rural district associations together to form a coalition.

"We understand that rural districts have different needs and, using surveys, we are finding out what those needs are to customize support," she says.

In her board role, Bramson will also embark on a listening tour to interview paraeducators across the state.

"I am the paraeducator representative, ... and I hear from other paras that they are in crisis and leaving the profession in record numbers," she says. "Paras are asking for training to keep themselves and their students physically and mentally safe. They need help negotiating for fair pay and professional respect."

She hopes to create a statewide communication channel with these para groups, so they can discuss what trainings they need, get help with negotiations, and share information. She also plans to organize group trips to the state capital, where ESPs can share their stories with legislators and ask for their support.

Bramson has spent many "Educator Days" on Salt Lake City's Capitol Hill, raising awareness about ESP needs and contributions, and challenging lawmakers to "actually read the bills."

In Utah, ESPs are still referred to as "classified employees." Bramson has

been looking for a lawmaker who will sponsor legislation to officially change this job title to education support professionals.

"I want people to understand that we are skilled professionals dedicated to our craft," she says.

Among her fans is Gina Cox, a Park City school bus driver and president of the Park City Classified Employees Association.

"A respectful disagreement with Jen often turns into a productive work session," Cox says. "She is resolute in her beliefs but humble enough to see others' point of view. She can introduce uncomfortable subject matter in a way that is palatable and encourages the people around her to embrace the opportunity to make necessary changes."

Bramson served with Cox on the negotiating team representing ESPs in her district. They conducted a job study in collaboration with the district and discovered that district wages weren't competitive, leaving schools critically short-staffed.

The team was able to negotiate a significant raise for ESPs, bringing the lowest paid position to \$20 dollars per hour and raising all steps by \$8 an hour. They also negotiated the same 16 percent raise that the teachers received.

"This has been a life-changing raise for the ESPs in my district," Bramson explains. "We have heard that members have been able to quit second jobs and have postponed retirement to earn higher Social Security. One woman was able to save her house, and many more have said that they feel valued."

Bramson says, "Improving the lives of my fellow ESPs is my why." 🌟

LEARN  
MORE

Read about the ESP of the Year Award, 2024 nominees, and previous winners at [nea.org/espy](https://nea.org/espy).



Theresa Ziebarth-Moritz's Indigenous lessons includes bead work and poetry.

## INDIGENOUS HISTORY GETS A BOOST

The Ojibwe, Dakota, and other Indigenous tribal nations have called Minnesota home for thousands of years, and residents have experienced their presence and impact for centuries.

Still, many students have minimal or inaccurate knowledge of Native history.

"Indigenous people are still here," says Tanis Henderson, a White Earth Nation descendant and counselor at Minnesota's Grand Rapids High School. "Educators are ready and willing to learn more about Indigenous communities," she adds.

To close students' knowledge gap, a state law passed in 2023 requires K-12 educators to receive training about Native American history and culture in order to renew their teaching licenses.

Until now, the history and culture of Native students has not

"Educators are ready and willing to learn more about Indigenous communities."

—Tanis Henderson, counselor, Minnesota

### HONOR NATIVE PEOPLE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

One way to recognize Indigenous people is through a Native land acknowledgment, a formal statement that recognizes the relationship that exists between Indigenous people and their traditional territories. They often start like this:

"We begin by acknowledging that we gather today on the ancestral lands of [name of local tribe or tribes] who were removed unjustly, and that we in this community are the beneficiaries of that removal. We honor them as we live, work, and study here at [your school or organization's name]."

This is a great way for students to learn about the Indigenous people who originally inhabited the land.

For an in-depth guide to land acknowledgments, visit [nea.org/LandAcknowledgment](https://nea.org/LandAcknowledgment).

been represented in the general curriculum, says Indigenous educator Theresa Ziebarth-Moritz.

She has been working with the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board to develop an outline and framework covering what students and teachers need to know about Indigenous history and culture in the state.

She wants teachers to understand the concept of sovereignty—the ability of Native tribes to govern, enforce laws, and protect and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of tribal citizens within tribal territory. Recognizing past traumas and the complete history of Native Americans is also an important part of this learning, she explains.

"Teachers need to know about the boarding school trauma and its generational effects," Ziebarth-Moritz says. The training's should focus on presenting an accurate portrayal of Native students' identities and history, she adds.

When Ziebarth-Moritz was a student, she recalls not feeling comfortable sharing the dehumanization and brutalization she knew her relatives experienced at Native American boarding schools.

She wants a different reality for Native students today.

—ANIYA GREENE-SANTOS AND BRENDA ÁLVAREZ

### LEARN MORE

Explore lessons, activities, and resources related to Native People at [nea.org/IndigenousCultures](https://nea.org/IndigenousCultures).

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THERESA ZIEBARTH-MORITZ

## member spotlight

### Instilling Pride in Native Cultures

**Leslie Montemayor**  
INDIAN EDUCATION COORDINATOR  
OKEMAH, OKLAHOMA

"Most Americans are unaware that a Native American was a heartbeat away from serving as the U.S. president; that Native Americans were not granted U.S. citizenship until 1924; and that federal law did not allow tribes to teach their Native languages until 1972. What many people do know—or think they know—is often based on stereotypes and fallacies.

Even worse, our Native American students, from past to present, have been deprived of feeling pride in their rich culture. Native history is packed with valuable contributions and knowledge. Long before anyone else arrived to these lands, many tribes modeled how to form a democracy rooted in a desire for peace. Most knew how to cultivate crops that are still essential today. And Native "code talkers" helped the U.S. win World War II by using their languages to develop secret codes.

As the Indian Education Coordinator for 77 counties in Oklahoma and a Native American myself, I help teachers facilitate lessons about Native history and traditions, and teach students about the contributions of Oklahoma tribes. All American school children need to learn the truth of Native American history."

### LEARN MORE

For more member stories, go to [nea.org/Member-Spotlight](https://nea.org/Member-Spotlight), or submit the name of an educator you'd like to see featured at [nea.org/Submit-Member-Spotlight](https://nea.org/Submit-Member-Spotlight).

PHOTO: MOSES MITCHELL

OUR VOICES

*quick takes*

## WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN GRATEFUL TO BE AN EDUCATOR?



*"Now, I've been teaching for 38 years and still have the idea I can make a difference."*

—Adonis Schurmann, Texas

*"Listening to parents at a school board meeting this week demanding better teacher salaries!"*

—Julie Nietling, Michigan

**"Every time a student comes to me and says, 'I don't know who else to talk to. Do you have time?'"**

—Kari L.

**"I taught auto and diesel mechanics. The rewarding times were when a student called and said, 'Mr. Z, I Got The Job.'"**

—Jim Z.

**"I'M IN MY 24TH YEAR AS A SPECIAL ED PARAEDUCATOR, AND THERE ARE WAY TOO MANY MOMENTS TO MENTION. MOST END WITH A CHILD SAYING, 'YES, I CAN DO IT.'"**

—Janet Weil-True, Missouri



**"I HAD A FOURTH GRADER WHO COULD NOT READ. WE PRACTICED AND PRACTICED—WORD FAMILIES, READING CARDS. I PULLED OUT AN OLD LIPPINCOTT BOOK, AND HE OPENED IT AND READ, 'ANN RAN, ANN RAN AND RAN.' THEN HE LOOKED AT ME AND SAID, 'HOW DID YOU KNOW TODAY WOULD BE THE DAY I LEARNED TO READ?'"**

—Sharon Dolan, Washington

**"I was asked by a group of students, 'How did you become such a good teacher?' I was NOT expecting that question from THAT group of students."**

—Dave A.

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# TEACHING GRAMMAR LIKE A SPORT

By Cinda Ackerman Klickna

Imagine my surprise when I was leading a literature class with a group of juniors, and they stopped me mid-stream to ask if I would teach them grammar! They admitted they did not know where to put commas or how to use grammar to improve their writing.

