



It's Your Union

Making the Most of Your CEA Membership



Your Contacts

As a member of your teachers' union, you have knowledgeable representatives available to answer employment-related questions, provide guidance and support, and protect your rights.

New teacher orientation and convocation are some of your earliest and best opportunities to meet your representatives. You may also check with your TEAM mentor or colleagues to learn who your union reps are. Many local education associations maintain websites with contacts and other key information for members.

Get to know who represents you. Keep their contact information handy, and reach out with any questions.

My School Building Representative (Name & Contact Information)

This is your go-to person for questions about your contract and everyday workplace issues. Your building rep may represent you in discussions or grievances with administrators.

My Local President (Name & Contact Information)

This person is elected to serve as your local education association leader and spokesperson. Like a team captain, your LP looks out for issues and problems in your school and district, organizes members toward common goals, and is most likely part of the bargaining team that negotiates your contract.

My CEA UniServ Rep (Name & Contact Information)

This CEA staff member supports your association's leadership in collective bargaining, contract enforcement, and member organizing and representation. Find your CEA UniServ Rep at cea.org/cea-staff.

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Welcome to Your Union

The Connecticut Education Association (CEA) represents more than 43,000 preK–12 public school educators, including classroom teachers, school counselors, social workers, and psychologists, as well as retired educators and aspiring educators. As Connecticut's largest and strongest union, CEA makes the biggest difference in the lives of educators, the success of their students, and the quality of public education.

Not only does CEA protect your rights with expert representation, but we also champion competitive salaries and benefits, well-resourced classrooms, and safe, healthy schools to attract and retain the best teachers. We empower teachers so that they can excel at educating all students.

Together we're stronger; together we're heard.

CEA is made up of more than 150 local affiliates—education associations from the smallest towns to our largest school districts. When you join your local education association, you are automatically a member of CEA and the National Education Association (NEA), the country's largest union, representing nearly three million educators.

There is incredible strength in our numbers, and together we are able to successfully advocate for everything from smaller class sizes and greater input into curriculum to a secure retirement and more.

Recent victories made possible by CEA's advocacy include repealing federal laws that denied public school educators Social Security benefits, making play-based learning mandatory in the earliest grades, establishing a 30-minute duty-free lunch for all educators, improving school indoor air quality, raising the kindergarten start age, simplifying processes for DCF mandated reporters, and much more.

Members are the driving force of our union—you are the union—and when you join, you are entering a community of like-minded educators who believe in the promise of a great public school for every student.

Your union advocates on your behalf at the legislature, at the State Department of Education, at school board and town council meetings, in administrators' offices, and in the greater community, ensuring you have the resources and time to teach and your students have the resources and time to learn.



CEA President Kate Dias and Vice President Joslyn DeLancey lead the state's largest educators' union.

**"Together we're stronger;
together we're heard."**

Organizations within CEA include CEA-Retired, serving retired educators, and the CEA Aspiring Educators Program, which provides practical support and experiences for Connecticut's future educators. CEA's charitable arm, the Connecticut Education Foundation (CEF), assists educators and students facing financial hardships and provides scholarships for students pursuing teaching careers.

We are happy you have joined us, and we look forward to supporting you throughout your career and into retirement.

Getting Started in Your Union

- 1. Download your digital membership card.** Add your digital membership card to your Apple or Google wallet. Your ID number gives you access to important updates on education policy, contracts, professional development, CEA event registration, and more.
- 2. Learn who your building rep is.** Your building representative serves as the point person in your school for questions about your contract and other union-related matters. Building reps usually hold a 10-minute meeting once a month to go over important union developments. This is an easy way for you to stay informed.
- 3. Get acquainted with your CEA affiliate—your local education association.** Attend your union meetings and socials to help build a professional support system and get answers to questions about your contract and your rights on the job.
- 4. Attend regional and statewide events.** Getting to know your colleagues both locally and across the state is a great way to build connections within your union and profession. Regional and statewide CEA events include workshops on how to support students and handle changing and challenging aspects of your work, information sessions on everything from student loan repayment to retirement planning at every point in your career, and forums that connect you with educators, legislators, policymakers, and others.
- 5. Explore CEA resources.** From our Legislator Report Cards to information on certification and teacher evaluation, cea.org offers a wide range of information and resources to help you in your role as both a union member and a teacher. Our staff are experts in their fields and can help you get any information you may need.

Need help?

Trouble accessing your CEA membership card?
Questions about your membership status?
Contact CEA Membership Associate Andrea Sutton.



Andrea Sutton
membership@cea.org
860-725-6339



Your Benefits

Your first years in the classroom are often the most challenging. Early career educators are so busy learning the ropes and managing multiple new responsibilities that they may not feel as connected to their union or as aware of their rights, responsibilities, and the resources available to them.

Joining your union gives you access to resources critical to your first years and important throughout your career, including

- Strong local, state, and national teams fighting for better **compensation, benefits, and working conditions** for you and better outcomes for your students
- Expert **contract negotiations** and collective bargaining for your salary, health insurance, and working conditions
- Free, relevant **professional development** covering everything from AI to behavior management and other issues your educator prep program may not have included; visit cea.org/professional-development
- One-on-one support with your **evaluation** and **certification**
- **Legal expertise and representation** in workers' compensation cases, Department of Children and Families (DCF) complaints, and cases where your rights are threatened or violated

- Free admission to **education conferences**, meetings, workshops, webinars, and more
- **Grants** and teaching awards
- **Guidance on financial matters** specific to educators, including contract provisions, salary scale, student loan debt, retirement planning, health savings accounts, and more
- **Liability insurance** for on-the-job protection
- **Life and property insurance**
- **Discounts** and special offers on products and services you use every day, including groceries, fitness, theater tickets, skiing, sporting events, clothing, furniture, gifts and accessories, car purchases and rentals, travel, and more; visit cea.org/discounts



Teachers earn
24% more
on average in states with
strong unions

Connecticut - Strong Union

- ✓ Some of the highest teacher salaries in the nation
- ✓ Three-year contracts with salary schedules and wage increases
- ✓ Duty-free 30-minute lunch break
- ✓ Ban on dual teaching
- ✓ Pensions to support teachers in retirement
- ✓ Substantial healthcare and other benefits
- ✓ Personal and sick days
- ✓ Teachers who take parental or medical leave guaranteed an equivalent position when they return
- ✓ Additional pay for additional responsibilities, including coaching and supporting extracurriculars
- ✓ Class sizes usually under 30
- ✓ Students taught by certified, highly educated teachers
- ✓ Prep periods
- ✓ Free PD provided by district

Places with Weak Unions

- ✗ The lowest teacher salaries in the nation
- ✗ One-year contracts with no guarantees for future years' earnings
- ✗ No guaranteed duty-free lunch break
- ✗ Teachers forced to deliver simultaneous remote and in-person instruction
- ✗ No pensions, or pensions that pay only a small sum in retirement
- ✗ Poor-quality healthcare and few other benefits
- ✗ No personal or sick days
- ✗ No guarantees for any teacher taking parental or medical leave
- ✗ No additional pay for additional responsibilities
- ✗ Class sizes as large as 70
- ✗ Many students taught by substitutes without education degrees
- ✗ No prep periods
- ✗ No free PD opportunities



Your Contract, Tenure, and Dismissal

Every public school educator is covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), also known as a contract, between their union and their board of education. Collective bargaining agreements outline your rights, responsibilities, and terms of employment, and they vary from one school district to another.

What should I look for in my contract?

After you receive your salary agreement from your district, compare the following information with what is outlined in your collective bargaining agreement to make sure there are no discrepancies.

