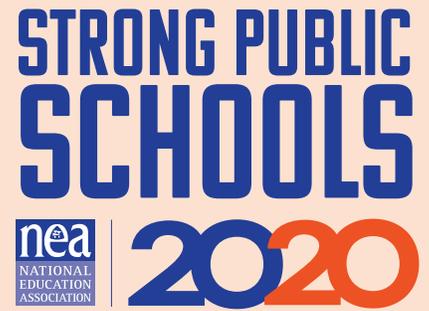


# NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION:

# VISION FOR 2020



**T**he National Education Association works to ensure that public education is the cornerstone of our democracy, where education professionals have a respected and valued voice and all people are prepared to take their places as powerful decision-makers in a just, diverse, and interdependent world.

**“WE NEED A PRESIDENT WHO  
VALUES OUR PARTNERSHIP.”**

Our union’s power is its members and their presence in every congressional district in this nation.

With more than 3 million members, the NEA is the largest labor union in the United States and the world’s largest professional association of educators. One in 100 Americans is an NEA member, and 1 in 39 voters reside in an NEA household. This election is our country’s high-stakes test, and we intend to do our part in choosing the next president of the United States. It’s our responsibility to ensure that our students and their well-being are a priority for all candidates and for all voters.

To that end, it is important to remember that the federal government’s role in education is *not* to be a National School Board. We believe local communities should have the power to make decisions for our public schools and hold the responsibility

to educate all students. The federal role in public education is to protect and uphold every student's civil right to a quality public education. We understand the federal role is vital, but under the current administration, it has been corrupted.

ALL students should have the legal right to access high-quality learning experiences. The U.S. Department of Education must challenge inequities and institutional racism that still permeate systems of

**"IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT OUR STUDENTS AND THEIR WELL-BEING ARE A PRIORITY FOR ALL CANDIDATES AND FOR ALL VOTERS."**

funding, programs, staffing, and services. These structures continue to interfere with access to education and opportunity for students of color, and they must be intentionally dismantled.

The Department of Education must not only articulate a vision of shared responsibility for equity, access, and opportunity for all students but also defend the rights of students with special needs—students with disabilities and English learners—to receive the necessary support to ensure their success. It must be the core work of the Department of Education to protect all students against discrimination and harassment in all its forms, whether based on race, gender, religion, national origin, immigration status, disability, language, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

For decades, too many politicians have been distracted by untried and unproven "reforms," resulting in negative impacts on our students. We have witnessed these politicians race to experiments in school privatization, standardization, and de-professionalization rather than directly confront the

growing and often race-based gaps in school funding, programs, and services. These reforms have proven to be failures.

The current administration has abandoned its responsibility to protect our students' educational rights. The take-over of public schools by incompetent or fraudulent private organizations and the draining of public school dollars to prop up charters have devastated communities of color all over the country. The federal government should have no role in encouraging, subsidizing, or incentivizing public school privatization in the form of private school vouchers or the unaccountable charter school industry. It should have no role in encouraging, subsidizing, or incentivizing fast-track teacher certification or short-term, revolving-door teacher placement schemes such as Teach for America that disparately and adversely impact our students of color. It should have no role in dictating to

states the high-stakes use of student test data in their assessment systems, educator evaluations, or school performance rankings. We can look to Betsy DeVos's experiment in Michigan to find the most tragic and cautionary tale.

The future Department of Education must fully embrace its role and responsibility. It is vital to the success of our public schools and our students. We must call out and cure persistent—and at times intentional—educational inequities so that all students have access to what the best public schools offer.

We know what makes a successful school. Study the school systems with the greatest student success—including optimal graduation rates, college enrollment rates, safety, attendance, test scores, scholarship opportunities, parental involvement, and teacher retention. The best public schools in the United States are *not* the best schools because of competition with charters or vouchers; they're *not* the best because of alternative certified teachers who stay two years and leave; they're *not* the

best because of high-stakes test prep. They're the best because they have high-quality programs that include the arts and sports; they have access to technology that works; they offer courses that inspire curiosity and emphasize critical and creative thinking skills and collaborative problem-solving; they have stable, highly qualified, and respected faculty and support staff; they have a librarian, a school nurse, and counselors on staff; and they have a clean, healthy building. They also have a large population of students who've never missed a meal and go to the doctor when they're sick.

