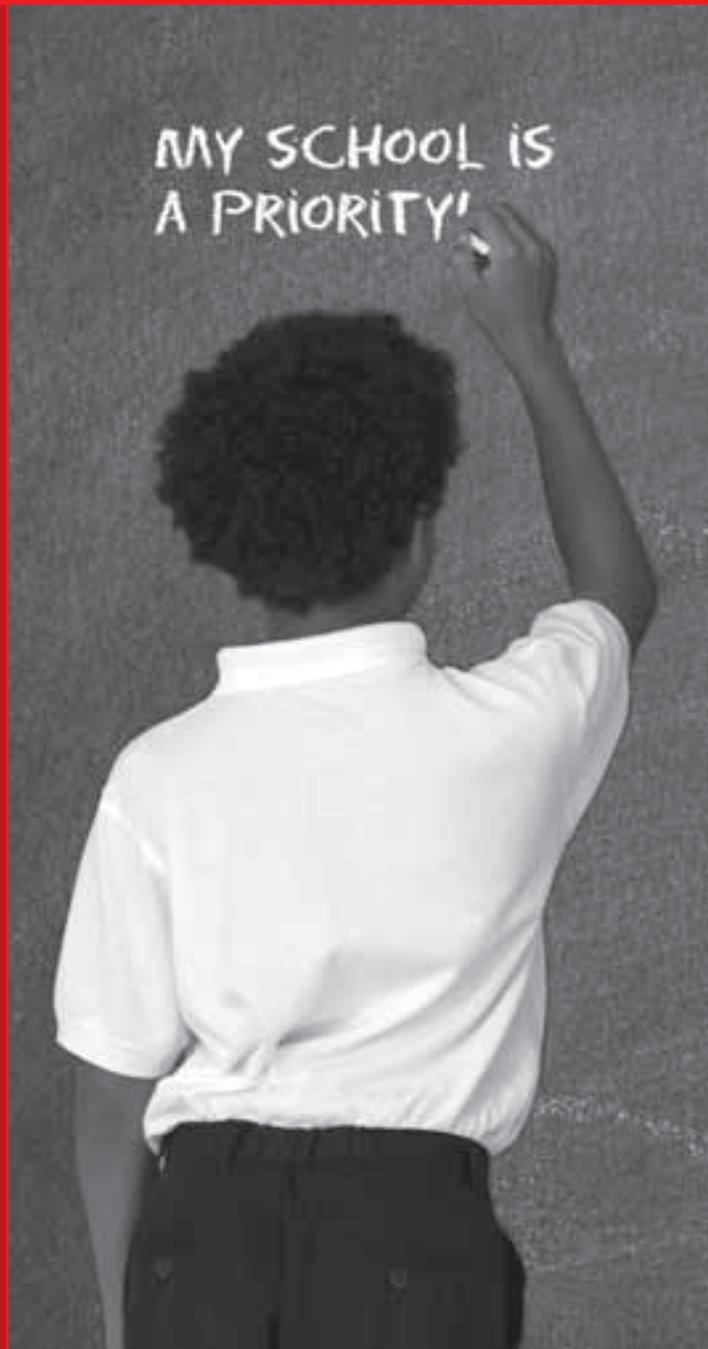


NEA'S PRIORITY SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN:

Profiles and commitments in school transformation

How schools, associations and communities collaborate to create great public schools for every student

P R I O R I T Y
S C H O O L S
C A M P A I G N



A Message from NEA President Dennis Van Roekel

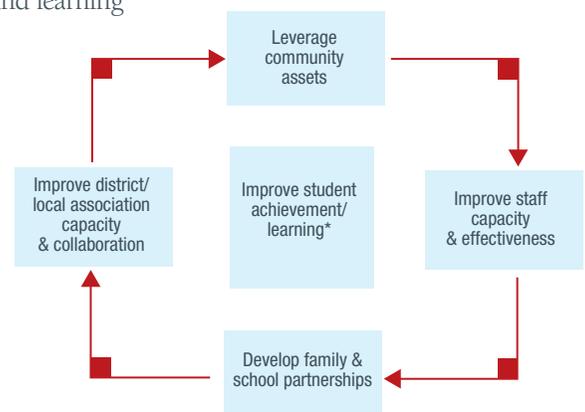
In the drive to improve education, the battle lines have been drawn. On one side are the so-called reformers, those drawn to the latest silver bullet, one-size-fits-all gimmick. Theirs is reform that divides, all the while handcuffing students and teachers with misguided and poorly crafted policies that promote sanctions rather than solutions.

And on the other side is NEA's Priority Schools Campaign, the Association's work to help transform low-performing schools, what we call priority schools. Ours is transformation that unites all stakeholders—students, administrators, policymakers, parents, communities—in a collaborative mission to fulfill the promise of public education. Partnerships between schools, school districts and educators may be surprising to many exposed to a steady diet of attacks on unions but make no mistake; NEA's Priority Schools Campaign is changing the game and moving the conversation.

