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Definitions:
For the purposes of this document, educator will mean "any staff person who works directly with students under the local's CBA."

VERMONT-NEA RESOLUTIONS AS ADOPTED AT THE 2026 REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

A. SERVE AS THE STATE VOICE FOR EDUCATION

A-1 SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Vermont-NEA supports holding school sites accountable when other parts of a comprehensive system--district, state, and national stakeholders are held accountable for providing the resources and other support personnel systems and materials necessary for schools to reach their goals. An effective and fair school accountability system must focus on the school as a unit for improvement and evaluation and ensure that the best practices are encouraged and supported.

The Association believes that school accountability systems must include training for education employees through professional development prior to implementation and procedures for evaluating and improving such systems. Exposure to school accountability systems should also be a part of preservice preparation.

The Association also believes that school accountability must be implemented throughout the school community through a collaborative, interactive, and continuous process by which local affiliates, students, parents/guardians/caregivers, education employees, the public, and policymakers define and support the goals of the school.

A well-designed school accountability system:

a. Promotes education excellence;
b. Has a balanced focus combining school context, processes, and student performance;
c. Is based on high standards for all students and multiple assessment tools and sources of data, including an examination of the resources needed and those allocated;
d. Focuses on the school and its goals, not the individual performance of the school staff or other stakeholders;
e. Is consistent with education employees' rights and responsibilities as set forth in collective bargaining laws and contracts, meet and confer understandings, and or policies;
f. Is applied in a fair and equitable manner;
g. Identifies external factors that impact student learning and achievement; and
h. Provides for the development of school improvement plans.

The Association further believes that the school improvement process must, as a minimum:

a. Involve the school's staff as an active partner in the development of the plan;
b. Provide the resources and assistance necessary to accomplish the plan;
c. Identify the responsibilities of each of the stakeholders in the implementation of the plan; and
d. Provide time for planning, implementation, and reassessment. (2000)

A-2 EDUCATIONAL FINANCE

Vermont-NEA believes that the funding of education is the shared responsibility of federal, state, and local governments. State aid funds should be allocated equitably, adequately, and directly for educational purposes.

a. Local school boards must be fiscally independent, and restrictive limits must not be imposed on their budgets or long-term borrowing.
b. Tax revision favorable to public education should be encouraged and continually reviewed at every governmental level.
c. State, federal, and local mandates affecting public education programs must be accompanied by adequate and equitable funding to cover the cost of achieving the goals of raising student performance, implementing new programs, and raising standards of student learning.
d. Funding should be greater for students facing social, economic, and/or education challenges.

Vermont-NEA further believes that all Vermont children in the public schools deserve equal educational opportunity to enable them to achieve educational excellence. Such an education requires adequate and equitable funding from public tax sources to meet the needs of all students.

The Association opposes providing any public revenues to Pre-K through Grade 12 schools for sectarian instruction.

The Association strongly urges the retention of funds received from teachers in payment for licensure and re-licensure for the purpose of supporting the activities of a professional standards board. The Association opposes the transfer of such funds to the State General Fund. (1987, 1988, 1989, 2006, 2011, 2018)

a. Providing any public revenues to Pre-K through grade 12 schools for sectarian instruction is ill-advised.

b. It is imperative that funds received from teachers for licensure and re-licensure be retained to support activities of the professional standards board. The Association opposes the transfer of such funds to the State General Fund (1987,1988, 1989, 2006, 2011, 2018)
c. Health insurance costs directly affect school budgets; Vermont-NEA will work collaboratively to find solutions to the issues and will include this concern in public relations discussions about school funding issues. (2025)

A-3 VOUCHER PLANS

Vermont-NEA believes that voucher plans, tuition tax credits, or other funding/financial arrangements that use tax monies to subsidize grades Pre-K through Grade 12 private school education can undermine public education and reduce the support needed to fund public education adequately.

The Association opposes any funding arrangements that pay for students to attend sectarian schools or for students to attend nonsectarian Pre-K through Grade 12 private schools in order to obtain educational services that are available to them in public schools to which they have access.

The Association also believes that any private school or agency that receives public funding through voucher plans, tax credits, or other funding/financial arrangements must be subject to all accountability measures and regulations required of public schools. (2006)

A-4 INTERDISTRICT PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

Vermont-NEA believes that the goal of interdistrict public school choice plans must be to expand educational opportunities for all students who are eligible to participate. Furthermore, involvement in interdistrict public school choice programs must be voluntary for both sending and receiving school districts and be based on cooperative agreements between partnering school districts.

Vermont-NEA will oppose school choice programs which are mandated by the state and/or based on a competitive model which permits public schools to fail because of dwindling finances and diminishing educational programs.

In promoting and evaluating interdistrict public school choice plans, Vermont-NEA and its affiliates will pay particular attention to the following beneficial features:
a. A comprehensive school improvement strategy--including instructionally sound interdistrict options—with interdistrict public school choice simply as one element;
b. Maintenance of electoral fiscal and curricular accountability to local communities among participating school districts;
c. Provisions for effectively achieving equal student access which address transportation, admissions procedures, enrollment capacities, and specialized student services;
d. Protection of student confidentiality rights, of access by parents and citizens to school information, and of legal standards and requirements;
e. Procedures to regularly inform and counsel students and parents about their rights and responsibilities and about program requirements and limitations; and
f. Procedures which maintain the community base, heterogeneity, and integrity of all schools in Vermont. (1998)

A-5 MEDIA UTILIZATION

Vermont-NEA encourages the creative and innovative use of media for educational advocacy.

The Association further urges its local affiliates to become involved in the utilization of these media sources. (1989, 1999, 2012, 2024)

A-6 PUBLIC ADVOCACY

Vermont-NEA believes that professional associations must promote public understanding of education and encourage wide public and parental participation in strengthening public education.

Vermont-NEA urges that local Associations, with the assistance of Vermont-NEA staff, make the production and distribution of community newsletters a priority activity. (2019)

A-7 IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Vermont-NEA believes that many educational facilities are in a state of decay, neglect, and/or deterioration. The Association supports funding to modernize, expand, replace, and/or maintain these facilities to provide a safe, healthy, and effective teaching and learning environment for students and education employees.

The Association also believes that the community, parents/guardians, students, and education employees must be effectively involved in the development of plans to modernize, expand, and/or replace facilities.

The Association further believes that preventive maintenance in all facilities is equally important in achieving these goals. (2010)

A-8 SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION

Vermont-NEA believes that the consolidation of schools should be treated on a case-by-case basis depending on the will of the communities involved. (2017)

B. ADVANCE THE GOAL OF EQUITABLE, HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL INDIVIDUALS

B-1 STANDARDS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Vermont-NEA believes in high standards that describe clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do. Throughout the implementation of content and performance standards, all students must be provided with instructional opportunities and learning conditions necessary to attain the standards. The Association supports the development and use of a variety of assessments appropriate to the standards.

The Association also believes that state and local affiliates must participate in the planning, development, implementation, and refinement of standards, conditions, and assessments to ensure that:

a. Students, parents/guardians/caregivers, education employees, community members, and government officials are involved and share the accountability;
b. Education employees are afforded release time and/or compensation to have opportunities to work with colleagues on a regular basis throughout the school year on how to teach and assess student proficiency in the standards;
c. Retention of high-quality education employees is necessary for students to become proficient in all areas.
d. Full funding and resources are provided;
e. Curriculum includes but is not limited to, required standards. Standards are introduced into the curriculum at a rate that allows education employees opportunities to adapt their practice, work with each other, and pilot the work in a concerted fashion;
f. A variety of assessments will be used to evaluate each student's progress toward attaining standards;
g. Appropriate attention is given to the needs and developmental levels of each student;
h. Professional development is provided for all education employees to help align their practices to the standards;
i. Education employees participate in the review and refinement of standards and assessments. (2000, 2023)

B-2 ACADEMIC CONTENT IN CURRICULUM

Vermont-NEA believes parents and community members should be informed regularly as to the contents of curriculum and the planned schedule used in presenting curriculum to students.

Vermont-NEA urges all school boards to establish, as an objective, the development of an integrated Pre-K-12 curriculum. There should be balance in curriculum between method and content.

Vermont-NEA also believes that academic learning and achievement of educational skills foster long-term self-esteem. (1998)

Vermont-NEA believes there should be a balance in curriculum with evidence-based methods and inclusive content. Educators should have significant roles in creating and implementing curriculum. (2026)

B-3 ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Vermont-NEA supports the ongoing and comprehensive assessment of student growth. A student's level of performance is best assessed with authentic measures directly linked to the lessons teachers teach and the materials teachers use.

The Association believes that the primary purposes of assessment are to:

a. Assist students and their parents/guardians/caregivers in identifying the student's strengths and needs;
b. Encourage students to become lifelong learners;
c. Measure a program's effectiveness, communicate learning expectations, and provide a basis for determining instructional strategies; and
d. Develop appropriate learning experiences for students.

The Association also believes that no one measure should be used to determine a student's performance. Teachers

should utilize a variety of measures to accurately assess student growth. All methods of assessment shall provide the necessary accommodations, modifications, and exemptions, and be free of cultural, socio-economic, racial, and gender biases.

The Association further believes that classroom teachers must be involved in the development of assessment systems and are best qualified to determine the criteria for assessment of students and dissemination of results. (2000, 2021)

B-4 GRADE ADVANCEMENT AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Vermont-NEA believes that each school district should provide to all students, at regular intervals, comprehensive assessments, including observations, a variety of work samples, portfolios, authentic measures, and reliable standardized tests to:

a. Measure their academic achievement;
b. Identify any need for remediation; and
c. Determine their eligibility for grade advancement and graduation.

Vermont-NEA further believes each school district should provide the services needed in elementary school to assure that students meet performance requirements in all curricular areas.

Vermont-NEA also believes all middle and secondary school programs should have in place rigorous academic programs through which their students advance toward graduation through acquisition of transferable skills and academic performance. Secondary school programs should be characterized by:

a. Course offerings with uniformly high academic standards; and
b. Clear standards for any student's admission and retention. (1998, 2018)

B-5 STANDARDIZED TESTING OF STUDENTS

Vermont-NEA believes that standardized tests should only be used to improve the quality of education and instruction for students. Standardized tests are most useful when selected by educational professionals closest to the classroom and integrated with assessment information specific to local programs. Affiliates should advocate for the design and use of a variety of developmentally appropriate assessment techniques that allow necessary accommodations, modifications, and exemptions and are bias-free, reliable, and valid. When a test is mandated at the state or the national level, it should only be used to evaluate programs toward meeting state or national standards and/or goals. The administration of a standardized test includes the responsibility to educate the stakeholders as to the purpose of the test, the meaning of test results, and the accurate interpretation of conclusions.

