



Competencies and Outcomes

Module 2: Education as a Democratic Institution

Description: The American belief has always been that an educated society is better equipped to make informed decisions, understand civic responsibilities, and appreciate the importance of democratic values. In this module, you will apply this vision in your journey to become an EDInfluencer, examining education as the cornerstone, reclaiming the mantle of leadership as an education professional, and determining what advocacy for public education and democratic values looks like as a key component as an EDInfluencer.

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Competencies

This module aligns with the following NEA Leadership Competencies:

Advocacy

Utilizes best practices in advocacy and political efforts
Acts as a political advocate

Communication

Develops individual communication approach and style to fit appropriate audience
Effectively uses current media (*print, broadcast, online, social media*) to communicate

Governance and Leadership

Establishes and maintains collaborative and effective relationships

Leading our Professions

Supports professional excellence and builds capacity for continual improvement and learning to ensure the success of all students
Advocates for policies and strategies that positively impact our professions and the learning of all students

Organizing

Builds and maintains meaningful community partnerships
Engages in collective action to identify and address pivotal issues

Social and Emotional Intelligence

Understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts

Earning Criteria

Earning this badge indicates that the learner completed Module 2: Education as a Democratic Institution of The Worthy Educator EDInfluencer Advocacy Microcredential and is certified to have the understandings, skills and dispositions to successfully serve as an advocate for the education profession.

Evidence

The learner was assessed on advocacy core competencies through self-assessment and reflection on eleven activities verifying the role of the educator as an influencer and advocate for what is best for children and for the profession in a democratic society.

Earning Criteria

Recipients must complete the earning criteria to earn this badge:

1. Finding their local School Board's policy or position statement on schools as democratic institutions. They may also inquire about a similar position statement in their local government.
2. Viewing "Which are the Four Advocacy Skills for Teachers" [VIDEO 2:18] and identifying which of the skills are strengths and which need development.
3. Reviewing the Education Commission of the States' Six Policy Priority Areas Prepare State Leaders for Impact, ranking them by personal priority, and identifying their top issue.
4. Writing a one page opinion piece on the importance of public schools to a democratic society, citing experience and expertise as an educator to back their viewpoint.

Evidence is verified and approved by authorized leaders of The Worthy Educator to ensure the integrity and quality of these requirements are met.

Skills

Recipients of this badge demonstrate these skills:

Verbalizing their values and commitment to public education

Identifying their strengths and attributes advocating for democratic values

Prioritizing policies and practices they want to champion as an advocate

Alignment

This badge is aligned with the [Leadership Competencies](#) of the [National Education Association](#).

Pathways

This module supports these educator advocacy pathways:

Professional Development and Skill-Building

Direct Instruction: learning education policy and advocacy can equip educators with the knowledge and skills to effectively advocate for change says jobsineducation.com.

Amplifying Voices and Sharing Stories

Personal Narratives: sharing stories to help decision-makers understand the impact of policies and practices on students and educators.

Direct Engagement with Decision-Makers

Local Government: engaging with local government officials on issues like funding, resources, and community partnerships can also be impactful.

Focusing on Specific Issues

Identify Key Issues: adopt positions on specific issues to advocate for policies and practices that support optimal outcomes for public education and the students it serves.

Resources

Aissa, Evelyn: Join the Fight for Public Education and Democracy
Common Dreams, Published February 12, 2025
<https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/fight-for-public-ed>

Berger, Joel: What Does 'Public Education is the Cornerstone of Our Democracy' Really Mean?
National Education Association, Published September 25, 2024
<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/what-does-public-education-cornerstone-our-democracy-really-mean>

Black, Derek W.: America's Founders Recognized the Need for Public Education. Democracy Requires Maintaining That Commitment
Time, Published September 22, 2020
<https://time.com/5891261/early-american-education-history/>

Brooks-Young, Susan: Education as an Act of Democratic Advocacy
[VIDEO 7:02] Original content exclusively recorded for The Worthy Educator

Ceniseros, Markus: Public Education: The Last Line of Defense for Democracy in Our Communities. Medium, Published Sep 19, 2024
<https://future4learning.medium.com/public-education-the-last-line-of-defense-for-democracy-in-our-communities-1b596f2a2739>

Clay, Valencia: How A Baltimore Teacher Bridges Education & Advocacy [VIDEO 3:39] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Y-zVPDjJ74>