- Is the position full-time or part-time?
- What is the salary? (Look at your salary schedule and contract article for initial placement of new hires. Were you placed correctly?)
- Did they give you credit for all the education you completed prior to hire?
- Are your years of experience accurate?
- Does your agreement include compensation for additional positions/responsibilities (stipend positions)?

Need help?

If you notice any discrepancies or issues, reach out to your local union representative—typically your building rep—for help resolving the issue. Don't wait; if you are not receiving the compensation or benefits you believe you're entitled to, it's important to rectify the situation now. Those benefits or wages may not be retroactive, and that could affect your long-term earnings and retirement income.

What are the basic stages of employment for educators?

Probationary Stage Your first 90 days as a public school educator are considered probationary, and your contract can be terminated at any point during that time. During this period, your employer does not need a reason to end your contract and may do so at their discretion.

Nontenured and Tenured Stages After your probationary period, you must complete 40 continuous school months of employment for the same board of education **and** be offered a position for the following school year to achieve tenure. Each year during this period, until you achieve tenure, your school may decide not to renew your employment contract.

You must be notified by May 1 if your contract is not being renewed for the following school year. That decision will be upheld as long as the reason is not arbitrary or capricious.

Even as a nontenured teacher, however, you are granted certain rights under Connecticut General Statute (CGS 10-151), and school boards must follow a specific statutory process when dismissing either tenured or nontenured teachers.

What should I do if I receive notice that my contract will not be renewed?

If your district informs you that you will not be renewed, do not resign until you have spoken to your local association president.

What are my rights as a nontenured educator regarding nonrenewal?

- You must be notified by May 1 if your contract is not being renewed for the following school year.
- While the board of education does not have to specify a reason for nonrenewal, you may file a written request within three calendar days of receiving your notice, and if you make such a request, the board must supply a reason for termination or nonrenewal, in writing, within four calendar days of receiving your request.

What reasons could lead to an educator's termination?

Under the Fair Dismissal Act, an educator can be terminated from their position if a board of education proves one of the following six reasons:

- Inefficiency, incompetence, or ineffectiveness based on evaluations that comply with State Board of Education guidelines for evaluations
- Insubordination against reasonable board of education rules
- Moral misconduct
- Disability proven by medical evidence
- Elimination of the position to which an educator was appointed, as long as there is no other position for which that educator is qualified—and subject to the applicable provisions of a collective bargaining agreement or local school board policy
- Other due and sufficient cause

In the 2025 legislative session, CEA fought for a revamping of the teacher termination process in Connecticut so that it would include just cause, a

higher standard of review, and a binding decision by a neutral arbitrator. While the bill did not ultimately get called for a vote by House leadership, it passed the Senate and received overwhelming bipartisan sponsorship and support. CEA will continue to fight for this legal standard.

What is a grievance? How do I know if I have a grievance?

If you believe a provision or portion of your collective bargaining agreement has been violated, misinterpreted, or misapplied, you may be able to file a grievance. Contact your building representative or local president. Do not discuss the matter with any administrator until you have consulted with your local association. Be sure to act quickly; timelines may be short. If you have a concern that does not constitute a grievance, your union may still be able to assist through other avenues outside the grievance process.

What happens if I move to a different district?

Since tenure is attained both by serving 40 continuous months in the same district and being offered a continuing contract for the following year, if you move to a different district before attaining tenure, you will need to start the tenure process over.

If you achieve tenure in one district and move to another, you must complete 20 months of continuous service in your new district and be offered a contract for the following year.

Connecticut General Statute (CGS 10-151) provides more specifics on tenure, as does the State Department of Education at portal.ct.gov/sde.

If you change districts, sign up for membership in your new local association to remain in the union and continue receiving union protection and benefits.

When can I resign from my teaching contract?

Most districts have requirements for how much notice you must give when resigning from your position. Talk to your local association president and CEA UniServ Representative before resigning to make sure your rights are protected.



Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities

Appropriate Teacher-Student Relations

One of the most devastating situations an educator can face is an accusation of inappropriate contact with a student. When this happens, the charges are often unsubstantiated, but the impact on a teacher's personal life, career, and colleagues can be devastating. Here are key ways to reduce your risk:

- **Avoid physical contact with students, and be aware of (and sensitive to) physical and emotional boundaries.** Remember, you are not your students' friend—you are their teacher. Let professional counselors and psychologists assist students with serious emotional issues. While you do not want to push away an elementary school student who impulsively gives you a hug, you do not want to initiate the touching.
- **Do not meet with students alone in a closed or private space.** Specials teachers, coaches, and counselors are especially vulnerable. If you are giving a lesson with only one student, make sure you are within sight of the window. If your door does not have a window, leave the door open.
- **Understand how your students might view you.** Elementary students often view teachers as parental figures. Middle school students may idealize you, and high school students may seek your advice on life choices, including their social lives. You may not be able to change how you are viewed, but you must draw a line as a professional and not engage with students in an inappropriate manner. When in doubt, ask yourself if either the student's parents or your principal would disapprove.
- **Do not engage in classroom banter that shows favoritism to one or more students.** The same is obviously true for banter that would embarrass or humiliate a student.
- **Never send notes, messages, emails, texts, or other communication of a personal nature to students.** Parents should be copied on other correspondence that is exclusively educational. Be sure to follow district policy on social media and other electronic communications with students.
- **Use extreme caution when meeting with students in non-school settings, especially when other adults are not present.** You should always have parent and district approval if you must meet offsite (for example, when tutoring a student).
- **Notify an administrator or counselor if a child is regularly acting in a "needy" manner.** As educators, we need to be sensitive to our students' social and emotional needs and respond with compassion, but we must also be cognizant of issues that could arise.
- **Behave as the professional you are—and as if you are being photographed or recorded.** Smartphones open up the possibility that you may be recorded at any time.

Would you and your colleagues benefit from becoming more familiar with Connecticut laws impacting teachers and students? Ask your local president to schedule CEA's free workshop Chalk and Order: Legal ABCs for Educators.



Meet CEA's legal team, General Counsel Adrienne DeLucca (foreground) and Legal Counsel (left to right) Rebecca Mitchell and Melanie Kolek.

CEA'S Legal Team in Your Corner

CEA's attorneys provide training in legal matters related to education and can assist you with a wide range of issues that impact your career, including

- DCF investigations
- Workers' compensation
- Tenured teacher terminations
- Certification issues and revocations
- Unemployment denial hearings
- Unfair labor practices

For help with any of these issues or to schedule free training, reach out to your local president or UniServ Rep.

Student Information and Privacy Rules

Most of the information you gather and retain regarding students is private. Because personal educational data is protected by both state and federal privacy laws, sharing information without a valid educational reason could subject you to civil liability and discipline by the district. It could also violate federal law—the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA—and potentially put children at risk.

When discussing specific students with colleagues, ask yourself whether the discussion is really necessary to provide educational services to the student. If you are seeking advice about a student's academic challenges or behavioral issues, do so in a way that does not reveal the student's name or identity. Do not discuss individual students outside the school setting. Be sure volunteers in your classroom know they must keep students' information private.

In a world where data is easily shared, be cautious when using or directing students to online services. Privacy specialists say it takes only three pieces of “anonymous” data to identify a student. School district personnel are getting better at collecting, vetting, and listing approved online services and resources. Review your district's policies for using online services and apps. Here are some tips:

- **Most student information is private and should not be released** to anyone but the student, their parents or legal guardians, and staff with a legitimate educational interest.
- **Privacy laws cover all forms of data.** If you cannot release something in written form, you cannot release it verbally or digitally.