Grounded in five research-based elements of change, the core of NEA's Priority Schools Campaign is a recognition that shared responsibility and collaborative effort are the keys to students reaching their potential. The campaign is working with and through NEA state and local affiliates to:

- leverage community assets
- improve staff capacity and effectiveness
- develop family and community partnerships
- improve district and local association capacity and collaboration
- improve student achievement and learning

NEA's Priority Schools Campaign is the mandate of the NEA's 2009 Representative Assembly that the organization direct its resources toward priority schools. NEA seized on the public policy window afforded by the Obama administration's School Improvement Grant program to leverage NEA resources as a complement. Such collaboration is a powerful force for improving student performance.



* Performance/Access/Attainment Adapted from The NEA Foundation

Year two of the campaign finds NEA heavily engaged in transformation at the local level with target sites across the country receiving on-site, on-line and on-paper technical assistance in the areas of:

- support and advocacy
- engaging families and communities
- building and leveraging organizational capacity

The early success of our members proves that union-led, union-championed transformation is real and replicable.

We believe the following profiles in transformation are lighthouses for policies and practices that not only result in increased student success, but do so in a manner that respects the voice of educators and the profession.



Dennis Van Roekel

Profiles in Organizational Capacity

PORTLAND, OREGON

Roosevelt High School, represented by the Portland Association of Teachers, has been in a constant state of transformation for the past 30 years. Under a new, strong principal and led by building association leadership, this school's staff is meeting in collaborative teams to co-plan instruction designed to support every student they serve while providing professional development opportunities for educators. As a result, teachers and staff feel they are making a difference in their students' lives.

“This is the first year that I have felt I want to keep teaching here. I had been feeling really de-valued, and this has been a big turnaround for me. I'm feeling inspired to keep doing what I'm doing.”

—Brian Fain, teacher, Roosevelt High School



MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

In the midst of political attacks from the state legislature, the Alabama Education Association recognized that the success of the state's priority schools could be an effective response. With NEA's Priority Schools Campaign, Montgomery middle schools Bellingrath, Capitol Heights and Southlawn are using NEA's renowned KEYS program to identify strengths and needs, an exercise that will lead to an informed and enthusiastic start to the school year.

“We have perhaps the greatest impact on the instructional practices.”

—Tyna Davis, manager, Education Policy and Professional Practice, Alabama Education Association

CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA

Begun five years ago with the idea that teams of educators close to children make the best decisions for their students, the Clark County Education Association bargained development of The Empowerment School Project, a collaborative model for transforming low-performing schools. Its success proves that educators, not legislators, know best what should happen in classrooms.

“You can't go in and wave a magic wand and make everything right. It's going to take a team.”

—Carolyn Stewart, project manager, Clark County Education Association

MARYSVILLE, WASHINGTON

Combining two individual schools into one is a challenge. Tulalip Elementary School, with a 78 percent Native American student population, and Quil Ceda Elementary School will merge to form one student body at the beginning of the 2011-12 school year. The combination of the two schools will result in the opening of a much needed early learning center for the community. Strong leadership and guidance from the Marysville Education Association is helping to ease the transition for students and staff. Working with NEA's Priority Schools Campaign, school staff and district leadership are learning how a positive school culture, teacher leadership and effective shared practices will help to drive success.

“This is exactly the type of support that our district needs in order to move forward with our SIG implementation.”

—Judy Albertson, principal on special assignment, Marysville School District

Profiles in Support and Advocacy

DAYTON, OHIO

Three years ago, Belmont High School was known as “Hellmont.” Fights were a near daily occurrence. The school was a revolving door for teachers. A focus on creating a safe environment has led to a very different Belmont. Members of the Dayton Education Association agree that the turnaround is a result of leadership from Principal David White in collaboration with DEA President David Romick.

“We’re here to serve the students, that’s the bottom line, and collaboration is the only way to get there.”

—David Romick,
president, Dayton Education Association

DES MOINES, IOWA

North High School, represented by the Des Moines Education Association, has taken a two-pronged approach to improving student learning. Students will benefit from a one-to-one laptop initiative and teachers will benefit from a corps of school improvement leaders, grown from their own ranks. An intentional focus on incorporating the teacher voice into these innovations has had a positive impact on the professional culture of the building.

“It’s really important we change the culture of what we’ve been doing, because it hasn’t worked. We need to find new ways of engaging students and getting them in class.”

—Kris Byam, smaller learning communities coordinator, North High School

SALEM, OREGON

Roberts High School and Early College High School, alternative schools represented by the Salem Keizer Education Association and the Association of Salem Keizer Education Support Professionals, educate under-served but motivated students by providing them with rigorous academic programs. Some are teen mothers, others are homeless. More than a few have failed many classes or have been expelled from the district’s traditional schools due to behavioral problems. Too many are economically disadvantaged and hail from single-family homes. At Roberts, students find an academic home and a pathway to success. Free day care services and parenting classes are provided to teen moms. Students who are short on credits get extra help, and school staff helps students find part-time jobs and internships in the community. ECHS students attend three years of high school and two years of community college, graduating with a diploma plus college credits.

