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May 2026

neaToday

NEA
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Trust
Annual Report
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The Joy of Teaching

EDUCATORS SHARE THEIR SECRETS FOR STAYING—*HAPPILY*—IN THE PROFESSION

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Carissa Kano teaches middle school reading and math in Honolulu, Hawaii.

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Do four-day school weeks help retain educators? PAGE 13

Cellphone bans work! PAGE 34

How to support students with ADHD PAGE 40



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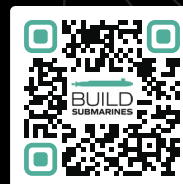


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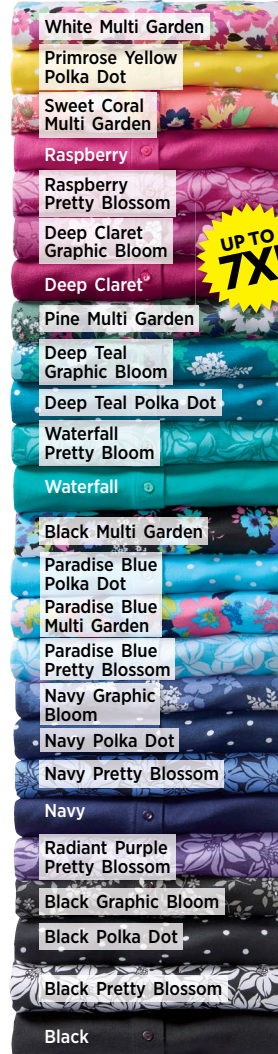
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COVER: CHRIS SCHUBERT; ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT): MARK PETERMAN; TRACY + DAVID STILLS AND MOTION; MICHAEL MOORE

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We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Find Members From Your Region in This Issue!

Meet these inspiring educators and many others in this magazine.



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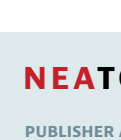
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TORRENCE



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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
NEA President



“

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. We are the reaction to this administration's action of terrorizing our communities with ICE raids; stripping away resources from our public schools, demoralizing working families; taking food out of the mouths of our babies and healthcare away from our seniors. Silence is the lifeblood of authoritarianism. So we will *not* be silent. We will fight back and we will fight forward for a world where our schools are sacred spaces, where every child feels safe and welcome at school, and where every educator is respected. We will create a world that is worthy of our students.

—Becky, speaking at the Los Angeles “No Kings” Rally, March 28, 2026

Face to Face With NEA members

Meeting educators has always been the very best part of my job! This spring, I visited members in Delaware, “The First State,” where educators are making union activism their top priority. The Delaware State Education Association (DSEA) delivered historic raises for teachers and education support professionals and are now working toward a \$60,000 starting teacher salary. They protected educator time, secured paid leave, won more personal and sick days, and fewer mandatory trainings. They also prioritized student wellness, with more play-based learning environments, and won more than \$100 million for school-based mental health professionals. And they preserved healthcare benefits and protected school funding! Way to go DSEA!



(Top) In Delaware, I joined students at a Unified Sports bowling outing, along with DSEA President Stephanie Ingram (third from left) as well as Middletown High School teacher Sarah Hall and Appoquinimink Education Association (AEA) President Steve Byers (both far right). (Bottom, left to right) I met with Appoquinimink Education Support Professionals president Sharon Livingstone and AEA member Abby Hartranft, a teacher at Spring Meadow Early Childhood Center.

JOIN ME 3 Things To Do For Yourself and Your Union

- 1. Organize with your local union.**
In light of the current political crisis facing our members, our schools, and our very democracy, the 2026 NEA Representative Assembly, in July, will build on the momentum of No Kings and May Day. Delegates will train and plan to expand our organizing efforts when they get back home to their affiliates. Follow along at nea.org/RA and look for important messages from your states in July and August.
- 2. Get ready for the November elections!**
Now is the time to start planning for the critical midterm elections. Bookmark nea.org/Vote to prepare. Our students' future, public school jobs, and our democracy depend on our informed participation.
- 3. Give some gratitude for yourself!**
It's the end of another school year—congratulations! Please take some time to appreciate what you accomplished. Breathe. Reflect. And then give yourself credit for the difference you made in your students' and colleagues' lives this year.

Find out how NEA is working every day for and with educators, students, and public schools. Read “We Are NEA!” (Page 10).

In the News:

“All students, regardless of race, place of birth, or language they speak, deserve schools that are safe, welcoming and free from fear—no exceptions.”

—Becky, on *The 19th*, February 26, 2026

What I'm Talking About: Organizing for Power

This moment requires all of us working in solidarity. We must organize for power to create safe, just, and equitable schools for our students and educators; an economy where one job is enough and all workers are treated with dignity; and a democracy that delivers for everyone, not just the privileged few. I have challenged our members to act—every day.

Learn how at nea.org/Protect.

Take an action every day, because we will not allow the Trump administration to privatize our schools, restrict our voting rights, erode civil rights, attack our unions, or silence our voices so that they can march unchallenged toward unfettered power. We can't just be outraged by what's happening, we have to use that anger to courageously stand in this season of suffering, to not turn away from our understanding that we are the ancestors of future generations. The struggle of this lifetime is our responsibility. I know you will never give up on our kids, our communities, and this country.



Becky Pringle
@neapresident.bsky.social

A pleasure and an honor to meet @zohrankmamdani.bsky.social at last week's NAACP board meeting—let's fight for affordability for working families everywhere.



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Nevada Union Safeguards School Funding

Nevada educators succeeded in keeping public money in public schools—one of

NEA's top priorities. The state's educators stopped a \$1.6 billion payout to the entertainment industry with tax dollars siphoned from schools.

The credit, dubbed the "Hollywood tax credit," was earmarked for

construction of a film studio in Las Vegas.

Thanks to strong organizing efforts by the Nevada State Education Association, Reno's Washoe Education Association, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and other allies, the state legislature rejected the unsound proposal and protected funding for students, educators, and long-term stability in Nevada.

NEA Joins Lawsuit to Stop Immigration Raids at Schools

NEA joined a federal lawsuit to restore protections for sensitive locations that, for decades, kept U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents away from schools, churches, and

hospitals. Last year, the Trump administration rescinded these protections.

This lawsuit puts students' well-being first, pushes back against fear and disruption in schools, and reaffirms educators' commitment to defending students' right to learn—no matter their immigration status. The lawsuit was still pending at press time.

Educators Shield Schools from ICE

After the Trump administration removed protections from immigration raids on school grounds, locals of the Washington Education Association stepped up!

Local unions, like Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, and Highline, won clear contract language and protocols that protect educators and families from interference by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). New protections include the right to refuse interaction with ICE while on school grounds and the right to withhold student, family, or employee personal information from ICE.

Minnesota educators modeled similar solidarity during ICE operations this winter. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, union members organized safety patrols, trained volunteers, and delivered groceries to families who were too afraid to leave home.

NEA's sample contract language can help you protect immigrant students in your school. Go to nea.org/SupportImmigrants.



Educators joined 50,000 protestors at anti-ICE rallies in Minneapolis.

NEA Higher Ed Is Surging!

The newly formed **New Mexico State University (NMSU)-NEA** union has been recognized by the state labor board as the official bargaining representative for

hundreds of faculty across the NMSU system! The university's faculty are part of a nationwide surge in higher education employees joining unions.

Before NMSU unionized, 63 percent of faculty across New Mexico were unionized. Now, it's up to 85 percent!

Pennsylvania student teachers will now get paid, thanks to the advocacy efforts of the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), which includes Student PSEA members. More than 3,000 future teachers will now earn up to \$15,000 during their student teaching semester.

Educators Making a Difference

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About the author:

Dr. Tasia Fields

She is an educator, district leader, consultant, podcast host, and founder of Great Minds TEACH Alike, a lifestyle brand for educators that centers on educator wellness.

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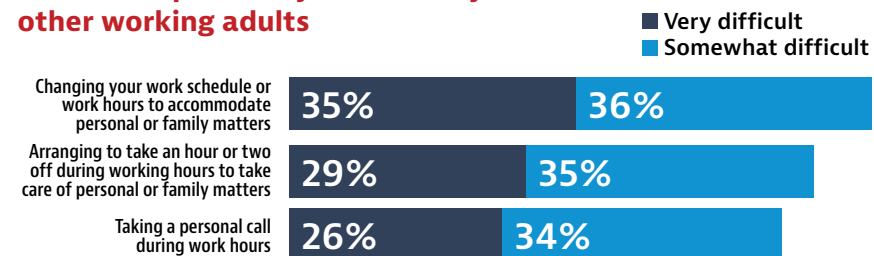
TEACHERS NEED MORE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Teachers experience poor work-life balance compared to similar working adults, according to a RAND survey of teachers, released in October and funded in part by NEA. Three times as many teachers as similar working adults said it was difficult to change their work schedule or attend to personal or family matters while on the job.

In addition, 46 percent said work made them too tired for activities in private life, compared with 13 percent of similar working adults. And less than half of teachers nationally said their school or district was making efforts to help teachers balance work and life.



Teachers report less job flexibility than other working adults



SOURCE: RAND, STATE OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER SURVEY, 2025

Naloxone Stocked in More Schools

The number of opioid overdose deaths—including fatalities from fentanyl—among adolescents in the U.S. has risen in recent years. According to experts and a growing body of research, most of these overdoses could be avoided by the timely administration of naloxone—an opioid reversal medication. Currently, 13 states have laws that mandate naloxone to be stocked in public schools. And 35 states have laws that expressly allow schools or school employees to carry, store, or administer naloxone.

In 2023, lawmakers in Congress introduced the bipartisan School Access to Naloxone Act, which would ensure school personnel have the training and education to administer the medication to prevent opioid overdose. The bill was reintroduced in January 2026.



PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION: ADOBE STOCK

DO FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEKS HELP REDUCE STAFF TURNOVER?

The number of school districts with four-day school weeks has grown significantly over the past decade. Ten years ago, the main justification for the switch was to reduce costs. But more districts—especially in rural areas—are turning to a four-day week to help address educator shortages. Research indicates, however, that these new schedules are not moving the needle on retention—and they could have drawbacks for students. Accordingly, many experts urge school leaders to proceed with caution when considering the change.