Their request led me to develop a two-week crash course in grammar that is based on a sports analogy. Players (the eight parts of speech) occupy positions (parts of a sentence) on a field (the sentence) and must follow rules. The writer becomes the coach who must know the players, positions, and rules.

Students grasp the concept of playing a game for the first time. In soccer, kids who are starting out know they are to kick the ball. Later, they understand positions, what a certain position requires, and the rules.

The same is true in grammar. At first, students may be confused, but they quickly catch on with practice, just as they do when learning to play a game.

The era of diagramming sentences is long gone. And the practice of studying each part of speech separately—and hoping students will assimilate and combine all into an understanding of grammar—doesn't work. But this crash course does!

## How to get started

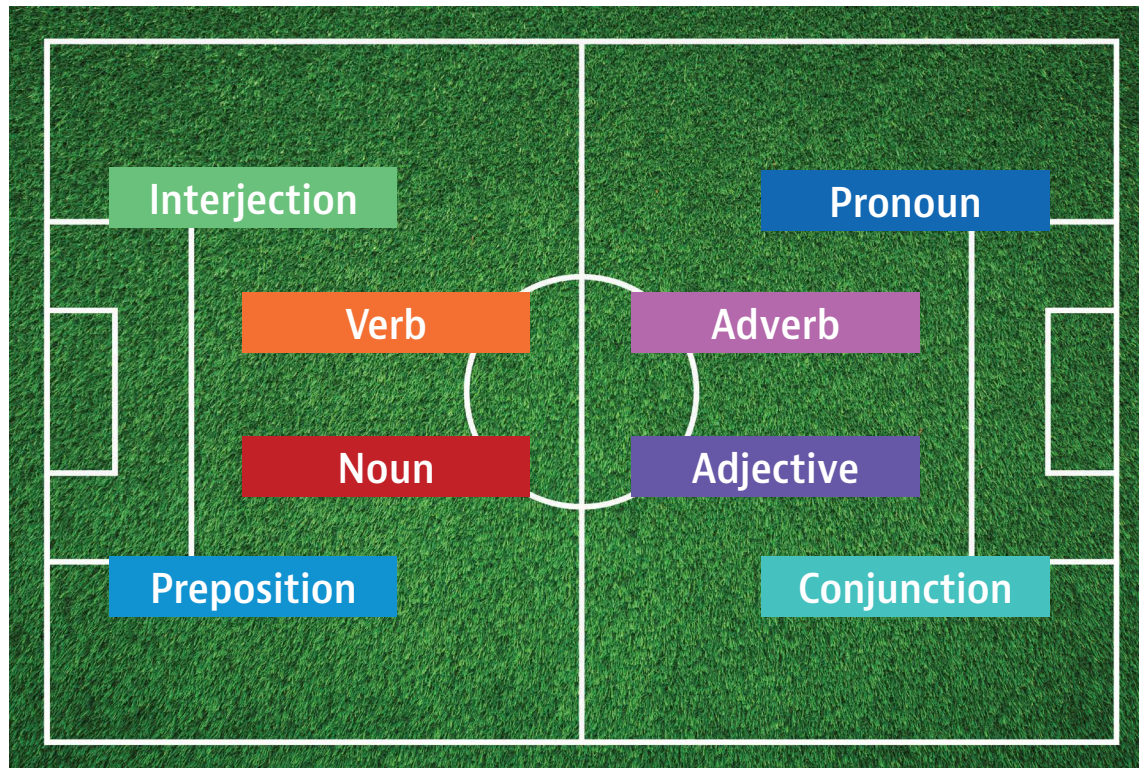
Students should learn the eight parts of speech listed below. Spending time on memorization upfront saves time later, making it easier for students to write sentences and pass college-entrance exams.

List the definitions of the eight parts of speech in sets of four: Noun, verb, adjective, and adverb require analyzing the word's function; pronoun, preposition, conjunction, and interjection can be memorized. Verbs also require memorizing a list of 23 helping/state of being verbs (see "Learn More" box).

The unit teaches all parts at once, using a process of elimination with memorization and analysis of a word's function. Provide students with sample sentences and use this lesson plan as a guide:



PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK



## Meet the players

### 1. Start with a simple sentence:

"The dog is brown." Ask if "dog" is a person, place, thing, or idea? Students identify it as a thing, so it must be a noun.

**2. Consider the word "is."** Is this word an action? Can you "is"? Of course not, so it's not an action verb. Can you find it on any of the memorized lists? Yes, it's on the list of helping/state of being verbs. But which of these types of verbs is it? Is the verb helping another verb? No, there is no other verb (because the only remaining word, "brown," is not an action). Then "is" must be a state-of-being verb.

**3. Now look at the word "brown."** Is it a thing? No, so it is not a noun. Is it an action? No, so it is not a verb. Is it on a memorized list? No, so we have ruled out noun, pronoun, verb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

Only two possibilities remain: adjective or adverb. Now, we must determine the function of the word. Does "brown" describe the dog by answering, "Which dog is it?" Yes, and a word that describes is an adjective.

By going through a process of elimination, referring to lists and definitions of what the parts of speech do, students begin to understand. This is when students start to have "lightbulb" moments.

Cinda Ackerman Klickna taught English in Springfield, Ill., and served on the NEA Board of Directors and as president of the Illinois Education Association. She authored the children's book, *Out of the Beaks of Birds: Our Crazy, Pesky ... Verbs*. Klickna retired in 2017 and is still active with the union. You can email her at [cindaklicknabooks@gmail.com](mailto:cindaklicknabooks@gmail.com).

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK

## SAMPLE LESSON



## Get to know the positions

**1. Introduce and define the parts of the sentence:** Subject, predicate, direct object, indirect object, predicate nominative, and predicate adjective. Explain which parts of speech can be used in each position.

**2. Focus on rules.** Just as a coach puts players in the correct positions, the writer is the coach of a sentence and must know the players (parts of speech) and where they go in a sentence. Two players are essential—a noun (or pronoun) and a verb. Explain that a noun serves as the subject of a sentence. Then explain that a verb is either an action, such as "run"; a word from the list of helping/state of being verbs; or a combination of the two, such as "is running." The verb serves as the predicate, which is an action or state of being verb.

**3. Go back to the sentence,** "The dog is brown," to help students determine the subject and verb. The subject is what the sentence is talking about: dog. We've determined that "is" must be a state-of-being verb, so "is" must be our predicate.



LEARN  
MORE

Scan the code at right for definitions of the eight parts of speech, memorized lists, examples to use in class, and more.



## Look at the field

**1. Move on to the other parts of the sentence:** Direct object, indirect object, predicate nominative, and predicate adjective. Give definitions of each.

### 2. Provide tips.

· After an action verb, the sentence might have a direct object, which must be a noun or pronoun: "The batter hit the ball."

· Only if there is a direct object could there be an indirect object, which is also a noun or pronoun: "The catcher tossed me the ball."

· After a state-of-being word, there might be a predicate nominative. This must be a noun or pronoun, "The dog is a poodle," or a predicate adjective, which must be an adjective, "The dog is black."

**3. Practice together by analyzing sentences.** Have students write various types of sentences. This helps them understand how to use words to create well-written sentences.

After some basics, it is easy to introduce phrases, clauses, and punctuation.

At this stage, most students realize that just as there are different rules in sports for beginners and advanced players, the same goes for grammar. And just like in sports, frequent practice will improve your skills.

TRY THIS  
*Technology*





# 12 WAYS TO UPDATE YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

By Jacqui Murray

For most teachers I know, life zooms by, filled with students, parents, meetings, grades, reports, reviews, and thinking. There are few breaks to update, fix, and maintain the tech tools that allow us to pursue our trade—including our online presence.

But if we don't, we are left wondering why our blog doesn't attract visitors; why our social media doesn't generate activity; and why we aren't being contacted for networking. Here's a short list of items that you can do quickly:



-  **1. Update your online profiles.** What do your blog, social media, and professional groups say about you? Have you changed focus? Switched jobs? Are you adding new publications or accomplishments? Is your contact information current? Ideally, you would do this once a quarter, but aim for once a year at a minimum.
-  **2. Clean up your social media stream.** Delete pictures and comments you no longer find relevant, or make them private. If you have active social

media, employers will check it out. Be sure it accurately reflects who you are.

