

## MODULE 3

# Connecting Educator Values & Union Values



## SUMMARY

This module offers participants the opportunity to understand both the history of the NEA, and contemporary anti-educator union narratives. In light of these historical and current struggles, participants will have the opportunity to articulate and connect educator values and union values. This connection will then be articulated in the powerful act of story telling.

### Goals:

- To understand the values that underpin NEA
- To learn about the political narrative that is seeking to undermine their union.
- To describe the intersection of union values and educator values
- To use story telling as a counter-narrative tool

### Materials:

- Flip Chart Paper
- Markers
- AV equipment for video
- Internet to download Prager U video

#### NEA Unionism Curriculum 2018

Curriculum to “*promote the attitudes, values, and goals of unionism, solidarity, justice, fairness, and the search for the common good.*”  
Provided to the National Education Association by

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# AGENDA

EXERCISE	FORMAT	TIME
<b>Group Introductions</b>	Go-Around or Individual Conversations	5 minutes
<b>We Are NEA - Unit Introduction</b>	Presentation, Video showing, Discussion	10 minutes
<b>Proudest Moments Exercise</b>	Writing and Story Telling	30 minutes
<b>Debrief and Close</b>	Large Group	15 minutes
<b>TOTAL TIME: 60 minutes</b>		

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## INTRODUCTIONS (5 minutes)

**NOTE:** Do introductions as a go-round if you are working with a group small enough to accomplish this in 5 mins (suggested max of 10 people). If you are working with a group larger than this, have people turn to one or two people around them that they don't know and introduce themselves.

- Ask participants to give their names, their preferred pronouns (see the facilitator's guide for guidance on preferred pronouns), anything else about their identities they wish to share, and why they are at this training.

## WE ARE NEA - UNIT INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)

**SAY:** "Our union or association is fundamentally a workers' organization. We bargain contracts that define and maintain standards for our wages & working conditions. Beyond this our unions spend money in the political arena to support public education and educators. We are also professionals. We are highly educated. We are required to get and maintain our licenses or other certification.

Sometimes it's not easy to see ourselves as the kinds of workers that unions traditionally have been for. We're not manual laborers. We don't work for big corporations or small private employers. We are tightly connected to the students and families that we serve as public employees. In this sense, it can feel like our jobs are more about social service than social justice.

**SAY:** "It's important to remember that NEA grew out of a history of struggle that connected educators, students, families, communities, and politics in a way that paid explicit attention to both racial and gender justice (or injustice). Let me read to you just a few sentences from the opening of the history section on the NEA website:

*In 1857, one hundred educators answered a national call to unite as one voice in the cause of public education. At the time, learning to read and write was a luxury for most children—and a crime for many Black children. One hundred and fifty years later, public education and the profession of teaching are transformed. What was once a privilege for a fortunate few is now an essential right for every American child, regardless of family income or place of residence.*

*Since its beginning, the National Education Association has been ahead of its time, from welcoming Black members four years before the Civil War and electing a woman as president a full decade before Congress granted women the right to vote.*

**ASK:** “Does this surprise you?  
(Pause to discuss)

“If you want to learn more about NEA’s history, there is a 4-part series on the website (Write address on board/flip chart). <http://www.nea.org/home/1704.htm>

**ASK:** “So if NEA has already won the battle to make education the right of every child, why do we still need to engage in that struggle today?”

**FLIP CHART:** use to note people’s thoughts

“It’s no accident that we are still having to wage these struggles after all this time. There are multiple forces out there that are determined to pit our unions against our students, and who want to claim that educator unionism is fundamentally contradictory to quality public education. Let’s watch this short video – it’s a perfect example.”

**SHOW:** Prager U video:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/12xUkCZWg3N3XbgGz\\_poup9x60xFI3zYG/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/12xUkCZWg3N3XbgGz_poup9x60xFI3zYG/view)

**SAY:** “Did that get you steamed? It’s a really disturbing image of who we are and what our unions are about, and it’s a narrative that has gained tremendous strength in recent years.

In order for us to combat this narrative, we have to become experts at telling a different story – a counter-narrative. We have to be able to say what our values are as educators, what our values are as unionists, and how the two can combine as a powerful voice not only for our own economic interests, but in the interests of our students and their communities as well. We have to continue arguing for social justice as a way to protect the institution of public education.”

## **PROUDEST MOMENT EXERCISE: CRAFTING NARRATIVES ABOUT OUR VALUES AND EXPERIENCES (30 minutes total)**

### **UNIT INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)**

**SAY:** “The exercise that I’m going to ask you to do now is about our values – our values as educators, and our values as unionists. The objective here is to help bring to the surface the connection between the two, and to help you as **(insert appropriate local name)** members to be able to articulate these connections. In this process, you will gain some skill and self-confidence in telling a story that can counter the destructive narrative of the PragerU video.”

**Note:** Those who have gone through module 2 will have had this discussion already.

**SAY:** “First, let’s start by defining values. What do you think of when I say the word?”

### **Notes:**

- Those who have gone through module 2 will already have had this discussion.
- People sometimes confuse values with practices. For example, someone might say that collective bargaining is a union value, but it’s not. It’s a practice. The values that underpin the practice are a commitment to the greatest good for the greatest number, respect for experience as reflected in seniority rights, the importance of the voice of the educational practitioner in shared governance, etc.

### **REFLECTION WRITING (10 MINUTES)**

**NOTE:** Put the following questions on a flip chart sheet in advance

**SAY:** You will now have about 15 minutes to think and write about the questions on this flip chart sheet (**review the questions**). Answering them will prepare you to tell your story about how educator values and union values are connected.

