



Salute

TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

An Evening of Celebration

FEB 13, 2026
AT THE ANTHEM
THEATER IN
WASHINGTON, DC

Presented by

THE NEA
FOUNDATION

JOIN US FOR THE **BIGGEST NIGHT IN** PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Public education plays a vital role in the United States. For generations, we have relied on public schools to prepare our children to achieve personal and academic success, to contribute economically, and to be active participants in our democracy. Today, millions of public school educators shoulder this profound responsibility, serving the needs of 49.5 million children while our democratic institutions face grave tests; the gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” continues to widen; and staffing shortages, a student mental health crisis, and deep-rooted racial inequities persist.

Despite this, public school educators persevere, upholding their commitment to ensure that all children receive the high-quality education they deserve and upon which the future of our democracy depends.

But educators cannot do it alone. That's where The NEA Foundation comes in.

We are passionate about preserving public education as the gateway to opportunity and the cornerstone of our democratic society. We also are steadfast in our conviction that the pursuit of educational excellence mandates the pursuit of justice, equity, and opportunity. When educators have the resources they need to innovate; build new skills; advance equity; and lift their voices about what children need, they spark greatness in students and entire communities.

We believe the need to recognize, support, and celebrate educators has never been more urgent.

Each year, at the Salute to Excellence in Education in Washington, DC, The NEA Foundation shines a spotlight on extraordinary educators and partners who inspire students, serve families, and strengthen school communities from coast to coast.

The Salute to Excellence in Education celebrates the power of educators while also raising critical funds that help The NEA Foundation continue its work. It's an unforgettable occasion that offers you the opportunity to support public education and connect with educators and education leaders from across the country.

We invite you to join us for this inspiring evening and to invest alongside us in ensuring that every child has access to a high-quality public education that enables them to realize their dreams.

THE NEA
FOUNDATION

A NIGHT TO HONOR PUBLIC EDUCATION'S CHAMPIONS

THE NEA FOUNDATION AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence (ATE) recognize educators for their excellence in the classroom and their leadership beyond the schools' walls. Nominees for these annual awards are drawn from all 50 states and from the U.S. Department of Defense schools.

The NEA Foundation presents three additional awards at the Salute to Excellence, honoring special friends of public education for their commitments to the field.

AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education honors those who have significantly increased understanding of the value of public education or dedicated themselves to

serving public school educators and students.

EQUITY PARTNER AWARD

A well-resourced public education should be every child's civil right but there are widespread inequities in education based on economic status, race, ethnicity, and geography. The Equity Partner Award honors an individual or organization that takes action to address equity and opportunity gaps in public education.

STUDENT VOICES FOR EDUCATION AWARD

Across our country, students play a significant role in advocating for improvements in public education. The Student Voices for Education Award recognizes an individual or group of students, or an organization that is providing exemplary leadership in elevating student voices and building student movements to advocate for stronger public schools.

PREVIOUS AWARD WINNERS

Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education

- 2001** Mister (Fred) Rogers
- 2002** LeVar Burton
- 2003** Mary Hatwood Futrell
- 2004** Joanna Cole & Bruce Degen
- 2005** President William J. Clinton
- 2007** Billie Jean King & Eric Carle
- 2008** Tiki Barber
- 2009** Sesame Street Workshop
- 2010** Jane Goodall
- 2011** Adora Svitak
- 2012** Will Allen/Growing Power
- 2013** Kyle Zimmer/First Book
- 2014** Special Olympics
- 2015** Walter Dean Myers & Christopher Myers
- 2016** Hispanic Scholarship Fund
- 2017** Global Kids

- 2018** American Indian College Fund
- 2019** EF Education First
- 2020** Linda Darling-Hammond
- 2021** Allison Ranelle Brown
- 2022** The Algebra Project
- 2023** Urban Arts
- 2024** Longview Foundation
- 2025** Kent McGuire

Equity Partner Award

- 2022** Californians for Justice
- 2023** Race Forward
- 2024** Institute for Democratic Education in America (IDEA)
- 2025** Black Teacher Project

Student Voices for Education Award

- 2023** Student Voice
- 2024** Diversify Our Narrative
- 2025** Mikva Challenge



“

Educators are the hope, the dream, the soul, the future, and the promise of public education.”

