



## Vermont-NEA Leadership Conference - August 4-6, 2015 Champlain College - Burlington, Vermont

### Session Descriptions – DRAFT

*(note: a final session description agenda will be posted in April 2015)*

#### Tuesday, August 4

8:30 AM TO 12:00 PM

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##### Session 1A: New Officer Training (Presidents, VPs, Secretaries, and Building Representatives) (START TIME 8:30 AM)

*This session will be for specific officer positions, focusing on reviewing and training people on how to perform the basic job duties for each officer position. Training will include mechanics of a high-function executive committee for a local Association (usually the group of officers, plus sometimes building representatives), best practices for officers, legal requirements, Vermont-NEA policies and expectations of local leaders, and much more. This session is a great opportunity for newly elected officers to get an orientation of the new role and an understanding of how their role interfaces with Vermont-NEA and NEA. Also a great opportunity for any interested member to attend to learn more about leadership roles and job responsibilities.*

##### Session 1B: Treasurer Training on Membership Processing, Accounting Systems, Tax Reporting and Fair Share Fee (START TIME 8:30 AM)

*This session is specifically for Treasurers. The session will include standard accounting practices for a local Treasurer, IRS reporting responsibilities, basic budgeting and local dues setting process, reviewing the Vermont-NEA billing system for state and national dues remittance. The session will also review basic information on how to process fair share fee payers and Vermont-NEA's policy on the roles and responsibilities of local Treasurers vs. Vermont-NEA in implementing fair share fee. **THIS SESSION WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE LIVE VIA A WEBINAR AND WILL BE RECORDED FOR VIEWING AT A LATER DATE.***

#### Tuesday, August 4

9:00 AM TO 12:00 PM

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##### Session 2A: Building Representative Training

*Learn the essential duties of being a building representative for your local Association. Building representatives are arguably the most important role in the entire Association. These individuals should be the daily face of the union, be able to handle basic questions by members, and be a resource for members in trouble. This training will review how to successfully prepare building representatives to be grievance resources, communication hubs, membership recruiters, and much more for the union. **THIS SESSION WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE LIVE VIA A WEBINAR AND WILL BE RECORDED FOR VIEWING AT A LATER DATE.***

### Session 2B: Political Action Activist Strategy Session & Training.

*Strategy and training session for political action activists to help Vermont-NEA build a vision for the new Political Education Action Committee (PEAC) – a new structure to encourage and build a base of activists on the local, regional, state and national level focused on political activism. Also learn critical tangible skills for any union political activists, especially as we face this new era of attacks against public educators, public sector workers and all workers nationally and right here in Vermont. We will review policy and legislative initiatives on the horizon during the 2016 Vermont Legislative Session and how we can start local organizing efforts to engage members on local political issues.*

### Session 2C: New Teacher & Student Member Special Session

*This is a special track for new teachers (less than five years in the profession) and student members (college or teacher prep program students). The session will run for three hours in the morning and continue after the plenary session in the early afternoon. We encourage you to attend both the morning and afternoon session for continuity. We will cover topics such as “what is a union and why is it important in public education today,” basic teacher law tips and potential pitfalls (know your rights and responsibilities), how to manage your time as a new teacher in the classroom, navigating the world of evaluations and how that impacts probationary teachers, and advocacy by the union on topics such as college debt.*

## Tuesday, August 5

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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#### 12:00-1:00 PM - Registration and Lunch

#### 1:00-1:30 PM - Opening Session

*Welcome remarks by Vermont-NEA and logistical overview of conference.*

#### 1:30-2:30 PM - Opening Keynote Session

*Hear the remarkable story of the NEA local Association from Jefferson County, Colorado and how they fought back against a Tea Party majority on their school board. Learn how they pulled together a community coalition, rallied with students to protect the curriculum from being rewritten, and prepared to fight back at the bargaining table.*

#### 2:30-2:45 PM - Break

#### 2:45-4:45 PM - AFTERNOON SESSION

##### ❖ Session 3A: Understanding Power and Standing Together as a Union

*This session will begin to develop an understanding about the role of power dynamics in our union, workplace and communities and how to harness collective power in the name of the union. We will explore the difference between individual power and collective power. We will discuss why understanding power truly matters and how it can be a positive tool for making change to improve your workplace climate or community.*

##### ❖ Session 3B: Responding to Student Violence/Workplace Safety Issues as a Union

*As pressures at home increase due to socio-economic issues, more Vermont schools are seeing students acting out and creating an unsafe environment for educators. Learn how Pennsylvania educators are using their NEA state affiliate to respond proactively to protect educators, force*

administrators to create a safe work environment and ultimately better support these students in need.