A four-day week could improve teacher working conditions, which many surveys suggest is the top factor in educators' decision to stay or leave. But the change may not be enough to make a difference, says Aaron Ainsworth, a researcher at University of California, Irvine and co-author of a recent study that examines the impact of a four-day week in Oregon. Ainsworth and his colleagues found that teacher turnover actually increased in districts with a four-day schedule. The turnover was highest in years 5–9 of adoption.

"Teachers may find fitting the curriculum into four days is a challenge, and maybe they don't have the necessary support from administrators," Ainsworth explains. "Many teachers also end up working longer days—and sometimes on that fifth day when students aren't in school."

And in the places that have adopted the new schedule, pay tends not to keep pace with other districts. Given how important salary and working conditions are to teacher retention, Ainsworth and his colleagues conclude, "boosting one and not the other may not move the needle in the long term."

"Teachers may find fitting the curriculum into four days is a challenge."

—Aaron Ainsworth, University of California, Irvine researcher who studied four-day work weeks



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

CURSIVE MAKES A COMEBACK

In 2016, 14 states required schools to teach cursive writing. By 2019, 20 states had enacted legislation requiring it. Now, there are 27 states with cursive instruction requirements. Pennsylvania became the latest, in February, when the legislature passed a law requiring the state's public elementary schools to teach cursive writing in grades 3–5.

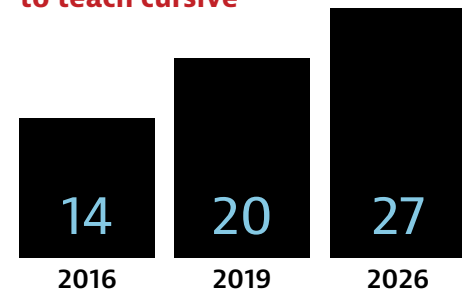
The advancement of classroom technology wasn't the only driver behind the sidelining of cursive. The Common Core State Standards, released in 2010, didn't mention cursive writing, but did call for the teaching of "keyboard skills."

Cursive proponents point to the many studies showing that learning cursive not only improves retention and comprehension, it engages the brain on a deep level as students learn to join letters in a continuous flow. It also enhances fine motor dexterity and gives children a better idea of how words work in combination.

Despite acknowledging the benefits of cursive, many educators may be wary of yet another state mandate and whether, with only limited instruction hours available, there are more urgent priorities in the classroom.



Number of U.S. states that require schools to teach cursive



“When our communities walk into our school, they feel seen. They know they are safe, and that is power. And you are the ones making it happen.”

—Education Minnesota President Monica Byron, in January, during the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement surge in Minneapolis and St. Paul



PHOTOS FROM TOP: ADOBE STOCK; JENN ACKERMAN

Fewer School Shootings, but Still too Many

There should never be another school shooting, but the number of these incidents in the U.S. seems to be declining. According to the K–12 School Shooting Database, there were 233 recorded incidents at elementary and secondary private and public schools in 2025—the lowest number since 2020, when 116 school shootings took place. The highest number of school shootings occurred in 2023, with 352 incidents. Additionally, the number of shooting victims injured or fatally wounded on K–12 campuses last year was 148, down from an all-time high of 276 in 2024.

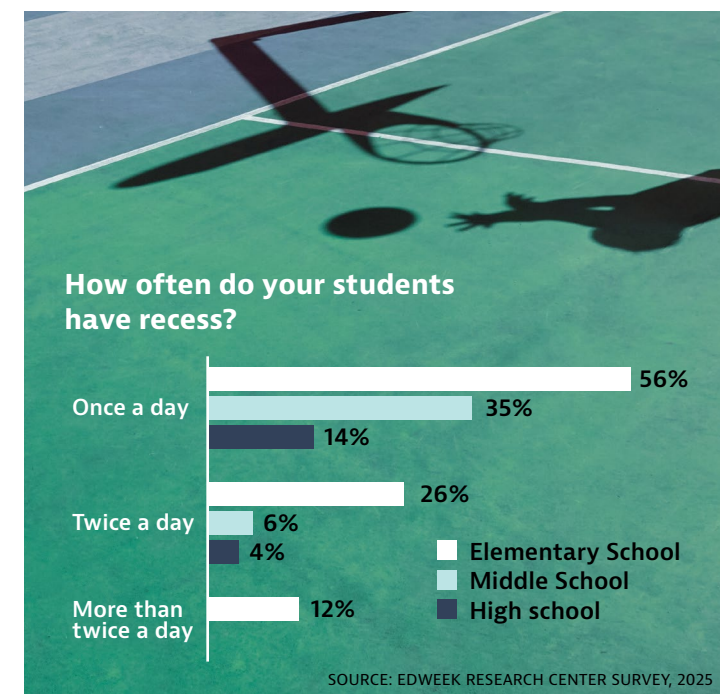
Still, these numbers remain staggeringly high. Experts say lawmakers are not doing enough to prevent shootings, such as enacting commonsense gun laws and providing mental health supports for students.



Number of school shooting incidents in the U.S.



SOURCE: K–12 SCHOOL SHOOTING DATABASE



HOW MUCH RECESS IS ENOUGH?

Recess improves academic outcomes as well as social and emotional learning. It also boosts overall well-being, especially for elementary students. But over the past decade, time devoted to recess has declined for a host of reasons. Before then, elementary students spent an average of 30–40 minutes per day on playgrounds versus 20–30 minutes today. In high school, there are few if any scheduled recess breaks. A recent *EdWeek* survey found that 80 percent of high school teachers and 49 percent of middle school teachers reported no recess at their schools. Fifty-six percent of elementary teachers said recess was offered once a day. Most experts believe that is not enough, recommending two 20-minute breaks for elementary students. Teachers reported that the potential loss of instructional time and other priorities are behind the drop in time for recess.

PHOTOS FROM TOP: ADOBE STOCK; SHUTTERSTOCK

When a new faculty union at Michigan State University (MSU) finally won recognition, in 2025, it was like seeing a plant emerge from the soil—50 years after the seed was sowed.

After failed unionization efforts in the 1970s and 1990s, and years of organizing and hard-fought legal battles since 2020, MSU faculty have established the Union of Tenure System Faculty (UTSF).

"This is a historic victory for tenure-system faculty at MSU," the UTSF Organizing Committee said in a joint statement. "For years, we have organized to secure a voice in decisions shaping the future of our institution. ... We can negotiate and advocate for the ideals that make our work possible."

The new unit at MSU is just one of the new additions to the NEA family tree in the past year. For the first time since the pandemic, NEA ended the 2024 – 2025 membership year up nearly 12,000 members over the previous year's totals. That means the number of new members far exceeded the number of memberships dropped in that same time period.



Tenured faculty at Michigan State University spearhead a campus organizing event in 2025.

"Every worker deserves a union, and educators who work in America's colleges and universities are no exception. Faculty nationwide are facing unprecedented challenges, from the elimination of federal funding to political attacks on research and teaching."

—NEA President Becky Pringle

What made the difference at MSU?

"It wasn't one thing, it was a pileup of things," says Evan Eslinger, who, alongside NEA colleagues, spent five years organizing the roughly 1,900 tenured faculty. "It was the MSU administration's actions that gave us a tipping point in this campaign," he notes.

For one thing, the administration had slashed the salaries and retirement benefits of non-union employees during the pandemic.

They had also canceled long-standing campus diversity initiatives, such as the cherished Chinese New Year celebration. And they signaled that they weren't going to stand up for academic freedom on campus.

Another key factor in the MSU campaign—and every organizing campaign—was the hard work that educators put into one-on-one conversations with their peers.

"When educators do the organizing, they are really building a community," Eslinger says. "That's how we grow our union and sustain that growth." ✨

Welcome to the Family!

New NEA affiliates and growing locals around the country—including those featured here—are strengthening our union voice.

KANSAS

The 599 education support professionals of Lawrence Public Schools voted by a 95 percent margin to unionize under the **Lawrence Education Association**.

After this victory, the local grew to

1,471 members.

SOUTH CAROLINA

The **South Carolina Education Association** established two new NEA Aspiring Educator chapters at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)—Allen University, in Columbia, and Claflin University, in Orangeburg.

These future educators join more than

40,000 student NEA members.

SUMMARIES PROVIDED BY NEA'S CENTER FOR ORGANIZING.

VIRGINIA

The **Harrisonburg Education Association** held a representation election in 2025—and won by a landslide! More than 86 percent of eligible staff voted.

98% of certified personnel

and

92% of ESPs said "yes" to representation.

NEW MEXICO

The **Western New Mexico University (WNMU)** faculty unionized with lightning speed after the school's president and entire board resigned amid a financial scandal. Union membership at WNMU now spans all departments, schools, and colleges.

Faculty organizers collected signatures from more than

2/3 of college faculty.

LEARN MORE

You can help grow the union!

Start having effective conversations with potential members. Check out NEA's toolkit at nea.org/Organize.



OUR UNION IS GROWING!

By Amanda Litvinov



THIS UNIVERSITY STAFFER HAS \$8.42 IN HER BANK ACCOUNT

By Mary Ellen Flannery

“I’ve gotten really good with lentils,” says University of Massachusetts (UMass) Boston staffer Alison White. It’s a culinary skill born of necessity. As a research data coordinator, her 2025 – 2026 salary—about \$37,200 a year—isn’t enough to afford more typical sources of protein.

She gets free food from a community pantry each Thursday, lives with a roommate that she found on Facebook, and budgets every single penny. Her monthly allocation for “fun”? It’s \$0. Recently, she ended the month \$8.42 in the black.

White loves her job, but she is growing more and more demoralized—and poor—as her employer, the University of Massachusetts system, refuses to provide a living wage to all employees. For White, a single person in Boston, a living wage would be \$63,939, or nearly double what she’s paid.

And, unfortunately, UMass isn’t the only college or university with employees living in poverty. Even as staff do necessary work—advising students, managing dorms and dining services, running academic departments and research labs, providing critical health

services, and much more—many are denied a living wage.

