

## N.E.A. Resolutions

*The September 1994 issue of NEA Today, the monthly newspaper published by the National Education Association, reports the "resolutions" adopted by delegates to their 1994 Representative Assembly. Below is a small sampling from the 302 resolutions that were passed this year. (One of the resolutions listed is not among those adopted by the NEA. See if you can figure out which one it is.)*

### **Arbor Day Education**

The National Education Association believes that Arbor Day should be appropriately observed each year in every state. The Association urges its state and local affiliates to encourage their governors and mayors to declare the appropriate day each year as Arbor Day. Appropriate activities such as essay contests and tree plantings should be a part of this observation in each school.

### **Repatriation of Native American Remains**

The National Education Association believes in the dignity of the dead and encourages laws to prevent the robbing of graves.

The Association believes that the remains of thousands of Native Americans in storage throughout the United States should be returned for interment to the tribes and/or areas from which they were taken. The Association further believes that American Indian sacred items in museum collections should be returned to the tribes of their origin.

### **Left-Handed Students**

The National Education Association believes in meeting the needs of all students in the public schools, including left-handed students. Toward this end, the Association and its affiliates urge appropriate governing agencies to provide desks, scissors, and all other materials and instruments necessary for left-handed students to achieve on an equal basis with right-handed students.

The Association strongly recommends preservice preparation and staff development for education employees that present strategies for handwriting instruction of left-handed students. Such training should

also address sensitizing instructional staff to the needs and problems of left-handed students in a right-handed classroom.

### **Professionalism and Accountability**

The National Education Association believes in teachers who know their subjects, care about children, are treated as professionals, generously rewarded for their results and held accountable for what their students learn.

### **Genocide**

The National Education Association deplores any act of genocide, defined as "the deliberate and systematic eradication of a racial, political, cultural or religious group." The Association believes that curriculum should include the historical context of all known acts of genocide in order to provide insight onto how such inhumanity develops. The Association further believes that acts of genocide must be acknowledged and taught so as to preclude such acts.

### **Competency Testing and Evaluation**

The National Education Association believes that competency testing must not be used as a condition of employment, license retention, evaluation, placement, ranking, or promotion of licensed teachers. The Association also opposes the use of pupil progress, standardized achievement tests, or student assessment tests for purposes of teacher evaluation.

### **World Hunger**

The National Education Association believes that worldwide attention needs to be focused on hunger and malnutrition. The Association supports continued relief

to those in need as well as the education of children, youth, and adults concerning world hunger and its effects so that they may develop the capacity and the commitment to resolve these problems.

### **Statehood for the District of Columbia**

The National Education Association affirms that all citizens of the United States should enjoy the full benefits of citizenship. Accordingly, the Association urges its affiliates to support efforts to achieve statehood for the District of Columbia.

The Association believes that the concept of fiscal autonomy is consistent with this position that the federal payment to the District of Columbia should be based on an established formula.

### **Violence Against and Exploitation of Asian/Pacific Islanders**

The National Education Association is committed to the elimination of racial and ethnic discrimination in all its forms. The Association deplores the resurgence of covert and overt anti-Asian/Pacific Islanders sentiments, threats, and incidents of racially motivated physical and verbal attacks. The Association believes that community-based educational awareness programs should be developed in conjunction with Asian/Pacific Islander groups to create an awareness of this violence. The Association supports its affiliates in their efforts to bring about clear and consistent law enforcement to protect the civil and human rights of the victims of racial violence.

The Association deplores the exploitation of women by organizations that advertise mail-order brides in their catalogs.

\* The resolution that didn't make it on the NEA's list was "Professionalism and Accountability." It makes our list, though; we lifted it from the Network's credo.

I conclude that the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education harmed rather than helped children because it undercut the confidence which the public had in schools, and damaged the trusting relationship between teachers and their students.

We used to celebrate the fact that schools increasingly were becoming desegregated learning communities. Willis Hawley said, "The research shows that desegregation has positive consequences," that "School desegregation increases interracial contact," and that "Contact more often than not is friendly." Ronald Edmonds and his associates stated that "Court-ordered desegregation is usually the greatest opportunity for reform...in urban school districts."

We were pleased with the good news that on reading and math tests conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress "School achievement scores of blacks have increased at a faster rate than those of whites," although substantial gaps remained between these racial populations. The commission's report said nothing about these achievements. Instead it reported that "Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent." We should have been told the good news along with the bad.

We read with approval reports that educational opportunities for very young children were increasing throughout the nation, that rates of participation in early childhood education have grown dramatically among all children, and that the participation growth rate was often greater among blacks. But *A Nation at Risk* carried no recommendation for continuing early childhood education.

We rejoiced with Ronald Edmonds and his assertion that all children can learn, and we applauded James Comer's identification of teachers as "most responsible"

for the success or failure of schools in fulfilling "Their mission of student learning and development." We were encouraged by the findings of Michael Rutter and his associates that "Educational outcomes were better in schools where the teachers expected the children to achieve well and where there was substantial use of praise and approval in classroom teaching." Ignoring the wisdom of these educators about teacher-student interaction, the commission focused instead on ways of preparing teachers to meet high academic standards and ways of evaluating teachers for compensation purposes.

### Report encouraged criticism

The report did nothing to cement the trusting relationships between teachers and students that are essential. Rather, it encouraged educators to be scornful of low achieving students. The report did nothing to increase the confidence of parents in schools. Rather, it encouraged parents to be super-critical of schools and to use them as scapegoats for all else that is wrong in our society. This is the wrong way to achieve educational reform. There is a better way of doing it.

The challenge to educators is found in the useful research mentioned. We must redirect the school improvement movement to embrace these hopeful findings, and turn away from school-bashing tendencies. The major task before us today is to discover ways of reestablishing *trust* and *confidence* between teachers and students and parents and schools. If we will diligently pursue these goals we will help our students, save our schools, and contribute to true educational reform. ♡

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