



2026 Fall Conference Session Descriptions

Breakout Session 1: 9:00AM – 10:15AM

Increasing Ethnic Minority Participation and Representation in Educational Spaces

Presenter: Joaquin Cuni | **Local:** North Kansas City NEA

This session is about having an honest conversation about the challenges and possibilities of ethnic minority educators in terms of involvement, representation, and leadership opportunities in schools, districts, and our own union. Participants will have the share to express and discuss their concerns, hopes, ideas, suggestions regarding the improvement of the current representation of ethnic minority educators in educational spaces (schools, union, etc) and the action steps that will effect positive change.

Inside MNEA Learns: Creating, Connecting, and Growing Together

Presenter: Lindsey Weatherby | **Local:** Mehlville NEA

A conversation about creating meaningful content, growing the platform, and expanding professional learning opportunities. Panelists: Greg Kester, Alicia Kleoppel, Ryan Tash, Paulette Lockett

ABC's of Addressing Behavior Challenges

Presenters: Tresina Alvested, Angela Rathert | **Local:** Odessa NEA

Are you tired of managing behaviors all day? Do you work harder than your students? In a 2023 article by Cindy Long in NEA Today, a survey highlighted that disruptive and violent behaviors have become a top concern for educators, second only to low pay. Attend this session to learn some tips and tricks to help take control of your classroom. We will review the ABC's of behavior (antecedent, behavior, and consequence). The answers to the ABC's will allow us to explore ways to understand, address and modify behaviors. The session will end with interactive activities to solve challenges from your own classrooms. This session is appropriate for aspiring educators, practicing educators, support staff, and administrators.

So You Want To Be an Advocate

Presenter: Pat McPartland | **Local:** MNEA - Retired

In this session we will talk about why educators should be advocates and give practical tips in how to start that work. We will practice together some of the skills needed to be comfortable and effective.

The Educator's Soundtrack: Using Music for Burnout Prevention & Classroom Community-Building

Presenter: Amanda Irvin-Black Kurtis Heinrich | **Local:** Park Hill NEA

Educator burnout and classroom tension both stem from overtaxed nervous systems. Grounded in the science of music, co-regulation, and autonomic nervous system regulation, this interactive session shows how intentional music selection can support teacher self-care and classroom management. Participants will explore how music prevents burnout and models real-time emotional regulation for students. For the classroom, we will cover using white noise, calming tracks, low-BPM instrumentals, and guardrail-guided student playlists to reduce anxiety and sharpen focus. Attendees will build custom playlists (personal recovery and classroom vibes) while collaborating with peers to swap high-impact tracks and audio routines.

We Got This: The Quest to Be Who Our Students Need us to Be

Presenter: Cornelius Minor | **Room:** Charter Hall

True equity in education doesn't start with a heroic individual—it starts with deep, authentic listening. In this transformative workshop based on his acclaimed book, *We Got This: The Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be*, educator and author Cornelius Minor challenges traditional "teacher-hero" narratives and demonstrates that listening to kids is the closest thing to a true classroom superpower. While a single teacher cannot dismantle systemic inequity overnight, Cornelius shows how educators can directly confront the racism, sexism, ableism, and classism right inside their classrooms. Participants will explore actionable strategies to transform everyday instruction, school culture, and student advocacy.

Breakout Session 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

Demystifying the School Psychologist: Insights, Tools, and Support for Your Classroom

Presenter: Christina Baker | **Local:** Special District NEA

School psychologists could offer far more than just evaluation services. In this session, educators will explore the full spectrum of a school psychologist's expertise—from behavioral intervention and crisis support to academic data analysis and mental health advocacy. Learn how to effectively collaborate with your school psychologist to build stronger classroom supports and improve outcomes for all students.

The Science of the Musical Mind (yet usable on Monday)

Presenter: Ron Malanga | **Local:** Hickman Mills NEA

In a highly interactive and practical session, teachers and interested administrators will learn classroom-applicable aspects of how the musical mind works. Recent neuroscience has clarified aspects of listening, moving, imitating versus generating, reading/writing, and instrument playing that every educator should know -- both in terms of pitfalls to avoid and cognitive processes to leverage. The session is highly interactive and practical. The science underpinning this session is always unpacked as the answer to "Why this?" after teacher's have experienced an activity or procedure they can use on Monday.

Increasing Student Engagement and Achievement Using the Blended Learning Model

Presenters: Maureen Kramanak, Sally Newell | **Local:** Center EA

Blended learning is more than just combining online content with face-to-face instruction—it is an intentional pedagogical approach designed to increase student engagement, personalize learning pathways, and maximize instructional time. In this interactive session, participants will explore practical strategies for seamlessly

integrating digital tools with traditional classroom practices. We will examine core blended models (such as Station Rotation, Flipped Classroom, and Flex), analyze real-world case studies, and identify how to leverage tech tools for immediate, actionable feedback. Whether you are looking to refresh your current curriculum or build a blended strategy from scratch, you will leave with ready-to-implement frameworks and adaptable resources tailored to your educational environment.