Indeed, nearly half of higher ed staff members report “moderate to severe problems” making a living wage, according to a 2024 NEA survey. A quarter of respondents said they struggle to pay for medical bills and groceries, and 1 in 5 say they have trouble paying their utility bills.

This work matters

White is a member of the Professional Staff Union (PSU), which represents about 2,400 members across UMass’ Boston and Amherst campuses. In June 2024, their contract expired—and for nearly two years, union members were at the bargaining table, demanding pay that acknowledges their contributions. It was a frustrating—and galvanizing—experience that involved thousands of union members in 50-plus bargaining sessions and dozens of union actions. Finally, in February 2026, their union power led to a new contract.

Starting in 2027, under the overhauled contract, no PSU member at UMass Boston—including White—will earn less than \$60,000.

(Left) Alison White, a UMass Boston staffer, gets paid so little that she relies on food from community pantries to avoid hunger. (Below) Union member Hannah Bernhard calls on UMass Amherst Chancellor Javier Reyes to bargain in good faith.

These are transformative, life-changing raises for the most underpaid employees, but still not what they deserve. Consider that the UMass Amherst football coach makes between \$1.3 and \$1.4 million a year, the most of any employee. In fifth place, Amherst Chancellor Javier Reyes will be paid at least \$743,357 this year, or about 18 times as much as the lowest paid PSU employee.

By comparison, UMass Boston program coordinator Chanel Fields makes so little money that she must work nights and weekends as a security guard. As staff for the department of exercise and health sciences, Fields supports its directors and faculty; runs its internal and external events; helps her graduate students put their dissertations together; and connects undergrads with internships, research opportunities, and graduate programs.

Like many PSU members, she has an advanced degree—a master’s in

public administration, earned at the same university she now works for. Her work is critical to students, but her pay doesn’t show it.

“The message is that staff is expendable,” says A.J. LeBlanc, an education abroad advisor and administrator on the Amherst campus. “[But] we’re the ones spending time with kids. We’re the ones seeing them, helping them, getting them resources—everything from, ‘Things are going great, do you know about this national scholarship?’ to, ‘Hmm, something is not right, we’re going to stop this conversation and I’m going to walk with you to health services,’ which I have actually done.”

The system has money

While wages for workers languish, many universities are spending lavish amounts on executive pay. According to a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* analysis, the median base salary for college presidents jumped 53 percent between 2012 and 2022.

At UMass Boston specifically, the *Chronicle* found that presidents’ pay grew by 90 percent between 2012 and 2022; at UMass Amherst, it grew by 37 percent.

“People with titles like provost or dean, those structures are growing ever larger,” notes Hannah Bernhard, a UMass Amherst program manager. And they’re giving themselves the raises that they’re denying poorer employees, she says. For example, between 2020 and 2025, base pay for the Amherst chancellor’s chief of staff increased from \$86,192.33 to \$175,869.39, or 104 percent.

Last fall, Amherst administrators heralded a new, on-campus food pantry, open to hungry students and staff. Bernhard visited at least



The High Cost of Low Pay

A 2024 NEA member survey found that higher-ed staff routinely struggled with basic bills for food, shelter, and medicine.

39%
skipped routine or preventive health appointments.

29%
did without acute or emergency health care.

28%
did not fill prescriptions.

26%
struggled to pay their rent or mortgage.

24%
struggled to buy food.

four times in its first two months. “I think they want us to be grateful that we have this resource without examining how f***ed up it is that I, a full-time state employee, need to use that resource at all.”

“I’m exhausted,” said Bernhard, as PSU battled for fairness last year. But she added, “I’m also empowered.” And that empowerment led to big wins! 🎉

OUR VOICES

member spotlight



Elementary school teacher Laurie Sullivan brings space down to earth at K.W. Barrett Elementary, in Virginia, where her students explore STEM through hands-on learning.

THIS TEACHER'S LESSONS ARE 'OUT OF THIS WORLD'

By Colin Davan

"The effort I put into my lessons, I really feel the benefit and impact on the kids."

—Laurie Sullivan, a Project Discovery elementary school teacher, in Virginia

"Mom, I got a message from space!" shouted Laurie Sullivan into the phone. Sullivan had been following astronaut Anne McClain's 2019 flight to the International Space Station and, through social media, had asked McClain a question from her elementary school students.

"How has teamwork made us successful this week?" the class wanted to know. McClain's answer arrived in a video message from space.

Moments like this capture the heart of her work as a Project Discovery teacher at K.W. Barrett Elementary School, in Arlington, Va., where space travel is a core topic in many of her lessons.

Helping future explorers take off

In Sullivan's classroom, bright orange and white student-size space suits line the back wall. Signed pictures of astronauts, solar system models, NASA posters, and former students' space projects are on display around the room.

Above her desk lies a handwritten note she reads every morning: "My purpose is to inspire students to love learning, equip them with the skills for life, and to make them feel safe with a trusted adult."

She works toward this goal each day, aiming to ignite her students' curiosity about science and engineering.

Shooting for the moon

Project Discovery grew out of a partnership with the NASA Explorer School program, which began in 2005, bringing STEM-based mission, research, and expertise into classrooms for grades 4-9. "The goal of the NASA Explorer school was to engage and inspire future generations of explorers, scientists, and engineers," Sullivan says.

The NASA program no longer exists, but the school is considered an Explorer School alum, allowing cooperation between NASA and Project Discovery to continue.

Project Discovery began as a co-teaching model with classroom teachers but evolved into a special

class five years ago, much like art or music. Lessons include hands-on activities and projects focused on natural science, engineering, the environment, space, and many other STEM related subjects.

"STEM is important, but I believe the whole collaboration, communication, and critical thinking show the teamwork going on with NASA," Sullivan notes.

Class projects have included everything from designing a zero-gravity indicator to planting a "moon tree"—using a seed that orbited the moon aboard NASA's 2022 Artemis I mission.

Sullivan attends space education trainings, NASA workshops, and conferences, where she meets people who are active in the field—including scientists who work on space missions.

These connections have allowed her to bring actual rocket scientists into her classroom and forge partnerships with organizations such as Lockheed Martin, which has provided guest speakers and "spacy" school supplies for her students.

Full-circle moments

Since Project Discovery began, Sullivan's students have gone on to advanced study and work in STEM fields—like former student Michaela Donovan, who is now an astronomer. Last June, Donovan co-taught a class with Sullivan.

For Sullivan, this is what it's all about. She says, "The effort I put into my lessons, I really feel the benefit and impact on the kids." 🚀



Who is Laurie Sullivan?

Laurie Sullivan's 33 years at K.W. Barrett Elementary School are nothing short of inspiring. Growing up, she was deeply impacted by her mother, who was also a teacher. "She didn't retire until she was 77!" Sullivan says.

As a teacher, Sullivan has earned recognition at the highest levels. She was named the 2004 Virginia Teacher of the Year and the 2015 Arlington Public Schools Air Force Association's Aerospace Education Teacher of the Year. In 2024, she was a finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

What Classroom Mementos Mean the Most to You?



Caption

OUR VOICES quick takes



"Where I live, most kids can't afford a gift for a teacher, so when they bring me shiny rocks and little pebbles, I know it means they went out of their way to find something beautiful."

—Tamara Madden, Oregon

"My read-aloud books are treasures to me!"

—Melanie Smeltz, Pennsylvania
(Her favorite book is *Red & Lulu*.)



"I have a handmade ornament that says Times New Roman, double-spaced, 12-point font."

—Jean L.

"One of my all-time favorite notes came from a student after he went on to middle school:

'Dear Mrs. Njaa, thank you for teaching me reading, and math, and stuff. It comes in handy. From your friend, XXX.'

—Marj Njaa, Washington

"After teaching about [Native American environmental leader] Billy Frank Jr., a student who was a relative of his gave me a woven purse made by a member of the family."

—Janis Swanson, Washington



"A hand-knitted duck, made by my student Daniel."

—Pam T.

"I cherish a bronze bell my grandma gave to me my first year [of teaching], 30-plus years ago. It had belonged to her sister when she taught in a one-room schoolhouse in Oklahoma."

— Stacey Gilroy, Arizona

SHARE THIS

We want to know what's on your mind. We asked this question on *NEA Today's* Facebook page and received so many great answers! Keep an eye on [facebook.com/NEAToday](https://www.facebook.com/NEAToday) for our next question, and share this link with your fellow NEA members.

Congratulations

TO THE 2026 AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE RECIPIENTS!



MELLYSSA FERRO

Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence
Middle School Science Educator, Syringa Middle School
Caldwell, Idaho, Idaho Education Association



JOMEKA GRAY

Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence
Kindergarten Educator at Kennedy-Powell STEM Academy
Temple, Texas, Texas State Teachers Association



STEPHANIE KING

Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence
High School English Educator, Granger High School
Granger, Washington, Washington Education Association



PETE STONE

Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence
High School English Educator, Lewisville High School
Chester, South Carolina, South Carolina Education Association



JANET DAMON

NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence
High School History Educator, DELTA High School,
Denver, Colorado, Colorado Education Association

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TRY
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engage



From archive to audio, the *Making Gay History* podcast brings LGBTQ+ voices into today's classrooms. It includes historical interviews from (clockwise from left): Kathleen Boatwright, on right; Craig Rodwell, shown with his mother; and Barbara Gittings, on left, and Kay Lahusen.

PODCAST BRINGS LGBTQ+ LIVING HISTORY INTO THE CLASSROOM

By Brenda Álvarez

When students hear the voices of people who lived through history, something shifts. That's the core idea behind the *Making Gay History* podcast, which draws from host Eric Marcus' interviews with LGBTQ+ activists, leaders, and everyday people in the 1980s and 1990s.

Today, NEA and educators across many disciplines are partnering with Marcus to develop classroom-ready resources and leveled lesson plans for grades 5–12, each centered on a particular podcast episode. The lessons—featuring NEA members and presented as video companions to the podcasts—provide educators with the context and tools to bring archival LGBTQ+ history into the classroom.

Episode: "Joy and Power in Queer History"

Washington teacher Chiara Whooley created a lesson plan to go with an episode about two civil rights activists who were life partners. The interviews gave students in her middle school

English classes a way to connect with history.