- **Make sure you are not unnecessarily sharing information about students—review your classroom practices.** Do not publicly list the names of top scorers or students who need to turn in work. Be cautious about students reviewing each other's work. Do not discuss students with colleagues where you might be overheard—for example, in the hallway, main office, or lunchroom.
- **Be cautious using online resources and apps** by checking with your supervisor or other designated district employee when incorporating online services into your classroom instruction or administration.
- **Do not post students' work in a class newsletter or website** unless you have parental permission or remove all identifying information.
- **Taking photos or videos of students**—even working on projects or in your classroom individually or as a group—likely requires that parents sign a permission form. Check your school district policies or ask your principal.
- **Do not release information without being certain it is not protected.** When in doubt, withhold the requested information until you check with your principal about whether it can be released.
- **If anyone questions you about a student,** whether it be the media, law enforcement, or the parent of another student, simply say you cannot discuss private student data unless your supervisor allows it and it would not violate FERPA.



Mandatory Reporting

Teachers are mandated reporters, as are other school personnel. If you know or have reason to believe one of your students has been the victim of child abuse or neglect, Connecticut law requires that you report it to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) **within 12 hours** of the time you became aware of the possibility of abuse or neglect.

Connecticut law does not require that you be certain abuse or neglect has occurred—only that you have reasonable cause to suspect or believe so based on observations, allegations, facts, or statements by a child, victim, or third party.

Some factors that may lead you to report suspected abuse or neglect include

- A child with a pattern of unexplained injuries or an inordinate number of “explained” ones
- A child who regularly comes to school inappropriately dressed for the season
- A habitually late or absent child
- A child who arrives early and leaves late because he or she is reluctant to go home
- A child who is unusually fearful of adults or other children
- A child who goes to the bathroom with difficulty or has trouble sitting
- A child who is constantly tired, thin, or shows evidence of malnutrition

**Report what you know to DCF’s
Careline 1-800-842-2288.**

If the situation is not an emergency, you may report it online at portal.dcf.ct.gov.

- **Do not rely on others to report.** The obligation to report lies with each mandated reporter.
- **For the child’s protection—and yours—report any suspicion you have right away, even if you are unsure.** The law provides you with immunity for reports made in good faith, and you can and should make the report anonymously. The law also provides immunity when you, in good faith, do not make a report.
- **Do not take it upon yourself to investigate whether abuse or neglect has occurred.** If you are unsure, you should always err on the side of reporting and leave the investigation to the proper authorities. It is permissible to conduct a preliminary inquiry in order to obtain information to help with the decision to report. A preliminary inquiry is not and should not be an investigation.
- The statutory definitions of abuse and neglect can be found here: portal.ct.gov/DCF/1-DCF/Child-Abuse-and-Neglect-Definitions.

For more about mandated reporting, visit portal.ct.gov/DCF/1-DCF/Reporting-Child-Abuse-and-Neglect.

Need help? Know who your UniServ Rep is. Go to cea.org/cea-staff/#uniserv.



Mike Brady



Mike Breen



Mike Casey



Marty Deren



David Eng-Wong



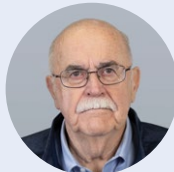
Eric Fisher



Sharon Milano



Brendan Murphy



Steve Ozga



Gregory Perry



Brett Pickerign



Sara Pomponi

Disciplinary Meetings

It's not uncommon for miscommunication, misinterpretation, or other circumstances to lead to false accusations against teachers. If an administrator calls you into a meeting pertaining to alleged misconduct or failure to meet your responsibilities, you are entitled to union representation. These rights are referred to as your **Weingarten rights**.

- **Ask about the purpose of the meeting.** If an administrator invites you to a meeting without revealing why, ask about the reason.
- **Invoke your Weingarten rights.** If you reasonably think disciplinary action or other adverse job consequences might result from the meeting, you have the right to have a union representative present. **You must assert this right;** your administrator does not have to offer it to you.

How to Invoke Your Weingarten Rights

Say "If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative be present at this meeting."

- **Contact your building representative, local president, or CEA UniServ Rep for assistance.** It's your right to have a union representative present in any meeting that could lead to disciplinary action.

Accused of a serious work-related offense?

If you are ever accused of a serious offense, contact your CEA UniServ Representative immediately. You may be referred to CEA Member Legal Services.

Do not talk about the specifics of the accusation with anyone except your CEA attorney. Tell anyone who is asking questions, "Once I obtain legal advice, I will provide a response."

Do not sign anything unless you have consulted with your appointed attorney or CEA UniServ Rep.

- **Ask to stop any meeting that turns into an investigation of alleged wrongdoing.** If you attend a meeting that begins on a positive note but deteriorates into questions about wrongdoing and possible discipline or other adverse job consequences, ask to stop the meeting until you can obtain union advice and representation. Your local association president or UniServ Representative will advise you as to your rights and any recourse you may have.
- **Be prepared for an administrator's reaction.** Administrators may feel threatened by the presence of a union representative. Some may even indicate that they will not allow a representative to be present. If the administrator continues and directs you to answer questions, you must not be insubordinate and should answer the questions. However, contact your local president immediately after the meeting to inform them that you were denied your Weingarten rights.



Suzanne Haviland



David Jedian



Donald Jones



Jocelyne Jones



Tom Kennedy



Lisa McKinnon



Sharon Quinn



Bekah Saxon



Jim Tessitore



Ed Thibodeau



Justin Zartman



Joe Zawawi

Special Education

In addition to instructing students, special education teachers are required by federal and state law and their district to document their work to ensure that procedural safeguards and IEP requirements are met for students with disabilities.

It's important to complete all documentation within the required timelines; there are consequences for failing to do so.

Get organized and take advantage of any support your school can provide.

- **Get a mentor.** If your school does not provide formal mentoring, find an experienced local association colleague you can call on for advice.
- **Keep up with required paperwork.** If you find yourself falling behind, reach out immediately to trusted colleagues for advice and help. Ask your supervisor or special education coordinator for support if you are facing staff shortages, a complicated case, numerous cases that have required your attention all at once, or other special circumstances—personal or professional—that have required your time.
- **Come prepared to discuss any issues of concern when you attend planning and placement team (PPT) meetings.** In the Indirect Services section of the IEP, you have the right to request assistance and supports. Examples of supports you can request include training, collaboration time with other staff, and paraeducator support, including a one-to-one para.

You are encouraged to speak honestly and openly at PPT (and Section 504) meetings without fear of reprisal. State and federal law protect you from retaliation for any recommendations you make during these meetings.

Need help?

Would you or your colleagues benefit from a presentation on special education law and regulations? If so, ask your local president to email myprofession@cea.org and schedule a workshop with CEA Special Education Issues Specialist Robyn Kaplan-Cho.



Robyn Kaplan-Cho
myprofession@cea.org
860-725-6314

Special Education Resources

Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Special Education
portal.ct.gov/SDE/Special-Education/Bureau-of-Special-Education

Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Special Education Learning Disabilities and Dyslexia Resources
portal.ct.gov/SDE/Special-Education/Specific-Learning-Disability-and-SLD---Dyslexia

National Education Association
Special Education and IDEA Resources
nea.org/specialed

National Association for Gifted Children
nagc.org

Council for Exceptional Children
cec.sped.org

Education World
educationworld.com/special_ed

CEA Special Education Resources
cea.org/special-education



Free Speech and Technology Use

While teachers have the right to free speech, the law can—and does—establish limits on that speech.

Be certain that what you communicate isn't potentially harmful or embarrassing to your school or inconsistent with the image of an educator. Commenting publicly about school or district issues, controversial topics, or details of your personal life can lead to disciplinary action. Even messages shared privately can be made public.

In general, avoid negative statements about your school, students, students' parents, or school district as well as any communications that could be considered offensive or unprofessional. This applies to social media content as well—any posts or images you create, share, or comment on.