Engaging Around A Social Justice Issue

Presenters: Noelle Gilzow, Dr. Alexander Tai | **Local:** Columbia MNEA

This session will provide a toolkit for mobilizing around a social justice or educational issue. The toolkit provides templates and strategies for planning, organizing, mobilizing, communicating, promoting, and post-event reflection.

Primary Sources, Personal Connections: Improving Student Research Outcomes via Family History

Presenter: Kate Kraybill | **Local:** MNEA-Retired

This workshop provides educators with strategies to improve student research skills and narrative writing by tapping into personal family genealogy. Traditional research projects often struggle to engage students, but anchoring academic inquiry in personal heritage creates immediate motivation. Participants will explore practical frameworks for guiding students through authentic research processes—teaching them how to locate primary source documents, interview family members, analyze archival records, and synthesize findings into compelling personal narratives. Attendees will gain hands-on tools to help students critically evaluate historical contexts, cross-reference diverse evidence, and translate factual discoveries into rich, structured storytelling. By bridging the gap between personal identity and academic rigor, this approach not only sharpens foundational literacy and critical thinking skills but also directly improves student educational outcomes across humanities disciplines.

Safety, Bias, & LGBTQ+ Issues

Presenter: C Scott Miller | **Local:** NEA Training Cadre

The newly expanded LGBTQ+ Training is designed for all NEA members. With a focus on addressing bias around sexual orientation and gender identity, coupled with an intersectional focus on racial justice, this revised training series is full of the latest data, legal updates, and activities to empower members to support all students. This program covers six topic areas including supporting transgender students, exploring the intersections of race, and creating safer classrooms.

Breakout Session 3: 1:45PM – 3PM

Burnout Prevention: Leading Well by Caring for Yourself First

Presenter: Paulette Luckett | **Local:** NEA St. Louis

Educators dedicate themselves to supporting the academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being of others, often while neglecting their own. The daily demands of education can lead to chronic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout, affecting both personal wellness and professional effectiveness. This interactive session explores practical, evidence-informed strategies to help educators recognize the early warning signs of burnout and prioritize their mental and physical well-being. Participants will learn how to incorporate healthy boundaries, mental health breaks, restorative self-care practices, and the appropriate use of mental health days into their daily routines. Through reflection, discussion, and real-world scenarios,

attendees will develop a personalized burnout prevention plan that strengthens resilience, supports professional excellence, and promotes long-term career sustainability. Participants will leave with practical tools and resources they can implement immediately to protect their well-being, enhance their effectiveness, and continue making a positive impact in their schools and communities.

Navigating the National Board Journey

Presenters: Charlene Teresa Steadman, Sandy Humbyrd, Julie Weis | **Local:** MNEA-Retired

Are you ready to join other teacher leaders throughout the country in their pursuit of National Board certification or want to learn more about National Board certification? If the answer is yes, this is the session for you. Three National Board certified teachers will help you navigate through an introduction to the National Board certification process. In the quest towards National Board certification, teachers increase impact on students' learning and become more reflective about their teaching. Participants will learn the requirements to complete this certification. In addition, this session will highlight resources available through the National Board and supports available through MNEA. MNEA provides opportunities for like-minded teachers to form a collaborative community of support through this life changing journey. Take the first step toward this rewarding experience by joining us!

Bots & Boundaries: Ethical AI Use for Students

Presenter: Alicia Kleoppel | **Local:** North Kansas City NEA

This session will discuss the importance of AI literacy in education focusing on explaining what ethical AI use can look like. The session also helps educators feel empowered to create classroom policies around AI use.

Supporting Multilingual Learners in the General Classroom

Presenter: Shayna Bright | **Local:** Engaging Around A Social Justice Issue

Educators will explore practical, asset-based strategies for supporting multilingual learners (MLs) in general education classrooms. Through collaborative activities, participants will examine how to make content comprehensible without lowering expectations, build vocabulary and background knowledge, and design meaningful scaffolds that promote participation and academic language growth. Participants will leave with ready-to-use tools and a personalized plan for strengthening instruction, benefiting not only MLs but every student in their classroom.

If We Could Redesign Teacher Preparation

Presenter: Erin Mareth | **Local:** Nevada NEA

What if we could completely redesign how we prepare the next generation of educators? This interactive round table invites teacher educators, practicing teachers, administrators, and education professionals to examine what future teachers truly need to be successful in today's classrooms. Participants will explore what teacher preparation programs do well, where gaps exist, and what experiences and skills are often missing. Guided discussions will focus on areas such as classroom management, student behavior, family communication, special education, technology, real-world classroom experience, professional expectations, and teacher well-being. Rather than simply identifying problems, participants will collaborate to envision a teacher preparation system that better connects theory to practice and prepares future educators for the realities of the profession.

