

2026 Aspiring Educators Conference



The NEA Aspiring Educators (AE) Program is the leading voice for the next generation of educators. The mission of NEA's AE Program is to advocate for education professionals and to unite its members and the nation in fulfilling the promise of public education and to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

Aspiring Educators Request for Proposals

Aspiring Educators meet each year in June before NEA's Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly. We are now accepting applications to present at the 2026 Aspiring Educators Conference. The Conference will be held in Denver, Colorado from June 28 - July 1, 2026.

The purpose of the Aspiring Educators Conference (AEC) is to offer future educators the opportunity to connect with their colleagues, learn about their profession, and act on important education issues affecting public schools and communities. The AEC is designed to support experiential learning that provides opportunities for NEA Aspiring Educator members and leaders to develop the knowledge and skills articulated in the [NEA Leadership Competency Framework](#) and to highlight and embody the AE Core Values (Community Engagement, Educator Quality, Political Action, Racial & Social Justice).

Aspiring Educators seek learning and information (such as advocacy, social and emotional learning, and classroom practice) to take home and share with other members and their communities. The AEC is for NEA members and leaders, regardless of experience level, membership type, or educator category. With that in mind, NEA views a Request for Proposal (RFP) as an application for a training session that directly supports the purpose of the AEC. The proposal must incorporate content from the Leadership Competency domains and clearly explain how the use of the content will help develop the knowledge and skills within the AE Core Values.

To submit an RFP for the 2026 AEC, please use the link below.

[Aspiring Educator Conference RFP Submission](#)

❖ **The deadline to submit a proposal is 11:59 p.m. ET on January 9, 2026.**

All applicants will be notified of selection by March 1, 2026.

❖ **Registration for the Aspiring Educators Conference will open in May 2026.**

Preparing A Successful Proposal

Proposals should offer engaging, interactive, solution-oriented sessions that enable participants to return to their universities and/or communities with innovative ideas, skills, and a plan of action for making a difference. The proposals should be written to articulate how the session will apply to Aspiring Educators.

Proposals should include presenter(s) information and a PDF to the submission form above with the following information:

1. Session Title
2. Session Description (175 words or less)
3. Session Objectives
 - a. Question to consider:
 - i. By the end of the session, what do you hope that participants will know, do, or believe?
4. All breakouts are expected to be interactive and action focused. How do you plan to engage participants and promote action-taking through your session?
 - a. Questions to consider:
 - i. What learning methods (small group, discussion, storytelling, scenarios, role-playing, etc) will you use?
 - ii. How will you set up participants to take action and apply their learning as a result of your session?
5. How does your session apply to Aspiring Educators and the AE Core Values (Educator Quality, Community Engagement, Political Action, Social & Racial Justice)?
 - a. Question to consider:
 - i. How does your session support Aspiring Educators' professional or leadership development?
6. On which AE Core Value(s) (Educator Quality, Community Engagement, Political Action, Social & Racial Justice) does your session specifically focus?
7. On which [NEA Leadership Competency](#) or Competencies does your session specifically focus? Which specific Competency experience level (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3) is targeted?
 - a. The seven Leadership Competencies are: Advocacy, Communication, Governance and Leadership, Leading Our Professions, Organizing, Strategy and Fiscal Health, Social and Emotional Intelligence. The three experience levels are: 1—Leading of Self; 2—Leading Others; 3—Leading the Organization.
 - b. You can find the descriptions of the seven Competencies at the [end of this PDF](#).
8. What steps have you taken to prepare to lead this session, including any research or prior presentations on the topic?
 - a. Question to consider:
 - i. How did those experiences inform your current approach for this session?
9. Provide a draft facilitator agenda for a 90-minute session.
 - a. Question to consider:

- i. How will you incorporate an introduction to the content, engaging learning methods, and action-taking during your session?

Important Information

- A. A team of reviewers will evaluate and rate all session proposals. Provide enough details for reviewers to fully understand your plans.
- B. What is Required for the RFP:
 - a. Be sure to fill out the presenter's form in its entirety and include the names of all potential co-presenters on the online application. You must complete this form even if you previously presented at an AEC or at another NEA conference.
 - b. Presentation titles should not exceed the maximum 100 characters, including spaces and punctuations.
 - c. Presentation descriptions should not exceed the maximum 1,000 characters, including spaces and punctuations.
 - d. To maximize the number and diversity of presenters and perspectives, each is limited to two proposal submissions.
- C. What I Need for Travel and Related Conference Disclaimers:
 - a. NEA will pay for travel and hotel accommodations for two nights only for the primary presenter in accordance with our travel guidelines. (Note: Honoraria/fees and work release time are not reimbursable, and payment for substitutes is not covered.) NEA will not cover expenses for secondary presenter(s).
 - b. NEA will provide specific guidelines and information for travel arrangements and accommodations. NEA will also provide specific follow-up guidance and agreements for all presenters.
 - c. All presenters **are required** to register for the AEC by the registration deadline. Failure to register may result in your session being canceled and replaced.
 - d. If your proposal is accepted, you will receive more information and can finalize session information after receiving your acceptance notice.
 - e. NEA will not accept/make changes to the primary presenter identified in the original RFP application to receive NEA travel accommodations after confirmation of your acceptance to present.
- D. What to Expect Post-Submission:
 - a. Primary presenters will be notified of selection or non-selection by early March and should share information with any secondary presenters.
 - b. Travel information will be sent out to selected primary presenters in May. Any secondary presenters will need to secure outside funding for travel and housing.
 - c. Registration for the AEC opens mid-May. Primary presenters will receive a link to register for AEC between mid-May and early June.
 - d. Selected presenters are expected to attend a pre-AEC Zoom in early June. Secondary presenters for selected sessions may be invited by the primary presenter to attend the Zoom meeting.

- e. Travel days to the conference will depend on when your session is scheduled. If you choose to attend the entire conference, selected primary presenters will have to secure their own funding and contact the hotel to extend the reservation for any nights they stay in addition to the night(s) provided by NEA.

Please review this guidance carefully and use it as a reference to complete your application.

If you have questions about the submission, please contact Tierra Snead, tsnead@nea.org or Ann Nutter Coffman, acoffman@nea.org.

NEA Leadership Competencies

1. Advocacy: Advances the cause of public education through advocacy for students, including addressing racial and social justice in education and how it benefits students and members' professional needs and rights.
2. Communication: Build and execute an integrated communications strategy that drives the mission, vision, core values and strategic goals of the Association.
3. Governance and Leadership: Provides strategic leadership to advance the mission and establishes and monitors strategies necessary for a relevant and thriving Association while motivating and fostering a pipeline of diverse leaders.
4. Leading Our Professions: Advocates for professional learning, professional quality and social diversity inside our professions and promotes our union's role in advancing education transformation, student learning, and equitable access to opportunities.
5. Organizing: Mobilizes, activates, and engages members and leaders to support internal and external relationships and Association capacity to recruit, retain and identify diverse groups of members and leaders, and advance strategic priorities at the national, state, and local levels.
6. Social and Emotional Intelligence: Understands the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that create healthy identities, manage emotions, and achieve personal and collective goals; demonstrates ability to feel and show empathy, establish, and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible, caring decisions.
7. Strategy and Fiscal Health: Use Association resources responsibly to accomplish the goals of the Association through strategic thinking, effective financial management and understanding of fiduciary responsibilities.

Levels:

1. Foundational (Leading of Self)
2. Mobilizing and Power Building (Leading Others)
3. Agenda Driving (Leading the Organization)