— Sara A. Sneed, President and CEO, The NEA Foundation



WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“

It's important for educators to feel seen so that they have energy and enthusiasm and so that they continue doing this work.”

— Natalia Benjamin (Educator, Century High School, Rochester, MN; Horace Mann Award Recipient)

“

The NEA Foundation's ability to make practical change on behalf of teachers on the ground represents a trust that a corporation cannot earn on its own.”

— Event sponsor

“

Celebrating educators from across the country is part of the work to ensure that young people view education as a viable and rewarding profession to enter.”

— Nick Archuleta (Board of Directors, The NEA Foundation)

“

I think [this event] is key to inspiring teachers . . . to understand that they will be acknowledged and that they're valued.”

— Julius Thomas (Counselor, Rio Hondo College, Whittier, CA)

“

This evening revitalizes the profession . . . I think for new teachers seeing the work people put in is just hugely validating.”

— Alexandra Castellanos Smith (Educator, Sand Ridge Junior High, Roy, UT; Horace Mann Award Recipient)



SPOTLIGHTING THE BEST IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE SALUTE TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

EXPOSURE

Presented both in person and livestreamed, the Salute to Excellence in Education reaches a diverse audience of more than 2,000 people around the country each year.



800+

ATTENDEES



1,500+

LIVESTREAM VIEWERS

MEDIA ATTENTION

The Salute to Excellence in Education garners widespread media attention. Editorial coverage, print advertising, video, social media, and press outreach drive engagement and visibility with a national audience of stakeholders.



200,000+

**SOCIAL MEDIA
IMPRESSIONS**



11,000+

**YOUTUBE
VIEWS**



12,000+

**IMPRESSIONS SPARKED BY COVERAGE
IN NATIONAL NEWS OUTLETS PLUS
TELEVISION AND RADIO**

NETWORKING

Attend the Salute to Excellence and meet and mingle with a diverse array of local, state, and national leaders committed to driving education forward.

- Public School Educators and Education Support Professionals
- NEA Foundation Board Members
- Business and Community Leaders
- Education Philanthropists
- National Education Association (NEA) Executive Leaders and State and Local Affiliates
- Education Nonprofit Leaders
- Federal and State Government Representatives
- Education Policymakers and Advocates

DEMONSTRATE YOUR SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

SPONSORSHIP BENEFITS AND RECOGNITION

Are you ready to make a difference? Invest in public education and in a brighter future for our children by becoming a sponsor of the Salute to Excellence in Education! Sponsors receive an array of special benefits; recognition opportunities; and networking privileges in recognition of their generous support.

CHOOSE FROM THE FOLLOWING SPONSORSHIP LEVELS:

GENIUS \$75,000

- VIP reception attendance and *premium seating* for up to twenty (20) people
- Logo recognition in print advertisement in *NEA Today* magazine
- Inclusion in national press release and recognition from the podium
- Logo recognition on save the date, invitation, table flags, signage, and program
- Leadership positioning of logo in promotional video, livestream, and stage slideshow plus hot-linked logo on event website
- Leadership recognition on the Foundation's social media platforms, including in Social Media Tag night of the gala plus in three (3) social media posts and three (3) e-blasts
- 1 complimentary half-page ad in the gala program

SAGE \$50,000

- VIP reception attendance and *preferred seating* for up to twenty (20) people
- Logo recognition in print advertisement in *NEA Today* magazine
- Inclusion in national press release and recognition from the podium
- Logo recognition on save the date, invitation, table flags, signage, and program
- Leadership positioning of logo in promotional video, livestream, and stage slideshow plus hot-linked logo on event website
- Inclusion in the Foundation's Social Media Tag night of the gala plus in two (2) social media posts and two (2) e-blasts
- 1 complimentary quarter-page ad in the gala program

