

Maine Education Association 2022 3-1(g) Plan

PURPOSE of MEA's Plan for attaining the goal set in NEA Bylaw 3-1(g):

Maine's population continues to change as indicated not only by the recent 2020 United States Census but also as we have seen an increasing number of immigrants from ever more diverse countries. The Maine Education Association must continue to improve our understanding of issues relating to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. These are seen not only as priorities for our members but also for our students and our system of public education as well as for our organization.

While the specific purpose of this plan is to ensure that the MEA is doing all it can to meet the goal of equitable representation in the Maine delegation to the NEA Representative Assembly, as set forth in NEA Bylaw 3-1(g), in order to do this, the plan must include strategies to increase the engagement of our ethnically and racially diverse members in the Association, to recruit more ethnically and racially diverse members, to recruit and retain a more diverse educator workforce, and thus to also create educational experiences in which all of our students are welcomed, safe, see educators who are like them, and can envision themselves as potential future educators as well.

THE MAINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE

The MEA Board of Directors made a formal commitment to racial justice when it adopted the following position in December, 2020:

The MEA Board of Directors is committed to:

examining the policies and practices of our Association to identify any that may need revision in order to meet the goal of MEA being an inclusive, equitable, and diverse organization;

working to increase diversity in the educator workforce in Maine;

working to promote equity and inclusion in our public pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher learning;

encouraging Maine educators to become anti-racist educators;

supporting members who promote social and racial justice in their schools and on their campuses;

to meeting consistently our 3-1 (g) goal as per the NEA Bylaws.

Adopted by the MEA Board of Directors, December 5, 2020.

The Maine Education Association joined with other educational organizations in Maine and with the Maine Department of Education in making public a "Joint Statement of Commitment and Support for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Maine Schools" (see Attachment A) and has worked with these groups by sharing resources and information about professional development opportunities in order to promote and support the work that is necessary to address inequities in our system of public education. We have been doing this to ensure that all students have the welcoming and supportive learning

environment that they deserve and all educators have the supports and resources with which to teach and work with students.

Each year the MEA Board of Directors adopts as one of the three strategic foci for the organization's work that progress will be made on issues regarding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice. (see Attachment B)

The MEA is committed to continuing to meet our 3-1(g) goal. In order to do this, we know there is work we must continue to do that will increase the likelihood that we can meet the goal, work that is broader than merely focusing on delegate recruitment. Thus, we will continue our efforts in the following areas:

- 1) continue to expand the learning and deepen the knowledge of both governance and staff on racial and social justice;
- 2) continue to increase the knowledge and understanding of our members regarding these issues;
- 3) continue to identify and remove potential barriers to member engagement so that all have equitable opportunities to be contributing members with pathways to leadership positions;
- 4) continue to explore and implement ways to promote racial and social justice in our organization as well as in our systems of public education, in our communities, and in our state.

During MEA Board of Directors' discussions, a member of the Board serves as an 'equity, inclusion, and justice monitor' to ensure we are considering multiple perspectives and the impact of our work on diverse members.

Each year Committee Charges include components related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (see examples in Attachment C) and during committee meetings a member is asked to monitor the committee's work by having an 'equity lens'. (See Attachment C)

MEMBER IDENTIFICATION

Invitations to our ongoing biweekly conversations (via zoom) for members who have identified as racially and/or ethnically diverse are sent to those who have self-identified. Participants in the conversations are encouraged to reach out to colleagues they know who are not attending; this helps to find members who have not yet self-identified so that the information can be added. This also helps to identify 'not yet members' who are then invited to join the MEA. In addition, members and their local leaders are reminded that these conversations are taking place and that if someone is not receiving the invitation and should be, they are told to contact MEA so that the correction can be made.

UniServ Assistants as well as local association representatives are reminded of the importance of filling out the appropriate information on enrollment forms and to reach out to new members to request it if it is missing.

Reminders, as well as an explanation as to why this information is important, are included in the MEA President's messages as well.

When the enrollment form is reviewed again for possible revisions, this area will be looked at carefully to see if there is a need for any change to help ensure that members self-identify.

