



NEA is working to provide great public schools Directors' Newsletter

October 2019

Countdown to 2020



NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia calls the website, strongpublicschools.org (homepage seen above), “the Consumer Reports for education candidates.” The site is updated regularly and allows visitors to compare candidate positions on various educator and labor issues.

Board undertakes election messaging training

The opening of the NEA Board of Directors’ Election Messaging training began with an energetic introduction by Executive Committee members Shelly Moore Krajacic (WI) and Robert Rodriguez (CA) as they walked leaders through the strongpublicschools.org website, and they challenged the Board to share the interactive site far and wide. Krajacic reminded us that “When you become president, you do it with us, not against us.”

Ramona Oliver, Senior Director of NEA’s Center for Communications, reminded the Board that its message is student-centered when we talk about the 2020 election. Educators have superpowers; they are our connection to our students, our concern for the success of the students, and our issues and values.

Mike Misterek, Associate Director of Communications-Politics and Advocacy, was the next presenter. He spoke of the #RedforEd movement and how it has energized our members. He also discussed the goals behind the NEA’s message. It is all about the issues and not the candidates. Misterek reminded the Board that it must engage all NEA members and provide them voice in the process. In 2020, with so much at stake for the future of our country, educators must use their powerful voice to elect a president who believes that all students—regardless of where they live and how much money their family makes—deserve the support, tools, and the time to learn in a public school.

The board then broke into eight small groups to practice one-to-one conversations to encourage citizens back home to get involved in the 2020 presidential election and support a candidate who knows the value of public education.

“Right now we are not promoting a candidate, we are promoting an agenda,” NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said. “We want our members to attend every event they’re able to and identify themselves as an educator and a member to put education on the overall agenda.”



New ED Anderson Shares Her Story

Late on the final day of the Directors' meeting, NEA's new Executive Director Kim Anderson introduced herself to the directors and observers and shared her vision for NEA. She was born in 1969 in the Cayman Islands. Two years prior, the Supreme Court struck down a law banning interracial marriage. This allowed her parents to marry, and Anderson cited this ability to "change the law for the better" is hard-wired into her core beliefs and has shaped her over the years. Her core values are community, respect, identity, inclusion, and partnerships. In speaking of NEA's future and our goals, she said, "there is literally nothing we can't do. Our power is in our members, and in our ability to evolve."



Anderson

Total Membership Dips at Summer's End

During her report to the NEA Board, NEA Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss (VA) provided an update on membership (overall numbers are down by 23,218 compared with a year ago). Moss noted the vast majority of this membership loss is attributable to the recent California Faculty Association's sudden disaffiliation. Overall, membership was at 2,975,250 on September 16. "As our colleagues in states like Michigan and Iowa have told us, we are not out of the woods yet," Moss said, referencing a rise in organized membership drop campaigns. "We must make it a priority to be out there having those one-to-one conversations with those who have not decided to become a part of us to let them know the value of belonging to an organization such as ours."

VP Pringle Touts Community School Work

NEA Vice President Becky Pringle (PA) highlighted several organizational initiatives during her report to the Board. She began with an overview of a recent visit to New Mexico that highlighted deeply collaborative work with the community schools model. She also touched on the retooled ESP Leaders for Tomorrow program that is now the ESP Leadership Institute. It will include 40 ESP from around the nation (up from 20, previously). When it launches in January, all its training will be grounded in diversity, equity, and cultural competency. Each participant will have a capstone project designed to lift Association goals. All of the training will be led by ESP for ESP. Pringle highlighted what she called a "research and development project" known as Pathways. It is a year-long cohort-based learning and development journey that supports educators of color to grow as leaders and activists at the local, state, and national level. Pringle also took advantage of the opportunity to promote the NEA Leadership Summit, scheduled for March 13-15 in Orlando, FL. Registration opens January 6 and closes January 24.

Feedback on Vision Statement Sought

A New Business Item brought forward during the 2018 NEA Representative Assembly in Minneapolis asked the NEA leadership to revisit its Vision Statement: "A Great Public School for Every Student." Following year-long engagements leading up to the 2019 RA in Houston, a task force brought forward the following proposed revision: "Public education is the cornerstone of our democracy where education professionals have a respected and valued voice and all students are empow-

ered to be leaders of a just society." That Vision Statement was referred back to the committee for further work. NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia (UT) has asked the NEA Board to gather feedback from members on both the current and proposed Vision Statements: What is liked/disliked about each. Additionally, if the NEA's mission of preparing students to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world is successful, what would we see in our communities in the future? If you'd like to participate in this feedback and have not been contacted, please contact your Board contact listed in this Newsletter.