Podcast guests Barbara Gittings and Kay Lahusen brought their creativity, determination, and good humor to what was called the homophile movement in the 1960s and the gay liberation movement in the 1970s.

"Most gay people in New York who had any kind of income were going to the therapist, ... [who was] usually trying to cure them," Lahusen says. "See, I decided at 18 I was right, and the world was wrong."

Whooley's lesson examines the podcast interview as a primary source. Using the SOAR (summarize, observe, analyze, reflect) method, students build skills applicable to all nonfiction.

"Growing up in the 2010s and coming out as queer, while we made a lot of progress politically, ... there were still so many stories of trauma and sadness," Whooley shares. "I loved hearing that, yes, these two were strong protesters, but half of it was through joy."



Eric Marcus



Episode: "Understanding True Self"

Multilingual language learner specialist and educator Alexander Tai built his lesson around Craig Rodwell, a young activist who co-created the blueprint for Pride marches. Tai, who teaches high school in Missouri, says the episode fit well into a unit on "true self." He challenges students with a central question: Do we find our true selves, or do we create them?

His students witness Rodwell's journey in discovering his identity

and can connect this with their own experiences at a similar age. His students were captivated by Rodwell's choices, including when he told lies, such as inventing girlfriends.

"They were very enthralled about how lying to his parents was something that he did. ... In some cultures, lying is something that you just don't do to your parents," Tai explains. "It was eye-opening for me to allow the students to actually engage in the episode and nitpick at certain things."

The lesson underscores a broader truth for Tai: "I feel like using the *Making Gay History* episode on Craig truly opened my students' eyes in seeing that their life journey is going to be discovery, and it's going to be complicated at the same time."

Episode: "Point of View as an Element of Sourcing in Social Studies"

Joshua L. Rubin, who teaches middle school social studies in Maryland, focuses his lesson on an interview with Kathleen Boatwright. In the mid-1980s, Boatwright fell in love with a woman at church, even though she was married to a man, had four children, and belonged to a staunchly anti-gay congregation. The lesson asks students to consider point of view.

Rubin sees it as a chance to help middle schoolers practice empathy. One of the hardest skills for this age group is to understand point of view, Rubin says, especially since the state curriculum often has them studying events from "a thousand years ago."

He wants to give students something more modern and relatable. "Even though his recording was [from]

1989, it's still a conversation that's very relevant today," Rubin notes.

He chose the parent-child dynamic in Boatwright's story as an entry point. Boatwright left her husband and children to be with the woman, and was subsequently shunned by her family and community. The podcast frames her story around that difficult decision to live openly as her authentic self.

Rubin asked his students to imagine what it would be like if their mom had to make that choice. His students' responses confirmed the impact of the lesson.

"I had one nonbinary student [tell me] ... they really appreciated just having a day when they could focus on that part of themselves in class," Rubin recalls. Another student surprised him with gratitude. "They said 'thank you for making me think about this.'"

Filling the void in LGBTQ+ curricula

Tai says his work with *Making Gay History* fills a critical gap in LGBTQ+ history. The podcasts offer perspectives missing from textbooks and provide resources to help students grapple with real-life complexity.

"It is important for students to understand that there is gay history out there, and it may be a journey for them to understand," he says. LGBTQ+ history, Tai adds, is a vital part of U.S. history and should be included in what high school students are taught.

HOW TO LISTEN

To listen to the podcasts and check out the lesson plans, go to makinggayhistory.org/Lessons.

TRY
THIS
technology



TOO MUCH TECH CAN IMPACT YOUR WELL-BEING

By Chelsea Chambers

Teaching the power of tech can engage and motivate kids,” says sixth-grade science and math teacher Alfonso Gonzalez. “But it’s all about balance.”

As a veteran educator in Washington’s Chimacum School District, Gonzalez continues to explore new ways to mix technology with hands-on learning. But too much technology can sometimes lead to tech fatigue, he cautions.

When educators face constant pressure to learn, integrate, and manage new digital platforms with little to no support, this burden, along with other stressors, can lead to burnout. In a 2025 survey by the RAND Corporation, more than half of teachers reported feeling burned out. The cause of their exhaustion? Long hours and ongoing problems with student behavior were the primary drivers.

“More and more has been asked of us, and it doesn’t seem to stop,” says Connecticut teacher Joe Holloway.

Another thing on your plate

District leaders usually present educational technology as a path to more innovative instruction and

streamlined processes—and it often delivers on that promise.

However, a 2024 study in the journal *Teacher Development* found that learning new technologies can also have a negative impact. The researchers, David T. Marshall, Teanna Moore, and Timothy Pressley, report that teachers who used a learning management system such as Canvas or Schoology reported higher levels of burnout.

“Ideally, these tools should have simplified their jobs,” the authors write on *The Conversation* website. “We also thought these systems would improve teachers’ ability to organize documents and assignments. ... [But] instead of being used to replace old ways of completing tasks, the learning management systems were simply another thing on teachers’ plates.”

A 2021 study in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* also found that the increased workload around tech integration—particularly self-guided integration—can have negative effects on the well-being of teachers, creating high rates of stress and anxiety.

“There are so many platforms teachers have to be on,” explains instructional specialist and author Miriam Plotinsky, who oversees secondary English and literacy teachers in Maryland’s Montgomery County Public Schools. “Expecting people to figure it out is not fair, but it is common.”

She adds, “When teachers cannot figure something out, they blame themselves. But that’s not their failure, it is someone else’s.”

A shifting digital landscape

Math teacher Dylan Kane says that at the beginning of his career, he went all-in on new technology. “I was on the earlier side of technology adoption,” he recalls. “I’d drag the Chromebook cart into my room and try everything.”

Since then, the demand has increased drastically. Teachers are expected not only to deliver instruction, but also to manage behavior and track data across multiple platforms.

Over the past five years, Kane has seen more downsides. “It does feel tiring sometimes as we push more and more of our systems online,” explains Kane, who teaches seventh grade in Leadville, Colo. “I have one website up for attendance and a second website up for entering discipline notes. I have a third website up for monitoring students’ bathroom passes and a fourth up to monitor what students are doing on their Chromebooks.”

Better training and support

It is possible to reduce tech fatigue, Plotinsky says. “Protecting teacher

well-being has to do with streamlining the number of places where teachers have to complete tasks,” she notes.

More time would also help, Gonzalez notes. “Districts need to allocate time for teachers to learn and integrate technology,” he suggests. “When teachers do not have to educate themselves, there’s less burnout.”

Instead, it’s important to advocate for structure, support, and intentionality when implementing tech in the classroom.

Tech fatigue does not mean we should reject the evolving digital landscape, Gonzalez adds. He defines “true blended learning” as instruction with enhancements that are not entirely erased by technology. 🌟



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This Is Still a Great Job!

By Mary Ellen Flannery



Carissa Kano teaches basic reading to middle school students. It might be the hardest job on the island of Oahu—and she loves it.

PHOTO: CHRIS SCHUBERT

Educators share their secrets for staying—*happily*—in the profession

The 'aha!' moments. The exhilaration of a class period that ends with a student saying, "That was so much fun!" The camaraderie of union members. Almost 95 percent of teachers around the world say they "often" feel happy at work, according to a 2025 report. Indeed, despite the many concerns confronting educators today—which are scary, heart-breaking, and too numerous to name—many NEA members love their work. Meet some of those educators in the following stories.

Carissa Kano Middle school reading teacher Honolulu, Hawaii

Yes, Hawaii is paradise—for tourists. For its children, it's often not. Middle school teacher Carissa Kano has a student who was abandoned in a Honolulu park as a baby; another was shot in his public housing complex. Some sleep on couches, others in cars. "I have families, with eight or nine people, living on about \$26,000 a year," she says.

As eighth graders, they read like kindergartners and first graders. Kano, who is a National Board-certified elementary reading teacher, needs to catch them up—and fast. "I know what their life could look like ... either way," she says.

Kano does it with love and laughs—and a lot of snacks. She has good friends who barter sunset yoga classes for boxes of oat bars to stock her classroom pantry.

This is Kano's calling. At 5 years old, when the other girls opted to be

PHOTO: COURTESY OF EMILY MCCAFFREE

Emily McCaffree Special ed paraeducator Columbia Falls, Montana

"I really love what I do, all the time, every day," Emily McCaffree says. "Yes, there are a lot of struggles, especially in special ed. But when it all of a sudden clicks and you see it on their face? That's the reason I do what I do and love what I do."

Over her 13 years in rural, special ed classrooms, McCaffree has done everything from teaching students to make lunch to tutoring them in high-level math. Today, she works in a high school learning lab, providing one-on-one support to ensure students can stay on track to graduate.

"I had one kiddo who came up to me at graduation and said, 'I wouldn't be



Emily McCaffree

here if you hadn't pushed me. And the only reason I didn't quit is because you didn't quit on me," McCaffree recalls. "He literally said, 'I felt like every other teacher gave up on me and you were like, you're going to walk that stage.'"

Of course, not every student is going to say thanks. And not every student will persist. But McCaffree says she is never going to be the reason they walk away. "I always tell them, I believe you can do it."

Her advice to other educators?

"Start fresh every day," she says. You might have had a terrible Monday with a challenging student. Don't start Tuesday still mad at them. Whatever happened the day before, let it roll!"

princesses for Halloween, she dressed as a teacher in a denim skirt. Her mother taught kindergarten for 25 years; her father, Cary Kano, is a legend at Honolulu's Roosevelt High School, in his 42nd year of teaching. It's no surprise to them that their big-hearted daughter is drawn to the neediest students at one of the island's poorest schools, Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani Middle School.

When it comes to transforming lives developed in poverty, "education is the most powerful tool," Kano says. "We can give people the skills to read, to write, to persevere, to have grit." Too often, in this country, "the poorest students get the poorest education," she notes. But not in her classroom.

On a recent morning, Kano rewards a student's effort with his favorite snack, a strawberry Gusher. (She knows every kid's favorite snack.) She greets one with a personal handshake and teases another about his new girlfriend, "When are you going to introduce me? I promise not to say anything

embarrassing!" She stays late to coach a girls' volleyball team that she started. She muses about making and selling leis to take players out for a weekend day.

