

TO: NEA Board of Directors

State Affiliate Presidents

State Affiliate Executive Directors

FROM: Dennis Van Roekel, President

DATE: January 5, 2012

RE: Priority Schools Campaign 2012

I want to share with you some positive news in public education; information about the work of our members and leaders that too often is obscured by the more conventional news events about our profession.

As we move into 2012, **more than 25,000 students** in low-performing schools across the nation are receiving special attention and support by **nearly a thousand members** through NEA's Priority Schools Campaign.

Indeed, [in the 38 schools in 17 states](#) where NEA works with affiliates to help transform low-performing schools, many are finding the Association to be an invaluable partner for reaching student achievement goals.

A Forum to Build Community

Last November, NEA brought **more than 300 teachers, education support professionals, union leaders, district administrators and parents** from Priority School sites together to share strategies and experiences, interact with education improvement specialists and connect with experts and resources from NEA and its partners.

At the conference, NEA unveiled **new research on successful strategies to involve parents and communities in schools**, a key reform strategy that is often ignored. More than 30 years of research has shown that parent, family and community involvement correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement.

To foster a supportive professional, and thus learning, environment, a new component has been added to the campaign—a **virtual mentoring pilot program** for Intensive Support Sites. This pilot program features 41

accomplished teachers to serve as virtual mentors to their fellow educators in priority schools.

Ø For details on the Family-School-Community partnership report, click [here](#).

Ø Check out the PDF copy of the [program booklet](#) and a [summary report](#) provided to all participants.

NEA's social media sites, including [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), continue to bring together the NEA members and partners of the Campaign for news and discussions about work to raise student success in priority schools.

Results

Student Learning—Educators and staff at many priority schools have repeatedly seen their school ranked, labeled and listed in a manner that is rarely positive. But as this multimedia report shows, one year after its School Improvement Grant, **Kit Carson Elementary in Nevada** has [improved in every subject area](#). An [NEA-produced video](#) from Nevada shows some of the work of students who are English language learners. NEA members are helping to lead the profession by preparing educators of English learners to meet the educational, cultural and linguistic needs of their students.

Leadership—Dedicated teachers and staff at **Glendale Middle School in Utah** show how [hard work and a boundless belief](#) in students can raise achievement in an environment where most of the students live in poverty and many have enormous challenges to overcome in their home lives. Educators at one Michigan high school have “reversed” classroom instruction, putting student achievement on fast forward, [Flipping the Classroom: Homework in Class, Lessons at Home](#).

Family and Community Involvement—In North Carolina, [see the difference](#) a volunteer coordinator can make to a school and a community. Said the principal, “She brought the community to us and we’ve run with it.” And ESPs around the country are contributing more and more to the transformation of chronically low-performing schools. Read how in [ESPs Making Parents a Priority](#).

Recognition

NEA's positive agenda through the Priority Schools Campaign continues to gain supporters, earn praise and garner attention for its on-site, on-line, and on-paper support in the areas of teacher and staff quality and effectiveness, student-centered labor management collaboration, school culture, and family and community engagement:

- The [Arizona Daily Star](#) recently covered PSC's efforts to transform a struggling high school in the [Tucson Unified School District](#).
- [The Morning Sentinel](#) details the leadership role the union is taking in Anson, ME.
- The [Augusta Chronicle](#) looks at the union's work with three struggling high schools in Richmond County, Georgia.
- The [Evansville Courier and Press](#) detailed how a union-led effort brought various parts of the community together to help students at an Indiana middle school build a community garden.
- Matt Franck of the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch wrote during the 2011 Education Writers Association Conference](#) that PSC would motivate him to think differently about how he covered teachers unions.

Thank you!

When delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly created the Priority Schools Campaign in 2009, they believed that a sharp focus on the nation's struggling schools could create a ripple effect for change in education policy and practice nationwide. Uniting our members, affiliate leadership, and dedicated community members – NEA's Priority Schools Campaign is creating paths of hope for tens of thousands of students.

This year, NEA's Priority School Campaign will continue to provide special support to students who need it most, working towards our goal of a great public education for every student. We are proud of this work and deeply appreciate your leadership in making this possible