The Association opposes the use of standardized tests when:

a. Used as the criterion for the reduction or withholding of any educational funding;
c. Results are used to compare students, teachers, programs, schools, communities, and states;
d. Used as a single criterion for high-stakes decision making;
e. They do not match the developmental levels or the language proficiency of the student;
f. Student scores are used to evaluate teachers or to determine compensation or employment status; and
g. Curriculum is designed and/or narrowed to achieve passing the standardized test. (2000, 2023)

B-6 REGULAR PLANNING AND GUIDANCE FOR ALL STUDENTS

Vermont-NEA believes that prior to or within the first month of each school year, all parents should attend parent informational meetings for the purpose of obtaining a clear understanding of the expectations that classroom and other teachers have for their children, with respect to both behavior and academic performance.

Vermont-NEA urges all school boards to establish, as an objective, the development of an integrated K-12 curriculum.

Vermont-NEA believes that each school district should assure that all students are provided academic and career planning guidance which involves them and their parents, and which is designed:

a. To ensure that students and their parents are aware of educational opportunities, programs, and graduation requirements;
b. To assist students and their parents in monitoring and planning academic development and social growth in a consistent and comprehensive fashion from the 7th through the 12th grade; and
c. To support students and their parents in making career planning and post-secondary decisions. (1998)

B-7 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Vermont-NEA supports early childhood education programs in public schools for children from birth through age eight. The Association also supports a high-quality program of transition from home and/or preschool to public kindergarten or first grade. This transition should include communication and cooperation among parents/guardians, the preschool staff, and the public school staff.

The Association believes that such programs should be held in facilities that are appropriate to the developmental needs of these children. The Association also believes that early childhood education programs should include a full continuum of services for parents/guardians and children, including child-care, child development, developmentally appropriate and diversity-based curricula, special education, and appropriate bias-free screening devices. Early childhood education programs must also be sensitive to and meet the physical, social, mental, and emotional health and nutritional needs of children.

The Association further believes that early childhood education programs should maintain small group sizes with appropriate staff/child ratios for each age level.

The Association recognizes the importance of active parental involvement in a child's development and education. Parents/guardians should be made aware of the expectations that will be placed on the child as well as familiarization with new policies and procedures that the child will experience. Parents/guardians should be provided with information to allow them to access education-related services (e.g., screenings, testing, advocacy programs, etc.).

The Association supports regulations requiring children starting kindergarten to have reached age five or have demonstrated developmental readiness at the beginning of a kindergarten program.

The Association advocates the establishment of fully funded early childhood special education programs. These programs and necessary services should be readily accessible for children with disabilities and staffed by certified/licensed teachers, qualified support staff, and therapists. (2003, 2005, 2013)

B-8 ACADEMIC PROGRAM CHOICE FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

Vermont-NEA believes that multiple programs of study should be established for secondary education, grades 7-12, which:

a. Enforce clear academic and behavioral standards that students must meet to enter a program;
b. Provide information to both parents and students to help them understand the varying skills, intellectual development, and workload each course requires;
d. Provide a rigorous and appropriate academic program for all students;
e. Assure that all student work demonstrates high academic standards regarding content and skill development;
f. Provide ongoing and comprehensive remediation to any child who needs it; and
g. Offer distinct instructional programs reflecting differing approaches to education and different learning styles.

Vermont-NEA urges investigation of ways in which public school districts can join with each other to allow for a wider choice of educational options. (1998)

B-9 DISTANCE LEARNING

Vermont-NEA believes that quality distance education can create or extend learning opportunities but is not an alternative to traditional education that allows for regular face-to-face interaction among students, peers, and instructors.

The Association opposes arrangements whereby elementary, secondary, and undergraduate students receive all or most of their education through distance education and rarely, if ever, convene in an actual classroom. The Association recognizes that exceptions may be warranted in particular cases.

Further, the Association believes that best practices for in person and distance instruction are fundamentally different and that, to provide the best possible educational experience to students, teachers should not be expected to provide in person and distance learning simultaneously without requisite tools, structures, and planning time. (2010, 2021)

B-10 ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS FOR ALL AT-RISK STUDENTS

Vermont-NEA recognizes that there must be increased development and maintenance of alternative programs to

meet the needs of at-risk or special needs students. The Association recommends early and appropriate identification and placement of these students. Teachers and administrators should receive necessary training in diagnostic processes and alternative methods of teaching and learning. Appropriate training should also be provided to educational support staff.
Programs should emphasize a broad range of activities for responding to students' differing behavioral patterns, needs, and interests. Teachers in these programs must have a major role in designing the objectives and evaluations and working with appropriate school and community personnel to execute these objectives and evaluations.

The Association urges its affiliates to seek adequate compensation, planning time, materials, and facilities for educational employees in these programs. (2003, 2021)

B-11 HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION

Vermont-NEA believes that homebound students, those educated in the home because of individualized student needs determined by established local school procedures, must receive instruction that follows the regular curriculum. This instruction must be implemented, documented, monitored, and assessed by a licensed teacher. The Association also believes that credits earned through such homebound instruction should be accepted toward promotion and/or graduation requirements. (2007)

B-12 DRIVER EDUCATION

Vermont-NEA believes that driver education courses that include both classroom and behind the wheel experiences should be part of the public education of all students and should be taught by teachers licensed by the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators in driver education. (2001, 2013)

B-13 METRIC SYSTEM

Vermont-NEA urges that the International System of Units (SI Metric System) or weights and measures be taught at all educational levels.

B-14 NONDISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION

Vermont-NEA believes in the equality of all individuals. We acknowledge the existence in our society of institutional racism and implicit bias- the societal patterns and practices that have the net effect of imposing oppressive conditions and denying rights, opportunity, and equality based on, but not limited to, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, immigration status, age, ability, gender, gender identity including transgender a , sexual orientation and expression, socioeconomic status, occupation, and/or political affiliation. This inequity manifests itself in our schools and in the conditions our students face in their communities. Discrimination and stereotyping based on such factors as race, gender, immigration status, disability, ethnicity, occupation, and sexual orientation must be eliminated to allow access to education for all and for a more fair and just society.

The Association also believes that plans, activities, and programs for education employees, students, parents/guardians, and the community should be developed to identify and foster equity awareness and social justice and eliminate discrimination and stereotyping in all educational settings. Such plans, activities, and programs must:

a. Promote a safe and inclusive environment for all by increasing respect, understanding, acceptance, and sensitivity toward individuals and groups in a diverse society.
b. Eliminate discrimination and stereotyping in curricula, textbooks, resource and instructional materials, activities, etc.
c. Foster the dissemination and use of non-discriminatory and non-stereotypical language, resources, practices, and activities;
d. Eliminate institutional discrimination and implicit bias by encouraging all members of the educational community to examine practices that favor the education of one student over another;
e. Integrate an accurate portrayal of the roles and contributions of all groups throughout history across curricula, particularly groups that have been underrepresented historically;
f. Identify how prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination have limited the roles and contributions of individuals and groups, and how these limitations have challenged and continue to challenge our society;
g. Offer positive and diverse role models in regular classroom resources and media, and through the recruitment, hiring, and promotion of diverse education employees in our public schools; and
h. Coordinate with organizations and concerned agencies that promote the contributions, heritage, culture, history, and special health and care needs of diverse population groups. The Association believes it is essential

to develop and consistently implement ongoing training programs in equity and social justice work in schools and the broader community. (2003, 2016, 2018, 2021, 2022)

B-15 WORLD LANGUAGES

Vermont-NEA believes that world language courses which include speaking, listening, cultural exposure and perspective should be part of public education for all students and should be taught by teachers licensed by the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators in World Languages and endorsed in the language they are teaching.

Vermont-NEA believes that a world language program should help students perceive cultural diversity so that they may develop an understanding of their own culture and become exposed to the customs and ideas of diverse cultures. The Association believes it is vital to develop an appreciation of languages and the common humanity shared by all people. (1992, 1993, 2016, 2021, 2023)

B-16 ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Vermont-NEA urges the implementation of a comprehensive English Language Learner program throughout the entire state where it can be clearly established that a need for such a program exists. The financial resources of the local, state, and federal governments shall be utilized to achieve adequate funding for the English Language Learner program as well as adequate staffing to support this population of students/families from Kindergarten through high school graduation.

The Association also values bilingual and multilingual competence and supports programs that assist individuals in attaining and maintaining proficiency in their native languages before and after they ac proficiency in English (1992, 1999, 2012, 2021, 2022, 2023)

B-17 DISCRIMINATORY ACADEMIC TRACKING

Vermont-NEA believes academic tracking based on socioeconomic status, race, gender, or any other identifying category, must be eliminated in all public school settings. (1993, 2021)

B-18 GIFTED, TALENTED, AND CREATIVE STUDENTS

Vermont-NEA recognizes that there must be increased development of educational programs to meet the needs of all students (Pre-K-12) who have been identified as being exceptional in the creative arts, intellectual ability, leadership, and/or the psychomotor domain.

Vermont-NEA supports the multisensory identification of these students through both formal and informal methods which are developed by a committee, the majority of which are teachers. In-service training is needed for educators with provisions for program development at the local, state, and national level.

Vermont-NEA supports the formation of a policy by the state department of education for distribution of federal aid for the education of the exceptional. Financial support should be given to a greater variety of instructional approaches, thus making more options available to the local schools. (1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, 2003)

B-19 TECHNOLOGY IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Vermont-NEA believes that technology in the educational process improves learning opportunities for students, quality of instruction, effectiveness of education employees, and provides opportunities to reduce educational inequities.

The Association supports increased federal, state, and local resources, along with public/private partnerships, to fully fund equipment purchases/leases/upgrades, maintenance, technical support, training, evaluation, and staffing to support the effective use of technology in public schools.

Vermont-NEA believes that schools should develop guidelines for the responsible use of personal electronic devices during the school day. Such guidelines should promote respect for privacy, intellectual integrity, and a positive learning environment.