-  **3. Publish content frequently and consistently.** Keeping your page fresh and current is a must for search engines to prioritize your content.
-  **4. Add copyright protections.** Include a note in the sidebar, attach it to each post, or do both (see mine at [askatechteacher.com](http://askatechteacher.com)). If you don't, readers may erroneously think they are free to use and reproduce the content as they see fit. They're wrong, but make that clear.
-  **5. Use images and videos.** Data overwhelmingly shows that images and videos draw in readers. This is also an effective way to attract new readers.
-  **6. Update old blog posts.** Start with the most-visited posts and work your way down (in case you run out of time). Update old links and references. Consider freshening images or banners.

-  **7. Check individual post tags and categories.** Reorganize options so they authentically group your writing.
-  **8. Check your website's sidebar.** Look for outdated widgets and links. Include new pieces that add utility. Move pieces around to give an updated look. The current thinking is less is more. Consider putting awards, personal learning network (PLN) groups, and memberships on separate pages noted in your menu bar.

-  **9. Check if your website pages are still relevant.** Could some be nested under other pages to save space or make them easier to find? While you're at it, update pages that are visited less frequently.
-  **10. Look at your blog on a smartphone and tablet.** Does it display properly? If not, consider switching to a responsive web design that auto-adjusts for a variety of digital devices. Visit your hosting platform's support section for instructions.

-  **11. Unsubscribe from lists you no longer have an interest in.**
-  **12. Update venues where you sell books** (if you're a teacher-author), such as your Amazon Author page, Teachers Pay Teachers, Google Play, BarnesandNoble.com, and others. ✨

*Jacqui Murray has been teaching K-18 technology for 30 years. You can follow her on X @AskaTechTeacher.*

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# Being 'Not Racist' Is Not Enough



Kennita Ballard (left) works with students, such as Taija Nae Bussey (right) on lessons that focus on identity, compassion, the African diaspora, and Black joy.

By Brenda Álvarez

## EDUCATORS ARE SPEAKING UP WHEN THEY SEE INCIDENTS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM

Language arts teacher Kennita Ballard loves her school. The Grace M. James Academy of Excellence, in Louisville, Ky., opened its doors, in 2021, as an all-girls school focused on STEM and Afrocentric studies.

Classes range from sports medicine to engineering to veterinary sciences among other subjects. Lessons center on sisterhood and the contributions of People of Color—including famous and lesser-known figures in history. And educators strive to create a sense of belonging to ensure that students feel valued.

"It's not enough to say, 'I'm not racist,' if your classroom instruction is whitewashed, or if disciplinary practices for being disruptive disproportionately affect Black and brown students," Ballard says. "The majority of our school [population] is Black and brown, and so we can't continue to have systems in place that result in them being pushed out of school."

Instead, the academy uses restorative justice methods. When disruptions occur, educators talk with students and help them reflect on the choices they made and what they could have done differently. If needed, educators and students come together in restorative circles

to address harmful behavior and a path toward accountability and repair.

"It's not a suspension, and it does not go on a student's permanent record," Ballard says.

This is not the case in many school districts across the country.

### A classic case of systemic racism

A student repeatedly taps a pencil on a desk. Maybe it helps the student concentrate, relieve stress, or remember the lesson. An educator may speak to the student about self-awareness or provide a fidget toy. If the student is Black, an educator may be more likely to view the behavior as disruptive or defiant. This could easily lead to a referral, in-school suspension, or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for behavior.

### Teachers assign more blame to Black boys in classroom disruptions

This figure summarizes teachers' perceptions of student blameworthiness after the teachers watched video vignettes. Teachers responded to the prompt: "Describe the behavior of the student in the video."

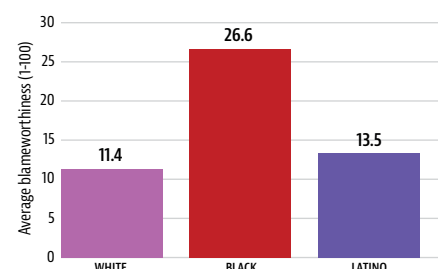


CHART: BROWN CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY AT BROOKINGS

*"It's not enough to say 'I'm not racist' if your classroom instruction is whitewashed, or if disciplinary practices ... disproportionately affect Black and brown students."*

—Kennita Ballard, language arts teacher, Kentucky

"I've witnessed several teachers put 'tapping a pencil on the desk' in an IEP," says Shana Balton, a middle school math and social studies teacher, in Wichita, Kan. "I've worked in four different schools, and it's mainly Black boys who are put on behavioral plans. ... The IEP can be helpful, but it also can be weaponized."

If a student transfers to a new school or district, she explains, the IEP follows and shows the previous teachers' complaints. The information tells the new teacher: This child is disruptive, which could reinforce negative subconscious feelings about boys of color, Balton says.

Before long, a student is trapped in a system that's intended to help, but instead causes harm. This is systemic racism playing out in real-time.

Systemic racism is a policy, embedded in an organization's normal practice, that negatively affects a particular group of people. In this case, it impacts students of color disproportionately and fuels the school-to-prison pipeline.

Yale professor Jayanti Owens designed an experiment to identify disparities in school discipline. She produced videos of White, Black, and Latino teenage male actors performing three identical behaviors: Slamming a door twice,

texting repeatedly during a test, and throwing a pencil into the trash can and crumpling a test booklet.

In the experiment, conducted in 2022, more than 1,300 teachers from nearly 300 middle and high schools watched the videos and were asked how they would respond to the incidents.

The findings? Educators were 6.6 percentage points more likely to send a Black student to the principal's office than a White student.

The study also found that about 25 percent of the difference was driven by the perception that Black boys are more "blameworthy" than White or Latino boys.

This reinforces existing research that shows Black students—particularly girls—are seen as being older and more knowledgeable of adult topics. So they often receive harsher punishments. But these systems can be broken down, Ballard says.

### What is anti-racism?

Racial justice, or racial equity, goes beyond non-racism, says Aaron Dorsey, a national trainer with NEA's Center for Racial and Social Justice. It's not only the absence of discrimination and



Kennita Ballard



# Being, Not Racist' Is Not Enough

inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

So what's the difference between non-racism and anti-racism? "Someone who is non-racist will say: 'Yes, racism is bad. Everybody should have equal rights and equality,'" Dorsey says. "An anti-racist not only believes in that, but acts to make it a reality."

These activists rally on the streets; write letters to elected officials to challenge policies that harm historically marginalized people; or support racial justice organizations financially or by volunteering, Dorsey explains.

"Most people fall into the non-racist category, but anti-racists are doing the work to unlearn racist ideas and calling out racism when they see it," he says.

## What it means to do the work

Ballard and Balton were among 50 educators who participated in an NEA anti-racist training, where participants learned about implicit bias, systems of oppression, anti-racist work, and how to apply the lessons learned in real time.

Ballard says she is now having conversations about race and racism in a way that "calls in" colleagues.

"I don't get anywhere with less hands as it relates to creating an empowering curriculum, culture, and climate for students. I get everywhere when more hands help break down systems of oppression," she says.

Balton is working to add more diverse voices to her local union and school board. In November, she was involved in a successful effort to elect People of Color to her local school board, where they can help enact anti-racist education policies.

## Change is possible

Brenda Johnson is a transition specialist at Stadium View, a school inside the Hennepin County Juvenile Detention Center, in Minneapolis. She helps students integrate back into their communities by connecting them with resources and mentors. She also attends court hearings with students and their families.

"We create a space where students can ask the hard questions and feel welcomed and hopeful. Our goal is to keep them out of 'the big house,'" Johnson says.

As a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Johnson taps into her networks to push for meaningful change for her students and community.

