

EDU: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE

By Brian Leonard and Mike Schlegelmilch

Feeling beaten down by mandates and high stakes testing? Wondering how many classes you'll have to teach on an adjunct salary just to pay your rent? Are there days when you feel more like a test proctoring, data collecting robot than an educator?

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the attacks educators face every day, from bullying administrators to billionaires and politicians hell-bent on privatizing our schools and breaking our unions. Luckily, Educators for a Democratic Union (EDU) has the vision to take back power from the privatizers and the Betsy DeVos's of the world and fight for justice for teachers, students, and our communities.

What We Believe

Educators for a Democratic Union is a caucus of rank and file unionists in the MTA working to build a participatory, democratic, social justice movement in our union and communities.

We believe union power manifests in the activities of rank-and-file members rather than union officials and bureaucrats. We share a vision for a future without power brokering in backroom deals—instead we envision solidarity with educators, students, families, and activists in our communities taking direct action to improve our public schools.

We believe that our power as a union comes from the ability to organize our members to take action in their workplaces and beyond. We'll never be able to compete with the Koch Brothers and the Waltons in terms of money and lobbying, but if we harness our people power, we can beat them every time.

EDU believes that the MTA is strongest when its members take collective action to solve problems in their workplaces and fight for justice for our schools and society. We want all MTA members to feel that they are the union, and to discover the power we have when we act together.

The Union We Need

EDU rejects the “business model” of unionism that has resulted in the steady erosion of our rights and benefits, allowed high stakes testing to be linked to teacher evaluations, weakened our healthcare benefits and autonomy, and starved our education budgets.

Instead, we have a vision of a member-driven and democratic union that stands up to the forces massed against us instead of compromising away our values and livelihood in backroom deals.

How do we get there? It's no easy journey, but we believe the union we need will be built around the following principles:

1. Democratic participation by members at all levels of union governance
2. An emphasis on organizing members to take action in their workplaces and beyond, rather than just lobbying and donating to candidates
3. Building coalitions with other unions and community organizations to build power and

solidarity

4. A commitment to social justice and building a social movement that connects our fight to movements fighting for racial and economic justice, gender equality, LGBT+ rights, and other struggles for liberation

Glimpse of a Stronger MTA

It may seem like we have a long way to go, but we've already seen glimmers of what a rejuvenated and powerful MTA could look like.

In the No On 2 campaign, we saw MTA members engaged and organizing like never before, knocking on doors in their communities, phone banking, and mobilizing their friends and family to fight school privatization in Massachusetts.

As a result, we pulled off a stunning upset, defeating an astroturf campaign that outspent us two to one, reversing initial polling that showed us trailing by double digits, and sending Question 2 to the Trash Can Of Failed Privatization Attempts by an incredible 24 percentage points. The lesson? When we organize and fight, we can win, even against huge odds.

Join us in building our union and our power, and in fighting for the schools our students and communities deserve.

We must struggle to make a better future for our union and public schools by reclaiming these institutions as democratic, egalitarian places where all people have a voice—not just the power elite. We oppose the privatization of our institutions and will fight to save our public schools from this threat. We have taken the lead in our workplaces and local communities in speaking out for education justice and equal rights for all.

Our power derives from our shared vision for a better world and in our collective actions in our communities and beyond to make this vision a reality. We are not willing to concede to the established political powers—we rise together to resist concessions and union-busting and instead work towards winning the public schools our communities deserve.

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