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Breakout Session 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM

Removing Traumatic Experiences

Presenter: Kim Robinson | **Local:** Riverview Gardens NEA

The work of the nation educationally is to provide healthy learning environments where students and staff can thrive. In these environments students and staff achieve. In toxic school settings there is. Pronounced abuse of staff. This directly impacts student achievement. According to the NAEP, test scores in the nation are declining. Abuse of educators directly impacts student achievement and leads to high teacher turnover and burnout. Standards need to be developed for administrators to follow and be held accountable to. In this way students and staff grow and learn in healthy environments. Schools are a microcosm of society. Improving them improves our country.

5D Teacher: Master Educators Only

Presenter: Mary Ann Seward | **Local:** Harris Stowe State University NEA

For those seeking higher consciousness in their teaching practices we must remember that when we doubt or fear the judgment of others, we struggle to admit our talents and spiritual gifts and fall short of serving as light workers who can help and serve students and others. Doubt in ourselves and what others might think of us and our teaching transformation may feel comfortable but anchors us in old patterns of doing things. A comfortable state of being and a comfortable state of doing things the same way, often hinders teachers from raising their consciousness and becoming their highest self, 5D teacher. If teachers can raise their student's level of consciousness and help them to develop holistically (i.e., intellectual, moral, and social) they can become a master educator. When teachers step outside their comfort zone and general classroom teaching duties to offer high impact lessons that include professional and personal growth they shape positive changes in their students. The teachers who are society's change-makers are master educators. This session offers teaching practices that ignite discovery and specific teaching techniques used by motivating and inspiring 5D teachers.

Building Research Agency Through Inquiry, Organization, and Intrigue

Presenters: Lisa Baldwin, Cassie Nette | **Local:** North Kansas City NEA

This session explores how Inquiry Charts can scaffold students' thinking throughout the research process. Teachers will examine ways to move students beyond simply collecting facts by prompting them to make connections, evaluate information, recognize patterns, and develop deeper understanding. Participants will consider how this strategy can support meaningful discussion and help students communicate their thinking and demonstrate learning in a variety of ways.

Staying Regulated in the Classroom: Calm in the Chaos

Presenters: Zoey Plummer, McKenna Hendershott | **Local:** St. Charles EA

Classrooms are high-sensory, high-stress environments. Staying grounded when dysregulation strikes—whether from a student meltdown, staff friction, or an overwhelming sensory load—is critical. Why self-regulation matters: an educator's nervous system dictates the classroom climate; you cannot regulate a student if you are dysregulated yourself. This workshop equips educators with real-time tools to maintain emotional balance during the toughest moments. Leave with a regulation toolkit designed to help you regain control, model composure, and remember that shared support is your strongest asset.

More Than Just a Game: Transforming Classics into Powerful Teaching Tools

Presenter: Sarah Miller | **Local:** Clayton NEA

Are you looking for fresh ways to ignite student engagement without spending hours learning complex software or buying expensive kits? The secret to active, brain-based learning might already be sitting on your shelves. In this interactive workshop, we'll explore how familiar tabletop classics like Monopoly, Bingo, and Jenga can be repurposed into high-impact teaching tools to reinforce content and engage your students. You will walk away with practical, low-prep frameworks to adapt the games you already own for your daily curriculum. Whether you teach middle school history or high school science, you'll learn how to transform static lessons into dynamic, social experiences that boost retention and leave students asking for more. Join us to turn your classroom into an active learning arena where strategy meets standards!

Every Employee Matters: Building a Culture That Values the Entire School Community

Presenter: Kristin Duffey | **Local:** Nevada NEA

Schools are more than classrooms and teachers. They are communities made up of educators, paraprofessionals, administrators, counselors, office staff, custodians, transportation staff, food service employees, nurses, and countless others who contribute to student success every day. Yet, not every employee always feels seen, heard, or valued. This interactive workshop challenges participants to examine what it truly means to create a school culture where every employee matters. Through reflection, discussion, and practical activities, participants will explore how communication, recognition, relationships, collaboration, and leadership influence employee morale and school culture. Participants will identify barriers that can make employees feel overlooked and work collaboratively to develop realistic strategies for creating a stronger sense of belonging, appreciation, and shared purpose across the entire school community.

We Got This: The Quest to Be Who Our Students Need us to Be

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Regional Bargaining and Organizing Track

2026 Regional Collective Bargaining Training - 8:55AM-3PM

Trainers: MNEA Staff

This training session is open to local presidents and bargaining chairs and will concentrate on leveraging our collective strength to secure improved results in local contract negotiations. This course will span the first 3 breakout sessions.

Topics to be covered include:

- Campaign action teams (previously known as contract action teams)
- Best practices for collective bargaining including member mobilization
- Organizing efforts prior to, during, and following negotiations

2026 Regional Organizing Leads Training - 8:55AM-3PM

Trainers: MNEA Staff

This training session is open to local presidents and organizing/action team chairs and will concentrate on leveraging organizing for power and building local capacity. This course will span the first 3 breakout sessions.

Topics to be covered include:

- Campaign action teams - organizing around bargaining, local elections, district/building climate, etc..
- Best practices for building and implementing organizing campaigns
- External organizing - community power mapping and building external partnerships