PHILOSOPHER \$25,000

- *Preferred seating* for up to ten (10) people
- Recognition from the podium
- Logo recognition on save the date, invitation, program, and table flags
- Logo and name recognition on event website and in livestream and stage slideshow
- Recognition in two (2) social media posts and one (1) e-blast
- 1 complimentary quarter-page ad in the gala program

INVENTOR \$10,000

- Seating for up to ten (10) people
- Logo and name recognition in livestream and on table flags
- Name recognition on save the date, invitation, program, and event website

SCHOLAR \$5,000

- Seating for up to four (4) people
- Name recognition on save the date, invitation, program, and event website

CONTRIBUTOR \$3,000

- Seating for up to two (2) people
- Name recognition on save the date, invitation, program, and event website

Note: Tables seat ten (10) people. Sponsors who secure their package early enjoy maximum benefits and exposure.

Interested in a custom sponsorship package? We want to hear from you!

Please contact Kate Gibney at kgibney@nea.org or call (202) 822-7623.



YOUR PARTNERSHIP HELPS THE NEA FOUNDATION DRIVE LASTING CHANGE

An investment in public education and public school educators is an investment in a brighter future for our children and a strong and vital democracy. Your contribution to the Salute to Excellence in Education supports critical NEA Foundation priorities.

Since 2010, The NEA Foundation has invested more than \$39 million in grants to educators for professional growth and innovation and in special initiatives to strengthen public education in school districts around the country.

FUEL EDUCATORS' AND STUDENTS' LEARNING

Our Grants to Educators program serves public school educators in communities around the country. Through Envision Equity, Student Success, and Learning & Leadership grants, the Foundation supports innovative classroom projects, educator-led collaborations, and teachers' professional development.

By the numbers since 2010: More than **\$7.7** million in grants awarded benefiting over **84,000** educators and **1.7** million students across the country

CREATE LEADERS FOR THE GLOBAL AGE

Each year, our Global Learning Fellowship engages up to 50 K-12 public school educators in a year-long immersive professional development and learning program. They emerge as leaders ready to bring the world into their classrooms and equip their students for global citizenship in the 21st century.

By the numbers, since 2010: **More than 500** Global Learning Fellows, **over 250** free classroom resources provided to educators, **over 42,000** hours of professional development for educators

CLOSE OPPORTUNITY GAPS

Today, 25 million students in public schools live in under-resourced households, the highest proportion in generations. Some regions, notably the American South, lag far behind the national average of a dollar per pupil in funding, with investments dropping as low as 30 cents per pupil. This contributes to a widening opportunity gap that disproportionately impacts low-income, Black and Brown students. The NEA Foundation's Community Schools Initiative is addressing gaps in educational equity and access by investing in the development of community schools in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

By the numbers since launching in 2020, the Initiative has: Supported the development of **27** community schools, created the Southern Regional Alliance for Community Schools network, served more than **14,000** students, educators and families.

SUPPORT CHANGEMAKERS

We believe that the most innovative and effective transformations within public education occur when educators are engaged in authentic partnerships alongside policymakers, students, parents, researchers, and community-based organizations. To this end, we create pathways for educators to gain a seat at decision-making tables. We build coalitions; invest in organizations dedicated to amplifying educator voices; and champion parent and student advocacy networks.



JOIN US!

SALUTE EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Generous contributions from Salute to Excellence in Education sponsors and patrons provide vital unrestricted support that fuels The NEA Foundation's work all year long. As a sponsor, you can help shape the future of public education while also recognizing and celebrating some of our country's most essential workers.



Become a sponsor today. Scan the QR code to access the sponsorship reply form or visit www.neafoundation.org/get-involved/awards-gala-sponsor/.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Kate Gibney, Senior Vice President of Development, at (202) 822-7623 or kgibney@nea.org.