Misuse of technology, in fact, is one of the most common causes for discipline. Follow these guidelines:

- **Use school-issued devices for school-related work only.** Avoid personal use or use for commercial purposes, such as promoting a summer business or selling items on Facebook Marketplace or eBay.
 - **Read and understand your district's acceptable use policy (AUP) for internet, social media, and email use.** The policy should define where, when, and how long school employees may use school-issued devices and network services, and restrictions on social media posts should be made clear. Do not use school devices for anything not permitted in the policy. Under the AUP, you are also likely responsible for exercising reasonable supervision over student use.
 - **Your district has the right to restrict or prohibit internet access at any time for any reason.** Activities typically prohibited include harassment, discrimination, viewing or transmitting inappropriate language or images, and copyright infringement.
 - **Don't expect your email to be private.** The school district owns and controls the email system. Even deleted emails can be retrieved and used against you. Members of the public may be able to gain access to your emails, so do not make statements or send materials that are not related to your professional duties or that are not respectful. Do not send any personal, confidential, or private emails from your district email address, on district-issued devices, or over district networks.
 - **Do not access, receive, or transmit anything that could be interpreted as obscene or pornographic.** It is good practice to notify the technology coordinator if you receive an unsolicited, inappropriate email. Delete it right away. Never let students see anything even marginally inappropriate.
 - **Grades, IEPs, and all other private data must be secured.**
 - **Review your social media history and delete any content that could be deemed inappropriate** by administrators, board of education members, students, or parents.
 - **Ensure your privacy settings are set** so that you have to approve whenever someone tags you in a photo or post. Do not, however, rely on privacy settings alone to conduct online activity, as there are constant breaches at social media companies that eliminate any sort of expected privacy.
 - **Do not friend or follow current students or their parents** on social media.
 - **Create separate accounts** if you are using social media for educational purposes. Do not direct students or parents to your personal social media profile for school updates.
 - **Avoid posting on personal social networking accounts during work hours**, and do not use district-issued devices or district networks.
 - Be aware that students sometimes target teachers via social networking sites. Contact your local president or CEA UniServ Representative for assistance if you are the subject of a fake social media profile or other inappropriate activity.
 - **Respect copyright and other intellectual property laws.**
- CEA provides free training in social media safety. Email myprofession@cea.org to request training for your local education association.



Your Profession

Certification

If you hold a Connecticut teaching certificate, congratulations! It means you have already cleared a major professional hurdle by passing the necessary courses and assessments.

After your initial certification period, make sure you renew or upgrade your certificate on time. This is your responsibility and not the responsibility of the school district in which you were hired.

Even if you cannot pay the full fee necessary to renew or advance your certificate before it expires, you should still send in the \$50 application fee and the required paperwork at least eight weeks in advance of your certificate's expiration date in order to be sure that your certificate is renewed in a timely manner. Your employment depends on it.

- Connecticut has moved to a two-tier certification continuum for fully certified teachers. The first step is receiving an initial educator certificate (valid for up to 10 years), followed by a professional educator certificate. Certificates are awarded upon the successful completion of requirements, which can include service in a school district.
- The state keeps your certification records. Only the State Department of Education, which is the agency responsible for granting and renewing teacher certificates, keeps a database of members' certificates. Your district will also keep a copy of your certificate on file once they have received it. You should keep a copy of your certificate in a secure location as well.
- Make sure the State Department of Education has your current email and mailing address. If you move or change your email address, send them a notification for their files. The best way to make sure the SDE has your current contact information is to create a certification account. Visit sdeportal.ct.gov/cecscreateuser and be sure to use your personal email when setting up your account so that you can access your records if you change schools or when you retire. You can also update your information by emailing teacher.cert@ct.gov.

Scan the QR code for more information about changes to certification.

To speak to an SDE certification officer, call 860-713-6969. The hotline is staffed 12 to 2 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays only.



Need help?

If you cannot find the answers to your certification questions by contacting the Connecticut State Department of Education, CEA Educational Issues Specialist Elizabeth Sked can assist you.



Elizabeth Sked
elizabeths@cea.org
860-725-6331

Professional Records

Keeping up-to-date personal and professional records in a safe location that's easily accessible to you is as important as keeping your grading and lesson plans organized. Having appropriate documentation on hand can be critical to your placement on the salary schedule, resolution of misunderstandings, and a fair and accurate evaluation.

Keep the following documents or copies in one convenient spot:

- Teaching certificate
- Records of in-service education or advanced academic credit
- Performance evaluations and your responses or comments
- Letters of praise, directive, or reprimand
- Record of college attendance, dates, and degrees
- Transcripts of undergraduate and graduate degrees
- Record of accumulated sick and personal leave days
- Copies of teaching schedules for current and past years
- Records of incidents involving student discipline, violence, or other disruptive student behavior
- Copies of correspondence with administrators
- Copies of correspondence with parents and colleagues
- Copies of all documents in your personnel files. Personnel files are generally kept in your superintendent's office. You should review your file annually to be sure you know what's in it. Keep copies of any disciplinary items.

Professional Development

CEA is a Connecticut State Department of Education designated professional development provider, and one of the most important benefits of CEA membership is free, year-round access to timely, relevant professional learning.

CEA's Professional Learning Academy offers a wide range of workshops for teachers, aligned with Connecticut's professional learning standards:

- Developed by educators with teaching and administration experience, as well as experts in law, special education, and more
- Delivered on-site as well as at CEA member conferences throughout the year
- Designed to provide practical tools and build immediately useful skills
- Customizable to your district's needs
- Continually updated to incorporate evolving research and educational requirements

Topics are added regularly. Current offerings include these and dozens more:

- Artificial intelligence
- Challenging student behavior
- Classroom management
- Communication with parents
- Conflict management
- Culturally responsive instruction
- DCF investigations
- Emotional regulation and executive function in students
- Play-based learning
- Social media for educators
- Special education law
- Trauma-informed classrooms

For a complete list of professional development offerings, visit cea.org/pla.

Have questions?

For more information or to schedule a professional development workshop, contact CEA Instructional and Professional Engagement Associate Abdul Osmanu.



Abdul Osmanu
myprofession@cea.org
860-725-6327



Your Safety

As an educator, you play a crucial role in maintaining a safe school environment—a role that involves key responsibilities as well as important rights.

Classroom Management

Start with a classroom management plan aimed at reducing disruptive behaviors.

Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, every local and regional board of education in the state is required to adopt and implement the **Connecticut School Climate Policy** to ensure schools are safe, welcoming, equitable learning environments.

The policy addresses school climate surveys, standards, improvement plans, funding, and more, and it requires that all schools have a school climate improvement plan. Scan the QR code to learn more.



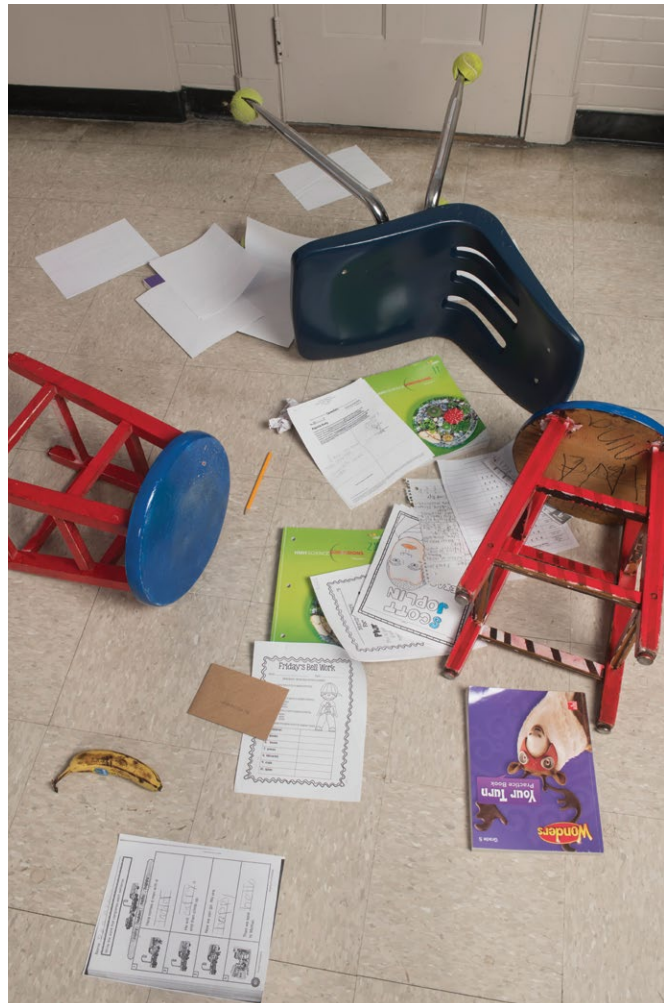
- **Follow school policy.** Obtain a copy of your School Climate Improvement Plan and know your school's policies on discipline as well as bullying and intimidation.