STRATEGIES

Fall 2022—MEA Executive Director, MEA President, NEA Organizational Specialist:

MEA will be conducting a survey of members to identify specific needs and concerns of members and possibly also identify ways to move our racial and social justice work forward. Once the information is gathered, a plan will be developed to set goals and needed actions in order to provide trainings and other supports to advance our work.

As per a recently passed New Business Item (see Attachment D), MEA will be applying for a grant from NEA to further our racial justice work in various ways. (This NBI was a direct result of the work last spring of the newly established BIPOC Committee.)

December 2022/January 2023—

MEA President and MEA Board Directors:

Record and share a video explaining what the MEA and NEA Representative Assemblies are, with an explanation of the process and timelines for elections for MEA RA and NEA RA delegates.

MEA President and members of the MEA Structure & Bylaws Committee:

Create and distribute a document with a clear elections timeline and an explanation of the process and related deadlines.

By February 2023—MEA President and MEA Executive Director:

MEA will develop and implement a plan to begin and sustain a continual review of the 3-1(g) plan even when the goal of 10% ethnically and/or racially diverse delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly is met.

Continuing—

MEA Training and Early Educator Engagement Director and additional staff; Leaders for Just Schools facilitators:

Trainings on topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice will continue to be offered.

MEA President and MEA Executive Director:

Ongoing conversations and check-ins with NEA Organizational Specialist regarding MEA's racial and social justice work and plans for continuing

Yearly—

MEA Executive Director:

Update the MEA Minority Involvement Plan to be approved by the MEA Board of Directors each July.

MEA Board of Directors and MEA Staff:

Do a Racial Justice Assessment of the Association and compare with previous years' assessments. Determine possible actions to support continued progress on racial and social justice work.

Ongoing—

MEA Board of Directors, MEA Executive Director, MEA Managers:

Check progress on the measurable goals for DEIJ strategic focus at each Board meeting.

Member Engagement Subcommittee of the MEA Board of Directors, the full MEA Board of Directors, MEA Staff, MEA Committees:

Continue the work of member recruitment and engagement, targeting recruitment and engagement of racially and/or ethnically diverse members.

Specifically, fill vacancies on MEA Committees with ethnically and/or racially diverse member representation on each committee; fill delegate seats at the MEA Representative Assembly so that each local has representation and endeavor to have 10% of MEA RA delegates be ethnically and/or racially diverse members.

CONNECTIONS

Each year, the Strategic Foci that the MEA Board of Directors adopts is shared with the full staff and with all MEA Committees. Additionally, Board Directors share the information with the local leaders in their Board Districts, and the MEA President conveys this also to local presidents at meetings. The Executive Director shares updates on the progress made toward each goal at Board meetings, with staff, and has included this in the Executive Director's address at the MEA Representative Assembly. These practices will continue.

Beginning this Fall 2022 and each fall thereafter, the charges to all committees will be shared with the MEA Board of Directors as well as with all Committee chairs (rather than as has happened previously, when committee chairs and Board and staff liaisons only receive the charges for their particular committee). This is intended to help all see the connections of the work of various committees.

The 2021 3-1(g) plan and the comments included in the approval received from the NEA Executive Committee were shared this past spring at the 2022 MEA Representative Assembly. This practice will continue going forward at the 2023 MEA RA and beyond, so that all MEA RA delegates are informed and connected to the work.

The draft 2022 3-1(g) plan was shared with the MEA Board and with several committees this fall (2022) for feedback and possible revisions prior to being submitted to NEA. The initial work on the 2022 3-1(g) plan began at the meeting NEA held in August in D.C. for state teams; the MEA team consisted of the state president, one of the MEA Board Directors who identifies as ethnically/racially diverse, and the president of a large local whose members include a higher percentage of ethnic/racial diversity.

The Training and Early Educator Engagement Director will be an essential staff member in helping to make connections regarding our Association's work on racial and social justice both within the organization as well as in helping to connect members to the work.

Once finalized and submitted, the 3-1(g) plan will be shared with members on the 'members only' portion of the MEA website to be sure all members have access to this.