Legal Challenge Successes Thus Far

NEA General Counsel Alice O'Brien provided a little levity as she began her report. "It seems like we're being sued pretty much everywhere," she began, "but we're also winning just about everywhere." And such is O'Brien's life in the post-Janus world where the NEA finds itself. To date, 17 cases have been tossed out of court at either the district or state court level, but 13 of those have appeals pending. Eight additional cases linger in the district courts. "Every case seeking back fees has been tossed out," O'Brien stated. Two cases challenging exclusive representation have petitioned the current U.S. Supreme Court. O'Brien said the high court should announce whether it will take one or both on by October 8. Each contend forcing a public sector employee to be represented by a labor union they've chosen not to belong to is a violation of their First Amendment free speech rights. Cases already before the Supreme Court this term include LGBTQ discrimination, gun restrictions around schools, and DACA rescission. O'Brien also noted a big win at the trial court level where the proposed *Flores Regulation* was permanently enjoined. This settlement limits child detention, requires detention facilities to be licensed and requires hearings for children. The proposed regulation would have allowed unlimited detention in unlicensed secure facilities without hearings.



O'Brien

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Hincapié inspires Board with remarks

‘We are building a nation that is equitable and inclusive to show that love *does* trump hate’

Marielena Hincapié, the Executive Director of National Immigration Law Center (NILC) and keynote speaker for this year's Hispanic Observance, inspired the Board with her advocacy for immigrants. The NILC is the only organization exclusively dedicated to low-income immigrants, working to protect the same opportunities that previous generations of immigrants had.

Hincapié shared that she was a daughter of Colombian immigrants who knew the power of education. "Daughter, we don't have material things to leave you, but an education is something no one can take away from you," she stated in both Spanish and English, honoring the personal sacrifice that her parents made – and many parents make – for their children to have a better future. "The promise of equality and freedom and justice for all draws immigrants from all nations.

"My family is what makes America great. Collectively this country is stronger because of everybody in this room today."

Hincapié dove into the dangerous times we live in and explored how much is at risk, declaring it is about our democracy and our future as Americans and aspiring citizens.

"It's really about changing demographics in our nation ... It's really about political power," she said. She also shared her work on DACA with President Obama and thanked the NEA for its continued partnership and support of DACA recipients. "It's not about immigrants," she noted. "It's about our children, our families, our communities, our members, our country – an existential fight for the soul of our nation."

Hincapié argued that what is really at stake is a "society where all have tools and resources and freedom to thrive and fulfill their full potential." She shared the history of the Public Charge Rule, a part of the Chinese Exclusion Act, that was applied to limited circumstances of immigrants and has been "radically expanded to now mean 26 million people, including nine million U.S. citizen children" who risk being able to remain permanently in the country if they use certain benefits. As a result, families are making life and death decisions on whether to receive



Hincapié, Executive Director of the National Immigration Law Center, addressed the Board as the keynote speaker during the annual Hispanic Observance.

care or be separated. Hincapié declared these changes are intended to fundamentally change our nation's character: "We are fighting for *all* of us. We are building a nation that is equitable and inclusive, to show that love *does* trump hate."

She concluded by emphasizing the importance of the 2020 election and how it will shape the future of our democracy. "Today's children are tomorrow's educators, entrepreneurs, political leaders – our future. This is not about immigrants or immigration. It's about all of us. We must do this for our children today and tomorrow's children. We must do this together! *Si, se puede!*"

UniServ Guidelines updates are approved

The NEA Board of Directors approved updates to the UniServ Guidelines during its recent meeting.

UniServ Advisory Committee Chair Tracy Phillips (ESP-At Large, NV) walked the Board through five primary modifications that came from a year-long feedback process.

The guidelines, which had last been reviewed in 2008, were looked at again beginning in October 2018 when leadership teams from the National Council of Urban Education Associa-

tions (NCUEA), the National Council of State Education Associations (NCSEA), as well as the UniServ Managers Association (UMA) were surveyed for their input. Phillips said those groups also had an opportunity to provide feedback to a draft of the changes in February. Finally, a workgroup that included representatives from the aforementioned groups, the Local Option managers, and members of Phillips' committee also met during the summer to finalize the recommended changes.

Chief among the changes were the following:

- ◆ Update the UniServ Program's Purpose to include the NEA's Core Values.
- ◆ To explicitly state that membership growth and engagement are included in the Purpose.
- ◆ Streamline the application and evaluation processes.
- ◆ Create a Membership Organizing position



Cournoyer applauds NEA-NIEA partnership

Diana Cournoyer, Executive Director of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA, www.niea.org), addressed the NEA Board in advance of the NIEA's 50th anniversary convention as part of the NEA's American Indian and Alaska Native Observance.