Watch for signs of bullying and address them immediately.

Teach students how to resolve conflicts and manage anger, and help them practice those skills in everyday life. Let students know they can tell an adult when they feel unsafe, and make it clear that bullying, harassment, put-downs, and physical aggression are not tolerated.

- **Establish classroom rules and consequences and review them periodically with students.** Many educators start the year by involving their students in setting class rules and consequences. This can give students a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility for the classroom environment. Make sure to review the rules from time to time, especially when returning from school vacations or if classroom management issues arise.
- **Be fair and consistent** in your discipline methods. Listen to students' sides of the story.
- **Avoid sarcasm and ridicule.** Be aware of how students may perceive your comments. Something you intended as a joke may be viewed as unfairly critical. Do not point out a student's mistakes in front of others.

Despite your best efforts to prevent them, discipline problems will likely occur. Gauge the appropriate response depending on the situation and your students' ages and abilities.



Challenging Student Behavior

Challenging student behavior has been called a silent crisis, and students with significant behavioral issues are increasingly the youngest children in our schools.

Connecticut law defines challenging behavior as "behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee." A state law that CEA helped pass requires that challenging student behavior be reported and addressed so that staff and students get the support they need with fewer disruptions to the learning process.

There are three types of challenging behavior that the law requires tiered responses to:

1. Behavior that necessitates temporarily **clearing a classroom** or removing a majority of students to reduce likelihood of injury, or
2. An indication of **credible intention to cause bodily harm** to self or others, or
3. An injury that requires **medical attention** beyond basic first aid, or less severe injuries caused by the same person on more than one occasion, verified by the school nurse or other medical professional.

Tiered responses must include the following, at a minimum:

1. **For a single incident**, the school principal must notify the parents or guardians of each student involved.
2. **For a repeat incident**, the school principal must invite the parents or guardians of each student involved to a meeting (in person at the school or virtually) to discuss specific supports or interventions, including restorative practices.
3. **For multiple incidents or a single incident that causes severe harm**, the school principal must give notice to the parents or guardians of each student involved regarding other resources for supports and interventions, including the 211 Infoline program, Behavioral Health Partnership services or programs, or other professional services, support, or crisis intervention.

For a tiered-response incident you witnessed, your administrator is required to meet with you within two days of the incident.

- The meeting must determine the supports and interventions necessary to address the student's needs and your own, as long as the supports and interventions for any student who receives

special education services are determined by the PPT and notice of the incident is submitted to the PPT within two days after the incident.

- There must also be a process by which you can request a behavior intervention meeting for students exhibiting disruptive behavior (CGS § 10-236c).

For tiered-response incidents, your school district must have (1) a Challenging Behavior Reporting Form, (2) an Investigation Form, and (3) a Response Process(es) Notification Form. You should file the Reporting Form if you are involved with the incident.

While school climate policies vary from one district to another, the following are guidelines to help you respond to challenging student behavior:

- **Fill out your district's Challenging Behavior Reporting Form.** Reporting allows you and the student to get the necessary help. Document unusual or escalating behavior, ideally on the day it occurred. Include the date, who was involved, what you did, and who witnessed the incident. Know your district's policy for reporting incidents. If you don't know how to access this form, ask your building rep.
- **Never use force.** Do not touch students. Defer to a school administrator to remove a student.
- **Consult with the special education teacher** in cases involving students with special needs.
- **Ask for help.** Seek assistance from your mentor, a colleague, or your building representative.

Your School Climate Improvement Plan outlines specific actions you should take in response to challenging behavior. The plan must include

- **Contact information for the designated administrator** who should be notified of any incidents of challenging behavior that result in discipline or removal from the classroom, as well as contact information for any other administrator or school employee who should be notified in the designated administrator's absence
- **Process by which the designated administrator will assess the facts**, severity, and intentionality of an incident of challenging behavior
- **Each designated location** to which a student may be sent when they are temporarily removed from a classroom **and the supports they receive there**, including (a) intervention from a trained school employee, (b) therapeutic resources, (c) available mental health supports, (d) instructional

materials, and (e) technology or other resources to address the student's temporary needs

- **Ways to address challenging behavior**, enhance resiliency, increase the use of de-escalation strategies, and improve social and emotional skills, which may include training, therapeutic mental health supports, restorative practices, or trauma-informed instructional strategies
- **Safeguards to ensure compliance with a student's IEP or 504 plan** when it comes to supports, services, or interventions for students who receive special education or accommodations for a disability
- **A prohibition on discrimination or retaliation** against anyone who reports or assists in the investigation of a challenging behavior incident

If a behavior is serious:

- **Call for assistance.** When a conflict is potentially violent or beyond your control, seek appropriate help and intervention immediately. Regardless of a child's age, unwanted physical contact (such as biting, spitting, or kicking) is unacceptable and must be addressed and reported.
- **Request a behavior intervention meeting.** A new state law that CEA advocated for allows any classroom teacher to request a behavior intervention meeting with the school's crisis intervention team for any student whose behavior has
 - Caused a serious disruption to the instruction of other students, or
 - Caused self-harm, or
 - Caused physical harm to a teacher, another student, or a staff member.

The crisis intervention team must then convene a behavior intervention meeting, and the team must identify resources and supports to address the student's social, emotional, and instructional needs. If a student's behavior causes harm to that student or a serious disruption to the instruction of other students, the administrator must notify the student's parent within 24 hours.

If the student who engaged in the challenging behavior has an individualized education plan (IEP), request a planning and placement team (PPT) meeting in writing immediately and include a copy of your report. Additional supports and modifications or a change in the student's placement might be in order. For students who do not have an IEP, a referral for a special education evaluation may be appropriate if their behavior is impeding their ability to learn.

If there is a physical assault or a threat of harm, file a report with your principal. You should include all relevant details and the names of anyone who witnessed the incident. In the case of a report of a physical assault, your principal is required pursuant to CGS Section 10-233g(a) to forward a copy of the report to the local police. **Note: This does not constitute a criminal report; it is a civil reporting statute. Provide your local association with a copy of your report with students' names redacted so that the local can follow up with the administration.**

You are entitled to file a criminal report of threats or physical violence with the police. State statute prohibits school administrators from interfering or prohibiting such reporting.

If you have an injury, see the school nurse or seek outside medical attention. Consider filing a workers' compensation notice of injury so that the incident is documented in the event that you need to make a claim down the road.

Learn more

CEA's Professional Learning Academy offers a variety of workshops to assist members in dealing with difficult student behaviors, addressing student trauma, and fostering social emotional learning. Visit cea.org/pla for a list of offerings and contact your local association president or myprofession@cea.org to inquire about scheduling training in your district.