Vermont-NEA advocates for equitable access to technological tools for students and educators. The Association realizes that Bring Your Own device policies are not a suitable method for providing equitable access to teaching, working, and learning. (2013, 2021, 2023)

B-20 INTERNET ACCESS

In Schools: Vermont-NEA believes that every school should have comprehensive, high-speed, seamless, and

equitable access to the Internet. The Association also believes that education employees are essential to the development of an acceptable use policy (AUP) and to the appropriate use of the Internet.

The Association further believes that an AUP that requires the signatures of parents/guardians and students must be in place before allowing student access.

The Association further believes that Internet access and activities should be age appropriate, monitored, and foster critical use. Any documentation material produced because of Internet access should be properly cited and comply with copyright laws.

In the Community: Vermont-NEA believes that all students and families need access to affordable and/or subsidized high-speed internet for equitable educational opportunities. (2002, 2021, 2023)

B-21 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MACHINE LEARNING

Artificial intelligence in education should be used as a supplement to, not a replacement for, human instruction and interaction. Teachers and administrators should ensure that students have a balanced and diverse learning experience, and that the use of AI in the classroom is monitored and regulated to prevent any negative impacts on student learning and well-being. Vermont-NEA believes that any use of artificial intelligence should be cited by the user to ensure transparent use of such tools and hold users accountable. (2023, 2026)

B-22 PROTECTION FOR HUMAN EMPLOYEES

Vermont-NEA believes that human beings are the most effective educational professionals and efforts by school districts to replace educational staff with technology products should be avoided. (2023)

C. PROMOTE THE HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND/OR STUDENTS

HEALTH, WELFARE, AND SAFETY

C-1 HEALTH OF CHILDREN

Vermont-NEA recognizes that the total environment including home, school, and community affects the mental, social, emotional, and physical health of children.

Vermont-NEA encourages special preventative services in the schools that are funded adequately and provide staffing to create for maximum impact and effectiveness, for the early detection of impending difficulties. When difficulties are discovered, Vermont-NEA believes that providing increased opportunities for respite for students and parents, both in-patient and out-patient therapy services as well as school counseling access specifically targeted to children and young people is critical to students' ability to move through the education system to be contributing, productive, mentally healthy members of society.

The Association promotes an awareness of wellness and the establishment of programs for the development and maintenance of lifelong, positive, health habits. To support these ideals, Vermont-NEA believes all school buildings should have at least one full-time nurse on staff. (1989, 1990, 1992, 1994, 2013, 2022, 2023)

C-2 NUTRITION

Vermont-NEA believes that proper nutrition is essential to child development and student success. The Association also believes that proper nutrition must be a part of prenatal care and must continue throughout life to avoid nutrition-related problems.

The Association supports programs within the education framework that promote understanding and facilitate informed decisions regarding proper nutrition including food and beverage choices.

The Association further believes school food service programs must be nutritionally sound, appealing, and free to all students and that school food service programs be encouraged to use locally grown and produced food. A choice of nutritious food and beverages should be available during the school day and at school-based functions. The Association also supports nutrition programs that are readily accessible and regulated by uniform standards. Considerations should be made about religious beliefs, cultural differences, and medical needs.

The Association supports the availability of free school breakfast and lunch for all students to continue to reduce the stigmatization of free or reduced-price school meals and ensure regular access to nutritionally sound meals for all students (2010, 2011, 2013, 2021, 2023)

C-3 HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Vermont-NEA believes that included in every child's right to a good public education is the right to a safe and healthy environment for learning, including healthy indoor air quality. Further, educational facilities should be safe from environmental and chemical hazards. Vermont-NEA believes students should be taught and provided models for sustainable practices such as composting and recycling. The Association understands that healthy children have a lower absentee rate and are more productive, and that the environment is a factor in overall good health. The Association will support policies that endeavor to assure public school buildings have healthy indoor air quality and be environmentally safe. (2008, 2020, 2023)

C-4 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Vermont-NEA believes that all students should have access to regular physical activity during the school day to encourage a healthy lifestyle and promote physical, mental, and emotional wellness. This physical activity should be provided through physical education classes, recess, and movement activities scheduled throughout the day.

Options for physical activity should be provided to allow all students, regardless of skill level or prior level of physical activity, to learn ways to become more physically active. (2005, 2023)

C-5 HEALTH CARE AND WELLNESS FOR ALL CHILDREN

Vermont-NEA believes that every child should have direct and confidential access to comprehensive health care. The Association believes that such health care should be provided by properly licensed physicians and by other properly licensed health professionals. The Association urges its affiliates to support legislation to provide comprehensive health care to all children.

The Association further believes that mental, emotional, and environmental pressures can significantly impact students' mental/physical health and success, potentially resulting in drug and alcohol use/abuse, violence, vandalism, school dropouts, self-injuring behaviors, suicide among children and youth, etc. Students should be equipped with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of these pressures and learn to manage their own physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing. (1995, 2023)

C-6 HIV/AIDS

Vermont-NEA recommends that educational institutions establish comprehensive health programming that includes HIV/AIDS education programs. These programs must include education about all means of transmission, including sex and intravenous (IV) drug use. Information on prevention options must include abstinence and medically accepted protective devices.

Furthermore, the Association believes that proper implementation of these programs requires employee training and input. The Association further believes that these programs should be presented by properly licensed/trained personnel. (1993, 1995, 2023)

C-7 SAFE AND ORDERLY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Vermont-NEA believes that all education employees, parents/guardians, students, school governing boards, and community members and agencies must work cooperatively to establish and maintain safe and orderly school communities. Students and education employees must be safe from physical, verbal, and psychological violence, the threat thereof, and all forms of harassment, bullying, hazing, intimidation, and retaliation. There should be procedures to prevent and eliminate all types of harassment that might occur. Plans and procedures regarding discipline and/or harassment must include due process.

The Association further believes crisis plans must be developed at each school site by school personnel, administrators, students, parents/guardians, and emergency personnel. These crisis plans must be discussed with and practiced by all personnel and students at the school site. Crisis plans must be developed in conjunction with and provided to police and fire departments and other community agencies that might be called upon in a crisis situation. Parents/guardians must be made aware of the existence of these crisis plans.

The Association also believes that both schools and school districts must have written discipline plans and procedures that are fair, equitable, restorative, and consistently enforced and procedures for safe and orderly conduct at school activities and events. The Association believes that students must be taught strategies and skills, including conflict resolution, which develop respect, self-discipline, and self-control. Students must learn to

distinguish between their own rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of others. There must be appropriate services, funding, and placement within regular education and alternative education programs and/or with state and/or community agencies for students who disrupt the learning environment or who are dangerous to other students, education employees, and themselves.

The Association also believes that appropriate school behavior begins and should be reinforced in the home. Parents/guardians of children who are disruptive often need support and training to reduce negative behavior and increase student learning. Programs that provide assistance and training in child development, effective parenting skills, and strategies for dealing with disruptive students must be available for parents/guardians. Schools can be instrumental in identifying and recommending strategies that can assist parents/guardians.

The Association further believes that for these plans to be effective they must be practiced and updated on a regular and consistent basis. Education employees and members of the school community should receive ongoing training to address these issues. (2001, 2007, 2013, 2020, 2023)

C-8 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Vermont-NEA recognizes the need to protect the safety and well-being of all children from any form of abuse, exploitation, and abduction.

The Association also believes that parents/guardians, children, and education employees must become critical users of mass media, the Internet, and other products accessible to children through media literacy education. The Association further believes parents/guardians should be given guidance on how to monitor their children's use of technology.

The Association urges school districts to:

a. Establish a system whereby the parents of absent children are notified immediately;
b. Conduct a voluntary fingerprinting of children in a non-threatening environment and give the completed fingerprint cards to parents and/or guardians;
c. Cooperate with community organizations to increase public awareness of the problems of abuse, exploitation, and abduction;
d. Utilize all available means to locate missing children; and
e. Cooperate with community organizations to increase public awareness of the dangers of Internet use.

The Association further urges legislative action be taken to implement these goals. (1988, 1992, 2006, 2013)

C-9 CHILD ABUSE

Vermont-NEA recognizes that education employees are in a key position to detect suspected cases of child abuse and are mandated to report them to the proper authorities. Teachers must have immunity from legal action in fulfilling this obligation. (1990, 1991, 1994, 2020)

C-10 COMPREHENSIVE SUBSTANCE USE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Vermont-NEA recommends that educational institutions establish comprehensive substance use education programs. These programs must include education about individual and societal problems which may result in physiological and psychological drug dependence. Substance use education should also include information about short and long term effects of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, prescription, and other drugs as they relate to the health, safety, and well-being of individuals. (2018)

C-11 STUDENT SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Vermont-NEA believes that all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression should be afforded equal opportunity and guaranteed a safe and inclusive environment within the public education system. The Association also believes all students should feel safe from harassment or bullying when using the restroom. Therefore, schools should permit students to use the bathroom of the gender they identify with and provide a gender neutral bathroom for those that feel unsafe or uncomfortable using the gender specific restrooms. (2003, 2012, 2013, 2017)

C-12 VACCINATIONS

Vermont-NEA believes that vaccines are essential medical tools in preventing infectious diseases. The Association acknowledges that vaccines must be pervasive to be effective and should therefore be provided at no charge.

The Association also believes that vaccination guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should be followed by educators, parents/guardians, and students. The Association

further believes that the state legislature should establish clear guidelines for waivers that minimize the numbers of unvaccinated students to those necessary due to documented medical conditions. Evidence-based vaccination campaigns are integral in maintaining student and community health. (2021)

C-13 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOL

Vermont-NEA recognizes that personal electronic gaming, smartphones, and other forms of electronic entertainment can inhibit students' engagement with their learning. The Association supports the development of policies that help students to fully engage with the learning experiences that are being provided in the school. The Association supports efforts that help students and educational stakeholders identify and mitigate the excessive use of electronic devices in the learning environment. (2024)

C-14 RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Vermont-NEA recognizes that excessive use of social media can have a detrimental effect on student mental health and that it can impair students' social and emotional development. The Association supports programs that help educate students and educational stakeholders about the responsible use of social media products. Vermont-NEA encourages the creative and innovative use of media for improving instruction. (2024)

STUDENT RIGHTS AND CONCERNS

C-15 STUDENT BEHAVIOR STANDARDS

Vermont-NEA recognizes the need to develop a school wide system of student behavior standards that allows educators to teach and students to learn. Vermont-NEA urges each school district to establish a policy for student decorum which:

a. Promotes a safe, orderly, and civil school environment where learning can take place;
b. Has clear expectations for students regarding behavior, language, clothing, and treatment of property; and
c. Places clear responsibilities on all members of the school community — educators, administrators, school board members, and parents, as well as students.

