

Friday Registration: 6:30 pm -9:00 pm
 Saturday and Sunday Registration: 7:00 am-9:30 am

Friday Special Session: 7:00 pm - 8:30

Privateers Exposed Diane Ravitch Josh Cowen

ALL KEYNOTE SPEAKERS ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE. WHEN THEY ADDRESS THE CONFERENCE, HOWEVER, WILL NOT BE MADE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE.

Saturday Opening Keynotes and Breakfast: 7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Diane Ravitch and Jess Piper, rural communities and public school advocate

Saturday: Session 1 9:45 am-10:55 am

Session Title	Description	Co-presenter 1	Co-presenter 2	Co-Presenter 3	Co-presenter 4
---------------	-------------	----------------	----------------	----------------	----------------

Florida School Board Elections Update	This workshop will discuss the experiences of three first-time school board candidates in Florida. The panelists will discuss public education messaging, their interactions with educators, parents, and students, and the politics of school boards in Florida.	Stephanie Vanos	Rebecca Thompson	Liz Barker	
---------------------------------------	---	-----------------	------------------	------------	--

Examining the Charter School and Privatization Movement in South Carolina's Lowcountry: How QEP Won a Battle in the Larger War on Public Education	This workshop will focus upon the work of the Quality Education Project (QEP) , an organizational member of NPE in South Carolina. The current director and faculty member at the University of South Carolina and two members of QEP that serve on the local school boards in Charleston, SC will share highlights of their fight against the privatization movement in South Carolina involving Burke High School, a historic predominantly Black high school on the peninsula and the Reimagine Schools Plan. They will also share some of the strategies used at the grassroots level to win smaller battles in the larger war against public education.	Dr. Kendall D. Deas	George Tempel	Dr. Carol Tempel	
--	--	---------------------	---------------	------------------	--

State School Boards: Policy and Power in the Fight Against Privatization and for Public Schools	Three elected state school board members will discuss how they campaigned, who opposed them, and how they use their position for good. They will also explain how citizens can petition and affect state policy.	Kathy Gebhardt	Meryl Johnson	Mitch Robinson	
---	--	----------------	---------------	----------------	--

"Whatever You Want to Call It": Science of Reading Mythologies in the Education Reform Movement	In recent years, a wave of science of reading (SOR) reforms have swept across the nation. SOR remains a contested and ambiguous notion. This panel examines the claims made by SOR advocates and sheds light on the ways these reforms are likely to reproduce, rather than disrupt inequities and injustices.	Elena Aydarova	Nancy Bailey	Tom Ultican	
---	--	----------------	--------------	-------------	--

Vulture Capitalism in the Charter School Industry	Ever since charter schools were created, there's been a persistent question of whether or not these schools introduce an entryway for profit-making actors to exploit the public education sector at the expense of teachers, students, and families. One such entryway occurs when for-profit charter school operators partner with private investors. Hear from a teacher with firsthand experience in teaching in one of these schools and from an experienced observer of Ohio charter schools who will explain how a "vulture capitalism" business model emerged in the Buckeye State and is now spreading elsewhere.	Jeff Bryant	Tasha Stiles	Jan Resseger	
Indianapolis Public Schools - Ground Zero for Project 2025	Indiana, and specifically Indianapolis, has been used as a 20+ year test market for the most extreme forms of charter/voucher privatization by both the local Dem party leadership and the state and local Republican party. Billionaire-backed organizations have spent millions to force their plan. Revealed in Project 2025 and the first weeks of the Trump/Musk/Vance presidency as a blueprint for the country. This is what it leads to and legitimizes.	Christina Smith	Dr. Gayle Cosby	MaryAnn Schlegel Rieger	
Saturday: Session 2 11:05 am-12:15 pm					
Session Title	Description	Co-presenter 1	Co-presenter 2	Co-Presenter 3	Co-presenter 4
Fighting Back Against the New Wave of School Closures	Two decades ago, No Child Left Behind and other high-stakes testing policies set forth mass closures of neighborhood public schools, overwhelmingly in Black low-income communities. Over the past two years, school closures have again risen due to unprecedented privatization and disinvestment in public schools. In this session, you will hear from organizers who are fighting school closures here in Columbus, Ohio, and from Advancement Project attorneys who have been supporting grassroots organizers nationwide fighting to save their neighborhood public schools.	Jessica Alcantara	Melodie Agnew	Laura Petty	Stuart McIntyre
Promoting Ohio's Whole Child Framework Through a School Board Alliance	During this session, panelists will discuss the framework of Honesty for Ohio Education's School Board Alliance, a trusted space for value-aligned school board members to collaborate on best practices around honest, inclusive education grounded in Ohio's Whole Child Framework. Attendees will learn organizing tools, the essential role of the Whole Child Framework, and ways to create safe and equitable spaces that foster relationship and movement building.	Christina Collins	Nidhi Satiani	Kelli Davis	Dr. Leslie Rasmussen
David's Playbook: Frontline Strategies Against the Charter School Goliath	This session brings together seasoned veterans from school districts, public education advocacy, and neighborhood/business communities who have battled charter school expansion in states and industrial zones. Participants will gain insights into hard-won victories, painful setbacks, and the ongoing fight against the charter school industrial complex.	Ilia Bulaich	Gregory Wallace	Gloria Nolan	