After the 2020 murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers, she felt she had to do something to encourage conversations about equity and racial justice. Johnson immediately reached out to clergy at Presbyterian and Lutheran churches with predominantly White congregations.

"We started a dialogue about systems of oppression and racist tactics that are entrenched in this country," Johnson says. "This is where racist practices can be undone, because it's going to take more of my White sisters' and brothers' help to lead the way. That's progress."

Johnson also runs a nonprofit called Shifting Forward, which brings together community groups to build relationships. As part of these efforts, Johnson led a training in 2021 that brought together police officers and members of the Black community in Bloomington, Minn.

"It was heavy," she says, referring to the conversations that took place. Participants learned how early policing in the South took the form of slave patrols, charged with controlling and disciplining enslaved people. After the Civil War, this legacy lived on as police brutally enforced Jim Crow laws. After the training, one officer told Johnson that she realized she had been harboring racist feelings, and that it was a hard realization to accept.

But unlearning racist ideas and beliefs is part of the work toward being anti-racist. Johnson says: "It's about education, calling out the injustice, and showing up, ready to use our voices." 🗣️

**LEARN MORE**

Explore NEA's racial and social justice trainings at [nea.org/Social-Justice-Trainings](https://nea.org/Social-Justice-Trainings).

PHOTO: ACKERMAN+GRUBER

# DISCOVER. LEAD. ACHIEVE!

As public education and the world continues to change, association activists and leaders need ongoing leadership development and support. That is why leadership development is a strategic priority for the NEA. Below is a list of resources to help support your leadership development journey:

**Leadership Development 101: A Foundational Course for Activists and Leaders**

**Leadership Development 102: A Strategic Approach to Leadership Development**

[www.nea.org/pep](https://www.nea.org/pep)

**NEA Leadership Competency Framework**

**Leadership Competency Self-Assessment(s)**

**NEA Leadership Development Guide Planning Tool**

[www.nea.org/leadership-development](https://www.nea.org/leadership-development)

**NEA National Leadership Summit**

[www.nea.org/leadershipsummit](https://www.nea.org/leadershipsummit)



SCAN ME



# A PATH TO PROGRESS FOR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS

AS ANTI-LGBTQ+ LAWS AND BOOK BANS GRAB HEADLINES, SOME STATES ARE LEANING IN TO INCLUSION FOR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS

By Brenda Álvarez

The year 2011 was a turning point for LGBTQ+ rights. It marked the end of the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy; New York became the sixth and largest state to allow same-sex marriage, in addition to Washington, D.C.; and then-President Barack Obama’s administration declared the Defense of Marriage Act—a 15-year-old law that defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman—to be unconstitutional, declining to defend the law in court.

That same year, California took a major step forward for LGBTQ+ students. The state passed the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful

Education (FAIR) Act, becoming the first state to require that K-12 schools include LGBTQ+ people in social studies and history curricula.

The change was desperately needed, says C. Scott Miller, a fifth-grade teacher in Orange County, California, who worked to pass the FAIR Act and helped review textbooks to ensure they were inclusive, based on the law.

At the time, Miller recalls, homophobic slurs were common among elementary-age students.

“Anything not considered ‘normal’ in someone else’s eyes would be met with, ‘That’s so gay,’ or ‘no-homo,’” he says. “It was hiding in plain sight that kids were questioning the student’s perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.”

## Lives are at stake

The impact of subtle and overt bullying, harassment, and lack of acceptance of LGBTQ+ students is a matter of life and death. According to The Trevor Project’s “2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People”—which polled 28,000 LGBTQ+ people ages 13 to 24—some 41 percent of respondents said they seriously considered attempting suicide in the prior year.

“When students feel they are not welcome, their ability to learn and thrive diminishes,” says Anthony Brisson, of NEA’s Human and Civil Rights department.

“Safe, affirming, and welcoming schools are a core element of student success,” he adds. “This happens only when



“Everybody has a place inside of the classroom and society, and everyone has something to offer,” says teacher C. Scott Miller about the benefits of California’s FAIR Act.

LGBTQ+ students believe they are accepted and respected, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

## Better laws can help

The FAIR Act has made a difference, Miller says.

“There had not been any LGBTQ role models in our school material,” Miller says.

After the law passed, if an elementary school book included a picture of Ellen DeGeneres, it wasn’t enough to describe her as a comedian.

“Because she’s a lesbian, we had to make sure people knew that,” Miller says. “We made sure that anyone who was LGBTQ was labeled as an LGBTQ American. No different

than African American, Mexican American, or any other group.”

He adds: “When students see a person, a positive role model who looks like them in social science books, they have hope for their future, because it normalizes their experience,” he says. “For other students unfamiliar with LGBTQ experiences, it helps to break down barriers.”

This is especially important today, Miller says. “We’re going through this very conservative wave of legislation. Our young people are going to see that ... repressing people is not a good idea, and when they’re older, they’ll work to change it,” he says. “I have great hope for the future.”

## A Timeline of Progress

Many states have followed California’s lead in requiring an inclusive curriculum:

**2019**  
**New Jersey** becomes the second state to require instruction that accurately portrays the contributions of LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities.

**Colorado and Oregon** pass laws requiring inclusive curricula. Oregon’s law includes LGBTQ+ people, people with diverse racial and religious identities, and other marginalized groups.

**2020**  
**Illinois and Nevada** require all K-12 public schools to include LGBTQ+ contributions in state and U.S. history curricula.

**2023**  
**Vermont’s** Champlain Valley School District, the largest in the state, unanimously passes a policy that codifies rights for transgender students, including: A right to have their names and pronouns used; and a right to access bathrooms and play in sports that match their gender identities.

## Why Pronouns Matter

Pronouns affirm gender identities and create safe spaces. When an educator is misgendered—meaning they are called the wrong pronoun or honorific, such as Mr., Ms., or Mrs.—it communicates that a person’s identity is not seen as important and can feel disrespectful, harmful, and even threatening to a gender-diverse person.

California teacher Lee Wygand identifies as nonbinary, transgender. For years, they have been the sole educator in their school to introduce themselves with they/them/their pronouns.

While many of their cisgender peers include

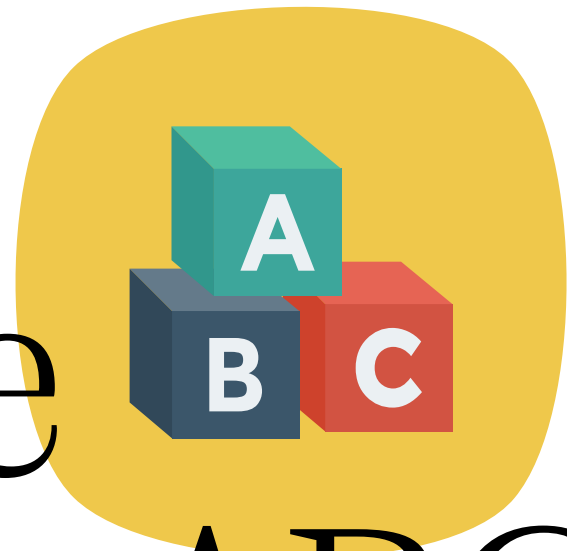
pronouns in their email signatures, they do not state them at meetings. “Therefore, my pronouns are overlooked, and I’m misgendered constantly,” said Wygand in an address to the 2023 NEA Representative Assembly, in July.

“This leaves me and other people who are nonbinary ... feeling marginalized when our pronouns are ignored and we’re misgendered,” they added.

Wygand encourages colleagues, if they’re comfortable, to share pronouns in email and in meetings.

To learn more, download NEA’s guide to pronouns at [nea.org/PronounGuide](https://nea.org/PronounGuide).

# More Than ABCs



At Arcola Elementary School, in Maryland, Rita Bamba's students play with blocks to develop fine motor skills and social skills.

By Cindy Long

## INVESTING IN QUALITY PRESCHOOLS DELIVERS RESULTS FOR STUDENTS AND OUR COUNTRY

There's magic in Rita Bamba's preschool classroom. It's filled with color and light, and it hums with chatter and music, punctuated by squeals of delight.