Furthermore, Vermont-NEA believes the provisions of such a policy relating to members of each group should address:

a. Their role in developing, enforcing, and/or complying with the decorum policy;
b. The behavior expected of them;
c. Their responsibility to model and promote high quality student behavior; and
d. Their responsibility to hold students and others accountable for high standards of behavior. (1998)

C-16 CONFIDENTIALITY

Vermont-NEA believes personal information regarding students and their families is confidential. This information should be shared only with educational personnel and other caregivers who are currently involved in providing services to the student. (1993)

C-17 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Vermont-NEA believes that positive and comprehensive early childhood education is the basis for successful school and life experiences and believes that preschool through primary age children should receive sufficient financial and educational resources from the state.

Vermont-NEA supports the development of parent education, information, and training programs to provide assistance in meeting the basic needs of children so that, when they arrive at school, they are socially, intellectually, and physically prepared.

Vermont-NEA encourages parents to demonstrate respect for their children's schooling by discussing with them school events daily, becoming involved through parent conferences, initiating contact with teachers about their children, and attending and participating in school activities, including school board meetings.

Vermont-NEA further believes that infant and early childhood programs should receive sufficient societal and financial support. (1998)

C-18 MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Vermont-NEA recognizes the special needs of the early adolescent. The Association encourages the development of middle school curriculum, guidance and counseling programs, health services, and preservice and professional development programs for these levels.

The Association believes this should be accomplished through the establishment of middle school teacher preparation programs at accredited institutions of higher education and through middle school in-service programs. (1988)

C-19 HUMAN SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Vermont-NEA supports comprehensive sexuality education and programs for the promotion of healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors, as well as the prevention and mitigation of endangering and destructive behaviors. Vermont-NEA supports access to information on sexuality as critical to healthy development. Comprehensive sex education is effective at reducing high-risk sexual behaviors, promoting safer sex practices, and preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Such information should be positive, age appropriate, should foster shared responsibility among all participants for sexual behaviors, should teach the importance of consent, and should be inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBT, youth. Comprehensive sex education should cover sensitive and respectful discussions of gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, among other topics. Students should not be gender segregated during human sexuality education. (2022)

C-20 TIME TO LEARN

Vermont-NEA believes that time to learn is essential in promoting optimum achievement in school. The Association believes that student absences have adverse effects on program continuity and academic achievement.

Furthermore, excessive or unusual working hours, including high school start times before 8:00 AM, are detrimental to a student's attention span and academic achievement. The child labor laws, as structured by the Fair Labor Standards Act, must be monitored, enforced, and strengthened by local, state, and national governing bodies. (1989, 1992, 2016, 2023)

C-21 USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Vermont-NEA recognizes that increased demands on teachers' time for initiatives and non-instructional activities is having a negative impact upon instruction. The increasing numbers and frequent changes of local, state, and federal initiatives are diminishing the time teachers can devote to enhancing student learning.

Therefore, Vermont-NEA urges each school district to adopt a policy and develop a formal plan to optimize the teaching time in the present school day. (1998)

C-22 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Vermont-NEA recommends that each school district should adopt a class and school attendance policy which:

a. Excuses students from attending classes only for emergencies, illnesses, or pre-approved educational activities that present educational opportunities;
b. Assures that its social services enhance its educational services;
c. Requires school personnel, working with students on matters unrelated to their curricular and extracurricular program, to develop a schedule with all teachers involved with the student;
d. Urges educators to be sensitive in seeking to excuse students from the classes of other educators; and
e. Establishes specific plans for students whose unexcused absences from class exceed a specific number. (1998)

C-23 HOME SCHOOLING

Vermont-NEA believes that all children must have an equitable and quality education. The Association also believes that home schooling programs based on parental choice cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience. The Association strongly recommends that home education programs meet state requirements.

Furthermore, a school reserves the right to grant a diploma, or grade advancement only if an incoming home schooled student meets the requirements of that school. (1989, 2002, 2006)

C-24 HIV TESTING OF STUDENTS

Vermont-NEA opposes mandatory/involuntary HIV testing of students except where legally defined probable cause exists. (1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1995)

C-25 DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING OF STUDENTS

Vermont-NEA believes that mandatory drug and alcohol testing of students is an unwarranted and unconstitutional invasion of privacy and opposes such testing.

EQUAL ACCESS

C-26 EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Vermont-NEA supports a free appropriate public education for all students with disabilities. However, the Association recognizes that to implement Federal and State Law effectively:

a. A favorable learning experience must be created for all students;
b. Educational employees, administrators, and parents must share in planning and implementing programs for students with disabilities;
c. All staff must be adequately prepared for their roles through in-service training, retraining, and adequate supports in their roles;
d. The appropriateness of educational methods, materials, and support services must be determined in cooperation with classroom teachers;
e. The classroom teacher(s) must have an appeal procedure regarding the implementation of the program, especially in terms of student placement;
f. Modification must be made in class size, using a weighted formula, scheduling, and curriculum design to accommodate the demands of the program;
g. Adequate funding must be provided and then used exclusively for this program;
h. Adequate release time must be made available for teachers, so that they may carry out the increased demands upon them;
i. Individual educational programs should provide appropriate services for the students with disabilities and not be a criterion used for the evaluation of teachers;
j. A change in the State Department of Education's policy for distribution of federal aid to special education should be effected with financial support given to a greater variety of instructional approaches, thus making more options available to the local schools. (1987, 1990, 1992, 2012, 2013)

C-27 PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH HIV/AIDS

Vermont-NEA supports a free, appropriate public education in a least-restrictive environment for all students with AIDS or infected with HIV.

The Association believes that the placement of children in school should be made on a case-by-case basis by a team composed of qualified health care professionals, school officials, representatives of the local Association, the child's physician, and the child's parent or guardian. (1988, 1990, 1992, 1993)

C-28 PASSIVE RESTRAINT

Vermont-NEA believes that the technique of passive restraint as a means of controlling the actions of a student is appropriate only when all other means of control have failed. The Association believes that this technique should be implemented by people trained in its use. Vermont-NEA further believes this policy should include plans, developed with parental input, which will address not only the child's needs but also implementation of the policy. (1994, 1995)

C-30 GENDER EQUITY IN ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

Vermont-NEA believes that at all educational levels female and male students must have equal opportunity to participate in athletic programs.

The Association urges that athletic funds for facilities, equipment, and remuneration of staff be allocated equally between female and male programs. Vermont-NEA believes that all should have the opportunity to play recreational sports in accordance with their gender identity, irrespective of their gender assigned at birth, and to have their personal dignity respected. (2022)

D. PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AMONG EDUCATORS

D-1 CLASS SIZE

Vermont-NEA believes that excellence in the classroom can best be attained by small class size, particularly in grades Pre-K-12, which allows for the optimum development of a student's potential.

The Association urges school districts to seek an optimum class size of fifteen (15) students.

The Association believes that class size maximums must be established based on the type of students, subject area content, and physical facilities.

The Association endorses the limitation of ten (10) students per class during labs or field activities in the hazardous occupational programs defined by the Department of Labor, *Child Labor Bulletin 101*. Furthermore, the Association should seek the implementation of a weighted class size formula to reflect the inclusion of students with disabilities. The Association resists efforts to circumvent laws, regulations, and policies that mandate maximum class size and maximum teaching loads. (1992, 2013)

D-2 TEACHER PREPARATION: ENTRY

Vermont-NEA believes immediate steps should be taken to improve standards for entrance into the teaching profession through cooperative interactions with teacher training institutions. Entrance requirements should be rigorous, yet flexible enough to attract candidates who demonstrate the potential to become effective teachers.

The Association urges appropriate state agencies to inform teacher preparation institutions of projected needs as well as working with those educational institutions to be enticing and actively recruit quality teaching candidates. Teacher preparation institutions should prepare prospective teachers in fields consistent with those needs. (1992, 2023)

D-3 TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS: CONTENT

Vermont-NEA believes that a sound teacher preparation program must be equitably funded and must:

a. Involve practicing Pre-K-12 teachers in the design, implementation, evaluation, and systematic change of the program;
b. Require a Bachelor of Arts or science degree from an accredited college or university, which may be in a field of concentration other than education;
c. Include required courses in the liberal arts, subject or grade level specialty, reading, writing, research and information skills, and professional studies;
d. Include training in student assessment, , using technology remotely, classroom management, discipline, group processes, the dynamics of intergroup communications, human growth and development, the changing role of the family, exceptional behaviors, human relations, unconscious bias, racism, white privilege, religious groups, and multicultural education.
e. Include a variety of field experiences culminating in a one-year paid internship. (1992) (1998) (2000) (2021)

D-4 TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS: STUDENT TEACHING

Vermont-NEA believes that student teachers should be provided with legal status and liability protection.

The Association believes that supervising or cooperating with classroom teachers should be compensated monetarily and by reduced teaching assignments and responsibilities. The recommendation of the supervising or cooperating classroom teacher should weigh heavily in the decision regarding readiness to enter the teaching profession.

Vermont-NEA further believes that the acceptance of student teachers should be on a voluntary basis. Vermont-NEA also encourages students to join the Association. (1992) (1999)

D-5 TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS: PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATION

Vermont-NEA urges licensed educators with teaching experience to become involved in college and university committees that control teacher education programs.

The Association supports placing these teachers in decision making roles in departments of education and sharing in the responsibility for practicum experience with the public schools and teacher preparation institutions. (1992) (1999)

D-6 TEACHER INDUCTION

Vermont-NEA believes that teacher induction is a process that facilitates the transition of new teachers into the profession and provides a system of collegial support for veteran teachers experiencing a change in grade level, type of assignments, site, or cultural environment. The Association also believes that an effective induction process is based upon exemplary teaching practices, an understanding of adult and student learning, and a professional environment that supports collaboration and inquiry.

The Association further believes that the induction process enhances teaching skills and promotes professional development. The induction process for new teachers must be mandatory, be at least one with up to a maximum of three years in duration including a mentoring program. The induction process for veteran teachers must be flexible and provide support based upon changes in their professional assignments.