How Colorado Voters Turned Down a School Choice “Voucher” Amendment	The panel will describe how their collective advocacy helped defeat a voucher amendment in November 2024. Representing the Colorado State Board of Education, Advocates for Public Education Policy, the Colorado Education Association, and a statewide political watch group, the panelists will discuss the lessons learned in their fight against privatizing public schools. They will highlight how networking and messaging were critical to informing and motivating the public to engage in support of public education.	Phil Sorensen	Lisa Escarcega	Paula Noonan	Evie Hudak
The Role of Religious Extremism in Education	Religious extremists are taking an increasingly visible role in influencing education policy. In this workshop, we will expose the extremists and their objectives, identify where and how they are operating, and offer guidance on how to respond to their attacks.	Susan Nogan	Adam Clark	Peter Montgomery	Rev. Charles Foster Johnson
Doomed to Fail: How Mass Public School Takeovers by Charters Have Failed (And How We Make that Case)	Three experts on district school takeovers by charter schools provide evidence of their failure and explain the effects of those failed efforts on schools, families, and students.	Gary Rubenstein	Ray Sanders	Dountonia Batts	Lisa Haver
Lunch Keynote: 12:25 pm - 2:10 pm.	John Jackson: CEO and President of the Schott Foundation				
Saturday: Session 3 2:20 pm - 3:30 pm					
Session Title	Description	Co-presenter 1	Co-presenter 2	Co-Presenter 3	Co-presenter 4
One Must Imagine Sisyphus Happy: Lessons from Florida	Florida is often the birthplace of terrible education policy. This panel will discuss how organizers on the ground continue to push the boulder up the mountain for public schools. Discover how Floridians maintain hope and momentum even though the system is rigged against them.	Damaris Allen	Norin Dollard	Katie Hathaway	Reverend James Golden
Release Time for Religious Instruction: The LifeWise Agenda against Public Education	Release Time for Religious Instruction has been around since 1952. Since 2018 LifeWise Academy has been using this legal loophole to push an agenda of Christian Nationalism and Evangelical extremism in their war against public education. Join the Secular Education Association during this workshop to learn about what this program is doing to schools and what the future of this agenda has for public education.	Jaclyn Fraley, Katherine Schwanitz	Jim Collier	Alan Limke	Keith Comer, Amanda Fontana
Transformational Community Schools: Models for Equitable Success for All	This workshop will explain how the Community School model can be successfully implemented through collaborative efforts. A growing number of states, districts, and schools are implementing the Community School model with many positive outcomes.	Christopher Montiero	Jeff Bryant	Adriane Dorrington	
Busting Charter School Myths: Tools for the Effective Use of Public Information	Charter school narratives are often more spin than fact but become embedded as “truth” in the stories charter schools relate to parents, the public and legislators - unless they are challenged. This session will provide examples of action research that have busted certain charter myths in Texas using information from the public record. The presentation will also include excerpts from a statewide report on charter schools prepared by a new Texas advocacy organization, Our Schools Our Democracy.	Patti Everitt	Maggie Stern		