What if a student is injured under your supervision?

1. **Seek medical attention** from the school nurse or administrator and call 911 immediately if the injury is severe.
2. **Fill out an accident report** for the district within 24 hours.
3. **Contact your local president**, who will reach out to your CEA UniServ Representative (cea.org/cea-staff/#uniserv). Do not discuss the incident with the media or anyone else until you have been counseled by your CEA UniServ Representative. This is for your protection and the protection of the student's privacy.
4. **If you receive notice of a lawsuit or pending lawsuit, contact your CEA UniServ Representative**, who will send you a claim form for your liability insurance provided through your CEA membership. The school district may also be a party to any lawsuit filed by parents. If the incident was a result of conduct within the course and scope of your employment, the district's attorney and/or representative of the school's insurance company will represent you in meetings on the matter. Contact your CEA UniServ Representative immediately if you receive notice that the district will not be representing you.

How can you guard against and prepare for emergencies?

- **Familiarize yourself with your district's crisis management plan.** Connecticut law requires all school districts to develop such a plan in cooperation with staff, parents, law enforcement, and others.

- **Make sure you receive training in crisis procedures, including opportunities to practice the procedures with students present.** Contact your site leader or local president if your district does not offer this.
- **Know your school building.** Make sure you get a map and a complete tour of your school. Know where designated safe areas are and how to get there. Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes and alternate routes if the main route is blocked.
- **Know the staff and other adults authorized to be in your school.** If you see someone you do not recognize, follow your school's policy for reporting an unauthorized visitor.
- **Pay attention to warning signs that a student could become violent.** These include preoccupation with weapons and death, cruelty to animals, expressions of anger or violence in writings or drawings, and isolation. Your school should have either a committee or an individual (sometimes the principal) you can contact regarding concerns about a potentially violent student. Ask others at your school how to access resources for troubled youth.

Need help?

CEA's Member Legal Services team and CEA Specialist Robyn Kaplan-Cho conduct training related to challenging behavioral issues and teachers' rights and responsibilities with regard to student safety. Talk to your local association president to schedule training in your district or check CEA's online events calendar for one of CEA's related workshops, Chalk and Order: Legal ABCs for Educators, and Know Your Rights: Special Education and Challenging Behavior Law.



Your Evaluation: Your Union Is Here to Help

Public school educators are regularly evaluated on aspects of their performance. For teachers, these typically include things like classroom management, routines and transitions, the atmosphere in their classrooms, how well instructional time is maximized, and whether instruction is differentiated for students. Those who provide specialized services, such as school psychologists or speech-language pathologists, are evaluated on criteria such as use of appropriate behavioral assessment tools, development and implementation of group or individual interventions, compliance with ethical standards for their field, communication with families, and collaboration with other educators.

Educators who are new to the profession are evaluated more often, and the process is meant to support you and help you improve. That process includes setting goals, having an evaluator come in to observe you, and regular opportunities for feedback and guidance.

Evaluation Gets an Upgrade

In 2023, the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted Leader and Educator Evaluation Guidelines, developed with significant input from CEA. The new guidelines streamlined and simplified the evaluation process, reducing paperwork and other burdens on educators. The focus shifted from rating educators to meaningfully supporting their professional growth. Collaboration is now emphasized, and a high priority is placed on giving educators feedback that's specific, timely, actionable, and accurate.

While the previous system of evaluation took a one-size-fits-all approach, evaluation today allows for differentiation based on an educator's role and years of experience. Educators who provide specialized services, for example—such as school psychologists or counselors—are assessed on different criteria and expectations from those that apply to classroom teachers.

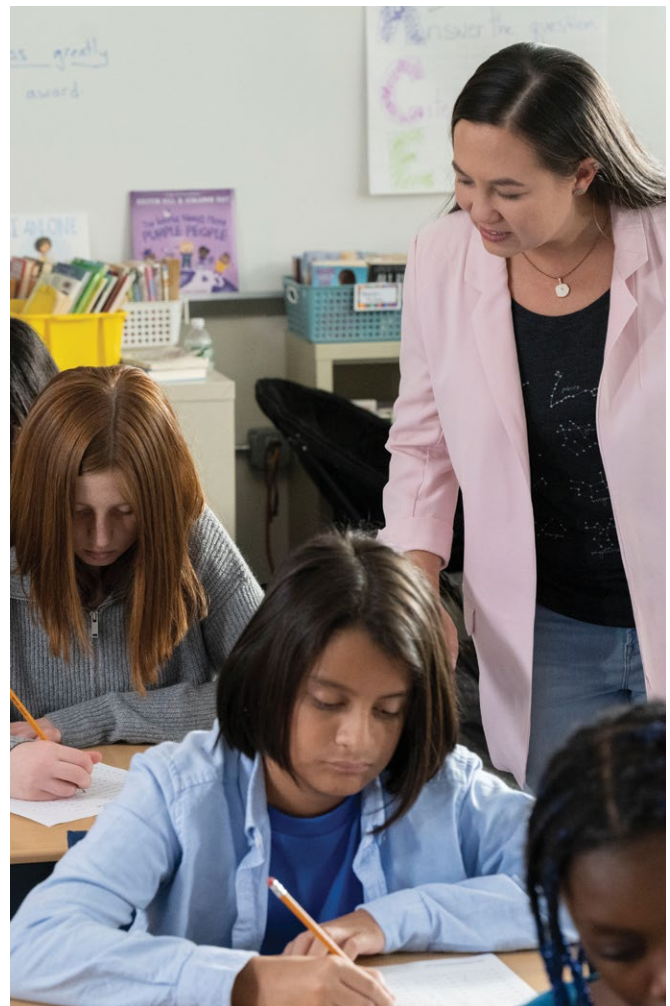
Your school district's evaluation plan must align with state guidelines—although within the guidelines, plans can be designed to meet the specific needs of educators and students. That means your district's evaluation plan may differ from those in other districts. Read your district's plan document carefully, attend the evaluation orientation in the fall, and ask questions of your association leaders, administrators, or staff at CEA.

While evaluation plans may vary significantly from one district to the next, there are core requirements that remain consistent across the state. The focus of your plan should be on meaningful professional learning and growth. Your plan should also consider

the growth and well-being of the whole child instead of focusing entirely on academic outcomes. Educators are permitted to set common goals that foster collegiality and collaboration, and rather than stress compliance, evaluation guidelines are intended to foster trust, innovation, and transformational improvement.

By law, your district's **Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC)** must review your evaluation and professional development plan each year and revise as needed, so as the year unfolds, let the teachers on your PDEC know what's working and what isn't.

If you have questions, would like to customize an evaluation orientation or professional development workshop for your local association, or need more evaluation resources, contact myprofession@cea.org.



What's the Same in Every District's Plan

- **Basic Components** Every district's evaluation plan may be unique, but they all share a set of required elements, including goal-setting, midyear and end-of-year conferences, observations, feedback, a dispute resolution process, and a support/corrective action process that conforms to state requirements.
- **Goals and Indicators** All evaluation plans require at least one goal and two learning indicators, which you and your evaluator must mutually agree to. This means your evaluator should not tell you what your goal or learning indicators must be, although they should have some input. If you and your evaluator can't agree on your goal and indicators, a dispute resolution process may be initiated. The type of goal and indicators—and the duration of the goal—may differ from district to district, so be sure to read your district's evaluation plan to understand its unique aspects.
- **Standards-Based Rubric** Although the nature and number of observations may differ from district to district, all evaluation plans require some type of observation of educators. Observation rubrics are aligned to teaching and learning standards developed and validated externally, such as Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching (CCT). Districts are free to adopt a rubric that simply states the expected level of proficiency and includes columns for feedback. Review your district's rubric prior to being observed.
- **Trained Evaluators** All evaluators in your district must have an 092 certification and be trained in your district's evaluation procedures and in how to provide supportive, meaningful, standards-based feedback. This takes ongoing training. In addition, the state requires all evaluators to regularly engage in calibration activities to ensure reliability and common expectations. That means that if your district has more than one evaluator, those evaluators must agree on expectations and the kinds of feedback and support they provide so that educators across the district are evaluated in consistent ways.