FUNDING AND RESOURCES

A charge to the MEA Strategic Budget Committee for 2022-2023 is to design a way to make explicit where and how the work related to the 3-1(g) plan and our social and racial justice work is funded in the proposed budget that will go to the 2023 MEA Representative Assembly for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. While funding for the work has been included, as in funding for conferences and trainings, for MEA members to attend NEA conferences, for materials to support learning for Board Directors and training for staff, the connection to specific aspects of racial and social justice work has not been explicit, thus this will be addressed in upcoming proposed strategic budgets.

The recently adopted Board policy of increased funding available to local associations for them to support delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly was intended to make this opportunity more accessible to a more racially and/or ethnically diverse delegation from Maine.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS

The monthly "MEA President's Virtual Office Hours" have continued and will continue. These began as a necessity during the first year of the pandemic in order to keep local presidents and vice presidents informed on various health and safety issues, and in order to help ensure that MEA was addressing these issues, as well as to help local leaders support one another through sharing ideas. A priority focus of the conversations going forward will be to ensure that local leaders understand timelines and procedures for electing delegates to both the MEA RA and the NEA RA, and to help identify members who could be encouraged to run for seats. The MEA President will follow up with phone calls and/or zoom meetings with individuals. An additional priority of these meetings will be to encourage locals to engage in racial and social justice work, and to identify locals that are already doing so in order to help highlight their work and share it with others.

The conversations for ethnically and/or racially diverse members that have been held twice a month on zoom will continue. These conversations have helped to support members, but have also helped to identify potential leaders. The MEA President has often followed up with individuals at the suggestion of participants in the conversations; this effort will continue. At times, participants who have registered for the conversations have brought not-yet-members to the sessions and the MEA President has also followed up to encourage them to join the Association and engage in our work; this will continue as well as we work to not only grow membership, but reach out, especially to potential members of diverse races and/or ethnicities.

Our MEA Leaders for Just Schools (LJS) facilitators have conversations with local leaders and other members who have indicated an interest in having LJS provide trainings in their districts. Not only do the facilitators provide trainings, but these conversations and the trainings as well help to engage many more members in ongoing racial and social justice work as well as help to support individuals in pursuing leadership opportunities.

INCLUSION

Several items included in previous sections of this plan speak to the inclusivity of the work of the MEA. These include:

All members who have self-identified as ethnically and/or racially diverse are invited to the continuing bimonthly conversations; efforts are being made to ensure all members have self-identified appropriately.

The 3-1(g) plan will be posted on the member-only section of the MEA website.

All seats on the Black, Indigenous Peoples of Color Committee, established last year, were filled for this year. Where possible, ethnically and/or racially diverse members have been appointed to other MEA Committees. Historically, participation on an MEA Committee has led members to further involvement in the organization, as an MEA RA delegate, MEA Board Director, NEA RA delegate, MEA Officer, or greater involvement in their local association.

In addition, last year the MEA President established an ad hoc “Young Education Professionals” (known as YEP) committee to help identify the needs of early career educators and ways to reach out and engage them; this ad hoc committee is continuing this year.

For two years now the MEA Board of Directors has once again included a student observer (Aspiring Educator, known in MEA as a Student MEA member) to ensure the perspective of those planning to enter the profession is included in our discussions and actions.

Space is provided for a higher ed caucus and for an ESP caucus at our MEA Representative Assembly, and in 2022 a space was also provided for a BIPOC caucus to meet. As a result of recently passed New Business Items, space will now be provided for an LGBTQ+ caucus and a Women in Education caucus at our MEA Representative Assembly and at conferences when possible.

LEADER IDENTIFICATION

MEA Board Directors and MEA UniServ Directors are routinely asked to help identify potential leaders. They help to encourage members and also refer the names of individuals to the MEA President so that the President can reach out and have conversations with them regarding opportunities.

When opportunities arise to send MEA members to NEA events, such as the Minority Leadership Training/Women’s Leadership Training and other conferences or trainings, a message goes out to all members with a brief application that comes to the MEA President to help identify a broader representation of the membership who participate.

In conclusion, it is the hope that this plan clearly communicates the commitment that MEA has and will continue to have to be a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just organization and to ensure that the same is true for our students’ learning environments, our members’ working environments, as well as our communities in Maine.