In Defense of Early Childhood Education and Care: Regional Working Groups Building Community through Advocacy	This panel will discuss the DEY Regional Working Groups formed to advocate on behalf of our national campaign. This panel will highlight how a diverse group of early childhood educators and advocates engage in community-based advocacy as resistance.	Sierra Roussos	Michelle Pullen	Hans Petersen	
Advocacy is for Everyone: Starting Your Own Movement to Protect Your Public School	Sharing how to mobilize your community by recruiting and training advocates in your school district. Staff and key volunteers of this highly effective organization will share strategies for defeating extremist groups like Moms for Liberty and Lifewise Academy that are targeting public schools.	Ellen Hopkins	Erica Watkins	Jenny Bobo	Lyndsie Wall
Saturday: Session 4 3:40 pm- 4:50 pm					
Session Title	Description	Co-presenter 1	Co-presenter 2	Co-presenter 3	Co-presenter 4
Funding Our Future: How Schools Fight Back Against Harmful Corporate Tax Breaks	Each year, corporations extract over \$95 billion per year from communities in the name of economic development. Schools are significantly harmed by this practice. In this session, we'll introduce tools to discover how much your community is losing to tax abatements and hear from people who have successfully reined in these wasteful giveaways that harm local public schools.	Anya Gizis	Kathleen Pointer	Greg LeRoy	Gregory Wallace
"Vouchers Hurt! The Ohio Story: Part 1 - Winning in the Courts	An expert panel of members of the Vouchers Hurt Ohio Steering Committee and its legal team will present the 5 Counts of the lawsuit against vouchers in Ohio. They will discuss successes, minor setbacks, pushback from privatizers and politicians, and other pertinent details.	Steve Dyer	Eric Brown	Miriam Fair	Charlie Wilson, William L. Phillis, Dan Heintz
Winning School Board Campaigns: Agile Strategies for a Changing Electorate	This workshop equips participants with actionable insights to build a winning pipeline of school board candidates. Learn to adapt to demographic changes, leverage the power of digital outreach, and apply Agile principles to campaign planning. With a real-world case study, discover how to counter extremism and win in challenging environments.	Melissa Hendrix	Jess Piper	Jennifer Jenkins	Rob Rogers
Advocacy Tools for a New Era: Exploring a Digital Dashboard of Opportunity to Learn Indicators by State	The Schott Foundation for Public Education and the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) have teamed up to develop an interactive database that uses a state-specific analysis to explore factors impacting students' opportunities to learn while highlighting the disparities in opportunity experienced by Black and White students in selected states. These factors are initial but important indicators of potential disparities in students' opportunity to learn. This session will explore the Schott/NCYL state profiles data and illustrate the dashboard navigation process for advocates.	Michael Wotorson	Dan Losen		

<p>Connecting the Fight for Democracy with the Fight for Public Education</p>	<p>Public education is a pillar of American democracy. The Trump Administration playbook to disrupt and destroy public education and therefore the possibility of an educated and informed citizenry is now a real threat. But we're ready to fight to defend public education and democracy. Panelists will share lessons learned from the first Trump Administration and the ongoing rightwing assault, as well as the victories racked up along the way.</p>	<p>Josh Cowen</p>	<p>Robert Kim</p>	<p>Kyle Serrette</p>	
<p>Democracy Starts with U(nions): How We Can Build a Rank and File Educator Caucus to Stand Up for Public Education</p>	<p>The Grassroots Education Movement NH (GEMNH.org). inspired by the teachers of Chicago, sought to reform our state union by pursuing leadership roles. We believe that it is only through hearing the voices from the classroom, by inspiring and helping new leaders to grow, that we can truly build the coalition we need to inspire and build rank-and-file educator power, overturn the expansive voucher program that seeks to swallow up public school findings, and elevate the profession.</p>	<p>Jacob Goodwin</p>	<p>Joanne Lazarus</p>	<p>Matt Castagana</p>	<p>Tim Belcher</p>
<p>Keynote: 5:00 pm-5:45</p>	<p>Kurt Russell: 2022 National Teacher of the Year</p>				
<p>Special Evening Event - 7:00 pm Changing the Narrative: Flip the Script to Win for Kids</p>	<p>Influencer and organizer Jess Piper, news talent & Comms Director of AROS Richard Fowler, and Director of SOSAZ Beth Lewis will delve into how grassroots organizations can elevate their efforts from simple messaging to robust communication strategies that drive impactful public education advocacy. The special event will provide tactical insights on growing digital presence, using different platforms effectively, and combating Project 2025 and privatization think tanks, with a focus on building winning communication strategies for state and coalition organizing efforts. Come learn from some of the nation's experts in grassroots comms and organizing!</p>	<p>Beth Lewis</p>	<p>Jess Piper</p>	<p>Richard Fowler</p>	
Description					
Sunday: Session 5 8:00 am -9:05 am					
<p>Courage is Contagious: Tips, Tricks, and Straight Talk on Dealing with the Hardest Parts of Organizing and Coalition Building</p>	<p>Organizing to protect and defend public schools in the face of well-funded opposition can be daunting and, at times, downright depressing. What happens when your funders want to fund (or "measure") the wrong things? This session takes an honest look at some of our most pressing and demotivating challenges. Come for the candor and lessons learned from actual campaigns around the states – and leave with real hope that we CAN overcome when we share our leadership with honesty, vision, strategy, and humility. We're not alone in this work and this session provides concrete tips for staying motivated and focused to reach our long-term goal of education justice.</p>	<p>Heather DuBois Bourenane</p>	<p>Damaris Allen</p>	<p>Beth Lewis</p>	