Need help?

For questions about your evaluation, contact CEA Teacher Development Specialist Kate Field.



Dr. Kate Field
katef@cea.org
860-725-6368

Your Rights

Educators have the same basic rights under the evaluation process regardless of the district in which they work. Your local association may have negotiated additional protections beyond what is listed. If you feel your rights are not being respected, it's important to let one of your union representatives or PDEC members know.

- **Mutual Agreement** Your evaluation goal and learning indicators can't be dictated, and you have the right to have input into both. You and your evaluator should discuss, compromise as needed, and reach agreement that the goal and indicators selected are meaningful and relevant to you and your students.
- **Dispute Resolution** If you and your evaluator can't agree on your goal, indicators, feedback, evaluation timeline, or any other aspect of the evaluation process, you have the right to a fair dispute resolution process. The details of this process are outlined in your district's evaluation plan.
- **Union Representation** You have the right to union representation in any aspect of your evaluation. If your evaluator misses important deadlines, forgets to provide feedback, provides unfair or unhelpful feedback, or has identified you as a candidate for tiered supports, it's important to involve your union immediately.
- **Support and Feedback** You should receive either written or verbal feedback after every observation. The timeline for this feedback can be found in your district's evaluation plan. Your evaluator should also offer support and professional development to help you grow as an educator.
- **Grievance** If your evaluator misses any aspect of your evaluation process (such as a deadline or conference) and it has a harmful impact on your evaluation, contact your union, as this could be grievable.

What Your Union Can Do for You

- **Safeguard Your Rights** We help ensure all the steps of the evaluation process are followed with fidelity and can take action if your evaluator dictates your goal, fails to provide timely or accurate feedback, misses an important deadline, or tries to put you on a corrective action plan prematurely.
- **Dispute Resolution** If you are unable to reach mutual agreement with your evaluator on goals, indicators, the evaluation timeline, feedback, or other evaluation issue, you have the right to initiate a dispute resolution process that must involve your union. A union representative of your choice will represent you in this dispute and advocate on your behalf.
- **PDEC Representation** Your district's Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) must include at least one representative of the teachers' union. The PDEC creates and annually revises both your evaluation and professional development plans, so union representation on the PDEC ensures teachers have a voice at the table when important decisions regarding PD and changes to the evaluation process are being made.
- **Corrective Action Plans** Teachers may occasionally struggle with performance issues. The union will help determine if a corrective action plan is an appropriate step, and if so, that meaningful tiered informal supports were provided beforehand. The union must also be consulted regarding the content of a formal corrective action plan to ensure it provides adequate support and is not unreasonable in its expectations.
- **Professional Development, Guidance, and Individualized Support** Your local association can contact CEA to arrange a professional development workshop, an evaluation orientation, feedback training, calibration activities, or PDEC training or facilitation, all of which can be customized to meet your district's needs.



Ace Your Evaluation

- **Know Your Evaluator** Get a sense of your evaluator's values and expectations. If your evaluator places a high value on structure and order, make sure your lesson includes clear routines and tight transitions to minimize disruptions. Consider posting classroom norms on the wall where your evaluator can see them whenever they walk through. If you are not a classroom teacher, you may be observed doing non-instructional work, such as participating in a PPT or facilitating professional development, or your observation may be replaced by a review of practice, where an evaluator analyzes artifacts you provide.
- **Know the Rubric** Your district's observation rubric should show exactly what your evaluator is looking for when they observe you. If your observation is scheduled in advance, prepare a written lesson plan that aligns each lesson segment to the rubric. Actually cite the domain and indicator number in parentheses right on your lesson plan. This way, if the evaluator doesn't see something, you can submit the lesson plan as evidence of what was missed. If you're not a classroom teacher, be sure to use the rubric for service providers.
- **Be Proactive** You don't have to wait for your evaluator to schedule an observation. If you planned an innovative lesson or activity you're excited about, particularly if it relates to your goal, consider inviting your evaluator in to observe. This gives you more control, allows you to show your strengths, and creates a bridge between your observed practice and your goal. Observations do not need to take place in a classroom, so consider asking your evaluator to observe activities that meaningfully showcase the real work you do. For example, if you are a music teacher, invite your evaluator to a concert.
- **Show Engagement** Your evaluator will want to see evidence of student engagement. Consider creating a toolbox of very short, interactive, formative assessment strategies you can use at any point in any lesson so that if your evaluator walks in, you can choose one to show your students are actively learning and engaged. The toolbox could include turn and talk, four corners, thumbs up/down, etc.
- **Be Open to Feedback** Your evaluator should provide specific, meaningful, supportive feedback within 5-10 days of your observation (the exact timeframe should be in your district's plan). Sometimes the feedback may seem inaccurate or unfair. In this circumstance, it's still important to appear reflective. Tell your evaluator you're not sure you agree with their assessment but will reflect on it for a few days before responding. If after reflection the feedback still seems unfair or inaccurate, consult with your local president about how best to respond.



Your Finances

As an educator, you have a mix of financial considerations specific to professionals in our field. These include everything from salary schedules to student loan forgiveness, deductions for classroom expenses, discounted products and services, participation in a statewide teachers' retirement system, and more.

To help you understand and manage your earnings, savings, and benefits, CEA offers financial workshops, retirement planning, member benefits workshops, and expertise in matters ranging from your insurance plan to your pension plan—all at no cost, exclusively for members.

Need help?

CEA Organizational and Training Specialist Chris Teifke conducts free training in setting yourself up for financial success.



Chris Teifke
christophert@cea.org
860-725-1301

Let's start with your contract.

This checklist will help ensure you make the most of your paycheck and your position as a public school educator.

- 1. Are you being paid properly?** Check your payroll deductions at least once at the start of the school year and again at the start of each new calendar year.
- 2. Is your salary placement correct?** Your compensation is based on a numbered step schedule, with different lanes depending on your educational degrees and experience. Every contract, or collective bargaining agreement (CBA), has its rules for how you are placed on this schedule. Review your CBA and keep track of
 - What lane you are on
 - What step you are on
 - What it takes to advance either your lane or step
 - How long it might take to advance a step
 - How much credit you receive for years of teaching experience
 - How much credit you receive for your degrees/education
- 3. What's covered by your health insurance plan?** If you have a choice of plans, compare what they offer. Also understand what you have for vision and dental coverage, and maximize your health savings account (HSA) and flexible savings account (FSA), as both provide tax advantages. HSAs often earn interest.
- 4. What coverage do you have for long-term and short-term disability?** Short- and long-term disability insurance are crucial safety nets that pay a portion of your income if you're unable to work for an extended period of time. As a member of the Teachers' Retirement System, you are automatically covered by a disability benefit if you qualify. Your board of education may also offer a private long-term disability policy. Find out if you are covered. You may also wish to explore NEA's individual income protection plans.

Read through your CBA and refamiliarize yourself each time a new contract is negotiated, as salary schedules and other provisions are subject to change.

Also be aware that the credentials you've earned—for example, your bachelor's, master's, or sixth-year degree—could land you a higher compensation in another school district. Don't take those variables for granted.

Need help?

CEA Insurance Specialist Tom Lally offers free training in understanding your insurance benefits and making the most of your HSA.



Tom Lally
toml@cea.org
860-725-6392

Learn more at cea.org/do-you-need-long-term-disability-insurance.