Kano understands why other teachers burn out. This work can be torturous—and of course it's underpaid. A starter home on Oahu costs \$1.1 million, and she'll never, ever be able to afford one. She has more worries than money. Her husband, Logan Salcedo, says, "Sometimes I know she's lying there awake, and I say, 'Which kid are you thinking about?'"

The rewards come when a student reads a tough sentence and a smile breaks across their face, or when they share their feelings and funnies.

Her advice to other educators?

"When you focus on relationships, this is the greatest, most exhilarating, and exciting job you can do," she says. "I might make \$53,000 a year, but I'm the happiest person you'll ever meet—and that's priceless."

May 2026 29



How does Kano sustain her joy? Watch this NEA Today video to learn more about sunset yoga and snacks, her supportive parents, and more, at nea.org/Joy.



This Is Still a Great Job!

Megan Philbrook Social studies teacher Andover, New Hampshire

“Low-key, I am so excited to put on the pantaloons,” says Charley, as the eighth grader unhooks a pair of breeches from a clothing rack in her classroom and slides them over her leggings.

When she pairs the short pants with a white linen blouse and cherry wool overcoat, her teacher, Megan Philbrook, claps and exclaims, “Charley, turn around!”

“Ohhhh,” she sighs. “You! You are an American privateer!”

Philbrook is the only social studies teacher at Andover Elementary/Middle School in central, rural New Hampshire—a job she truly loves. Today, her students are dressing from a trunk of replica garments that Philbrook borrowed from the American Revolution

Institute. Winning a stint with the traveling trunk isn’t easy, but Philbrook has done it twice in two years.

“That scarf is to wipe off the sea mist in your face,” says Philbrook to a would-be able seaman. “Can you taste it?!”

Philbrook’s teaching style is drenched in interactive, hands-on experiences that engage students and educators alike. “I am not a lecture-based educator, at all,” Philbrook says. “We do a lot of historical reenactments, simulations, projects, inquiry-based learning.”

Did one of Philbrook’s colleagues find bear scat in the parking lot? Let’s go see! Even this can be a history lesson: “Early town records show that colonists were paid to hunt bears because they were such a nuisance to the sheep!” she says.

Philbrook’s mantra: Make learning magical. Make it fun. And, most of all, make it memorable. It has been—and still is—those things for her, too.

Philbrook’s advice:

After 12 years of teaching, she calls herself a veteran and a “new teacher, at the same time,” because she never stops growing her skills. Nobody should, Philbrook says. “My best advice? When you’re a teacher, you should never stop learning.”



Jessie McKinley reinvented his career after 17 years as an elementary music teacher. Change is good, he says.



Megan Philbrook (far right) dons a replica hat alongside her eighth graders. (Top) A student examines an old-school sextant, as part of a unit on the American Revolution’s naval history.

Jessie McKinley

Computer science, robotics, and engineering teacher
Phoenix, Arizona

On a recent morning, Jessie McKinley asks his third graders to use Scratch programming tools to record and replay a few words of speech. “It could be your name,” he suggests. “Or maybe a few numbers.”

Within minutes, a cacophony of six seven, SIX SEVEN, siiiiiix seeeeeven fills the room, as his Madison Camelview Elementary School students distort and stretch their recorded voices.

Later, the last girl out the door exclaims, “That was so much fun, Mr. McKinley!”

This is McKinley’s 25th year. For the first 17, he taught music. In 2015, he went back to school for a second master’s degree—this one in curriculum and instruction, with a surprising focus on technology.

“I didn’t have that background, unless you count playing Legos with my brother!” he laughs. Although it was challenging, he told himself: “If I ask the right questions and keep on asking questions, I can do this.”

Here are 5 tips from McKinley on how to stay in love with teaching:

- 1) Stay curious.** “Keep asking yourself, is there a better way to do something?” he advises.
- 2) Find passion in some aspect of the job.** It could be content: Do you stan for Emily Dickinson? Or it could be a strategy, like experiential learning. “Dive into that passion,” McKinley urges.
- 3) Focus on building relationships with students.** “Do that and do it right away,” he advises.
- 4) Talk to other educators!** McKinley hosts local meetups for computer science teachers. “The best professional development ever is, ‘let’s sit down, have some food, and talk about what’s going on,’” he says.
- 5) Keep fighting.** In a state like Arizona, which ranks last in the nation for per-student spending, it’s important to speak up, McKinley notes. “I refuse to lay down and take it. Our students deserve better, if not the best.”

This Is Still a Great Job!

The Joy in Teaching

Pete Stone left a career in medicine because he'd rather help people know what they're living for. In this essay, he reflects on where and how he still finds joy in the classroom.

As a teacher, when you are aware that the students in front of you are someone's greatest treasure, each full of infinite value, each a representation of the miracle of life, then it is an honor to spend time with them daily in the great unfolding adventure of their life stories.

At the basic level, there is joy in the classroom simply because every human being's native state is one of joy, expressed through wonder and curiosity. Teaching is therefore a daily opportunity to participate in the innate practice of sharing and learning more about the wonder of this life.

It is, of course, unfortunate that overcrowded classrooms, crammed curriculums, rigid pacing guides, and an addiction to testing complicate the natural flow of joy. However, joy—like any force of nature—cannot be contained, only rerouted or delayed. It continually overcomes all barriers, shining through again and again, as the human spirit cannot be denied any more than water can be perpetually held back.

Joy is not a what, but a how

Encouragingly, then, joy in school is not something that must be created, but something that must merely be realized and allowed. Because despite the system, students and teachers still find a way to bring humanity into the classroom.

This is because joy is not rendered through what students do, but through how they do it—when each one is



"I do not want my students to be standardized, but to maintain their diverse, joyful expression of the human spirit."

—Pete Stone (above)

uniquely given the time and space to be who they truly are. The ancient philosopher Laozi reminds us that "you can shape clay into a bowl, but it is the spaciousness inside that makes it useful."

Taking an open approach

I frequently take my high school English students out into nature to read, to write, to play sports, or just sit under trees and stare. A writing assignment, for example, will generally consist of students first walking and talking their way around the building. Next, I ask them to spread chairs out among the trees—where they will not feel the burden of needing to entertain anyone else and can calmly relax in stillness.

Finally, I encourage them to simply write words as they emerge with as little thought as possible. I find that providing this open approach to learning helps create a space where students' most

natural voices are free to let joy flow outward into the world, rather than being limited by critical comparison, fear of failure, or pressure to work "bell to bell."

I do not want my students to be standardized, but to maintain their diverse, joyful expression of the human spirit. I do not measure my success by evaluations, by compliance with a broken system, or by how much information can be packed into young minds for a test.

Rather, I remember the words of my teaching mentor, the acclaimed poet Vivian Ayers, who taught me that "omniscience is not the proper burden of mankind; magnificence is."

The good news is that when teachers are supported, then they can provide a balanced environment of structure and spaciousness where students naturally fill the classroom with joyful magnificence, simply by being the wonder they already are. ✨

Pete Stone walked away from a career in medicine to teach students "the study of stories." He currently teaches English and journalism at Lewisville High School, in Richburg, S.C. "I realized you can keep people alive," he told NEA Today, "but helping people know what they're living for is better work."

PHOTO: NEA FOUNDATION

MEMBER ESSAY

WHAT IS ANTI-BLACKNESS?

By Brenda Álvarez

IN CLASSROOMS, ANTI-BLACKNESS OFTEN SHOWS UP IN HARSH DISCIPLINE AND FEWER OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLACK STUDENTS



"If we know Black children are being harmed by racism, and we choose not to do anything, that to me is a moral failure."

—Kerri Ullucci (above), professor at Roger Williams University, in Rhode Island

Professor Kerri Ullucci describes anti-Blackness as a "devaluing of Black people, of Black culture, and of Black history." It's embedded in both the school structure and the daily decisions educators make about students.

It's this idea that there aren't a lot of benefits in studying Black culture and history, and that "there's something suspect about Black intelligence," says Ullucci, who teaches diversity and equity at Roger Williams University, in Rhode Island.

Anti-Blackness also refers to the specific ways Black people are excluded and harmed in society and institutions, including schools.

More severe discipline

One of the clearest examples of anti-Blackness is disproportionate discipline: Black students receive harsher and more frequent punishments than their peers for similar behaviors.

Ullucci notes that educators often justify these decisions with race-neutral language, such as, "I called him out because he was being disrespectful," she explains. National research, however, consistently shows

racial bias in discipline outcomes.

Adultification and surveillance

Another common bias is adultification—the tendency to view Black children as older or less innocent than non-Black peers. This bias affects how mistakes are interpreted and how quickly situations escalate.

Black students often face heightened surveillance in schools, with their hair, clothing, bodies, and cultural expression closely policed. What is labeled as "dress code" often becomes racialized control.

In 2019, a Black high school wrestler in New Jersey was forced to cut his locs before competing, sparking public outrage and scrutiny of hair policies for students of color.

Less opportunity

Black students are frequently viewed as less capable, limiting their academic opportunities. They're underrepresented in gifted, honors,

and Advanced Placement programs and overrepresented in special education.

An argument of morality

For Monique Cottman, a curriculum coordinator in Iowa City public schools, anti-Blackness predates current political debates.

"This isn't a recent phenomenon. It is the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness that started with school desegregation in the 50s, and this is just a different iteration of that," Cottman says.

She describes how legislation and policies have shaped educators' behavior. Cottman points to the Trump administration's February 2025



Monique Cottman

"Dear Colleague" letter, which threatened funding cuts for educational institutions that engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. A year later, the Trump administration withdrew that guidance. But the damage was already done.

"Our equity departments were all gutted," Cottman explains, adding that even if school affinity groups and similar programs are not explicitly banned, many educators interpret them as prohibited. "It becomes less an argument about legality, and more an argument of morality," Cottman says.

Ullucci agrees: "If we know Black children are being harmed by racism, and we choose not to do anything, that to me is a moral failure." ✨

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF MEMBERS

Do School Cellphone Bans Work?