The Association encourages its affiliates to be involved in the development of standards for teacher induction and the design and implementation process. (2000, 2023)

D-7 HIRING POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Vermont-NEA believes that, to provide the highest quality of education to all students, hiring practices must ensure that all education employee positions be filled with highly qualified professionals. The Association also believes that the hiring policies and practices must be nondiscriminatory and include provisions for the recruitment of a diverse educational staff. (2010)

Vermont-NEA believes that when provisionally licensed teachers are hired, districts should provide support to help them become highly qualified licensed professionals. (2025)

D-8 PROBATIONARY PERIOD FOR NEWLY LICENSED TEACHERS

Vermont-NEA believes in the establishment of a two-year period of probation for newly licensed teachers. It should include the following characteristics:

a. Successful completion is affirmed by the local superintendent (or school board if there is no superintendent);
b. A qualified individual will provide formal evaluations to the teacher;
c. An employing school district which has complied with its responsibilities to provide the teacher formal evaluations and required notice may, without being required to provide statutory hearing, decide for performance reasons not to renew the teacher's contract; and
d. A teacher who, for alleged performance reasons, does not successfully complete an initial two-year period, may extend probation for one additional two-year period, during which he or she is subject again to the requirements of a teacher with an initial probationary license. (1998, 2013)

D-9 MENTOR PROGRAMS

Vermont-NEA believes that mentor programs enhance the professional expertise of employees, and every newly hired educator should be mentored by a qualified educator in their field The Association also believes that the planning, implementation, and evaluation of such programs must be negotiated or cooperatively developed and maintained by the school district and the local affiliate.

The Association further believes that the duties and responsibilities of all parties must be clearly defined and uniformly administered. Mentors must be selected through a defined process with articulated criteria, be properly trained and compensated, and be provided with adequate time to fulfill their responsibilities. The state or local authority has the obligation to provide hold-harmless protection.

The Association believes that any documentation that results from the mentoring process must be confidential and the property of the mentee and mentor and must not be included in the personnel files. (2000, 2013, 2024)

D-10 CONTINUING EDUCATION

Vermont-NEA recognizes the need for continuing education in the career-long development of educators. All teachers should acquire a master's degree, or its equivalent in additional course work (except where industry standards apply), within seven years of receiving a permanent license. The Association believes that federal and state governments, as well as local school systems, have a responsibility to fund expenses for continuing education programs, courses, conferences, and degrees which benefit the professional development of all staff. We encourage all local universities and colleges to provide professional development for all disciplines, including technical programs.

The Association encourages its affiliates to develop strategies for the implementation of educator-governed professional development programs. These programs must reflect the needs of local educators and students; therefore, educators must have the decisive voice at every stage of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Local professional development committees should develop and oversee professional development programs, which:

a. Extend over 5-year periods;
b. Are offered at times which do not conflict with or overlap ongoing professional duties;
c. Reflect the priorities and curriculum developed by the school district;
d. Encourage ongoing and open critical analysis of them by district staff; and
e. Provide incentives to teachers and support staff to engage in those professional development activities which:
    1. Support district goals of retention of supported and professionally developed staff; and
    2. Assist the district in the attainment of its educational goals.

The Association supports increased federal funding and the appropriation of state and local funds to ensure the existence of learning collaboratives in sufficient numbers to serve all the educators of Vermont. (1992, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2021, 2023)

D-11 ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT

Vermont-NEA believes in accountability. The Association believes that school employees can be accountable only to the degree that they share responsibility in educational decision-making and to the degree that other parties who share this responsibility--legislators, other government officials, school boards, administrators, parents, students, and taxpayers--are also held accountable.

Vermont-NEA believes there should be no single local, regional, or statewide assessment system. The Association will resist any attempt to transform assessment results into a state testing program that would seek to measure all students, teachers, or school systems by a single standard. (1988, 1990, 1991)

D-12 TEACHER COMPETENCY TESTING

Vermont-NEA believes that competency testing must not be used as a condition of employment, relicensing, evaluation, placement, ranking, or promotion of licensed teachers. The Association also opposes the use of student progress, standardized achievement tests, or student assessment tests for the purpose of teacher evaluation. (1988)

D-13 PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Vermont-NEA supports non-evaluative professional assistance programs (i.e., instructional coaching, mentoring, and Professional Learning Communities) that provide assistance for improving professional practices and retaining promising educational employees. The Association also believes a professional assistance program must be developed through the collective bargaining process. (2001, 2002, 2023)

D-14 EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES

Vermont-NEA advocates a formal evaluation system for every educational employee in every local school district because consistent evaluations of on-the-job performance are the only appropriate way to assess and assure the competency of practicing educational employees.

An effective evaluation procedure, supported by well-developed, continued professional growth programs, will enable all educational employees to keep abreast of developments in their area of specialization and to continue professional growth. Such procedures also can identify educational employees with instructional deficiencies and provide them with remedial options, counseling, sufficient resources, and opportunities to observe other educational employees. Regular assessment and supportive resources will ensure that those who continue in this capacity are competent.

If, after an evaluation process that follows all the above provisions of this resolution, and if, after being given sufficient time and opportunity for improvement, an educational employee is formally re-evaluated and there is documentation of incompetence, dismissal proceedings with guaranteed due process should be instituted. Therefore, it is essential that administrators and/or mutually agreed upon evaluators be properly trained and held accountable for the implementation of appropriate and fair evaluation systems.

A school district's evaluation procedure will be developed and maintained in conjunction with representatives selected by the local Association and will include:

a. Clear performance expectations:
b. Regular observation of classroom performance, with advance notice and discussion of evaluation visits and a timely consultation after each visit;
c. A written evaluation report provided to the educational employee;
d. Opportunity for a written response prior to the placement of the evaluation in the personnel file. Participation in an evaluation process shall not waive an educational employee's right to due process in any subsequent contractual or legal proceeding.

The Association believes that procedures for evaluation of administrators should include guaranteed confidential evaluations by school employees within their direct supervision. (1992, 1994. 2000, 2023)

D-15 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS, AMINISTRATORS, AND EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

Vermont-NEA believes that continuous professional development is required for teachers, administrators, and

educational support professionals to achieve and maintain the highest standards of student learning and professional practice.

The Association also believes that professional development should:

a. Be based upon clearly articulated goals;
b. Be designed and directed by the affected professionals at each site;
c. Assist educators in meeting the needs of students;
d. Be incorporated into the teaching profession as an essential component of the work schedule;
e. Provide training for the implementation of new and expanded programs;
f. Provide time for inquiry, research, reflection, and collaboration;
g. Provide opportunities for mentoring with colleagues;
h. Be standards referenced and incorporate the best principles of teaching and learning;
i. Be career long, rigorous, and sustained;
j. Stimulate intellectual development and leadership capacity;
k. Balance individual priorities with the needs of the school and the district;
l. Provide a depth of subject matter knowledge and a greater understanding of learning styles;
m. Provide opportunities to apply new learnings and changes in practice;
n. Provide opportunities to assume new roles, including leadership positions;
o. Include an ongoing assessment and evaluation component to determine effectiveness;
p. Provide flexibility for the use of a variety of resources such as university-school partnerships, professional development schools, exchange programs, professional development resource centers, and cultural and business resources.
q. Includes regular ongoing training opportunities focused on best practices to address the needs of students from underrepresented groups.

The Association also believes that administrators and staff are partners in the total school program. The administrators must maintain valid administrator licenses and have annual teaching experience. Areas of training should include participatory decision-making, interpersonal skills, personnel selection, staff evaluation, curriculum, and school management techniques. (1988, 2000, 2019, 2024)

D-16 CONSULTANTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Vermont-NEA supports the full staffing and full funding of the State Department of Education to attract and keep professional consultants in all positions.

D-17 PROMOTE THE RETENTION OF EXPERIENCED EDUCATORS

Vermont-NEA believes that experienced educators are valuable resources in the promotion of educational excellence. The Association also believes that our experienced members should be incentivized to remain in the education profession so that such members are appropriately compensated through the negotiations process. (2003, 2023)

D-18 RETURN OF SIGNED CONTRACTS OR LETTERS OF INTENT TO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Vermont-NEA recognizes that life situations may change and, as a result, school employees may need to relocate or consider employment at another school. School employees should be given sufficient time to review an offered position and pursue other job opportunities before contracts for the following school year are due to school administration. (2017)

E. GAIN RECOGNITION OF THE BASIC IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHER IN THE LEARNING PROCESS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES IN THE EDUCAITONAL EFFORT

E-1 IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION

Vermont-NEA believes that a prime responsibility of professional associations is to stimulate significant improvements in the quality of instruction. Much of the responsibility to make educational changes lies with the teachers through their influence and involvement in democratic decision-making, in and out of school.

Local school systems shall be urged to provide classroom teachers with support staff to free the teacher from non-teaching duties. Support staff may be either paraprofessionals or auxiliary personnel. (1988, 1989) Teachers will be

protected from the demands of staff shortages, such as loss of prep time, so that they continue to teach and provide high quality instruction. (2023)

E-2 SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING

Vermont-NEA believes in school restructuring that is flexible, locally defined, and responsive to the needs and interests of teachers, students, and the broader educational community. The Association believes in a school restructuring process which ensures teachers share in leadership, authority, and governance. (1992)

E-3 FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN READING

Vermont-NEA strongly supports the right to read and believes that licensed professionals within the school are best equipped to choose material to be used in the classroom or to be available in the school library. In instances where a move toward censorship occurs, a review procedure, similar to that of the American Library Association, should be implemented. (1988)

E-4 VOLUNTEERS

Vermont-NEA recognizes and encourages business and community involvement through volunteerism. However, the work performed by volunteers shall not result in any violation of the applicable bargaining unit agreement nor jeopardize any educational employee's position. Vermont-NEA encourages school districts to require a formal application process, which may include a background check, for all volunteers. (1990, 1993, 1994, 2012)

F. PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES & ADVANCE THEIR INTERESTS AND WELFARE

PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEES

F-1 PROTECTION OF EDUCATORS

Vermont-NEA shall insist upon development and enforcement of laws, regulations, policies, and procedures that guarantee the safety of educators and other school personnel from verbal and physical attacks on their persons or property. The Association further believes that when school personnel are victims of physical attack, verbal abuse, theft, vandalism, bullying, or harassment from any individual in the workplace - including, but not limited to, students, staff, or parental guardians, they should receive full support of their employer in pursuing legal and other remedies as well as receiving reimbursement for their personal and property loss. Time lost due to injuries from attacks should not be deducted from accumulated sick leave. (1994, 1995, 2007, 2013, 2022)

F-2 EMPLOYEE RIGHTS PENDING COURT ACTIONS

Vermont-NEA believes when criminal charges or civil lawsuits are filed against a school employee, the right of due process must be guaranteed. If an employee is removed from student contact or suspended from a position due to pending court action, all employment rights of the employee shall remain in force, including full compensation and job security.