McGuire, Kent and Wilka, Matt: A Democratic Vision for Public Schools Stanford Social Innovation Review, Published August 29, 2024
<https://ssir.org/articles/entry/public-education-after-neoliberalism>

Partnership for the Future of Learning: Public Education In a Strong Democracy, Published August 21, 2024
https://futureforlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/PFL-Vision_20240917.pdf

Tropiano, Dolores: Public Education and Democracy Arizona State University, Published July 27, 2022
<https://education.asu.edu/about/news/public-education-and-democracy>

Weingarten, Randi: In Defense of Public Education Education International, Updated May 9, 2023
<https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/27493:in-defense-of-public-education>

Westheimer, Joel: The Role of Schools in Democratic Societies [VIDEO 11:45] <https://youtu.be/t24Dyv3MqOk?si=BeCcXaNa8fqzGFN>

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

The following are submitted to the module discussion board for engagement and evaluation:

- I. Find your local School Board's policy or position statement on schools as democratic institutions. If you cannot find one, determine your municipal government's policy or position. Capture what you find and save it for your future reference.

Does your school district have an official statement on schools as democratic institutions? If so, summarize it.

Does your local government or local leaders have an official position on schools as democratic institutions? If so, summarize what you've learned.

- II. View “Which are the Four Advocacy Skills for Teachers” [VIDEO 2:18]. What of these four skills are strengths of yours? How do you use these strengths in your current work as an educator? Which of these four skills need strengthening? Are there colleagues who exhibit these skills who can help you?
- III. Review the Education Commission of the States’ Six Policy Priority Areas Prepare State Leaders for Impact. Rank the six priorities based on their importance to you. Which priority is number one on your list? What is your position on this issue? How can you communicate this to your elected officials?

IV. Share Your Commitment!

Write a one page opinion piece on the importance of public schools to a democratic society, citing your experience and expertise as an educator to back your viewpoint. Save the final draft for your future reference. Optional: submit your piece to a local newspaper or online news source for publication.

Rubric

Worthy Educator EDInfluencer Advocacy Microcredential Rubric

Criteria	3 Outstanding	2 Adequate	1 Needs Improvement
Voice	A compelling introduction Grabs the reader's attention Relates personal perspective Appeals to stakeholder perspective Offers personal experience and expertise Utilizes an inclusive, professional tone Elevates the narrative on education Confident expression of ideas	A clear introduction Addresses the reader directly Present educator credentials Maintains a consistent tone Avoids blame and polarizing statements Smooth use of syntax and semantics	Uses first-person voice Succinctly states ideas Relates personal opinion Leaves the reader wanting more elaboration
Persuasiveness	Clarity of the purpose of the piece Shows awareness of audience Evidences expertise and credibility Presents solid data and evidence Uses logic and reason Appeals to emotion and experience Makes the case effectively Influences the reader to take action	Directly states premise Shows audience awareness Logical flow of ideas Cites professional experience Espouses personal priorities Makes clear closing statement	Speaks on own behalf Straightforward presentation of ideas Unconvincing presentation Didactic tone
Organization	Begins with clear thesis statement Effective use of language Ideas are logically sequenced Builds to a call to action Creates a satisfying conclusion Documents references cited Adherence to technical conventions Clean formatting	Clean introduction Clear expression of ideas Well-developed structure Documents references cited Technically consistent Clean formatting	Underdeveloped thesis States thoughts in isolation Meets minimum requirements of assignment Technical errors
Substance	High interest topic Relevant to current issues in education Viable treatment of the topic References reliable sources Indicates desired course of action Enlists the support of stakeholders Outlines next steps Describes desired outcome	Knowledgeable on the topic References current events Appeals to popular sentiment Cites personal aspirations Outlines options for action Brings discussion to satisfying conclusion	Surface-level treatment of ideas Uses lists rather than sentences Promotes personal agenda Lacks connection to future
Vision	Makes the case for future needs Universally relevant message Explains what is at stake Outlines consequences of inaction Paints a credible picture Provides clarity and detail Builds a bridge from the present Invites others to help build out the vision	Makes the case for change Connects with the reader Speaks in the present tense Describes possibilities Inspires hope and aspiration Invites others to join in the vision	Describes current circumstances Asks questions without providing answers Reactive rather than proactive Unclear next steps