By Tim Walker

YES! EDUCATORS SAY THEY HAVE BEEN WELL WORTH THE WAIT

Alabama educator Jonathan Buchwalter had high hopes when his state passed a law prohibiting students from using cellphones in school.

A Marine veteran and author, Buchwalter teaches high school social studies in Tuscaloosa County. "I've been in the classroom since 2017, and half my energy has been spent on managing phones or dealing with phone-related behavior," he says. "These kids are addicted, and it got worse after COVID. So, I was looking forward to this new law because I knew it would have an impact."

Called the FOCUS Act, the law went into effect for the 2025 – 2026 school year. On the first day of school, the results in Buchwalter's classroom were immediate—fewer behavior issues, greater engagement, stronger academic performance. More importantly, the improvements lasted throughout the year.

Buchwalter recorded his impressions the next day in a TikTok video, which soon went viral, attracting more than 2 million views. "Today, all of my students—100 percent of them—took notes in my class, did their assignments, asked for help when they got stuck, and turned it in," he says in the video. "And then when they were done, they ... talked to each other."

The impact wasn't limited to the classroom. Students were socializing more in the lunchroom. The school library saw more activity.

"Was it this easy of a solution the whole time?" Buchwalter wonders. "I've been pulling my hair out for eight years!"

Momentum behind phone bans

The constant distractions generated by cellphones are not the only drivers of student behavior issues and academic underperformance. But for Buchwalter and educators across the country, the impact of these devices in their classrooms could no longer be ignored. A 2024 NEA survey found that 90 percent of teachers supported banning cellphones during instructional time and 75 percent favored so-called "bell-to-bell" bans that cover the entire school day.

Rachel Robins, a teacher and instructional coach in Washington County, Utah, says, "It was clear, these devices were stopping the learning process. I was in a lot of classrooms, and same thing time and time again. Without a policy in place, I saw teachers who were not comfortable telling students to put their phones away."

Educators and their unions have advocated for tougher restrictions on cellphones and have



Rachel Robins



Jonathan Buchwalter noticed positive changes in his classroom on the first day after Alabama's cellphone ban went into effect.

State laws vary, but most leave it up to districts to decide how to enforce these measures. Schools in Tuscaloosa County, for example, enacted a bell-to-bell "no-show" policy, allowing students to keep their phones in their backpacks or back pockets instead of central storage locations or Yondr pouches.

In Robins' district in Utah, schools adopted a similar no-show policy in 2025, although high school students are permitted to use their cellphones during lunch and breaks. For intermediate and middle schools, cellphones are banned on campus entirely.

Happier educators, more focused students

With most of these new policies not even a year old, tracking their long-term effect will take some time, but recent research suggests educators across the country are giving the new restrictions high marks. A new national survey of more than 20,000 public school

educators—conducted by the nonpartisan research initiative Phones in Focus—found that stricter school cellphone policies are linked to higher teacher satisfaction and fewer violations of these rules by students.

"So far, two patterns stand out," says lead researcher and psychologist Angela Duckworth. "The stricter the policy, the happier the teacher and the less likely students are to be using their phones when they aren't supposed to."

The survey also found that "strict storage rules," such as a requirement that students leave phones in hallway lockers or Yondr pouches, led to better academic and behavioral outcomes. Still, nearly half of schools use a no-show policy. This type of policy does not perform as well as more restrictive policies, according to the survey.

A recent working paper by the National Bureau of Economic Research found modest but real test score improvements in a large Florida school district in the second year after a

"I was in a lot of classrooms, and, ... without a policy in place, I saw teachers who were not comfortable telling students to put their phones away."

—Rachel Robins, Washington County, Utah

Do School Cellphone Bans Work?

"Today, all of my students—100 percent of them—took notes in my class, did their assignments, asked for help when they got stuck, and turned it in. And then when they were done, they ... talked to each other."

—Jonathan Buchwalter, teacher in Alabama

cellphone ban went into effect. The researchers, also noted an increase in suspensions in the first year, followed by a decline in the second year.

And a study by Kennesaw State University, in Georgia, revealed that cellphone bans had a positive impact on teacher well-being. The researchers surveyed teachers at two schools in Marietta, Ga., and found that 9 out of 10 teachers said the ban had helped them manage their classrooms and build stronger connections with students. Eighty-five percent reported improved well-being and job satisfaction.

This is about learning

One month after Buchwalter's post about the first day of school, he returned to TikTok with an update. Were the positive results holding up?

Yes, but with a few caveats.

"What we're seeing is a bit more behavior issues emerge, but still well below where they were before," he reports. "I'm still taking up phones in class, so are my colleagues. Kids are kids, and they will try to break new rules. That's expected."

It's the same with academic performance, he says. "But even my students who are struggling

are still taking notes and are less distracted than they were before. So, are we still at a net positive? Absolutely."

And what about parents? Even though their opposition to school bans has been softening lately, less access to their children during the school day continues to fuel concerns.

"We struck up a healthy compromise to help reduce parents' worries," Buchwalter says. Under the county's policy, exceptions can be made for documented medical needs, individualized education programs, and emergency situations.

Robins reports that in her district, parent opposition to the cellphone ban has been minimal. Student opposition, as expected, has been fairly widespread.

"Their opinions are important," Robins says. "So we should help educate students on why schools are taking this step. This is not about punishing or controlling them. This is about learning."

Robins collected feedback about the new restrictions in a voluntary survey of parents, teachers, and students. Their responses to the policy were overwhelmingly positive.

"The policy has been a game changer," one teacher shared. "No longer are students always looking for ways to get on their cellphone. Now that phones are put away, not even visible to students, they are focused more on work in class."

Another commented, "I like what I see academically and socially. ... The students are putting forth more effort towards their assignments as well as a greater engagement in class. I feel their social interactions have greatly increased, and they are having a better perception on how to communicate."

Long-term success in any district, Buchwalter says, depends largely on school leaders supporting school staff and assuring enforcement is consistent.

"Distractions and disruptions ... prevent kids from doing well and graduating. That's what cellphones are," he says. "I wouldn't want to work for a district that doesn't have these measures in place. I don't want to go back." 📵

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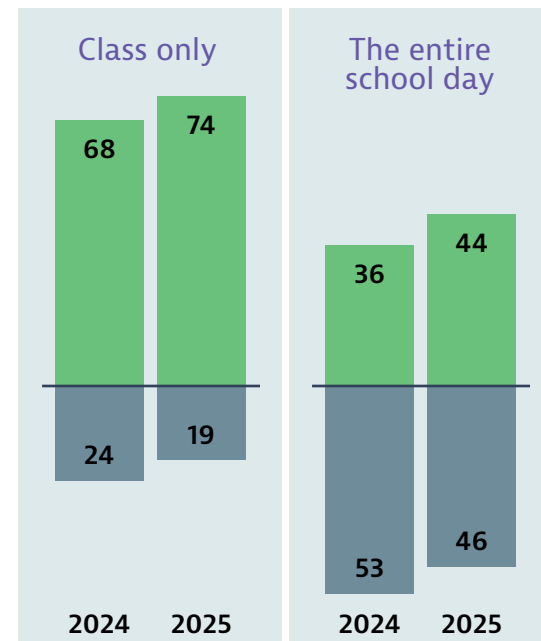
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Support Grows for School Cellphone Bans

Percentage of adults who favor or oppose classroom and "bell-to-bell" bans in middle and high schools

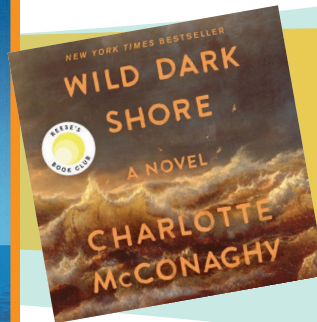
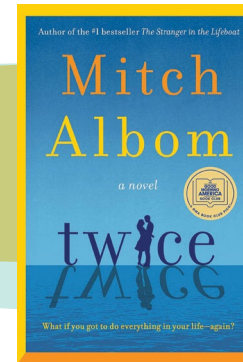
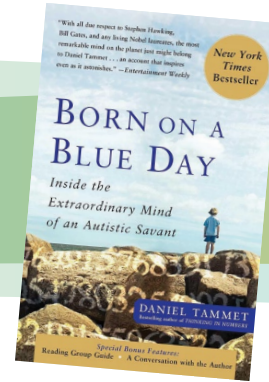
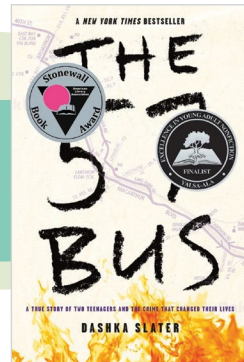
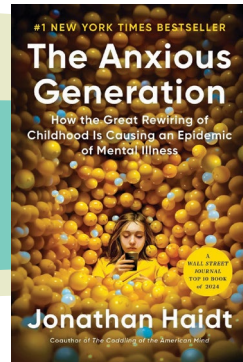
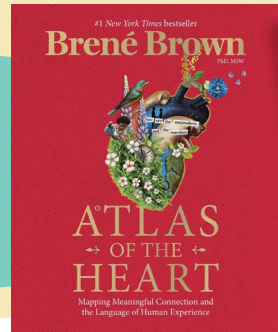
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Educator picks for your summer reading list



LOOKING FOR A GOOD BOOK TO DIG INTO? THESE EDUCATORS HAVE IDEAS!

If you need inspiration for a great beach read or for books that expand your mind and support professional growth, check out these recommendations from your NEA colleagues around the country.

Atlas of the Heart

BY BRENÉ BROWN
"Inspiring and insightful," this book can help educators learn how to build stronger connections, says Topher Tackman, a classroom aide in Bartonville, Illinois. "I would encourage educators to read any book by Brené Brown!"



Tackman

Summer Solstice

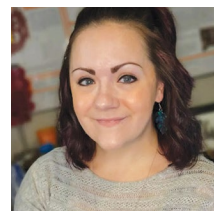
BY NINA MACLAUGHLIN
"MacLaughlin's languid essay is a memoir of New England summers and a meditation on savoring fleeting moments," reflects college librarian Cathy Fahey, from Salem, Mass. "It's perfect for reading in a hammock while enjoying the sun and shade. I reread this book every June, to remind myself to enjoy the season."



