

Educators for a Democratic Union: Principles



We offer the following principles for public education in our Commonwealth, and principles for how our union will be most effective in achieving our goals:

- 1) We believe first and foremost in public education – education for all, paid through fair taxation, and democratically controlled. We will build a union that fights for high-quality public education by reaffirming the commitment to democracy and the public good as the foundational purpose of public education.
 - 2) Schools can only succeed with well-supported and experienced educators and support staff. In order to attract and retain quality teachers and staff, our society needs to pay them well, provide job security, and above all honor and respect those who are dedicating their lives to helping students learn and develop. We will build a union dedicated to supporting all in the education workplace and fighting back when they are under attack.
 - 3) An experienced teacher in a small classroom with engaging curriculum is actually the second most important factor affecting a child’s ability to learn. Family and community poverty is even more important. We will build a union that sees fighting for economic justice – good jobs, progressive taxes, and aggressive social and economic investment in the poorest communities – as an essential part of fighting for quality public education for all.
 - 4) We reject the focus on rote learning and high-stakes testing fed to us by both political parties, which is harmful to the education of our children. We will build a union that will stand firmly against the testing mania because we, as public educators and support staff, know it is bad for our students and our future.
 - 5) Our nation has turned its back on one of the great crusades of the past half-century: ending segregation and inequality in our schools and ensuring that all public schools have equal resources. We will build a union that will reengage in civil rights struggles to end racism and discrimination, which is an essential condition for achieving quality public education.
 - 6) Public education is free from kindergarten through high school. If 12th grade is free, why does it cost up to twelve thousand a year to attend **public** higher education the next year? We will build a union that ignores the naysayers and insists that free higher education is the natural next step in a two-centuries expansion of access to education.
 - 7) The rise of a plutocracy and the decline of the working and middle classes over the past generation are a direct result of the decline in the power of unions and the assault on collective bargaining. We will build a union that will not capitulate to enemies, or fair-weather friends who suggest that the way toward a better society is through the weakening of the rights of working people.
 - 8) Our union needs to be open, transparent, democratic, and participatory. Ordinary members should understand and debate the issues, then be involved in decision making. We will build a union that starts anew to build the confidence of the members, so that they are involved in shaping a long-range, activist vision for the MTA, a vision that reconnects the public sector with the public good.
 - 9) When the MTA backs off our principles without a fight, that only leads our opponents to come back at us with a new demand for concessions. For too long we have been playing defense, always responding to the latest assault on our integrity, our budgets, or our benefits. We will build an MTA that will take a stand, put forward our vision for public education, involve the membership, and be willing to fight on principle in order to win the war for public education rather than negotiate a slow retreat.
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