❖ **Session 3C: New Teacher & Student Member Special Session (continued from the morning)**

*This is a special track for new teachers (less than five years in the profession) and student members (college or teacher prep program students). The session will run for three hours in the morning and continue after the plenary session in the early afternoon. We encourage you to attend both the morning and afternoon session for continuity. We will cover topics such as “what is a union and why is it important in public education today,” basic teacher law tips and potential pitfalls (know your rights and responsibilities), how to manage your time as a new teacher in the classroom, navigating the world of evaluations and how that impacts probationary teachers, and advocacy by the union on topics such as college debt.*

❖ **Session 3D: Organize Around a Strong Narrative**

*Based on materials from the New Organizing Institute and work by Marshall Gantz, learn how the use of story can help you bring more people into the union. The use of story helps to connect personal experiences with the larger cause or campaign. Strategically understanding the components of an effective story will help you become a more effective leader and also help your Association understand the power of good stories in messaging to the community/public the work of educators.*

❖ **Session 3E: Best Practices by Local Leaders Topic #1 (TBD)**

*Based on feedback from last year’s conference, this session will focus on one very common topic/question we hear from local leaders. We will explore the most effective ways to address this topic.*

❖ **Session 3F: One on Ones**

**This session is required attendance for all members.** One-on-one conversations are to unions what the gears are to a car. When understood and utilized well, you can really move and activate your union to do lots of things. Learn the fundamentals of how to have an effective one-on-one conversation and then how to use the information gathered to build a stronger union. This session will also be important preparation work for the required field component of the conference.

4:45-5:30 PM - FREE TIME

5:30-6:30 PM - DINNER (IDX Cafeteria)

## Wednesday, August 5

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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7:30-8:30 AM - BREAKFAST (IDX Cafeteria) and Registration

8:30-9:30 AM - EARLY MORNING SESSIONS

❖ **Session 4A: How to Do Effective Door Knocking**

*Many people cringe at the idea of going door-to-door to support a cause or political candidate. Learn why door knocking is one of the best and most proven ways to organize in your community.*

*We will explore best practices, share technology and strategies to make the work easier than ever before and share examples on how and when to use door knocking in non-political campaigns.*

❖ **Session 4B: Social Media 101**

*Learn the fundamentals of key communication tools in a modern day communication-driven world that exist on-line. Learn how to build a social media strategy and what tools exist to make communicating as easy as a couple of clicks! Bring any communication samples you may have and learn how to enhance what you do in your Association already. This session is designed for social media novices! See session 7E on Wednesday for a more advanced social media session.*

❖ **Session 4C: Discussion with former Vermont-NEA Vice-President Joyce Sullivan on the 2015 International Union Summit**

*Join Joyce to learn more about the 2015 International Union Summit held in July 2015 in Ottawa Canada. Learn impressive stories from around the world where labor unions are defending workers and fighting back against neo-liberalism.*

❖ **Session 4D: Tech Skills 101**

*Learn the fundamentals of key technology resources that can help you run a more efficient and collaborative local Association. This session will review email listservs that allow you to increase readability rates by members, basic website templates, Google Documents (how to use), meeting scheduling options, volunteer organizing platforms and much more. Work smarter not harder as a local leader by learning what tools are available - almost all of which are free!*

❖ **Session 4E: How to Use the NEA Voter Activation Network (VAN) for Member and Community Engagement**

*Learn the power of "the VAN." Any organizer will tell you campaigns can succeed or fail based on the strength of the data and networking utilized along the way. VAN is a database system of all NEA members (and in some cases all registered voters) that is accessible and user-friendly for any campaign. It can produce robo calls to targeted groups of people, virtual phonebanks for school board election campaigns, track information on membership so you can tag and code information on who is in your membership and much more.*

9:30-9:45 AM - BREAK (Joyce Hall - beverages only)

9:45-11:45 AM - MID MORNING SESSIONS

❖ **Session 5A: One on Ones**

**This session is required attendance for all members.** One-on-one conversations are to unions what the gears are to a car. When understood and utilized well, you can really move and activate your union to do lots of things. Learn the fundamentals of how to have an effective one-on-one conversation and then how to use the information gathered to build a stronger union. This session will also be important preparation work for the required field component of the conference on Wednesday.