The Association urges its locals to negotiate contract provisions covering procedures to be followed until final disposition of the case. (1993)

F-3 DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING OF EMPLOYEES AND JOB APPLICANTS

Vermont-NEA believes that mandatory drug and alcohol testing of employees and job applicants is an unwarranted and unconstitutional invasion of privacy and opposes such testing. (1991)

F-4 CONFIDENTIALITY

Vermont-NEA supports professionalism in the educational environment. The Association believes that the right to confidentiality, including that of medical records of all education employees, should be respected by the educational community to the fullest extent allowable by law. (2019)

F-5 DUTIES IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Vermont-NEA believes that in emergency situations the duty of education employees is to remain with students and comply with established emergency procedures.

The Association believes that requests by the administration, even on a voluntary basis, for education employees to serve on search squads and the like are construed as clearly outside normal duties.

Vermont-NEA urges local Associations to become aware of existing local guidelines, and, in the absence of such, to participate in the immediate development of a written procedure. (2013)

F-6 TRANSPORTATION

Vermont-NEA urges local school systems to provide and to incur the expense of transportation liability insurance for education employees who are requested or required to transport students by private vehicle for any school-related function.

Vermont-NEA believes that every student is entitled to safe transportation between home and school.

The Association urges local school systems to provide and to incur the expense of transportation liability insurance for education employees who are requested or required to transport students by private vehicle for any school-related function. (2013, 2023)

F-7 LICENSED PARAPROFESSIONALS

Vermont-NEA believes paraprofessionals holding teacher licenses who are assigned professional duties should receive professional salaries during the time they are performing these duties.

The Association urges local affiliates to oppose efforts by school boards to use the employment of paraprofessionals in replacing professionals or increasing class size. (1991, 1992, 1993)

F-8 ASSIGNMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

Vermont-NEA believes in the importance of employing professional educators to fulfill the critical role of substitute teachers. The Association also believes that substitute teachers perform a vital function in the maintenance and continuity of daily education. The Association condemns the practice of assigning substitute teachers to regular positions. Such positions should be filled by available licensed teachers who are eligible to be placed on contractual status by the school district.

The Association opposes the practice of replacing absent teachers by dispersing students to other classrooms. The Association also opposes the use of individuals such as educational support professionals, part-time employees, or employees hired through private agencies to cover classes. The Association further opposes requiring teachers to substitute during their preparation time.

The Association condemns the practice of utilizing licensed teachers to substitute for personnel on extended leave without providing full pay for the substitutes. (1988, 1992, 2002)

F-9 EDUCATION EMPLOYEES AND ACTIVE-DUTY SERVICE

Vermont-NEA believes that an education employee whose career is interrupted by a call to active-duty service by the National Guard or the reserves should be guaranteed reemployment and all benefits that would have accrued if the employee had continued in a position with the school system. (2002)

CONTRACT ISSUES

F-10 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

Vermont-NEA believes that greater emphasis must be placed upon securing, supporting, and retaining the most capable educational support professionals. The Association recognizes that educational support professionals share the same community interest of the professional staff. The Association urges that salaries and benefits for educational support professionals be competitive with similar positions in private industry and business within the local region.

Vermont-NEA believes that educational support professionals are entitled to advance notice when their responsibilities or assignments are changing due to student needs, whether short-term or long-term. Furthermore, the Association believes that paraprofessionals should be licensed and urges teachers to become involved in the orientation and training of paraprofessionals and other educational support professionals.

Vermont-NEA believes that Districts should provide the time and compensation for paraprofessionals to meaningfully collaborate with one another and with teachers. (1991, 1992, 1993, 2023, 2025, 2026)

F-11 UNIFORM PAY STRUCTURE

Vermont-NEA and its affiliates believe that school employees should be adequately compensated by a uniform pay

structure as bargained with local school districts. The Association opposes "merit pay" or any other compensation plan based on preferential, subjective, or politically motivated criteria. (2023)

F-12 EDUCATOR COMPENSATION

Vermont-NEA believes that educator salary schedules should provide for entry-level salaries and career earnings comparable to those of other professions with similar preparation and responsibilities and be structured to provide compensation levels that encourage classroom educators to remain in the classroom.

The Association further believes that assistance and guidance should be provided to local affiliates in dealing with compensation systems for educators.

Therefore, the Association urges local affiliates to proceed as follows in the pursuit of agreements concerning compensation:

a. Avoid proposing pay-for-performance systems and prevent the adoption of pay-for-performance systems if they are proposed by school districts, state legislatures, or other governmental entities;
b. Exclude the use of supervisor evaluations and student testing as bases for evaluating educator performance - if school districts, legislatures, or other governmental entities intend to adopt pay-for-performance systems;
c. Attempt to have pay-for-performance systems rescinded or amended if already adopted; and
d. Oppose the provision of additional compensation to attract and retain educational employees in hard-to-recruit positions. (2001, 2024)

F-13 REDUCTION IN FORCE

The National Education Association believes that one of its basic responsibilities is job security and Vermont-NEA urges its affiliates to negotiate in collective bargaining agreements the criteria to be utilized should reduction in force occur. Criteria should include seniority, objectivity, nondiscrimination, uniformity of application, and affirmative action. The RIF process must be conducted professionally and with respect for employee dignity.

Vermont-NEA believes that RIF decisions should endeavor to preserve positions that serve students, and school districts should reduce administrative roles in equal proportion to direct student services positions. (2025)

F-14 RIGHT TO STRIKE

Vermont-NEA supports the legal right of teachers to strike if local Associations and school boards cannot mutually resolve their differing positions in negotiations within 30 days of receiving a fact finder's report. Furthermore, the Association believes that binding interest arbitration may be used by local Associations and school boards for final settlement of contract disputes if the parties mutually agree to this process at the local level. (1996, 2018)

F-15 STAFF WELLNESS

Vermont-NEA believes that the physical, emotional, and mental health of staff has an impact on performance, students, and associates. Vermont-NEA believes schools should strive for a positive school culture in which individuals feel valued, cared for and respected. This culture contributes to effective teaching and learning and to genuine and respectful communication both within and outside the school. The Association urges school districts to promote an awareness of wellness among all personnel and establish programs for the development and maintenance of positive health habits.

Vermont-NEA advocates Employee Assistance Programs as a voluntary resource that would assist school employees who are experiencing significant professional or personal problems. These programs would provide confidential, professional counseling leading to improved health and job effectiveness. (1989, 1990, 2020)

F-16 HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT

Vermont-NEA believes that education employees have the right to a work environment that includes healthy indoor air quality and is safe from environmental and chemical hazards. The Association understands that healthy employees have a lower absentee rate and are more productive, and that the environment is a factor in overall good health.

The Association also believes in the establishment and enforcement of standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to ensure health and safety, as well as the ongoing training and certification of education employees who work in potentially hazardous situations. Additional health hazards should not be created when facilities are altered or repaired.

The Association further believes that OSHA standards must be posted. The Association believes education employees and the public must be notified in a timely manner of actual and potential hazards. Vermont-NEA believes that schools should be models for sustainable practices such as composting and recycling, as these contribute to a healthy environment. (2008, 2020)

F-17 SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS

Vermont-NEA believes that every child has the right to a safe environment for learning. The Association believes that every educator has a right to safe working conditions.

Vermont-NEA will support policies that endeavor to ensure safe public school buildings which include secure entrances & exits, consistent safety policies and protocols, and efficient communication throughout the building/district. (2013, 2023)

F-18 BASIC CONTRACT STANDARDS

Vermont-NEA and its affiliates believe that school employee/school board collective bargaining agreements should contain certain standard contractual concepts. Therefore, Vermont-NEA and its affiliates will pursue agreements which provide for the following concepts:

a. A grievance procedure, including all discipline, suspension, dismissal and nonrenewal, subject to due process and just cause that terminates with final and binding arbitration;
b. Contractually defined procedures that provide for a published seniority list and layoff and recall based on seniority as bargaining unit members and licensure;
c. Employer-paid fringe benefits that fully cover bargaining unit members and their families; Employer-paid insurance packages which incorporate the benefits of wellness care including comprehensive health, life and dental insurance, and employee assistance programs;
d. Insurance premium increases should be factored into salary scale negotiations as a real cost to the employee;
e. Membership in the Association or the payment of a service fee as a condition of employment;
f. Required posting of all vacant or newly created positions along with binding rights based upon seniority and licensure where licensure is applicable;
g. Preparation and planning time for all members of the bargaining unit at a minimum of forty-five (45) consecutive minutes within each school day; also, schedules should enable teachers to interact during the school day, through such mechanisms as shared preparation periods;
h. Enforceable class size and teaching load maximums, specifically a class size of fifteen (15) or fewer children;
i. Duty-free lunch periods for all members of the bargaining unit;
j. Nondiscriminatory, fair, and equitable treatment including income protection of bargaining unit members regarding their gender, sexual orientation, race, creed, religion, residence, physical characteristics, handicap, illness, age, marital status, or grade/subject taught;
k. Contractually defined evaluation procedures;
l. Throughout the birthing and aftercare process, any school employee disabled by pregnancy is entitled to all contract benefits available to school employees for other causes and illnesses. Paid parental/child rearing leave should be granted for everyone to provide care for a natural or adopted child. If an employee needs to leave their classroom during the school day for medical reasons, including but not limited to breast pumping and/or insulin injection, the employee will be provided with a substitute and a safe, secure location on site;
m. Release time for Association business with full pay and fringe benefits;
n. Contractually defined procedures for ensuring school employee decision-making in curriculum design and related instructional areas as well as instructional management and reporting systems;
o. Salary schedules based upon preparation, professional growth, and length of service, where placement of newly appointed faculty on step according to their teaching experience, with full credit on salary scale for previous experience; and where part-time faculty, working half time or more, shall advance on the salary schedule a full step each year. They shall receive the same salary and fringe benefits as full-time faculty, prorated according to the workload. All extracurricular and extra duty assignments to be filled on a voluntary basis with provision for adequate compensation for school employees who accept such assignments;
p. The recognized bargaining unit will include continuing education teachers, part-time teachers, school nurses, school social workers, librarians, school psychologists, counselors, department heads, vocational education teachers, teachers of extracurricular activities, therapists, and other professional special education personnel as well as regular classroom teachers, and all other nonsupervisory school employees of the school district;
q. A provision which assures that work performed by members of the bargaining unit shall not be contracted out or performed by temporary workers.