- a. What has been one of your proudest moments as an educator?
- b. What has been one of your proudest moment as a union members or leader?
- c. What common themes do these moments have? (Examples: inspiring someone else; helping someone discover their potential and/or find their voice; promoting critical thinking or citizenship, etc.
- d. What values underpin the common themes in your stories?

### **STORY TELLING (15 MINUTES)**

**SAY:** “Now that you’ve had some time to reflect on your proudest moments and the values they reflect, you are going to practice telling your story. Remember, the point here is to

create a counter-narrative to the PragerU video, or other anti-educator union narratives. Use the notes you took to help you tell your story.

This process may make you feel vulnerable or shy. That's OK. It's not uncommon for the experiences that shape us most deeply also make us uncomfortable. So take your time and encourage your partner to speak freely. This should be a safe space.

Each person will have about 5 minutes to tell your story, and then another couple of minutes to talk about it. You can give each other feedback on what you heard, ask questions, or help each other to surface the values aspect of your stories.

I will let you know when it's time to switch to the other person's story.

Find a partner and get started!"

### **DEBRIEF AND CLOSE (15 minutes)**

- 1) What did you hear in each other's stories? (**Pause** for discussion. Given time, you may ask some people to volunteer to tell their stories again to the whole group).
- 2) How could you imagine using your story as a tool to get other educators energized around union activity?
- 3) How could you imagine using your story as a counter-narrative to the kind of story told in the Prager U video?

## **Best Practices and Recommendations for Facilitating Challenging Trainings**

Facilitating training sessions on social justice topics, and especially those concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion, can be mentally and emotionally taxing for the facilitator and the participants.

Facilitating requires more than time in the classroom. Thoughtful and thorough preparation is essential, as is de-brief and decompression afterwards. Being unprepared will put you and your learning objectives at risk. Having some strategies at hand for when people are emotionally “triggered” is strongly advised. These and other best practices can ensure that you arrive in the educational space, and orchestrate the development of the educational community, in the best possible way.

Through intentional practice, you will find methods for holistic preparation and decompression that work best for you and feel healthy. Following the recommendations below can help you to grow as a facilitator who can sustain the learning space for the duration of the training, and do these kinds of trainings throughout your career. This list of best practices can serve as a checklist when you initially begin your facilitator journey.

### **Before the Training**

- **Know your audience.** Anticipate and research the historical and current practices and news about the group you will be working with. You may want to send out a pre-training survey to the group. This will help you assess the level of understanding and salient questions about the training topic.
- **Prepare thoroughly** including learning objectives, a timed-out teaching plan, interactive exercises, accessible materials, etc.
- **Don't train alone** if you can avoid it. This is especially true for less experienced facilitators. We all learn from unexpected road blocks, but make sure you have support from a co-facilitator who can share the weight of the training. Design your division of labor to give each other breaks.
- **Build facilitation teams in light of the topic(s).** Particularly if you are training on racial justice, make sure the facilitation team includes people of color. Similarly, if you are training around gender justice issues, having a male and female facilitator working together is a good way to go. This can also be true for generational differences.
- **Pay attention to language justice.** If you are expecting to train in a multi-lingual environment, make sure that you have the needed interpreters and equipment.
- **Consider triggering.** Make sure that you spend some time preparing yourself mentally and emotionally for managing not only curriculum implementation, but also the thoughts and feelings of your participants.
- **Study models** for methods of communication and conflict resolution. Use the ones that work best for your training and communication style. Get input from others about how they manage conflict in trainings. Disagreement is not a bad thing, but should be managed so that the time spent on it is productive for everyone sharing the experience.
- **Create a routine** that helps you feel good going in to and coming out of the training.

#### During the Training

- **Establish ground rules** (or group agreements) at the beginning. Ideally, these would be generated by the group itself but have a list of the things that are important to you in mind as well. Make sure people understand that this is a serious endeavor and that part of your role as facilitator is to call out infringements of the behavioral norms and expectations the group has established. Their purpose is to ensure that the space remains as safe as possible. That doesn't mean everyone will feel comfortable all of the time.
- **Be prepared to adjust the timing** in your teaching plan. You will know by "reading the room" when it is appropriate to spend more time on particular aspects of the training,

but check in with the group for their consent to stay on the topic or to move on. You have the option of coming back to a topic at the conclusion of your training, either in wrap-up, one-on-one follow-ups, or collectively if participants want to stay longer and if the space is available.

- **Keep the learning objectives in mind!** Interesting and unexpected divergences can have value, but don't let your plan get totally de-railed.
- **Manage triggering as it occurs.** Triggering may show up as anger or withdrawal, dominating the dialogue or being silenced, tears or defensive body language. If you believe someone is being triggered, don't ignore it. Use classroom conflict techniques to manage interactions. Sometimes taking a break and speaking to someone privately is appropriate. Make sure everyone understands that the impact of particular information or discussion isn't the same for everyone. Members of traditionally marginalized groups may have strong (and legitimate) reactions that should not be ignored. They also should not dominate the learning process for the entire group. This can be a tricky balance to achieve.
- **Provide evaluation opportunity** for participants.

#### After the Training

- **Do self-reflection** on your own personal evaluation, and de-brief with your co-facilitator as soon as possible after the class. Compare your self-evaluation to the feedback from participants' evaluations. The opinions of your participants are important, but so is your own critical self-evaluation. Experiences of triggering, or the reactions of others to triggering can also show up in evaluations.
- **Become a part of collectives** for trainers, educators, or facilitators on diversity, equity, and inclusions so that you have a place to process with peers who do what you do. This is useful for learning tips, best practices, other forms of curriculum, and group dynamics.