❖ **Session 5B: A Vermont Case Study on a New Organizing Story (TBD)**

*We will feature a Vermont-NEA local Association working on a creative and innovative organizing campaign.*

- ❖ [Session 5C: Coalition and Solidarity Building with Groups Outside Our Union - Panel](#)  
*We can't do this work alone. Learn how and why we need to think beyond the struggles of our own contracts and schools. How do we build awareness and support for other workers' struggles within other school districts and other sectors. We must build external relationships in order to strengthen our organization and continue to maintain these relationships so we have allies in our time of local or state crisis. This session will be a panel of speakers featuring members from NH-NEA Monadnock region (invited), Long Island NY (invited), and Fairpoint workers who most recently spent most of the winter on strike.*
- ❖ [Session 5D: Best Practices by Local Leaders Topic #2 \(TBD\)](#)  
*Based on feedback from last year's conference, this session will focus on one very common topic/question we hear from local leaders. We will explore the most effective ways to address this topic.*
- ❖ [Session 5E: The Changing Face of Politics and the Impact on Public Schools and Unionized School Employees](#)  
*Politics won't leave unions alone, so why should unions leave politics alone? This engaging session will flip your understanding of politics and challenge you to re-think the union's traditional role in politics. We must go beyond candidate endorsements and limiting our advocacy work to basic labor or education issues on a state level. We have to see the importance of local elections, broader social justice based issues that impact our students and larger communities and use the union as an organization to help improve the lives of all students and workers, not just our members.*

12:00-1:00 PM - LUNCH (IDX Cafeteria)

1:00-2:30 PM - EARLY AFTERNOON SESSION

- ❖ [Session 6A: Professional Boundaries & Social Networking for School Employees](#)  
*This workshop will explore situations and problems school employees face with challenges in maintaining appropriate boundaries between school employees and students, parents, the administration and the community. Strategies will be developed to establish appropriate boundaries in order to maintain employee effectiveness and to protect the integrity of the employee and relationships within the school and the community. Physical, emotional and knowledge boundaries will be explored. Particular emphasis will be given to the use of electronic communications and social networking.*
- ❖ [Session 6B: Rebuilding a Local Union from the Ground Up, Jefferson County Teachers Association](#)  
*Learn how these NEA members broke out of union business-as-usual and learned how to fight back against a Tea Party majority on their school board. They will share how they used a new organizing model that engaged all walks of life in their community to defend public education in the larger Denver area.*
- ❖ [Session 6C: One on Ones](#)  
*This session is required attendance for all members. One-on-one conversations are to unions what the gears are to a car. When understood and utilized well, you can really move and activate your union to do lots of things. Learn the fundamentals of how to have an effective one-on-one conversation and then how to use the information gathered to build a stronger union. This session*

will also be important preparation work for the required field component of the conference.

❖ [Session 6D: How to Expand Your Local Association's Capacity to Act](#)

*A favorite session in Vermont-NEA Leadership Conferences in the past. Learn some of the fundamental pieces that need to be in place to build the capacity of your local Association to do anything! Learn how to leave the days of one or two leaders doing everything behind you and some practical tools to help engage your members and bring them into leadership so that your Association can do more than just the basics.*

❖ [Session 6D: Under 35 Engagement Methods](#)

*As we see the workplace shift of Baby Boomers to Generation X (born after 1960~) and Generation Y (born after 1980~) union members, are our systems, methods of communication, use of technology, and structures best suited for these generations? What are the trends of the characteristics and needs of Generation X & Y union members, the different perspectives these generations have towards labor unions, and how you, our unions can be more inclusive and embrace these new union members? Learn methods from other parts of the country to successfully and meaningfully engage educators under 35 years old. The session will include key factors to consider in local Association communication methods and outreach tools to increase engagement with younger members. You will leave with ideas and strategies to apply to your local union or state affiliate.*

2:30-2:45 PM - BREAK

2:45-3:45 PM - AFTERNOON SESSION

❖ [Session 7A: Fair Share Fee Systems & Membership Recruitment Strategies](#)

*Recruiting members to join the Association is one of the most important pieces of being a union leader. However, there are effective methods to recruit folks and not-so effective methods. Learn how to tailor your recruitment technique to bring members in to build an active membership vs. a group of passive members. Bring your chronic challenges with getting people to join your union. Bring stories of successful tactics to share with other leaders. We will also review the basics of fair share fee and why it is NOT in your best interest to use that new legal requirement as a default membership drive. Bring your fair share fee questions to this session.*

❖ [Session 7B: Public Speaking](#)

*Much of our union work requires public speaking at one point or another. Learn basic tips on how to be effective when speaking on behalf of your union at the bargaining table, in front of the schoolboard, in front of the media or in other settings.*

❖ [Session 7C: Effective Meeting Management](#)

*We have all sat through ineffective meetings. Don't let your local Association meetings be ineffective. Learn smart and simple ways to fun efficient meetings that leave your local leaders and/or members feeling energized and valued. Plus, if planned well, you can increase attendance at your local meetings and increase participation in your overall union.*

❖ [Session 7D: Local Elections - School Budgets and School Board Elections](#)

*Learn the important tools for pulling off a local campaign either for the local school budget, electing school board members, and/or addressing repeated school budget votes. Each of the three case studies used unique tactics to pass their budget and/or elect board members that greatly changed the dynamics on their local school board.*