Cournoyer highlighted the partnership between the NEA and the NIEA in its work to advocate for the country's indigenous students. For example, NEA worked to educate educators in Oklahoma about social justice issues and educators' responsibilities to discuss the idea of social justice and instill it in their students.

She used her experience of people's perception of the mentality, rhetoric, and perception of her community of Pine Ridge to demonstrate the need to adjust the perception of indigenous



Diana Cournoyer addressed the NEA Board of Directors

communities across the country. The NIEA works to implement programs that will ensure college and career readiness for indigenous youth and develop culturally relevant curricula. Furthermore, the organization collects data to support the preservation of indigenous lan-

guages and traditions through culture-based education.

Cournoyer noted: "When there are not enough teachers to go around, the schools with the fewest resources and least desirable working conditions are the ones left with vacancies." She added that this disproportionately affects schools that serve indigenous students.

Cournoyer also took a moment to acknowledge the land and the Indigenous nations that were in the D.C. – Maryland/

Virginia region – and encouraged educators to use posters provided by NEA Ed Justice to help students honor the native land where they are. You can learn more about the Indigenous nations in your area and #HonorNativeLand by visiting www.native-land.ca

NEA Board receives training to build better understanding of white supremacy culture

Over 100 NEA directors met on Sunday morning of the recent Super Week to begin training to understand white supremacy culture and its implications for NEA. This was presented by the Center for Social Justice.

Sabrina Tines from the Center for Governance introduced the session. Both the Centers for Governance and Social Justice partnered to train the highest level of NEA leadership to most effectively look through the lens of social and racial justice in all that it does.

Hilario Benzon, Senior Policy Analyst in the Human and Civil Rights Department, then took the reins to tell the board about a recent experience he had in Washington, D.C., that forced him to speak out in support of fellow professionals who were being verbally attacked. This incident underscored the importance of learning all that we're able because if you *know* better, you *do* better.

Cory Wofford, Center for Governance, reviewed NEA's vision and core values to keep them forefront in the work. He discussed NEA's leadership competencies and its Leadership Learning and Development Objectives which include:

- ◆ Developing common language, specifically about the organization's work on racial justice in education
- ◆ Enhancing education leaders' ability to critically examine issues of race that permeate the classroom and educational institutions and to enhance their ability to strategize to create local remedies

- ◆ Strengthen the organization's ability to analyze issues of race, become more explicit about race and racial justice while actively advocating for change
- ◆ Create an experiential learning that provides structured learning and sharing opportunities to discuss key concepts and develop discussion skills and techniques

For the NEA Board of Directors, participation in this and other trainings are critical in advancing the organizational goals for its racial and social priority work. The intent of the training was to prepare each board member with the competency to be able to: Use their own voice and the voices of others to elevate and impact conversations about racial and social justice, including directing people toward resources and tools for activism; build, connect, engage, and grow a community of activists in the communities where we live and work to advance NEA's racial and social justice policies that directly impact public education.

As the training began and Benzon was walking the Board through the history of white supremacy culture, the focus changed from that of a standard training to a much more personal conversation about race and racism and how it affects each of us. The facilitators allowed the board to have those difficult conversations realizing they are a necessary part of change. So while the 3-hour training was not completed, it began in a way that will allow all Board members to continue to learn and grow as social and racial justice advocates for our nation's students, NEA members, and themselves.



2020-22 Plan and Budget work begins

As the NEA Board of Directors begins the work of developing a 2-year Plan and Budget which will be presented at the 2020 Representative Assembly in Atlanta, it received critical pieces of information to launch that work. It was able to provide initial input on the process.

First, the Board heard from the Strategy Department's Andrea Walker about the NEA's most-recent SWOT Analysis. The analysis examined the organization's strengths and weaknesses as well as its external opportunities and threats.



Moss

Walker noted some external trends that popped up in this biennial review: the steady erosion of public institutions including public education and educators claiming their right to shape public education, with or without the NEA. In terms of lessons learned Walker noted the need to build bridges to a more just society and to create a big tent to unify and shape our future together.

Following Walker's presentation, NEA Executive Committee member George Sheridan (CA) moved adoption of the 2020-22 Strategic Framework which is largely unchanged from the current version, focusing on three key areas:

- ◆ Opportunity: Increasing Educator Voice, Influence, and Professional Authority; Recruit and Engage New and Early Career Educators; Advance Racial Justice in Education; Support Professional Excellence.
- ◆ Defense area: Secure a Pro-Public Education Environment.
- ◆ Capacity: Enhance Organizational Capacity.