Fahey

The Anxious Generation

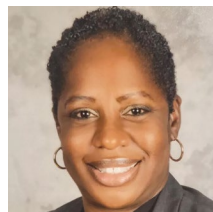
BY JONATHAN HAIDT
"As a teacher who is not a parent, it was eye-opening to see how my students' phone experiences were wildly different from my own as a teenager," shares Ally Bowers, a high school science teacher from Chamberlain, S.D. "The Anxious Generation also offers concrete actions for how we can move toward a brighter tech future for our students."



Bowers

The 57 Bus

BY DASHKA SLATER
"By examining a real act of violence and its profound consequences, this book explores empathy, restorative justice, gender identity, race, and the complexity of youth within the justice system," says counseling professor Kashara Moore, from Long Beach, Calif. "Reading The 57 Bus becomes an act of civic engagement, as it can strengthen one's capacity for compassion, critical thinking, and meaningful dialogue."



Moore

Born on a Blue Day

BY DANIEL TAMMET
"As someone who works with students who have autism, [this book] was fascinating to me," says Becky Marszalek, a special education paraeducator in Pittsburgh, Pa. "This memoir is written by a person with autism who sees numbers as shapes, colors, and textures. He has savant syndrome, an extremely rare condition that gives him extraordinary mental powers. He can learn to speak new languages fluently, from scratch, in a week. In 2004, he memorized and recited more than 22,000 digits of pi, setting a record."



Marszalek

Empire of Silence

BY CHRISTOPHER RUOCCHIO
The first title in the sci-fi/fantasy Sun Eater series, this book is set in the distant future, when humans have colonized the galaxy. "There is something darkly comforting about seeing human beings throughout time—even if it is a fictional future time—dealing with and overcoming the same oppression and injustice we find ourselves fighting today," notes high school English teacher Sean Olorundami, who lives in Sioux City, Iowa.



Olorundami

Twice

BY MITCH ALBOM
"The story is about a character with the magical ability to get a second chance at everything. He can undo any moment and live it again. The one catch: He must accept the consequences of his second try—for better or worse," recounts Beryl Torrence, a bus driver from Kannapolis, N.C. "I found the premise of a 'do-over' intriguing. However, as we know, all of our choices have consequences. I loved this book and have recommended it to friends."



Torrence

Wild Dark Shore

BY CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY
"This is a beautiful story about nature, love, grief, and isolation," says Nicole Tejada, who teaches family consumer science in Southold, N.Y. "Set on a remote island between Australia and Antarctica, it follows the story of five characters navigating individual struggles. With its focus on global warming, this book will linger in your mind for days!"



Tejada

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In search of great reads for your students? Explore NEA's Read Across America at nea.org/ReadAcross.

HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH ADHD

By Cindy Long

THESE SOLUTIONS WILL BENEFIT YOUR STUDENTS WITH ADHD AND YOUR WHOLE CLASS

Special education teacher Yesenia Guerrero buys one new wiggle stool a year for her students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

"I'm trying to build up my supply," says Guerrero, who spends her own money on the chairs. "They're very expensive, but they work!"

An educator in California's Lennox School District, Guerrero has experience with students who have ADHD in elementary through high school, including some who have IEPs or 504s, and some who don't. The most common trait she sees is their need to move.

That's where the wiggle stools come in. The idea is to offer movement as a sensory break.

"Don't get stuck on having everything always quiet, with everyone sitting still. A little noise, and a little movement is OK," Guerrero says. "Offer different kinds of seats. Let them work standing up. If they want to sit lotus style or on their knees, let them. They need the release."

ADHD looks different in every student

While many students who have ADHD have traits that are easy to recognize—such as attention-seeking, disrupting class, fidgeting, or talking to classmates—others are quiet and may seem engaged, but their minds are elsewhere. "They may have their eyes on you, ... but their brain is wandering," Guerrero

explains. "They aren't as impulsive in body movements, but they're not paying attention even if they're looking at you. When you call on them, they'll snap out of a daydream."

There are also a lot of common misconceptions about ADHD. One of the most common, Guerrero says, is that people assume these kids can control their ADHD and that they are being willfully disobedient or inattentive.

"These are very, very bright kids—they just have a difficult time containing themselves," Guerrero explains. "They may appear to be lazy or unmotivated, but that is a total misconception. Their brains just work differently."



"Offer different kinds of seats. Let them work standing up. If they want to sit lotus style or on their knees, let them. They need the release."

—Yesenia Guerrero, special education teacher in California (above)



Yesenia Guerrero provides wiggle chairs (purchased with her own money!) for students with ADHD, offering them a way to move quietly during lessons.

What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder and a lifelong condition affecting the brain and its executive functioning. It affects about 11 percent of school-age children, according to the nonprofit Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD).

ADHD can present in three ways: predominantly inattentive, hyperactive impulsive, and combined. CHADD lists these symptoms for each presentation:

ADHD predominantly inattentive presentation

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not appear to listen
- Struggles to follow through with instructions
- Has difficulty with organization
- Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort
- Loses things
- Is easily distracted
- Is forgetful in daily activities

ADHD predominantly hyperactive-impulsive presentation

- Fidgets with hands or feet, or squirms in chair
- Has difficulty remaining seated
- Runs around or climbs excessively (in children); extreme restlessness (in adults)
- Difficulty engaging in activities quietly
- Acts as if driven by a motor; adults will often feel inside as if they are driven by a motor
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Interrupts or intrudes upon others

ADHD combined presentation

The individual meets the criteria for both inattention and hyperactive-impulsive ADHD presentations.

Martha Patterson, who currently teaches middle school social studies but spent many years as a special education teacher for Central Kitsap schools, in Washington, agrees.

"They can certainly manage their ADHD with therapies, accommodations, and medications, but their behaviors are symptoms, not choices."

Patterson has several students with ADHD, and her largest class has 31 students.

"I'm a veteran in my 40th year, and there are days that are very frustrating, when a student is asking the same question for the 10th time, or I have to repeatedly ask another to turn around and stop talking," she admits.

"In the early part of my career, when this kind of thing happened, I thought those students were just being naughty. Looking back, I realize, that kid probably had ADHD! Now I understand their brains are wired differently."

HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH ADHD

Tips for managing ADHD in class

It's likely educators will have at least one student who has ADHD in their class. Fortunately, there are strategies that will work not only for that one student, but for everyone in the room.

Arrange seating strategically

"I would give students who have ADHD seating near the teacher and away from distractions like windows or hallways, but it's important to look at the class as a whole," Patterson says. "Don't seat them next to a student who also has distractibility, but do try to find a place next to a good role model who can model appropriate actions and focus, and who [the student] can ask for help."

Give students breaks

At Guerrero's school, kids get a variety of "break cards."

"A student will say, hey, I need to play a break card, and they have cards for coloring breaks, quiet corner breaks, water breaks, and bathroom breaks," Guerrero explains. "It helps prevent meltdowns and allows them to better focus after the break."

Maintain routines and repeat reminders

Create consistent routines so everyone knows what to expect each day or each class period and can focus



Martha Patterson posts the class schedule each day on the whiteboard to help students stay on task.

their attention and memory on curriculum, not figuring out what to take out of their desk or backpack or when to pack up, Patterson suggests.

"When students come into my class, they always see on the screen the plan of the day, the materials they need, and what they will be working on," she says. "If a student needs a reminder, I'm happy to provide it."

Sometimes a student will ask to take out their Chromebook before it's time, Patterson notes. When she says no, there might be an outburst, an inappropriate word, or total shutdown and withdrawal.

When that happens, she's careful not to escalate. "I speak to them in a calm voice," Patterson says. "Then I remind the class what we're working on and when Chromebooks come out."

Other times, a student is just sitting and staring into space, she adds. "They don't

know where to start and seem lost from the beginning. These students need multiple reminders, even with a set routine."

Guerrero agrees that repeating instructions helps when a student can't focus on one thing.

Auditory signals also work—shake maracas when it's time to take out new material, ring a small bell to indicate a new lesson is starting, she advises.

"I'll have a student who can tell me what color my outfit is, what the neighbor said, and everything going on around the room,"

she says. "But they can't focus on the task at hand because their brain is so busy taking everything else in. They can get sensory and stimulation overload."

Guerrero takes time to notice all the behaviors of her students. "Are they completing assignments? Can they answer a question based on the classroom discussion? Sometimes their work is half done, and it's all correct, but incomplete," she says. "They have great plans but then don't follow through to the end. Their ability to attend to it [and] plan it out isn't there without guidance and support."

Once they have support and accommodations, students with ADHD can become hyperfocused, one task at a time.

ADHD is a difference not a deficit

Above all, Guerrero and Patterson recommend that educators and parents—and the students themselves—are reminded that ADHD is not a deficit, just a difference.

"I do a unit about famous people who were diagnosed with ADHD and made it work for them in their careers,"

Patterson says. "Let them know that there are lots of brilliant and successful people who have ADHD. 🦋"

TAKE ACTION

Roughly 7.5 million students receive special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Trump administration has threatened to transfer this program from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to another agency, making it less likely that students with disabilities will receive services.

Contact your members of Congress and tell them not to move ED functions to other agencies. Go to [nea.org/Defend](https://www.nea.org/Defend).



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How to Expand Students' WORLDVIEW



Seventh-grade teacher Brittany Ahnrud engages students in a lesson that incorporates diverse stories and perspectives.

By Brenda Álvarez

IN CLASSROOMS WITH MOSTLY WHITE STUDENTS, TEACHING ABOUT DIFFERENT CULTURES HELPS PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LIFE

More than one-third of U.S. public school students attend schools where at least 75 percent of their peers are of the same race or ethnicity, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Even as the nation's overall student population becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, schools often remain segregated.

But in schools with homogeneous student bodies, especially in mostly white schools, fostering belonging and studying different cultures is invaluable.

This early exposure can ensure that when students finally encounter difference—whether that's in a college classroom, a workplace, or a grocery

store—they do so with curiosity instead of fear.