❖ [Session 7E: Social Media 201](#)

*Learn more of the bells and whistles of social media tools. Learn how to build a social media strategy for your local Association. This session is designed for members with some social media experience! See session 4B on Wednesday for a more basic social media session.*

4:00-6:00 PM

❖ [Session 8A: Understanding Your Leadership Style and Finding New Leaders](#)

*Do you know what type of leader you are? Learn the different styles and what styles engage members and what styles tend to encourage more passive membership. We will do practical evaluations of your leadership style or the style of your local leaders to help tease out what approaches and strategies as leaders can help you get where you want to be in your local Association.*

❖ [Session 8B: How to Expand Your Local Association's Capacity to Act](#)

*A favorite session in Vermont-NEA Leadership Conferences in the past. Learn some of the fundamental pieces that need to be in place to build the capacity of your local Association to do anything! Learn how to leave the days of one or two leaders doing everything behind you and some practical tools to help engage your members and bring them into leadership so that your Association can do more than just the basics.*

❖ [Session 8C: Classroom Issue Organizing](#)

*Learn how Washington State organized their members around class size and won! Use the basics of how they built their campaign to figure out how to organize around local issues that don't always lend themselves to bargaining topics.*

❖ [Session 8D: How to Map Your Community and Understand Key Players and How to be Strategic and Effective in Your Campaigns](#)

*Learn tools on how to map your community and understand who and where the key leaders and people who have influence reside and how to leverage that knowledge to help your campaigns be it small campaigns to improve an element of the school or larger campaigns. Learn how to analysis this information and use it beyond just a bargaining crisis.*

6:00-7:00 PM - DINNER (IDX Cafeteria)

## Thursday, August 6

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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7:30-8:30 AM - BREAKFAST (IDX Cafeteria)

[8:30-10:00 AM - Field Preparation Session,](#)

*This session is required for all participants to prepare you for a field component of the conference. We will review the goal of the campaign, divide members into field teams with coaches, and train*

members on how to be effective in the field. We will be visiting members who have joined the union within the last two years in Chittenden County at their homes (they have been notified ahead of time of the visit). We will be seeking their input and questions about the union, identifying potential new leaders, and making contact with these new members to develop a stronger connection between them and their union.

10:00-1:30 PM - [Field Component, Chittenden County in Burlington, South Burlington and Winooski.](#)

2:30-2:45 PM - Beverage Break

1:30-2:30 PM - [Field Debrief session based on teams](#)

2:45-4:15 PM - AFTERNOON SESSIONS

❖ [Session 9A: Panel on New Unions in Vermont](#)

*Learn about why we had a record year of new organizing among school support staff in 2014-2015 and how these new local leaders won almost unanimous votes to support the union. Also learn from a new wave of unions representing adjunct faculty at Champlain College, Burlington College, and St. Michael's College and how they organized on campuses where no unions existed prior to their organizing drives (note: St. Michael's had a fairly new small custodial/maintenance union, but the vast majority of staff were not unionized).*

❖ [Session 9B: Are We Still On the Road to Single Payer Health Care?](#)

*With the announcement by the Governor in December 2014 to step away from an aggressive push towards single payer health care, where does that leave Vermont? Learn from one of the experts on current health insurance offerings to public sector teachers and how Vermont's legislative initiatives will and, in some cases, maybe won't get us to single payer in the near future.*

❖ [Session 9C: Organizing to Change Workplace Climate and Morale](#)

*More and more local Associations are taking on poor working climates and low morale issues in their school buildings. Learn about Vermont-NEA's climate organizing toolkit and hear case studies from the 2014-2015 school year from Colchester (tentative), Hardwick (tentative) and Addison Northeast (tentative) where local educators took a stand and action to improve workplace climates.*

❖ [Session 9D: Goal Setting, Campaign Planning, Defining a Win](#)

*When building a campaign, it is critical to understand the components to set a measurable and realistic goal, objectives, strategies and tactics. Figure out how to construct a campaign around a topic to both motivate members to join you and to actually achieve something concrete. These building blocks will help local leaders attempting to build campaigns on any topic. Finally, help to learn how to look for victories - large and small - in everything you do.*

❖ [Session 9E: Identifying Shared Interests and Finding the Right Organizing Issue](#)

*How do you find the right issue that will motivate people to take action? Is there such a thing as a "bad" topic to organize around as a union? How do you deal with competing interests within your membership and find common ground? Learn how to bring your members together, assess what issues build power and cohesion in a membership and what you should look for as a leader when facilitating issue-based organizing.*

4:15-5:15 PM - Closing Keynote Speaker

5:15-5:30 PM - CLOSING SESSION