Vibrant bulletin boards, posters, and children's artwork cover the walls, streamers hang from the ceiling, and shelves brim with treasures, like Play-Doh, colorful blocks, and tiny instruments for tiny hands.

"We have all of these things for a reason," Bamba says. "We want to spark their imaginations and foster learning through play."

Most students in her class at Arcola Elementary School, in Silver Spring, Md., are eligible to attend the program for free, based on their family's income.

"I work with a lot of students who are English language learners, and many come in with little to no English," Bamba says. "The earlier these children are in school and exposed to language and vocabulary, the better. All children need to learn how to express themselves, manage behavior, and follow routines. It's so important to their future learning. They need this foundation."

But a huge population of children in the United States don't get that foundation.



Rita Bamba

### Setting up students for success

The KIDS COUNT Data Center tracked national preschool enrollment by family income level each year from 2005 – 2019. During that time period, about 60 percent of low-income kids (those below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline) did not attend preschool, while 46 percent of higher-income kids (those above 200 percent of the poverty level) also did not attend. (The federal poverty guideline for a family of four in the contiguous United States was \$19,350 in 2005 and \$25,750 in 2019.)

The U.S. lags behind many countries in providing critical early-learning opportunities for children, despite abundant research proving the benefits for students and for the country's population as a whole.

In the 2023 report *Early Childhood Education: Health, Equity, and Economics*, authors Robert A. Hahn and W. Steven Barnett conducted a review of scientific evidence about preschool. The researchers found that preschool education for 3- and 4-year-olds can reduce educational gaps and improve health and even lead to longer lifespans.

"The evidence suggests greater gains for those in poverty, but because children in middle-income

households also benefit, gains accrue to the population as a whole," they write. "We recommend public funding for preschool education for all 3- and 4-year-olds."

These outcomes hinge on a key factor—attending a high-quality preschool.

"High-quality preschool programs provide much more than just the ABCs and counting. They support the development of the whole child—cognitive, social, emotional, and physical," write Hahn and Barnett. "The programs we found to be effective had better-prepared, better-paid teachers and smaller classes."

Lack of fair compensation is a major barrier to high-quality preschool.

Tilesa McFee is a paraeducator with the Colonial Early Education Program, in New Castle, Del., who led a training at NEA's 2024 Education Support Professional conference called "Preschool is Real School."

### Lacking fair compensation

She knows what a high-quality preschool program looks like, but the funding and salaries don't reflect the education she and other early educators provide.

"We need a salary that fairly compensates us for what we are expected to do," McFee says.

Preschool educators typically earn less than half of what other classroom teachers make, but

**"All children need to learn how to express themselves, manage behavior, and follow routines. It's so important to their future learning. They need this foundation."**

—Rita Bamba, preschool teacher, Maryland

## The Benefits of Pre-K

The federal Head Start program reduces depression and the use of alcohol and tobacco by middle school.

SOURCE: WASHINGTON STATE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY



Head Start participation leads to reduced mortality as well as educational gains.

SOURCE: NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH



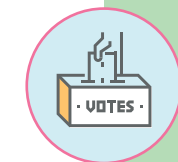
Students who attend preschool are more likely to enroll in Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses; less likely to fail courses or be chronically absent; and more likely to graduate high school on time and enroll in college.

SOURCE: GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY



They are even more likely to be registered to vote and participate in civic engagement.

SOURCE: GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY



# More Than ABCs

their work, as the research shows, has far-reaching impacts—all of which makes the jobs of elementary, middle, and high school teachers easier.

"The educators throughout the district say they love our students," McFee says. "They recognize they're well prepared for school because they know routines and have the behavior and emotional balance needed to start the academic process. They achieve more in class because they have a solid foundation."

McFee's goals for her students are self-regulation, fine-motor skills, social skills, creativity, and problem-solving. "Exposure to literacy and numeracy is important, but we focus on helping the children express themselves, be creative and curious, and solve problems without giving up," she says.

**(Below) Bamba teaches words and syllables with the help of pictures and blocks. Frog is one block, puppy is two. (Right) A child explores music with a small keyboard.**



## Teaching students to be 'comeback kids'

Anyone who has spent time with 3- and 4-year-olds knows that when something they build falls apart or another child has a toy they want, emotional fireworks flare. Early educators know how to handle these meltdowns.

"[We] don't take for granted how hard waiting in line is for little ones," McFee says.

To help them build coping skills, she continually repeats affirmations.

"I'm like a broken record, but soon the kids will repeat what I'm saying and internalize it," she says.



"You can do hard things," she'll say when a child struggles. "I know this is hard for you, but you can do hard things."

"I can do hard things," the child repeats.

"You can handle this," she'll say when a child is crying from frustration. "I can handle this," the child eventually repeats.

"No biggie, no sweat," she'll say after an accident or mistake. "We won't make small problems into big problems."

One of her favorites? "You can be a comeback kid."

"I tell them that no matter what happened a minute ago, an hour ago, a day ago, they can start fresh and be a comeback kid," McFee says.

Sometimes she and the other educators will have to sit with a child, tell them they are safe, and take time to breathe, reset, and recover.

"We are always modeling this," she says. "We work through it with them."

McFee guides students but also steps back to allow them to develop social skills. A key component of preschool is fostering the ability to form peer relationships.



Deneshia Smith, a paraeducator in Bamba's classroom, tells stories as the children learn to sit quietly and listen.

## Letting imagination run wild

In Rita Bamba's classroom, she and paraeducator Deneshia Smith also step back and let the children lead.

"We have some structured activities, but we don't limit them to use lessons or materials the way we planned," Bamba says. "They are more creative than we are!"

One day, the educators asked students to create a movie theater—and let them run with the idea.

The children taped together big pieces of paper for the screen, set up rows of chairs, and ripped and crumpled yellow sheets of construction paper because, obviously, they needed popcorn. They even made candy and soda machines.

"We ask them guiding questions, but they think of anything and everything on their own," Bamba says. "It's so exciting to see their creativity. Let the children lead the way!" 🎬

**"Exposure to literacy and numeracy is important, but we focus on helping the children express themselves, be creative and curious, and solve problems without giving up."**

—Tilisha McFee (right), paraeducator, Delaware



For example, she had a boy in her class with aggressive behavior, and the other students steered clear of him. He had special toys in the room that he guarded protectively.

One day a little girl decided she wanted to sit next to him to play. She asked, and McFee agreed. The boy ignored her, but they played peaceably side by side. She sat next to him the next day, and the next day, and the day after that. One day, he gave her one of his special toys.

"Here was a girl who decided to be his friend, and something in her was able to unlock him," McFee recalls. "We'd been working with him on social and emotional skills, but nothing we did was as effective as another child reaching out in friendship."

Before long, the other kids wanted to be his friend, too. Eventually, the boy said he couldn't wait to go outside and play with his new friends.

**LEARN MORE**

Take a look inside Rita Bamba's magical classroom at [nea.org/prek](https://nea.org/prek).

# Winning Streak

By Amanda Litvinov

**HOW NEA LOCALS ARE DEFEATING TOXIC, FAR-RIGHT SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES—AND YOURS CAN, TOO.**

Community pride was on vivid display during the annual homecoming parade in Johnston, Iowa—a conservative-leaning suburb of Des Moines with a small-town vibe.

At the September event, Johnston High School athletes proudly wore their purple-and-black school colors as they tossed candy to youngsters from flatbed floats. The dance troupe performed to the beat of the marching band, and the mayor waved from the back of a convertible.

But many students, parents, and educators felt unsettled when a red Jeep festooned with Donald Trump flags rolled past. It followed a truck that was plastered with signs for four school board candidates endorsed by Moms 4 Liberty (M4L)—an ultra-conservative political group founded by three former school board members from Florida. Floats promoting presidential candidates are prohibited under parade guidelines. But M4L had become emboldened in Johnston after the group swept the 2021 school board election, taking three of the board’s seven seats.

