

SEXUAL ORIENTATION & GENDER IDENTITY

HISTORY

Following the 2001 NEA Representative Assembly, NEA President Bob Chase appointed the NEA Task Force on Sexual Orientation. This 19-member Task Force represented a broad range of NEA constituencies and opinions. It was charged by the NEA Executive Committee to “examine the needs of, and problems confronting, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students and education employees. In conducting this examination, the Task Force shall give due consideration to NEA’s history of commitment to human and civil rights for all people, as well as the potential implications for the Association.”

The Task Force presented its recommendations - each of which was reached by consensus - to the NEA Board of Directors in the January of 2002.

Included among them was the establishment of a new standing committee focused on GLBTQ issues and concerns. Specifically, the report noted “it is the conclusion of the Task Force that ‘policies and programs related to issues of particular concern to’ gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students and education employees warrant similar attention [as other constituency groups], and, accordingly we recommend the establishment of an advisory standing committee for NEA’s gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered constituency – i.e., the Advisory Committee on Sexual Orientation/Gender Identification Issues.” It further recommended that the Chair of this committee be given official observer status at meetings of both the NEA Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

The NEA Board of Directors took action on the Task Force report at its February 8, 2002 meeting. All recommendations – including the recommendation to establish a standing committee-- were adopted by the Board. The Task Force’s recommendations and a report on the Board’s actions were sent to all delegates to the 2002 NEA Representative Assembly and reported to that year’s RA.

The formation of the Committee followed. Its initial members were appointed by the President and approved by the NEA Board of Directors in September 2002. And it was given oversight of six charges established by the NEA Executive Committee for the 2002 through 2005 program years. Those charges were 1) to examine the needs of and problems confronting gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered student as education employees and to make recommendations regarding NEA policy and programs giving consideration to NEA’s history of commitment to human and civil rights as well as the potential implications for the Association; 2) to monitor the Association’s implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Sexual Orientation; 3) to work in collaboration with the Human and Civil Rights Committee in its charge to examine issues of bias and hate crimes as it pertains to sexual orientation/gender identification, and to

review NEA programs and policies aimed at addressing such bias and hate crimes and make recommendations as appropriate; 4) to examine the characteristics and effects of bias and discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students and education employees and to examine the effects of such bias and discrimination on student achievement; 5) to work in collaboration with the committees on Women's Issues, Human and Civil Rights, and Minority Affairs to recommend strategies, approaches, and programs to enhance the Association's activities, celebrations, and observances of the diversity within our society, schools and Association; and 6) to assist the Human and Civil Rights Committee in garnering nominations for the Human and Civil Rights Awards.

In succeeding years, the Committee has been given additional and differing charges based on the priorities and needs of the Association at the time.