These public schools are as good as or better than any elite private school in the country, and they are most consistently found in affluent, white neighborhoods. Parents in these communities—who can afford any prestigious private school—choose their neighborhood public schools because they're excellent schools. *Parents in all communities, including our poorest communities, should have this same choice.*

The fundamental question is: Why aren't all public schools as good as our best public schools? As a union of educators and public service professionals, *we are giving candidates the answer.*

Betsy DeVos supports the growing inequality of our public schools and what is referred to as the "Education Industry." This "starves the beast" of public education—particularly in poor black and brown communities—to build a critical mass of dissatisfaction with neighborhood public schools and increase support for privately managed charters. The distraction of high-stakes testing has been used to feed the narrative that public is bad and private is good; to throw public schools into a chaotic and expensive race to get a few more stressed kids above an arbitrary cut score; and to do whatever it takes to avoid being labeled a failure. Disillusioned

educators leave the profession in droves, unwilling to be complicit in harming their students through test-and-punish, scripted and joyless lessons, and cuts in programs and support staff that leave them without the colleagues they depend on to serve the whole child. This is by design.



**We need a president who understands the concerted effort that has been made to discredit our public schools and turn them over to profiteers.**

Many good people have been fooled because, on paper, it sounds advantageous to allow schools to be more creative and inclusive of "parent" voices. What the facts show is that profiteers are not interested in hearing from parents; they want parents to leave public schools instead of being more engaged. Undermining public schools may seem like a step in the right direction for those frustrated with the pace of improvement, but we must see it for what it is: public dollars for private profit. We need a president who sees it and rejects it; one who will focus on what's right for all students and not for Betsy DeVos's Education Industry.

**We need a president who knows that we, as educators, don't just go to work every day; we answer a call to serve.** We need a president who will respect our voice and make sure that all of us—especially those who serve our most vulnerable



students—have the authority, resources, and respect that all professionals deserve.

**We need a president who recognizes and honors all professionals who work in public schools and on campuses across the country.** We want a president who understands and recognizes that we know what we're talking about; who will turn to us, as educators who are working directly with our students, to find creative solutions and innovations; who will trust in our collaborative judgment and understand the importance of our role in making decisions that affect our students and our professions.

**We need a president who is committed to improving our public schools instead of abandoning them;** one that will not cut the education budgets and shift scarce resources to private school vouchers and charters. We need a president who believes underserved students should have the same access to excellent public schools as those students in the most affluent communities.

**We need a president who will fight for all students to have access to higher education** to help them grow into successful and happy adults. The phe-

nomenon of crippling student debt is not sustainable, and it must be addressed. If it isn't, higher education will quickly become limited to those who come from families who can afford to write a check.

**We need a president who will acknowledge the pervasive systemic and structural racism in our institutions built around a culture of assumptions of white supremacy.** This culture continually harms students of color in the way they are disciplined; the resources they are afforded; the limited expectations of their abilities and their prospects; and inadequate housing and healthcare.

Unless we acknowledge that this culture still exists, we cannot confront the school-to-prison pipeline, tracking, and the lack of access and support that leads to opportunity.

**We need a president who not only understands that our country is comprised of people with fundamental differences but also welcomes and celebrates that diversity.** Our country needs a leader who can demonstrate respect for others; who works to build bridges; and who will understand the lives of ordinary families who have extraordinary dreams for their children.

**We need a president who truly believes that public education is the cornerstone of this democracy** and an educated citizenry is critical to this nation's survival and success.

**We need a president who values our partnership.** Someone who will see the educators of America, and the union that represents them, as a trusted partner. Someone who will welcome us and understand our calling to serve our great mission—to advocate for our professionalism and fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