Researchers have found that meaningful exposure to diversity, through curriculum, connections, and discussion, can reduce stereotypes and better prepare all students for civic life and the workforce.

For many educators, the motivation to expand students' worldview is simple: Students won't stay in these bubbles forever.

Beyond the bubble

On a small island off the coast of Rhode Island, seventh graders at Lawn Avenue School, in Jamestown, performed a puppet show about children fleeing war in Sudan. The students—most of them white kids who have been classmates since kindergarten—spent 10 weeks reading *The Lost Boys of Sudan*, grappling with

what it means to retell a story rooted in displacement and survival.

"Text is one of the best ways to get at someone else's experience if you can't experience it yourself," says Brittany Ahnrud, a seventh-grade English teacher at the school. "I am a white, upper-middle-class woman, and I wasn't exposed to this kind of [information] until I was in college. ... For me, it's really important to expose students to things beyond the island."

Exposure is key to helping students understand different experiences, explains Amanda Bridges, a math teacher at Lawn.

"There's a very small chance that they're not ever going to leave their immediate environment," she says. "They need to be able to work with people and see different perspectives."



"Text is one of the best ways to get at someone else's experience, if you can't experience it yourself."

—Brittany Ahnrud, English teacher in Rhode Island

Why it matters for white students

The absence of diversity can lead to ignorance, often masked as humor, the Rhode Island educators say.

"That's what we struggle with the most, especially in the seventh-grade level," Ahnrud says. "Making jokes about each other's race or gender or sexual identity and not realizing the context and the history."

Some students repeat what they see online or hear at home without understanding the weight of those words. Ignoring those moments sends the wrong message, Bridges says. "It's important to show kids how to be an *up-stander* rather than a bystander, when [they] hear a group targeted with a hateful comment."

For students who already feel different, even small

gestures can matter. Bridges recalls a Jewish student's reaction after participating in a Passover activity during an advisory period—a time for a small group of students to discuss school and personal concerns with a teacher.

"I got a message from her mom about an hour after school, saying that the student came home and was just overjoyed that we had taken the time to celebrate," Bridges says. "Even if it's only one kid, she heard us."

Windows in a world of mirrors

For some teachers in majority white communities, the challenge is how to introduce difference without turning it into a show.

"We want the kids to have exposure, but not for it to be forced or performative," Bridges explains.

She and Ahnrud rely heavily on curriculum approved by their district, both for quality and protection. The district's state-approved English language arts curriculum, for example, opens the school year with lessons on Sudan. This builds on a unit in the sixth-grade English curriculum in which students read a book centered on a protagonist from Malawi.

"I love to teach the first unit, because it opens the door to talk about people from Africa," Ahnrud says.

Historically, when we did a "What do you think of ... Africa?" activity, kids' impressions were mostly negative, Ahnrud recalls.

"This year, for the first time, the kids were more positive," she says, noting that earlier lessons about Africa helped broaden students' perspectives and foster a more informed, open mindset by the time they reached seventh grade.

Exposure fosters understanding

In Fergus Falls, Minn.—a rural town of about 14,000 people that is more than 90 percent white—Melinda "Mindy" Christianson, decided that her lessons couldn't stay confined to the classroom.

How to Expand Students' **WORLDVIEW**

Christianson teaches college-level English and communication courses at Kennedy Secondary School. With support from her principal, she added an intercultural communication course, modeled after one she took in college.

Christianson grew up in Fergus and always wished she'd had a class like this one before leaving her hometown.

As part of the course, students travel an hour north to Fargo, N.D., where they engage with adult multilingual learners, speak directly with new Americans, and visit international markets.

"They lose some of those stereotypes and assumptions they had," Christianson says.

Belonging for all

While homogeneous schools may appear uniform, differences still exist.

In Boise, Idaho, junior high music teacher Cassie McBean works in a district with a mostly white, Mormon population.

"Because we have such low populations of students of color and LGBTQ+ students," McBean says, "I see those students getting targeted more."

For her, inclusion starts with visible signals: "Everyone is Welcome Here" posters, a safe-space sticker on her classroom door, and music choices that



In math teacher Amanda Bridges' classroom, students learn about mathematicians from a variety of backgrounds and cultures.

go beyond what students already know.

"If students aren't feeling safe or comfortable or connecting to teachers, they won't feel safe at school," she says. McBean is deliberate about representation, especially when teaching music from other cultures. "There's a fine line," she says, "between honoring it right and making a joke out of it."

Teaching through tension

Across the country, educators describe navigating political and cultural restraints about what can be taught in the classroom related to race and identity, while also trying to center students' well-being.

In Idaho, where lawmakers have passed restrictions on classroom

discussion of identity, McBean says politics have definitely taken a toll. "It's just being afraid to do what I want ... for my students," she reflects.

In Rhode Island, Ahnrud works closely with colleagues and administrators to select the appropriate text and lessons from the approved curriculum, which helps shield Ahnrud and her peers from political attacks.

Rather than stepping away from the work, educators say these challenges reinforce the need to continue it with care and intention.

"You have to make yourself OK with having uncomfortable conversations ... about something that's highly charged and emotional," Bridges says. "And you also have to examine your own biases."

What these educators hope students carry forward is openness. "Different isn't bad," Bridges says. "Different is just different."

As McBean says, "Be open and listen to your students. [They'll] say a lot without saying anything at all." 🌸



You can advocate for safe and inclusive schools. Find out how at nea.org/EdJustice.

NEA MEMBERS INSURANCE TRUST® AND PLAN - 2024 SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT

(Plan Year Beginning September 1, 2024)

The following is the summary annual report for the NEA Members Insurance Trust® and Plan (collectively Trust), Employer Identification Number 53-0115260, providing information on the insurance programs sponsored by the National Education Association (NEA) including the NEA Life Insurance® Program, NEA Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance Program, NEA Complimentary LifeSM, and NEA Retiree Health Program for the period beginning September 1, 2024, and ending August 31, 2025. The annual report has been filed with the Employee Benefits Security Administration by the NEA as Plan Administrator, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

BASIC NEA MEMBERS INSURANCE TRUST FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The value of Trust assets, after subtracting liabilities of the Trust, was **\$168,158,235** as of August 31, 2025, compared to **\$173,136,125** as of August 31, 2024. During the Trust year, the Trust experienced a decrease in its net assets of **\$4,977,890**. This decrease includes unrealized depreciation and depreciation in the value of plan assets; that is, the difference between the value of the plan's assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year or the cost of assets acquired during the year. During the Trust year, the Trust had total income of **\$115,702,330** including participant contributions of **\$105,000,185**, a net appreciation in the market value of investments of **\$6,083,940**, and earnings from investments of **\$4,618,205**. Trust expenses were **\$120,320,220**. These expenses included benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries, administrative and other expenses.

INFORMATION FOR NEA LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with Minnesota Life Insurance Company to pay all NEA Preferred Term Life Insurance claims and The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all other NEA Life Insurance claims incurred under the terms of this program. Because they are so called "experienced rated" contracts, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. The total premiums for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 2024, and ending August 31, 2025, made under such "experienced-rated" contracts were **\$53,691,418** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contracts during the Trust year was **\$55,316,215**. The total number of participants was **372,299**.

INFORMATION FOR NEA ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT (AD&D) AND ACCIDENTAL INJURY PROGRAMS

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all NEA AD&D and NEA AD&D Plus claims incurred under the terms of the Trust. Because it is a so called "experienced rated" contract, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. The total premiums for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 2024, and ending August 31, 2025, made under such "experienced-rated" contract were **\$4,475,348** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was **\$4,760,479**. The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America which allocates funds toward group insurance certificates for the NEA AD&D Advantage Program and the NEA Accidental Injury Program. The total premiums for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 2024, and ending August 31, 2025, was **\$1,036,762**. The total number of participants was **168,800** in all AD&D and Accidental Injury Programs.

INFORMATION FOR NEA COMPLIMENTARY LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all NEA Complimentary Life Insurance claims incurred under the terms of the Trust. The NEA Complimentary Life Insurance Program is self-supporting and paid by premiums from the NEA Members Insurance Trust funds rather than from Member contributions. Because it is a so called "experienced rated" contract, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. The total premiums for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 2024, and ending August 31, 2025, were **\$1,652,012** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was **\$1,348,960**. The total number of participants was **3,093,414**.

INFORMATION FOR NEA RETIREE HEALTH PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with United American Insurance Company to pay all NEA Retiree Health Program ("NEA RHP") claims incurred under the terms of the Program. The total premiums for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 2024, and ending August 31, 2025, were **\$21,043,394** for NEA RHP. The total number of participants was **6,713** in NEA RHP.

Your Rights to Additional Information

As a participant, you have the legally protected right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof for a reasonable charge or you may inspect the Annual Report without charge at the office of NEA Members Insurance Trust, Attn: NEA Member Benefits, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 or at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. upon payment of copying costs. Requests to the Department should be addressed to: Public Disclosure Room, Room N-1513, Employee Benefits Security Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210. You also have the right to receive from the Trust Administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the Trust and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the Trust and accompanying notes, or both. If you request a copy of the full annual report from the plan administrator, these two statements and accompanying notes will be included as part of that report. The charge to cover copying costs given above does not include a charge for the copying of these portions of the report because these portions are furnished without charge.

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Mr. Ward STRIKES A POSE



"I like your fit, Mr. Ward!" That's how many of Tom Ward's seventh-graders greet him as they spill into his classroom at Live Oak Middle School, in California.

But Ward's students aren't the only fans of his retro threads. This history teacher moonlights as a social media sensation, with millions following him on Instagram [@mrwardstyle](#), where he shows off his daily classroom looks.

Ward sports groovy duds from across the decades, but his favorite era is the late 1950s to early 1960s. "I love the classic Sinatra, Rat Pack look, with its smaller lapels, thinner ties, and high-waisted pants. The style from this period is stunning and timeless," he says.

Ward doesn't take those compliments from his students for granted. "I know that's an opportunity to make a connection with that student. I know how important that is," he adds. "I always try to create a culture of positivity, looking your best, acting your best, and being your best. I'm trying to give them a recipe for success."



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