Advocacy Under Fire: Stand Up, Fight Back	This panel will identify the unique challenges of advocating for public education in a politically hostile environment and learn effective advocacy strategies to combat anti-public education policies and rhetoric. They will also explore ways to collaborate with like-minded stakeholders, organizations, and community members to strengthen advocacy efforts and gain insight into navigating legislative processes and holding policymakers accountable, even in unsupportive administrations.	Crystal Etienne	Lucia Baez-Geller	Nancy Lawther	
The Pursuit of Justice in Education	Hear from National Network State Teachers of the Year's Empowering Educator Voices Fellows who are passionate about advocating for strong public schools in New England. Hear about their efforts to collaborate, develop connections, foster relationships, and speak out against unjust and harmful policies like vouchers, book bans, Parent's Bill of Rights, gag orders, and anti-LGBTQ policies in New England.	Heidi Crumrine	De'Shawn Washington	Kate McCann	Tracey Nance
The Risks and Potential Rewards of the Expanded Use of AI in the Classroom	The panelists will dissect some of the risks represented by the expanded use of AI in the classroom in terms of undermining creativity, privacy and human connection, while considering if the risks are outweighed by potential benefits to overworked teachers.	Leonie Haimson	Cassie Creswell	Peter Greene	
What Have We Learned from New Orleans? The Risks of Privatization	This workshop will put New Orleans Public Schools under a microscope. This panel will hear from the parents of New Orleans students and their up-to-date experience as they navigate the system and what is happening now.	Ashana Bigard	Antonio Travis	Khem Irby	
Private School Vouchers and the Loss of Neighborhood Schools	Research shows school closures harm children and families in multiple ways and disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color. Learn more about the connection between vouchers and school closures and how to advocate against school privatization and for well-funded public schools.	Jessica Levin	Laura Petty	Fred Jones	
Brunch: 9:15-10:40 Keynote	Gina Hinojosa, Texas State Legislator				
Sunday: Session 6 10:50 am -11:55 pm					
Session Title	Description	Co-Presenter 1	Co-presenter 2	Co-Presenter 3	Co-Presenter 4
Growing an Equitable and Honest Education Movement Through Grassroots Organizing	During this session, panelists will share their experience and insight on successful ways to organize communities at the local, state, and national level. Attendees will learn about powerful communication tools, best practices on building meaningful relationships, strategies for advocacy and collaboration, and skills that foster civic engagement in diverse communities. Attendees will leave the session with tangible next steps for organizing in their local communities.	Nate Brown	Asma Elhuni	Damaris Allen	Melodie Agnew