5. Does your district have a sick leave bank you can contribute to and participate in?

6. Do you qualify for financial compensation for any of the following?

- Unused sick days
- National Board Certification
- Mileage
- Chaperone pay
- Certification reimbursement

7. Does your contract provide tuition reimbursement?

There's help for student debt.

Depending upon the type of federal student loan you carry, you may be eligible for partial loan forgiveness. Navigating student debt forgiveness and income-driven repayment can be tricky. More information about helpful money-saving programs can be found here:

- **Income-Driven Repayment Plans:** studentaid.gov/idr
- **Student Loan Repayment Options with Loan Simulator:** studentaid.gov/loan-simulator
- **Teacher Loan Forgiveness and Teacher Loan Cancellation:** studentaid.gov/articles/teacher-loan-forgiveness-options
- **Public Service Loan Forgiveness:** studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service

If you have a 529 Education Savings Plan, you may use those funds in more ways than you might be aware—for example, repaying your student loans up to \$10,000 or purchasing computer equipment or internet access. You may also qualify for matching grants and tax advantages. Learn all the ins and outs in CEA's workshop *Setting Yourself Up for Financial Success*.

CEA Member Benefits partner Cambridge Credit Counseling also offers free webinars and counseling sessions to every CEA member looking to qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness, take advantage of income-driven repayment, and more. For webinar dates and times, visit cea.org or contact student loan counseling manager Todd Friedhaber (tfriedhaber@cambridgecredit.org, 800-757-1788, ext. 5373) or director of education Marty Lynch (mlynch@cambridgecredit.org).

Retirement planning starts now.

Whether this is your first professional job or you've entered teaching as a second career, there are retirement issues specific to educators.

For example, membership in the State Teachers' Retirement System is mandatory for all public school educators who work at least half-time, and you must contribute a set percentage of your annual salary into the state retirement fund.

To qualify for a retirement benefit, you must meet certain eligibility requirements that factor in your age and/or years of service. You may also purchase additional service credits to increase your retirement benefit.

Although not part of the Teachers' Retirement System, 403(b) and 457 plans provide teachers with an excellent opportunity to save money by setting aside pre-tax dollars via payroll deduction to grow on a tax-deferred basis for retirement. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of 403(b) and 457 plans administered through your local school district. Check with your district's business office for more information on the investment options available to you.

The earlier you begin planning for your retirement, the better. CEA offers free, in-depth workshops to help you. These are offered virtually throughout the school year as well as at CEA conferences.

Every new CEA member also receives a Retirement Primer for Early Career Educators, and members across the career continuum receive an annual publication with important updates to teacher retirement.

For more information, visit cea.org/new-teacher-resources.

Need help?

CEA Retirement Specialist Robyn Kaplan-Cho leads workshops explaining your retirement options and answers any questions you have. Check CEA's online events calendar or search "retirement workshop" at cea.org for the latest.

Robyn Kaplan-Cho
robynk@cea.org
860-725-6314



Your Community

Whether you are just starting out or have transitioned into education from another career, your first years in the classroom are often the most challenging. Support from your union, peers, and veteran colleagues is essential.

CEA Early Career is a community within CEA that supports educators in their first seven years of teaching by providing networking, learning, and leadership opportunities.

Join CEA Early Career and Get Access to

- **Leadership Development** We'll help you build leadership and career skills that equip you to inspire others, be more confident in your profession, and be a strong voice for your students.
- **Professional Growth** Membership gives early career educators access to some of the most sought-after and innovative programs and resources on education law, social media, and workplace rights.
- **Peer-to-Peer Support** CEA Early Career provides opportunities to connect and support one another through regional events, working with school districts, and reaching out to aspiring educators and colleges and universities.

CEA Early Career has working groups focused on your interests, including

- **Political Advocacy** Decisions about how and what you teach are often made by people who haven't seen the inside of a classroom in years. We teach you how to advance education policy that impacts your profession and improves public education.
- **Social Media** You're an Instagrammer or TikToker who wants to connect with others and break down the isolation that can come with being a new teacher. We'll show you how.
- **Education Justice** You want to make the world a better place through education. Your union has the resources you need.
- **Social Events** We could all use some fun! Connect with other educators at social gatherings, sporting events, and other outings. We help you plan them and pull them off.

Join CEA Early Career

Reach out to CEA Training and Organizational Development Specialist Katie Grant to be a part of the CEA Early Career community.



Katie Grant
katieg@cea.org
860-725-6370



Your Leadership Opportunities

Every CEA member is invited to explore leadership opportunities within the union. These include

Local Leadership

- Building Rep
- Local Officer (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chair, Webmaster, Newsletter Editor)
- Local Committee Chair/Member (Grievance, Negotiations, Sick Bank, Social, Political Action, Elections, Racial and Ethnic Diversity Affairs Commission, and others)

Statewide Leadership

- Statewide Committees (Constitution Revision, Representative Assembly Planning, Membership Training, and more)
- Statewide Commissions (Racial and Ethnic Diversity Affairs Commission, Member Benefits, Public Relations, and more)
- CEA Representative Assembly Delegate
- CEA Board of Directors
- Statewide Leadership (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and more)

National Leadership

- National Committees (Political Action, Resolutions, and more)
- NEA Representative Assembly delegate or caucus member (Women's Caucus, NEA LGBTQ+ Caucus, and more)



Your Voice

As an early career educator juggling multiple responsibilities, you may feel like there's no time for advocacy and community-building outside of school. But opportunities present themselves often, many take only a few moments, and participating has benefits that extend far beyond a single event.

- **Know the issues.** NEA, CEA, and your local education association keep you informed about issues that impact your classroom, students, and community. Subscribe to the CEA Daily at cea.org/daily, watch your inbox for alerts, and look for news on policy developments and more in every issue of the *CEA Advisor*.

We can't teach you if we can't reach you!

Because outside communications are often blocked by school email systems, make sure CEA has your personal email address. Scan here to log in to your account at NEA Ed Communities and make sure your information is complete and up-to-date.



- **Sign up to be a CEA Champion for Public Education.** Indicate your area(s) of interest, and we'll share timely opportunities to get involved. Visit ctedchamps.org or text champions to 48744.
- **Register to vote.** It's easy at cea.org/vote! Elected officials make most of the decisions that impact our schools and our communities. Exercise your power at the ballot box to support candidates who will support you in your profession.
- **Advocate for change.** Early career educators are a powerful voice at town council meetings, rallies, and legislative offices, and every event you attend elevates your voice and builds important connections. Even a small investment of time allows you to shape policies, hold elected officials accountable, and promote positive change. CEA is here to provide help with messaging and more.



Learn More, Do More

- **Learn about Connecticut elections.** The Secretary of State's election page, portal.ct.gov/SOTS, has information about upcoming races.
- **Know who represents you.** Find your state representative and senator at cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp. Reach out and let your legislators know how they can help you.
- **See how your legislators rate.** CEA's Legislator Report Card system evaluates legislators' voting records as well as their efforts to advance CEA priorities, such as improving educators' working conditions and salaries and providing schools with the resources that students need. The report card also includes a holistic view of legislators' support for public education and responsiveness to requests to meet with CEA members and staff. View the report card and see who's on the honor roll at cea.org/legislator-report-card.
- **Donate to education-friendly candidates.** The NEA Fund for Public Education is the political action committee of the National Education Association, which supports candidates who stand behind public schools. Visit educationvotes.nea.org/donate to learn more and contribute.

Want to know more?

Need help understanding pending legislation or contacting your legislators? Looking for opportunities to get involved in political issues that interest you? Contact CEA Political Engagement Coordinator Gus Melita or Legislative Coordinator Louis Rosado Burch at myvoice@cea.org.



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