r. Vermont-NEA and its affiliates further believe that school employee/school board collective bargaining agreements should define the salaries, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment of educational employees. Such agreements should not include provisions which restrict or demean the dignity of school employees. Therefore, Vermont-NEA and its affiliates will resist agreements which provide the following concepts:
s. A so-called "penalty" or liquidated damage clause that deprives a school employee of employment mobility or compensation earned for services provided;
t. Merit pay or any other compensation scheme which substitutes preferential, subjectively granted, or politically vulnerable salaries for services rendered;
u. A provision stating that contracts for the following year shall be issued no later than April 15 and returned by May 31 with extensions allowed at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee.
v. Contract provisions that support paraeducators who transition to licensed staff. Paraeducators who transition to a licensed teaching position should be entitled to have their years of service and expertise as paraeducators recognized on the certified pay scale and seniority list at a minimum ratio of 3:1 (3 years to 1 year). Additionally, if they are harmed by a reduction in force, licensed staff who previously were paraeducators should be allowed to return to their previous paraeducator position while maintaining continuous employment and seniority credit at the time of their transition as if they remained in their ESP bargaining unit position. (1988, 1989, 1992, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2017, 2020, 2023, 2025, 2026)

RETIREMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY

F-19 RETIREMENT

Vermont-NEA shall provide leadership to ensure that the Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System (VSTRS) should:

a. Be soundly financed, professionally managed, and responsively administered, with social responsibility;
b. Include retirement benefits that accrue at the rate of 2.0 percent for each year of service credit, of a teacher's mean salary of the highest three years, with full benefits to be realized after twenty-five years of service.
c. Include a legal minimum average compensation to be determined and established annually as the current teacher average salary for the State of Vermont. Upon normal retirement, no teacher will receive less than one-half of the minimum legal average compensation, subject to the normal discounts for early retirement;
d. Include automatic and realistic benefit increments to reflect increases in the cost of living;
e. Include comprehensive and meaningful disability and survivor benefits;
f. Provide a health insurance benefit for retired teachers and their spouses/domestic partners that is at least comparable to the health insurance benefit currently provided to retired state employees.
g. Provide for full vesting at the age of fifty-five (55) or after five years of service;
h. Provide for early retirement benefits after the completion of five years of service and the attainment of fifty-five years of age;
i. Include a provision for service credit for those teachers who chose not to join the retirement system until required to do so;
j. Include a provision for service credit to teachers with service in post-secondary educational institutions;
k. Provide a pre-tax savings plan toward which teachers may contribute and whose contributions will be matched by the employer and the state.

Vermont-NEA shall continue to ensure that the Vermont Municipal Employee's Retirement System (VMERS) is on par with the provisions and practices of the Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System.

Retiring teachers who are not eligible for Medicare benefits due to their age at retirement will be able to remain in the school district's health insurance plan. Until the retiree is eligible for Social Security and Medicare benefits, school districts will be encouraged to pay for these premiums. (1989, 1990, 1992, 2001, 2026)

ASSOCIATION ISSUES FOR EMPLOYEE WELFARE

F-20 STAFF MERGERS

Vermont-NEA supports and encourages the merging of teacher and educational support personnel units. (1992)

F-21 PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Vermont-NEA believes in professionalism among its members. To that end, the Association encourages its

members to become as informed as possible on educational issues.

Vermont-NEA further believes that one of its functions as a professional organization is to serve as an educational issues resource center for its members. (1994)

F-22 REGIONAL TRAINING

Vermont-NEA strongly supports regional training in Association skills for its members. (1988)

F-23 REGIONAL BARGAINING

Vermont-NEA strongly supports regional bargaining and regional consolidation of locals as the direction to be followed in collective bargaining, with the ultimate objective to be coordinated contract bargaining consistent with current collective bargaining laws.

The Association believes that active participation by local affiliates in the Regional Bargaining Councils will improve the economic status of Vermont educators. (1994)

F-24 UNIFORM SCHOOL CALENDAR

Vermont-NEA supports legislation that allows negotiation between Vermont-NEA and the Vermont Superintendents' Association and the Vermont Department of Education to develop a uniform school calendar.

Until a uniform calendar can be developed in this manner, Vermont-NEA supports the efforts of Regional Bargaining Councils to propose and negotiate regional calendars. (1988, 1995)

F-25 SUMMER SCHOOL AND MODIFIED CALENDARS

Vermont-NEA believes that affected local affiliates must participate fully in the design, authorization, implementation, evaluation, and continuation of summer school, the extended school year, year-round schools, and/or a modified calendar. Governing policies must take into consideration the impact on the community and be in accordance with the Association's principles for professional salaries and class size. Employment in summer school or other school programs outside the contracted days must be on a voluntary basis. School employees performing additional duties outside of their contract shall receive compensation in accordance with their annual contract. (1995, 2026)

F-26 UNISERV COUNCILS

Vermont-NEA encourages participation in UniServ Councils. Such councils provide an opportunity for all locals within their UniServ districts to meet, share ideas, solve problems, and set the direction for their districts.

F-27 VERMONT-NEA MEETINGS

Vermont-NEA shall not hold its Representative Assembly or statewide conferences in any city or town where a local affiliate is on strike at the time of the event. When Vermont-NEA is required to schedule events off-site, Vermont-NEA will not cross any picket line of another union. Vermont-NEA will not schedule off-site events at businesses that oppose the right of its employees to organize. (2012)

G. SECURE PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY

G-1 LICENSURE

Vermont-NEA advocates rigorous state standards for entry into the teaching profession. These standards shall include above-average college grades, field training experience that includes successful completion of student teaching, and demonstration of proficiency on appropriate pedagogical and subject matter tests. Tests should be valid and unbiased and should be included as one element of comprehensive assessment for completion of a teacher preparation program as well as for licensure into the profession.

The Association believes that licensing standards must assure that individuals wishing to enter the teaching profession have the following qualifications:

a. A Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited college or university, which shall be in a field of concentration other than education;
b. Undergraduate or graduate training in pedagogy and child development and psychology;
c. Successful completion of a student teaching internship experience or its equivalent at least one school year in duration; and
d. A passing score, established by the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators, on a teacher examination defined by the national certification agency or board for other education professionals such as speech-language pathologists or school nurses.

The Association asserts that a teaching license should signify that an individual entering the teaching profession is competent to teach. A teaching license must be legally recognized as the primary requirement for employment in every public and private school (Pre-K-12). No license should be issued unless an individual possesses the entry-level knowledge and skills required for teaching. No temporary or emergency licenses should be issued. No assignments should be permitted outside the teacher's area of licensure without appropriate concurrent retraining supported by the local district. Revocation of a teaching license must be for just cause and consistent with an equitable due process procedure.

The Association supports regulations that would put licensed educators with teaching experience in decision-making roles in licensing agencies.

The Association believes that all substitutes employed in the State of Vermont should be licensed to teach in Vermont. Beyond fifteen days in one level of assignment, a substitute should be licensed and endorsed in that area.

e. Vermont-NEA believes that teacher and administrative licensure should establish that an individual is qualified to practice. Re-licensure ensures that an individual remains qualified throughout their career. Supervision and evaluation should be evidenced-based and locally negotiated, and should not be addressed by statewide elected or appointed bodies (1988, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2016)

G-2 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARD

Vermont-NEA believes that the profession must govern itself. The Association also believes that each state should have a professional standards board, composed of a majority of practicing public school teachers.

Professional standards boards should have exclusive authority to license and to determine criteria for how a state certificate will be recognized for professional educators. Further, these boards should have the exclusive authority to establish the standards regarding licensure, including procedures for suspension and revocation. The Association opposes legislation that compromises the authority of state standards boards and urges the elimination of state statutes that conflict with this authority. (1995)

G-3 NEW AND EMERGING LICENSURE

Vermont-NEA recognizes that education is ever changing. Licensure requirements must be clarified and delineated to keep pace with developing educational initiatives. The Association believes that it is the duty and responsibility of the Professional Standards Board to redefine these licensure requirements. (1996)

G-4 NATIONAL CERTIFICATION

Vermont-NEA supports voluntary national certification by which the profession grants recognition to an individual who has met qualifications specified by the profession. The Association recognizes that this function is filled by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), which is composed of a majority of practicing public school teachers.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards establishes appropriate assessment procedures by which individuals demonstrate exemplary practice in pedagogy and in subject matter areas, issues certificates to all individuals who meet NBPTS-established standards, maintains a roster of those who have been certificated, and encourages reciprocity with state professional standards boards.

The Association also supports the periodic evaluation of such certification procedures to ascertain whether cultural, economic, gender, racial, or age bias is perpetuated by the requirements for certification. (2000)

H. UNITED EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES FOR EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP

H-1 ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

Vermont-NEA believes that every education employee has the right and obligation to be an informed and politically active person. The Association urges education employees to register and vote, participate in party organizations, discuss political issues publicly, campaign for candidates, contribute to campaigns of candidates, lobby, organize political action groups, and run for and serve in public office without curtailment of annual increments, tenure, retirement, or seniority rights. Major decisions affecting public schools are made by elected officials or their appointees. Therefore, the Association believes that it is the duty and responsibility of educators to involve themselves in the selection, election, and reelection of qualified committed candidates who support goals that provide quality education. (2020)

I. PROMOTE AND PROTECT HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

I-1 CIVIL RIGHTS

Vermont-NEA is committed to the elimination of barriers of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, size, marital status, and economic status. The Association believes that all members of society are entitled to the rights and liberties decreed in common law, the Constitution, and statutes of the State of Vermont and the United States. (1993, 2023)

I-2 THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Vermont-NEA believes that all people have the right to organize to achieve an improvement of their living conditions through their own free and independent unions and organizations. The Association urges that this right be advocated where it is now abused or denied and strengthened where it is now secured.

Vermont-NEA recognizes the benefits of strengthening connections with other unions and workers throughout the state. The Association supports promoting worker relations across the state and believes we are stronger together.

Vermont-NEA recognizes the historical role of organized labor in its struggle for economic and social justice. The Association advocates the use of union-made products and services.