The ADA's Impact and Future Directions for Inclusive Public Schools	This panel discussion will explore the profound impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on public education from the unique perspectives of educators with disabilities. It will highlight the successes and challenges over the past decades and provide insights into future directions for creating more inclusive educational environments.	Hinton Abbruzzese	Alyse Clark	Lindsay Rice	
Public Schools: Essential to the Preservation of Democracy	This panel will present from a historical and present-day perspective the important role of public education in preserving democracy in a diverse nation. A panel featuring historian Diane Ravitch, New Hampshire Attorney and public school and social justice advocate Andru Volinsky, and public school parents and advocates Gloria Nolan and Natalie Hastings present the best arguments for preserving one of America's most important institutions and what you can do to save it.	Diane Ravitch	Andru Volinsky	Natalie Hastings	
Victories Against Vouchers: Lessons from Blue and Red States	We will discuss the grassroots coalition efforts in each state that defeated vouchers in the legislature (New Jersey and Illinois) and at the ballot box (Nebraska and Kentucky), including messaging and coalition building. Our hope is that models and lessons from these campaigns can be used elsewhere to hold off future voucher efforts.	Sharon Kregel, Cassie Creswell	Tim Royer	Tina Bojanowski	Rebecca Firestone
Public Schools: Where ALL Students Must Be Welcome	This workshop will discuss the importance of attending to and meeting the needs of all students--especially those students who in the past were left behind and underserved--students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, and students of color. It will discuss the present attacks on inclusivity and how we should respond to ensure that all children are welcome in our schools.	Jennifer Hall Lee	Dr. Julianne Reynoso	Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig	
Mapping Voucher Schools in Ohio	This panel will walk through our analysis and discuss the impact of vouchers on school districts across the state.	Nidhi Satiani	Randy Bertram	Ali Smith	
Sunday Session 7: 12:05 pm - 1:10					
Session Title	Description	Co-presenter 1	Co-presenter 2	Co-Presenter 3	Co-presenter 4
The Fight for Educational Freedom: From the Criminalization of Literacy to the Banning of Ideas	The panel will examine modern censorship and educational inequality through the lens of history. It connects the criminalization of black literacy and subversive literature during slavery to Jim Crow segregation, the lost cause narrative and today's anti-CRT legislation. Black people, however, resisted throughout, running secret schools during slavery, pushing for public education during Reconstruction, and ushering in the modern civil rights movement. The panel will also include detailed analysis of current legislative trends.	Derek Black	Yohuru Williams		
"Vouchers Hurt! The Ohio Story: Part 2 - Winning in the Court of Public Opinion"	This accomplished panel will present strategies and actions for convincing Ohioans, including local community leaders, school communities, boards of education, retired school staff, and taxpayers, that the school voucher agenda can only be eliminated if local community members across the state stand up to the legislative majority by supporting the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit.	Dennis Willard	Betsy O'Brochta	Dan Greenberg	Andy Wilson, Jeanne Melvin, Maureen Reedy

Accountability in Action: How to Demand and Deliver the Schools Our Students Deserve	<p>This session unpacks the strategic plan of Wisconsin Public Education Network to hold our decision-makers accountable, build momentum for a statewide grassroots movement, and respond in real-time to threats and attacks on our public schools.</p>	Heather DuBois Bourenane	Patti Clark-Stojke	Jenni Hofschulte	Sandy Whisler
The Hidden Cost of Vouchers	<p>The Economic Policy Institute has developed a tool that estimates fiscal externalities—the dollar costs to school districts from students leaving public schools with a voucher. This panel will present the fiscal externality calculator and show users how to calculate the calculator for their district. It will provide examples of impact from research as well as the operations of a school district.</p>	Hilary Wething	Josh Cowen	Elizabeth Kirby	
Power of Community-Oriented Public Schools in Closing Opportunity Gaps	<p>Parents for Public Schools San Francisco will share successful models of community schools. Participants will learn about strategic equity enrollment approaches, navigation for student assignment systems, engaging in school governance and board meetings and in parent/community advisory groups, and developing the skills necessary for building, accessing, and navigating community support systems.</p>	Vanessa D. Marrero	Virginia Cheung	Rosario Gonzalez	Noah Sloss, Dorothy Clark
How to Organize a Multigenerational Community Movement to Beat Back Far Right Attacks on School Boards and Public Education	<p>This workshop will provide attendees with a toolbox of strategies and tactics on how to mobilize communities, even conservative communities, to defeat far-right insurgents in their attempt to politicize and take over school boards. Panelists will tell the story of their community, Sarasota, Florida, which became ground zero for the rightwing insurgency against public education in August 2020 when Bridget Ziegler, Sarasota school board member and co-founder of Moms for Liberty, organized a rightwing invasion of school board meetings.</p>	Carol Lerner	Lisa Gialdini Schurr	Zander Moricz	
Final Keynote: 1:20 pm-2:20 pm	Governor Tim Walz, Remarks by AFT President Randi Weingarten				