“It was a huge wake-up call for our local,” says middle school band teacher Patrick Kearney, who is also president of the Johnston Education Association. “I’ve served alongside probably a hundred school board members—most of them, I couldn’t have told you what their political affiliations were. But that all changed in 2021.”

That’s when M4L targeted Johnston and several other communities across the country for school board takeovers. By 2023, M4L needed to win just one more seat to have a majority.

In Iowa, school boards vote on whether to negotiate a contract with the local educator unions. With an M4L majority, it’s likely that the Johnston Education Association’s contract would have been gutted.

The stakes last November could not have been higher.

## The real Moms 4 Liberty agenda

In summer 2023, a speaker at the M4L conference in Philadelphia applauded the group’s school board “blitz strategy”—pushing a flurry of ultra-conservative

policies at the same time so communities have little opportunity to resist.

M4L’s ultimate goal is to stamp out curricula, books, and discussions that examine gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. Their chapters use tactics like banning books, grandstanding at school board meetings, and relentlessly targeting individual board members and educators with harassing and even threatening messages online.

Maurice Cunningham, a retired professor from the University of Massachusetts Boston and author of *Dark Money and the Politics of School Privatization*, explains M4L’s unlikely “origin story,” which involves three moms around a kitchen table. The reality, he says, looks more like this: Well-connected billionaires funded and launched M4L and called upon the conservative media to elevate the group, seemingly overnight.

Who are these funders? “Wealthy, White oligarchs, the most right-wing and tax averse people who don’t want to spend their

**Iowa band teacher and local leader Patrick Kearney helped stop a Moms 4 Liberty takeover of his school board.**



billions to give other people’s kids a fair chance,” Cunningham adds.

The professor’s years of research revealed that most of these groups are connected to one of two major operations that have long sought to privatize public education.

The first is the Koch network, headed by libertarian billionaire Charles Koch, famous for his efforts to eliminate government and privatize public services. The other is the Council for National Policy, an umbrella group of far-right donors, evangelical advocacy groups, and organizations like Turning Point USA, which has promoted anti-LGBTQ+ conspiracy theories, and the National Rifle Association.

M4L is the latest attempt in the radical right’s decades-long quest to ripen communities for privatization. Their strategy? Pit small groups of parents against local public schools and educators.

In that effort, M4L employs such damaging rhetoric against educators, People of Color, LGBTQ+ people, and the government that they were labeled an “extremist” group by the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2022.

## ‘My world would just crumble into chaos’

Last year, ninth-grade English teacher Bill Senavaitis had terrific mornings and nightmarish afternoons.

“I was teaching one of my favorite groups of kids I’ve ever taught in my career.

They were just goofy, smart, lovable kids, and I had such a good start to my day with them,” says Senavaitis, who has worked in the Central Bucks School District, in Pennsylvania, for his entire 21-year career. “Then my local president release time would start in the afternoon, and my world would just crumble into chaos.”

The M4L majority that had controlled the school board since 2021 seemed to

**“I’ve served alongside probably a hundred school board members—most of them, I couldn’t have told you what their political affiliations were. But that all changed in 2021.”**

—Patrick Kearney, Johnston Education Association, Iowa



**Bill Senavaitis**

# Winning Streak

be going down a checklist of culture war items—banning books and political statements, which M4L said included Pride flags.

“That really affected some of our educators deeply,” Senavaitis says.

As specific books were banned, teachers got nervous and pulled other similar titles. “I had one member who gave away her entire classroom library over the summer,” he recalls.

Members called him in tears. He attended at least a dozen disciplinary hearings, including one for a librarian who had displayed a quote from Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

By then, Senavaitis felt unsafe attending board meetings—ever since a man armed with a gun and knife had started showing up. The situation was reported to the school board president, who did nothing.

“We used to have such a sense of pride about working in Central Bucks,” says Cara Alderfer, who took over from Senavaitis as Central Bucks Education Association president this year. “But last year, when I told people where I worked, they were like, ‘Oh, I’m so sorry to hear what you have been going through.’”

## Reclaiming school boards

Diana Leygerman, a former teacher and the parent of two school-age children, saw what was happening. Leygerman, who lost a bid for school board in 2021, had helped found Central Bucks Neighbors United (CB Neighbors), a political action committee (PAC) that raises funds for pro-public education candidates.



**Diana Leygerman**

“I decided that my job in the year and a half leading up to the 2023 school board elections was to make sure that as many people in the community as possible heard what was really going on with the school board and all the money that was being wasted,” she says, referring to the board’s decision to give the superintendent an \$85,000 raise followed by a \$700,000 separation agreement when he resigned.

CB Neighbors recruited five candidates to run on a pro-public education platform. They also signed up volunteers to knock on doors and make phone calls.

“I knew we could win because we did not run on fear,” she says. “We did not run on anger and smear campaigns. ... We ran on



## ‘Students need us to run’

Ava Chiao (right) was a high school science teacher with 19 years of experience—and the only candidate with a teaching credential when she ran for the Cupertino Union School District board, in 2022. It wasn’t easy. She had to endure a smear campaign from well-funded opponents. But she stayed true to her values. “The truth is, our students need us to run,” Chiao says.

Her bid was successful, thanks in part to the skills she acquired at NEA’s See Educators Run candidate training program. Hear Ava’s story and those of other educators who have run for office at [nea.org/SeeEducatorsRun](https://nea.org/SeeEducatorsRun).

making our schools better and overturning the extremist policies.” Still, she cried “happy tears” on election night, after all of their candidates triumphed.

Election night was cause for celebration back in Johnston, Iowa, too. There, the pro-public education candidates backed by the local and the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) shut out all four M4L candidates. ISEA had joined forces with Alliance for a Better Iowa and other local allies to inform voters through mail, text messages, and digital campaigns about what was at stake.

“We clearly identified for voters the differences between those two slates of candidates on every issue, from book banning to supporting our LGBTQ kids,” Kearney says. “The results weren’t even that close.”

Across Iowa, more than 90 percent of school board candidates recommended by ISEA beat M4L candidates.

Nationwide, nearly 80 percent of school board candidates recommended by NEA affiliates won their races in 2023.

## If they can do it ...

When Pennsylvania’s Central York Education Association (CYEA) set out to elect pro-public education candidates to their school board, they had to face a tough fact: According to the data, they could not win.

Voters in their district had favored Donald Trump in 2016 by more than 25 percentage points. But then-CYEA Vice President Gina Grolemond wasn’t cowed by the data.

“We were tired of having no voice in the school district,” she says, recalling a string of harmful moves by the board, including their refusal to reverse a failed instructional program and their attempt to shutter summer meals programs at three schools.

Grolemond was determined to help good candidates run, but lacked campaign experience. By chance, she met fellow



(Left to right) Teachers Mike Mountz and Gina Grolemond teamed up with Samantha Schlundt, of the Pennsylvania State Education Association, to reclaim the school board in Central York County.

Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) member Mike Mountz, a high school social studies teacher who—incredibly—had spent a decade running congressional, state, and local campaigns as his second job.

Mountz works in the York Suburban School District, but lives in neighboring Central York. After politely declining Grolemond’s invitation to run for school board, Mountz agreed to help with the race. He later founded the bipartisan Citizens for Central York School District PAC.

Grolemond and Mountz organized a cadre of members, parents, and other community volunteers who did everything from signature gathering to data entry to phone banking and canvassing.

With the help of PSEA data guru Samantha Schlundt, they curated precise lists of voters likely to connect with their messages.

Door knockers focused conversations on the damage the current school board was inflicting on students—including an infamous book ban that blocked more than 300 titles. They spelled out how electing

pro-public education candidates would make things better.

“When I explained to volunteers that it’s really going door-to-door to educate voters, not to convince them to change their mind, they were much more comfortable,” Grolemond says.