The Association deplores the anti-union activities by business interests, school districts, and government agencies, including efforts that attempt to destroy and undermine labor unions and organizations, penalize members for union involvement, and deprive workers of their right to organize and bargain. (2002, 2024)

I-3 SEX DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL RIGHTS

Vermont-NEA urges full compliance with Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972. The Association urges that the Equal Rights Amendment be passed as soon as feasible.

I-4 COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE

Vermont-NEA believes that access to comprehensive health care is a right of every citizen and urges the State of Vermont to implement a comprehensive health care plan. (1990, 2003, 2010)

I-5 COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE POLICY

Vermont-NEA believes that affordable, comprehensive health care is the right of every resident. The Association supports the adoption of a universal health care plan for all residents of Vermont.

The Association will support health care reform measures that move Vermont closer to this goal and that achieve universal coverage, control costs while assuring quality, emphasize prevention of health care problems, and are financed by means that assure greater equity in the funding of that health care.

The Association also believes that if a single-payer health care plan is adopted, no cuts in Medicare/Medicaid benefit levels or in funding of those programs should be made. (2003, 2010)

I-6 PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

Vermont-NEA believes people living with HIV/AIDS should be ensured fair and equitable treatment in our communities, allowing equal access to education, employment, living conditions, and all rights guaranteed by law. (1994)

I-7 BULLYING

Vermont-NEA believes that bullying is a form of abuse. Students and education employees must be guaranteed a safe environment that protects them from bullying as pursuant to Vermont Statute 16 V.S.A. § 570. Therefore, the Association urges local affiliates to work with educational institutions to:

a. Establish strong policies defining and prohibiting bullying;
b. Develop and institute programs designed to help students and education employees recognize, understand, prevent, combat, and eliminate bullying;
c. Develop and implement a procedure that encourages the reporting of bullying incidents, provides due process, ensures prompt resolution of such incidents, and protects the rights of all parties;

d. Provide counseling services for all parties involved. (2004, 2022)

I-8 SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Vermont-NEA believes that sexual harassment of anyone based on actual or perceived gender, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation, preferences, or practices is a form of sex discrimination and abuse.

The Association further believes that educational employees and students should be protected from sexual harassment.

The Association encourages its locals to work with educational institutions to:

a. Establish strong policies defining and prohibiting sexual harassment;
b. Develop and institute educational programs designed to help people recognize, understand, prevent, combat, report, and eliminate sexual harassment;
c. Develop and publicize a grievance procedure that encourages the reporting of incidents of sexual harassment, resolves complaints promptly, and protects the rights of all parties.

Vermont-NEA further believes that counseling services must be provided for all parties involved in sexual harassment cases. (1994, 1999, 2018, 2022)

I-9 SEXUAL ASSAULT

Vermont-NEA supports efforts that will prevent and protect all individuals from becoming victims of sexual assault, including assault based on gender and/or sexual orientation, preferences, or practices.

The Association encourages its locals to work with educational institutions to develop and institute educational programs designed to help people recognize, understand, prevent, combat, and eliminate sexual assault.

The Association believes that counseling services must be provided for students and school personnel who are victims of sexual assault. The Association further believes that when school personnel are the victims of sexual assault, they should receive the full support of their employer in pursuing legal and other remedies. (1994, 1999)

I-10 FAMILY PLANNING

Vermont-NEA supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom. (1990)

I-11 NUCLEAR WEAPONRY

Vermont-NEA recognizes that federal spending for nuclear weaponry is being increased while funds for education and other social services are being cut.

The Association supports a mutually verifiable freeze on nuclear weapons as eighteen Vermont town meetings did in 1981 and one hundred sixty-one did in 1982. The Association urges that a mutually verifiable freeze be followed by reductions in every type of nuclear weapon and that these issues be discussed by all.

The Association calls for the transfer of funds from conventional and/or nuclear weaponry to education and other social services. The Association urges its members to work with other concerned organizations to have this issue brought before the public in any appropriate way. (2023)

I-12 ETHNIC-MINORITY EDUCATORS

Vermont-NEA believes that ethnically diverse educators are valuable to the school community. The Association urges local affiliates to work to achieve and maintain ethnic diversity in all categories of educational employment. (2002)

I-13 USE OF PREJUDICIAL TERMS AND SYMBOLS

Vermont-NEA deplores prejudice based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, disability, size, marital status, or economic status and rejects the use of names, symbols, caricatures, emblems, logos, and mascots that promote such prejudice. (2003, 2022)

I-14 IMMIGRATION

The Association recognizes that historically there have been many economic and/or political circumstances that have compelled people to come to the US. Vermont-NEA supports efforts to improve the immigration process, including the provisions of due process, equal protection, and access to status without regard to national origin and/or religion. The Association also supports policies that protect the integrity of the family unit and deplores the hardships imposed on families when family members, especially parents, guardians, or caretakers, are detained and/or deported for immigration status offenses and thereby separated from their children, many of whom are U.S.

citizens.

The Association believes that English, adult education, GED, and citizenship classes should be available in sufficient numbers to ensure that immigrants can comply with all federal mandates for permanent residence and/or citizenship. The Association also believes that the federal government is responsible for the enforcement of immigration policy.

Additionally, the Association supports the creation of sanctuary cities and the right of these cities to refrain from asking persons about their immigration status and to disregard Federal requests to detain individuals who are undocumented. Further, the Association believes that school boards should adopt policies declaring that their Districts to be safe zones for students, meaning that the district is a place for students to thrive and to seek assistance, information, and support related to any immigration law enforcement that interferes with their learning experience.

As a part of this policy, districts should agree to refer any immigration law enforcement agent seeking access to a school site or to obtain student data to the Superintendent's office, as the presence of immigration enforcement agents in schools substantially disrupts the learning environment. The Superintendent should then request a judicial warrant and, if no warrant is presented, state the grounds for access and contact of legal counsel. Immigration agents should only be allowed access to the school site or information if the district is legally obligated to do so. (2017, 2018)

I-15 MASS INCARCERATION

Vermont-NEA recognizes that substance abuse has been criminalized through the War on Drugs. Vermont-NEA further recognizes that the War on Drugs has resulted in the mass incarceration of people of color and that this is a form of institutional racism. Vermont-NEA further believes that laws that criminalize substance abuse should be altered and replaced with policies that treat substance abuse as a mental health problem and provide treatment in place of prison time. (2017)

I-16 EQUITY IN STAFFING

Vermont-NEA believes that gender equity is essential in a democratic organization. The Association is committed to gender equity in hiring and will strive to achieve a diverse professional staff that reflects and promotes the goals of the Association's membership. (2019)

I-17 WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

Vermont-NEA believes that to achieve racial and social justice, educators must acknowledge the existence of White supremacy culture as a primary root cause of institutional racism, structural racism, and White privilege. Additionally, the Association believes that the norms, standards, and organizational structures manifested in White supremacy culture perpetually exploit and oppress people of color and serve as detriments to racial justice. Further, the invisible, racial benefits of White privilege, which are automatically conferred irrespective of wealth, gender, and other factors, severely limit opportunities for people of color and impede full achievement of racial and social justice. Therefore, the Association will actively advocate for social and educational strategies fostering the eradication of institutional racism and White privilege perpetuated by White supremacy culture. (2019)

I-18 GUN-FREE SCHOOLS AND THE REGULATION OF DEADLY WEAPONS

Vermont-NEA believes that all students and education employees must be allowed to learn and work in an environment free of unauthorized guns and other deadly weapons. Severe penalties should be enacted and strenuously enforced for criminal actions involving guns and other deadly weapons, especially in school settings, and for those who profit from the illegal sale, importation, and distribution of these weapons. The Association also believes that individuals who bring guns or deadly weapons to school should be excluded from school and school grounds until completion of a mandatory prescribed intervention.

The Association further believes that our communities, schools, and students are safer when common sense gun regulations are in place. The Association supports banning assault weapons, limiting the capacity of ammunition magazines, requiring background checks and a waiting period for all gun purchases, creating a national database of gun sales, and preventing people with mental illness and/or a documented history of domestic violence from purchasing firearms. The Association believes that minors should not be allowed to buy, own, or sell firearms.

The Association also believes that scientific and medical research on the causes and prevention of firearm violence should be extensive and ongoing and that gun owners should participate in educational programs that stress responsible ownership, including safe use and storage of guns. (2018)

I-19 GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Vermont-NEA recognizes the scientific consensus that global climate change is largely caused by human activity, resulting in significant, measurable damage to the Earth and its inhabitants. The Association believes that humans must take immediate steps to change activities that contribute to global climate change. The Association supports the continued development and implementation of environmentally sound practices that abate global climate change and its effects in partnership with the global community.

Vermont-NEA believes all association-sponsored activities should be planned with a goal to mitigate environmental impact whenever possible. The Association also supports the development of school district policies that will minimize human impact on global climate change. (2020, 2024)

I-20 HATE-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Vermont-NEA believes that acts or threats of hate-motivated violence, including, but not limited to, physical and verbal violence against individuals or groups because of their race, color, national origin, political beliefs, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, size, marital status, or economic condition are deplorable. The Association also believes that state and local governments and community groups must oppose and eliminate hate-motivated violence, and that current events and/or economic conditions should not diminish such opposition.

The Association recognizes the danger of white supremacist groups and all media sources that promote hateful speech and actions, and the continuation of institutional racism. Further, the Association recognizes the danger of any group that marginalizes anyone based on race, color, national origin, political beliefs, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, size, marital status, or economic condition. Therefore, educators must take a significant role in countering the effects of such speech, actions, and racism on our students, families, and communities. (2021)

J. OBTAIN FOR ITS MEMBERS THE BENEFITS OF AN INDEPENDENT, UNITED EDUCATION PROFESSION

J-1 MEMBERSHIP PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSOCIATION

Vermont-NEA believes that every member has the right and obligation to participate fully in the Association. The opportunity to participate in the Association must be afforded to every member without fear, intimidation, or retribution. The Association also believes that school policies should provide released time without loss of pay to those who are fulfilling leadership responsibilities, attending meetings, or participating in other Association activities. (2002)

J-2 RETIRED MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Vermont-NEA believes that retired members should be active participants within the Association.
Retired members should be involved in areas such as political action, legislative lobbying, member training, crisis assistance, development and maintenance of educational excellence, welfare and safety of children, public relations, and retirement issues. (2002)

J-3 PROMOTION OF TEACHING AS A CAREER CHOICE

Vermont-NEA supports the establishment of organizations involving students interested in the field of education as a profession. The Association believes that it should promote the establishment of such organizations at all age levels and encourage its members to serve as advisors. (2002)