"The dangers and the opportunities are greater than ever before," Sheridan said.

2020-2022 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



Following the Strategic Framework adoption, Board members broke into smaller subgroups and dispersed throughout the building to provide initial input to members of the Program and Budget Committee through two questions: What would success look like in this area by 2022? How would we know we have been successful?

These responses from the various groups were collected and will be shared with the 8-member Budget Committee. That Committee, chaired by NEA Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss (VA), is charged with developing and delivering a plan and budget to the RA in July.

Budget Committee Elections: Elections were conducted the first day of the Board Meeting to fill three vacancies on the Program and Budget Committee. Six NEA Board members were nominated for the vacancies. The Board elected James Frazier (NJ), Gina Harris (IL), and Shannon McCann (WA) to 2-year terms. This trio will join Moss, NEA Vice President Becky Pringle, fellow Board members Amber Gould (AZ) and Doug Hill (MI), and state affiliate president Kathy Vetter



The NEA Board of Directors showed its solidarity by all donning "Are You the One?" shirts during Day 2 of its recent meetings. The shirts, provided as a promotion of the Strong Public Schools 2020 campaign, read "Are you for kids? Or are you just kidding?" on the back. The Board devoted much of the morning on Day 2 to learning messaging heading into Election 2020.



President's report covers much ground

Eskelsen Garcia touches on election, impeachment, NBIs

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia began her report to the Board of Directors with some good news: NEA's 3-1G initiative is showing great results. At the 2019 Representative Assembly, NEA had the highest ethnic minority representation in its history; 37 states met their 3-1G; and 40% of delegates were ethnic minorities.

After this bit of good news, Eskelsen Garcia turned her focus to the 2020 Presidential Election. She asked the board to remember the 2016 Election and its decision to make a recommendation early in the election cycle, the first time the NEA had done so. She believes the PAC Council and Board made the right decision, and that she will again follow the lead of those two bodies before a decision is made in the 2020 election.

To date, 19 Democrats and four Republicans are vying for the office of President.

Eskelsen Garcia said, "We are playing in a very serious arena" when it comes to the 2020 election and that the NEA will be in the center of that arena helping to direct its outcome because we believe in our responsibility to impact elections. "We believe in democracy, and when we see it in danger, we act."

In her president's report, she discussed the impeachment inquiry of Donald Trump and questions that Board and other leaders may get regarding her tweet which read, "The truth matters. Educators teach students to ask questions and seek answers. We support the House's call to initiate an impeachment inquiry." Eskelsen Garcia stressed the importance of a singular word in that statement: *inquiry* because, again, NEA believes in democracy.

"There are no budget implications (for NEA)," she said. "We have made our statement and it is now in the hands of Congress."

New Business Items were also a topic of discussion. Since 2009, the number of NBIs brought to the Representative Assembly have doubled. The Board had small and large group discussions about the number of New Business Items that are brought to the RA and how we might better serve the members so that they can have meaningful conversations and time to process the NBIs before



NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia discussed a variety of topics during her report to the Board of Directors.

Board provides input on current RA NBI process

One of the first orders of business at its most recent meeting was President Lily Eskelsen Garcia directing the Board to consider its current process around New Business Items at its annual Representative Assembly.

Eskelsen Garcia celebrated, "the wonderful tradition of each individual delegate having the ability to bring an idea, with 50 signatures, to the floor of the RA" and reported that the number of NBIs has doubled in the last 10 years. This has contributed to the challenge for delegates to be informed voters while carefully considering increasingly controversial topics.

"We are so proud of our deliberative democracy," Eskelsen Garcia said, "but I think we are losing the *deliberative*." She posed two questions for consideration: How important is it for delegates to have time outside of the RA to discuss and be informed on NBIs? Do you believe we currently have sufficient time to discuss NBIs outside of the RA?

After a 15-minute small group discussion, the Board shared thoughts and concerns from this summer's delegates about the need for more information and time before making decisions on the floor. Further discussion included barriers preventing early submission of NBIs and ideas around ways to improve the process. President Eskelsen Garcia concluded the conversation by thanking the Board for their ideas and promising to consider these concerns, barriers, and ideas as next steps were developed.

"We believe in democracy, and when we see it in danger, we act."

— Lily Eskelsen Garcia
NEA President

voting. This was an initial conversation and no decisions were made. The Board of Directors will carry on this conversation at its February Super Week. (See article at right.)



Great Public Schools for Every Child