Today, after winning seats in 2021 and 2023, the Central York school board is pro-public education and includes two PSEA members. It is also more diverse. There are now two Black board members and another who identifies as gender non-conforming. “[That’s] in a district that previously banned the biographies of Martin Luther King Jr., and Harvey Milk,” Mountz notes.

The Central York school board wins may sound like a small miracle, but they were achieved through smart strategy and hard work.

“I want other locals to know that you don’t need a book ban or a huge protest or \$100,000 or CNN coverage to win tough school board races,” Mountz says. “It’s about talking to the right voters. Any other local could do this, too.”

## Knock, knock. Who’s there?



Canvassing (or door knocking) is one of the best ways to get voters to the polls for pro-public education candidates. Listen along as NEA member Stephanie Bernholz-Leuschner (above) makes the rounds in her town.



SCAN THE QR CODE to hear the audio story, or go to [nea.org/doorknocking](https://nea.org/doorknocking).

# GIVE ME A BATHROOM BREAK!

By Mary Ellen Flannery

NO TIME TO 'GO'? IT CAN LEAD TO SERIOUS HEALTH ISSUES. YOUR UNION CAN HELP.

Virginia teacher Liz Boddye might be wearing incontinence underwear today. "If I'm sick or coughing, there's no hope for me. I'm going to be frank about that," she says.

Boddye is only 42. But she's also a mother and a teacher—and these factors don't work in her favor when it comes to bladder issues and bathroom access.

How hard is it for most classroom educators to use the bathroom when they need to? Too hard, educators say. Despite federal requirements that guarantee U.S. workers the right to use an employer-provided toilet when they need to, the reality is that many teachers regularly stretch their bladders for hours.

"That's so cute when you say federally protected rights. It's also in county code!" says Boddye, who works in a self-contained classroom for students with emotional disabilities in Prince William County, Virginia. She can't just leave her kids, not even for a duty-free lunch.

"Today, for example, I didn't get lunch—and I didn't go to the bathroom for like three hours after I had to go," she says.

Holding in a half-liter of pee through reading, math, and science, or back-to-back-to-back block periods, can have lifelong consequences. There's a

reason that urologists call it "teacher bladder." Is there another profession that requires a master's degree, but also demands you put on Depends?

But solutions are possible, union leaders say. Working through your building reps, sitting down at the bargaining table, and taking the issue to state lawmakers are all viable strategies to protect your right to toilet access.

## 'I hope I don't drip'

Incontinence supplies are not the solution, says South Carolina professor Jonathan Coker. Relaxing teacher dress codes so that educators can wear easy-to-slide-off yoga pants is another non-answer, he says.

For his 2022 research on teachers' bathroom breaks, Coker talked to a Georgia high school teacher who miscarried because of chronic dehydration. She avoided drinking because she didn't have time for the toilet.

"We have six minutes between bells. We're supposed to be in the hallway for those whole six minutes," she told Coker.

A second teacher told him she packs lunch with an eye to what might cause a bowel movement. (She doesn't have time in her workday for bowel movements.)



Educator Liz Boddye finds it almost impossible to get coverage for bathroom breaks. Now her body is saying she better get it, fast.

## Hear what educators are saying about their urinary tracts

When we asked on *NEA Today's* Facebook page about the physical toll of teaching, this is what we heard:

**"I have had two procedures because of my 'overactive' bladder. I retire in six months and can't wait to go to the bathroom anytime I need to."**

—Emily M.

**"Interstitial cystitis, aka painful bladder syndrome."**

—Sherri J.

**"Four kidney stones and six UTI infections in one year!!"**

—Joycelyn W.

**"I restricted my fluid intake while teaching a SPED class, so I would not have to leave to go to the bathroom. I came down with a kidney infection and kidney stones."**

—Susan D.

**"Three letters: UTI."**

—Betsy C.

**"A urologist told me once that teachers, truck drivers, and nurses have the worst bladders."**

—Mary Jane B.

**"Today, for example, I didn't get lunch—and I didn't go to the bathroom for like three hours after I had to go."**

—Liz Boddye, special education teacher, Virginia

# GIVE ME A BATHROOM BREAK!

"I'm really proud that we thought of this [contract language], but I'm also sad it has to be in there, because it speaks to a larger systemic issue."

—Liv Perez, co-president of the Coalition of Educators for Change, California

A Maine educator recounted how menstrual blood once dripped down her leg, in her classroom, because she hadn't had time to change her tampon. "I kept thinking, I hope I don't drip on the floor," she told Coker.

"The stories are just so harrowing," he says. "Hearing people describe in graphic detail their bodies being hurt, every day. I wasn't expecting to be addressing so much violence."

Coker, who did this research as part of his doctoral dissertation, notes the problem is often overlooked or dismissed, probably because it mostly affects women.

To Coker, the answer is funding. "The question is, who is going to supervise these kids if I run out of the room?" he says. "We need to put more pressure on school districts, on governments, to provide more funding so that we can have more teachers' aides. Teachers with aides don't have bathroom problems," he says.

## Your union has answers

Teachers at six charter schools in Oakland, Calif., also don't have bathroom problems. Their contract, which they bargained in 2020, guarantees them a lavatory within 400 feet of their classrooms. Where that's not possible, they go no more than two consecutive hours of work without a bathroom break.

"There aren't many professions that expect professionals to do their work without bathroom breaks," says Liv Perez, co-president of the

Oakland union, the Coalition of Educators for Change. Since ratifying their first contract in 2020, Perez says coalition members have not experienced any delays in getting the breaks they need.

"I'm really proud that we thought of this [contract language], but I'm also sad it has to be in there, because it speaks to a larger systemic issue," she adds.



Liv Perez

Similarly, in Orange County, Florida, contract language added in 2019 guarantees teachers the right to call the office at any time of day and get classroom coverage without delay.

Before negotiations, union leaders surveyed members and found that 47 percent were supervising students for three or more continuous hours.

Two-thirds said they avoided drinking water and 20 percent had sought medical care for bladder-related issues.

## Most of all, speak up!

Bargaining for more planning time can also help create opportunities for teachers to go to the bathroom.

After teachers went on strike in Portland, Ore., in 2023, their guaranteed planning time jumped from 320 minutes per week to 410. And, in Andover, Mass., teachers recently won 15 minutes a day of unstructured time through bargaining.

In places where collective bargaining rights are curtailed, go to your statehouse. In 2022, South Carolina elementary and special education teachers persuaded lawmakers to guarantee at least 30 minutes a day of duty-free time for the educators. At least 23 other states have similar laws, according to *Education Week*.

Most of all, speak up, urges Sarah Polda, a Washington high school teacher who has experienced bladder issues.

"My generation suffered in silence," says Polda, who is 63. "Call the office and make someone show up. Have building [or association] reps make this a part of their agenda when meeting with administration."

After decades of inadequate bathroom breaks, retired educator Kenneth Haines needs 24/7 access to a toilet, making it impossible for him to continue teaching.

When she was a building representative, Polda worked on expanding the number of administrators and employees who could watch a class for five minutes. The more people, the better.

## The 'happy' bladder

Urologists do indeed call it 'teacher bladder,' confirms Dr. Lori Lerner, a Massachusetts urologist. Imagine your bladder works like a pair of elastic-waist pants, she says. Stretch them, and stretch them, and you get saggy pants, right?

"We see people who hold [pee] in to such a degree that it will take several contractions for them to empty. In the worst scenario, those people will lose bladder function. They've stretched the muscle to such a degree that it can't contract," she warns.

While plenty of men have incontinence, it's far more common among women. Shorter urethras and post-pregnancy loss of muscle tone in the urethra can lead to stress incontinence, which—after giving birth five times—is Boddye's issue.

A "happy bladder" is hydrated and emptied regularly, Lerner says. Coffee is an irritant, but water is great, she adds.

Retired Maryland teacher Kenneth Haines did hydrate, he says—at 4:30 a.m., when he woke up to grade papers, drink water, and pee. But frequently, 12 hours would pass before he saw a toilet again. His high school campus was huge—the few staff bathrooms were far apart—and he simply didn't have time to go.