“I love the idea we’re holding the bar high, but we have to have multiple ways to jump that bar. . . We need to focus on graduation for all, so we can’t use a cookie-cutter approach to education.”

—Lorelei Gilmore, principal, Roberts High School/Early College High School

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Collaboration and innovation between the Seattle Education Association and building leaders are driving change at Cleveland High School. Implementation of project-based learning and the inclusion model, transition to a science technology engineering and math school, and inauguration of a one-to-one laptop initiative for all freshman and sophomores are just a few of the school’s new initiatives. The creation of a Student Instructional Council also has helped to amp the volume of the student voice. The unique voluntary student group periodically observes teachers in the classroom and provides them with constructive feedback. Better communication between students and teachers is helping to improve instruction and academic success.

“My teachers have changed through the year because of my feedback.”

—Savannah Daniels, freshman, Cleveland High School



Profiles in Family and Community Engagement

TUCSON, ARIZONA

The Tucson Education Association is well-respected in its community as a positive force for public education. That reputation is growing with **Howenstine Magnet High School**, a district jewel that brings the service-learning concept to life. Students see first-hand how learning makes a difference in their community, including projects from the school's decade-long relationship with Habitat for Humanity.

“It’s not real life until you do it and we are doing it here at Howenstine.”

—Chuck Silence, building technology teacher,
Howenstine Magnet High School

HIGH POINT, NORTH CAROLINA

The changes taking place at **Oak Hill Elementary School** are among the most remarkable the school has experienced in its 100-plus year history. **Guilford County Association of Educators** members are part of the team led by principal **Patrice Faison**, also a GCAE member, proving that collaboration between parents and the community leads to student success despite significant socio-economic challenges.

“I’m here because it is important for me to help build a foundation and structure for my son’s education.”

—Christine Jenkins, parent volunteer,
Oak Hill Elementary School

ROMULUS, MICHIGAN

Romulus Middle School, represented by the **Romulus Education Association**, faced a tough local election to renew a portion of its funding. School leaders and community members joined forces with NEA’s **Priority Schools Campaign** and successfully engaged voters to renew the critical funding. This parent and community engagement effort helped to keep **Romulus Middle School** open.



“The millage passed! We stayed on message, got the word out and through the help of the Priority Schools Campaign ran a successful campaign.”

—Jason P. Salhaney, principal, Romulus Middle School

EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

The **Evansville Teachers Association** has positioned itself as a partner with parents and the community to support the success of local students and schools. An innovative program, “**Breakfast in the Classroom**,” created by teachers at **Howard Roosa Elementary School** was in jeopardy of being shut down. Thanks to the collaboration of state and local leaders with parents and community leaders, students at Howard Roosa will continue to get their school day started right with a good meal.

“We wanted to have a method to maximize engagement from the beginning of the day because we didn’t like how the day was getting started. ‘Breakfast in the Classroom’ has improved attendance, reduced the gap in education and is now the calmest part of the day.”

—Brynn J. Kardash, principal, Howard Roosa Elementary School

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

State and local union leaders are working with school district officials and NEA’s **Priority Schools Campaign** to help engage families and community members of **Glendale Middle School** students. Every Friday, Glendale Middle School’s “**Pastelitos para los Padres**” or “**Pastries for Parents**” hosts a meeting for parents and other interested members of the community to discuss and help advance student achievement.

According to the volunteer who manages the parent center, the culture of the school is changing for the better. “Parents are getting more and more calls for positive behavior,” and they are becoming involved in the school.

—Juan Gilberto, community volunteer, Glendale Middle School

Join the Conversation



Priority Schools Campaign

Get the latest policy news and reports from priority schools across the country at the Priority Schools Campaign's official website www.neapriorityschools.org.



Use this private, invitation-only social media site to communicate, share and network with other priority schools stakeholders. You can even submit questions to NEA's subject-matter experts. Request an invitation by emailing priorityschools@nea.org.

Find us on Facebook and start networking with thousands of "fans" from across the country. Make and keep connections with colleagues and collaborators who can help advance your important work. Go to www.facebook.com/priorityschools.

Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/priorityschools. You'll get the latest news affecting America's priority schools sent directly to your computer or mobile phone.



NEA's official YouTube channel will be chronicling the Priority Schools Campaign's efforts to bring dramatic changes to America's struggling schools. Have a video you'd like to share with us? E-mail us a link at priorityschools@nea.org.



Become part of the conversation at Talk Priority Schools, the blog of the Priority Schools Campaign. It's where educators, community members, local leaders and policy experts discuss transforming lower-performing schools. Readers, writers, inbetweeners; check it out at www.talkpriorityschools.org.



Priority Schools Campaign

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