After 30 years of "holding it in," Haines now needs 24-hour access to a toilet (per his urologist), and it takes him three to five minutes to empty his bladder. He'd love to be teaching today, but these issues make it impossible. It's a poor reason to lose a successful educator, he grimly points out.

Retired Michigan teacher Karen Eglinton has also been in the care of a urologist for 30 years. "When I started, in 1975, we didn't usually get any breaks until lunch," she says. And even then, it wasn't guaranteed. "I had a colleague who got desperate once and went to the kids' bathroom. She had a kid look over the top of the stall and say, 'Hi, missus!'"

Today, Eglinton has stress incontinence, frequent bladder infections, and is unable to urinate without the help of gravity. "When you're young, you don't think it's an important thing," she sighs. ☹️



PHOTO: JATI LINDSEY

PHOTO: COURTESY OF LIV PEREZ

59%

OF TEACHERS SURVEYED COULDN'T EASILY TAKE A RESTROOM BREAK.

54.7%

CONSUMED LESS THAN 2 CUPS OF WATER PER WORKDAY.

SOURCE: WINCHESTER, HOOPER & KERCH, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND ERGONOMICS, 2022

## Want to negotiate for bathroom access?

Share this contract language, from Florida's Orange County Classroom Teachers Association, with your local union leaders:

"Administrators will cooperate with employees in making arrangements for a break in either the morning or afternoon. Employees needing to use the restroom may call the office at any time of the day to receive relief without a delay."

**BARGAIN THIS**

For more, go to [nea.org/bathroombreaks](https://nea.org/bathroombreaks).



# The World's Oldest Hatred

EVERY STUDENT SHOULD BE SAFE FROM FEAR AND HATE.  
YOU CAN HELP END ANTISEMITISM.



By Brenda Álvarez

With the rise of white nationalism, the number of antisemitic threats in K–12 schools has escalated—increasing even more since the Israel-Hamas war began. How we talk to students about antisemitism is critical. We can help them learn how to stand up to hate, bigotry, and bias.

To that end, NEA has curated a list of resources from respected organizations. These tools can help you teach the history and significance of the Holocaust and address antisemitism, including anti-Jewish incidents and bias in schools.

LEARN  
MORE

For more curated resources, visit  
[nea.org/EndAntisemitism](https://nea.org/EndAntisemitism).

## AN ANTISEMITISM CHECKLIST

The NEA Jewish Affairs Caucus has developed a checklist, **“Screening Out Jew Hate: An Antisemitism Checklist for Pre-K through Higher Education,”** to help educators identify and respond to anti-Jewish hate crimes and hate incidents in educational spaces. This tool provides clear examples of when a hate crime or hate bias incident has occurred.

Download at [bit.ly/NEAJACTool](https://bit.ly/NEAJACTool).

## RESPONDING TO ANTISEMITISM IN THE CLASSROOM

The organization **Facing History & Ourselves** uses research-based resources to challenge teachers and students to stand up to bigotry and hate. Their ready-to-use lessons provide historical context and also connect past antisemitism to the present uptick in antisemitic violence. One such lesson presents examples of young people standing up to hate.

Learn more at  
[bit.ly/AntisemitismResponses](https://bit.ly/AntisemitismResponses).

## A BRIEF GUIDE TO ANTISEMITISM

The organization **T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights** empowers rabbis and cantors to advance democracy and human rights for all people in the United States, Canada, Israel, and the occupied Palestinian territories. The group’s free booklet, ***A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism***, provides context, language, and tools to help fight antisemitism, along with all other forms of racial, cultural, religious, and gender oppression.

Visit [truah.org/antisemitism](https://truah.org/antisemitism).

## TEACHING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOLOCAUST

With a library of comprehensive Holocaust content, **Echoes & Reflections** empowers middle school and high school educators with dynamic classroom materials and professional development to help teach the history and significance of the Holocaust. These resources include lesson plans, activities, podcasts, and a timeline. The group also offers educator programs that foster confidence and amplify the skills needed to teach about the Holocaust in a comprehensive and meaningful way.

Go to [echoesandreflections.org/teach](https://echoesandreflections.org/teach).

## JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Students are more successful when they can see themselves in their schools and curriculum; and all students benefit when they can learn from a variety of experiences and perspectives. May is Jewish American Heritage month and offers an opportunity to honor the past and present contributions of Jewish Americans.

Find curated resources and lesson plans that explore Jewish Americans’ diversity, history, and more, at [jewishamericanheritage.org](https://jewishamericanheritage.org).

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# SEVEN ways

## 7 Ways to Reduce Classroom Noise and Chatter

By Madelaine Vikse



### 1. Build relationships with students.

Spend time getting to know your students. Figure out what they like and don't like and what kind of learners they are. This can help you to understand your students' individual needs. If certain students are more introverted and work better alone, consider giving them a chance to work on their own during a group activity.



### 2. Set classroom rules and expectations.

The first time you meet with your students, establish classroom rules—such as listen and don't interrupt while others are speaking. This way students know what's expected of them from the beginning of the school year.



### 3. Explain what will happen in class that day.

What topics will be covered? What activities will students do? Will there be time for discussion? What assignments will they have? This way your students will know what's coming.



### 4. Make lessons engaging.

Plan exercises to keep students focused. These can relate to the lesson and help foster discussion and communication among the students. They'll have the chance to connect with each other while also diving deeper into the topic.



### 5. Start class with an activity.

Have a few ideas in your back pocket and use the one that suits the mood of the class that day.



### 6. Set discussion times.

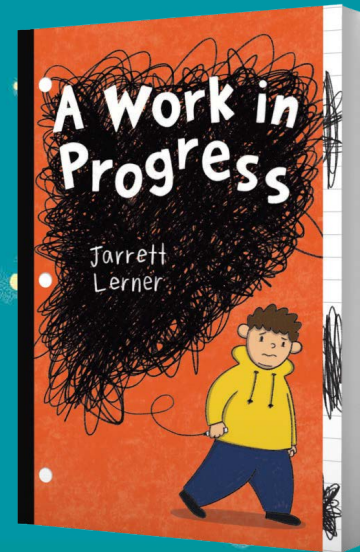
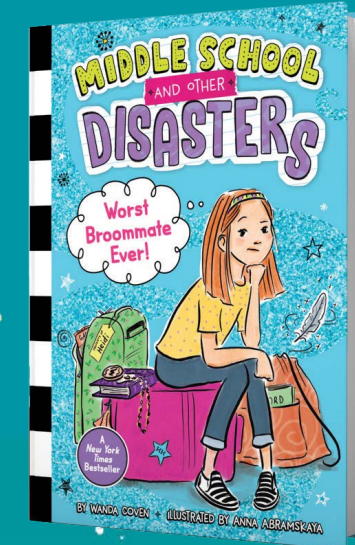
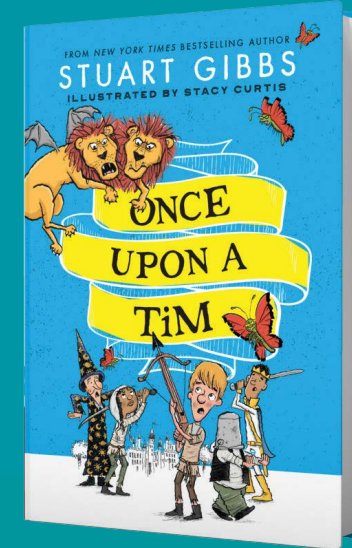
Let students know in advance when they will be able to talk to each other. This structure encourages them to hold their conversations for the appropriate time.



### 7. Reward a class if they are on track.

If the group is staying focused and listening respectfully while others are talking, reward them with a movie day, or dedicate one class to a study period. Pick whatever works best for you and your students.

## Fun & Thrilling Books for Engaged Summer Reading!



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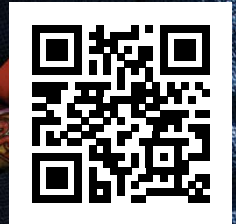
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