There is a wealth of resources available to teachers to integrate Black History Month curriculum into lesson plans, covering a variety of subjects and multiple grade levels.

TEA maintains a list online (www.teateachers.org/Black-History-Month) with links to various free resources for teachers, including the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, the Coretta Scott King Book Awards for literature ideas, the Library of Congress and more.

NEA also has extensive resources available online. Among the lesson plans available at www.nea.org/tools/lessons/black-history-month.htm, you can find sections on African American scientists and inventors, the music of Harlem, the African American migration experience and many other topics grouped by grade levels K-12.

"Don't limit yourself to just February," said TEA President Beth Brown. "These resources can and should be integrated throughout the school year."

"We are consistently hearing from members that they have too many demands on their time to fit more than one or two conferences into their schedules," said TEA President Beth Brown. "The intent of redesigning TEA's conferences is to be respectful of members' time and provide a training experience that is both effective and efficient."

TEA restructures conferences and professional development opportunities

The TEA calendar of conferences and trainings will look different in 2020. The Board of Directors restructured TEA's professional development conferences to provide members with a more effective and efficient experience.

The Ethnic Minority Affairs Conference will now be the only statewide conference offered in the Spring. The Spring Symposium, ESP, Administrators and New Teacher conferences have been combined into a new statewide conference to be held in the Fall each year.

"Confidence in the classroom begins with due process rights, tenure"

Yes, tenure is still a thing. Here is what it is and why you need it.

Tenure is, at its core, about basic fairness. Teaching is often a challenging profession, and having a fair and orderly process for issues that may arise helps teachers be the best professionals they can be.

Yet there is great confusion statewide among educators, administrators and local school boards on the status of teacher tenure in Tennessee.

While the law was amended in 2011 to change the way teachers become eligible for tenure, it was not abolished and remains an important part of the teaching profession.

What is tenure?

Many teachers, and certainly the general public, are uncertain of what exactly having tenure means.

Tenure is designed to ensure due process on discipline or dismissal, protecting a teacher for failing a star athlete or providing a hearing on questionable claims made by an unreasonable parent. Tenured teachers enjoy continuing employment and are not at risk for non-renewal. They can only be dismissed for cause.

It is not a "guaranteed job for life," as some opponents say. It simply provides a process to make sure dedicated veteran teachers are treated fairly and will not be dismissed for unjust or unfounded reasons; both tenured and non-tenured teachers can be dismissed for cause.

State law provides that a district may dismiss any teacher for the following reasons: incompetence, inefficiency, insubordination, neglect of duty, or improper conduct.

How do you get tenure?

Under the amended law, teachers become eligible for tenure after meeting all of the requirements listed in the graphic to the right.
Lessons from Dr. King

By TEA President Beth Brown

We recently celebrated the birthday of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a racial and social justice advocate who continues to inspire the world long after his 1968 assassination. As an English teacher, I love reading Dr. King’s writings to my students about Dr. King’s pursuit of equity and his masterful use of the English language.

As I took time on the recent holiday to reflect on Dr. King’s teachings, I contemplated a metaphor from Dr. King’s “I Have A Dream” speech. Standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, he stated that the country had promised America for perfection, but instead of giving her the best, it gave her a “bad check.” The promise was never fulfilled, but the hope and dream of freedom remained.

America for perfection, the promise of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence; instead of guaranteeing that all men would be created equal, the promise was broken. As an English teacher, I love that my students feel the need to correct the promise of the Constitution.

As Dr. King boldly proclaimed his refusal to accept the country’s promise, it affirms that African Americans’ freedom and justice.

This is one more example of the state failing to do its part to provide for a safe, healthy school climate where students feel safe and ready to learn.

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Dr. King then boldly proclaimed he believed that the country couldn’t, in fact, afford African Americans freedom and justice. He refused “to believe that there were insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity this nation itself prepared.”

A promissory note. A promise within the country’s founding documents. A promise not kept.

This sounds all too familiar.

Our state constitution promises that the Tennessee General Assembly “shall provide for the maintenance, support and eligibility standards of a system of free public schools.” However, when I consider the fact that our state ranks 45th in the nation for education funding while maintaining a $6.7 billion cash reserve, I feel much as Dr. King felt in 1963.

It feels like the state has defaulted on a promise when a kindergarten teacher cannot get $10 to purchase unit starters for her students.

It feels like the state has defaulted on a promise when a highly trained English teacher cries at night because she isn’t trained to deal with the emotional trauma that impedes her students’ learning.

It feels like the state has defaulted on a promise when a kindergarten teacher cannot get $10 to purchase unit starters for her students.

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On that day in August 1963, Dr. King reminded those in attendance of the fierce urgency of now. I offer that same reminder.

For the students sitting in school buildings with leaky roofs and no heat, there is a fierce urgency.

For the educators paying for classroom supplies out of their own pockets, there is a fierce urgency.

For the school districts making difficult decisions due to chronic underfunding, there is a fierce urgency.

The great Dr. King also said, “the time is always right to do the right thing.” To the Tennessee General Assembly, I say it is right to fund Tennessee’s public schools at least to the regional average. And to all Tennesseans, I say it is right to join us on Monday, March 16th, as we rally for the funding our schools deserve.

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The state has made progress on increasing mental health resources for public schools, but there is still a lot of room for improvement when it comes to fostering a school climate where students feel safe and confident in their ability to learn.

TEA believes that identifying and responding effectively to students experiencing trauma will enable them to come to school ready to learn and to meet academic challenges. When schools become trauma sensitive, they are in essence making a decision to ensure that all students are receiving the supports they need to succeed. TEA, specifically, has been advocating for an increase in funding for school nurses, social workers and counselors statewide.

Our schools are woefully understaffed in the areas that provide the most support for students’ emotional wellbeing. The National Association of Social Workers recommends a ratio of one social worker to every 250 students. Tennessee funds one social worker position for every 2,000 students.

This is one more example of the state failing to do its part to provide for a quality public education for every child. The research is there to back up the need for these positions in our schools. The funding is there, too, if we have the will to make it happen.

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Members voice opinions, set policy at NEA and TEA Rep Assemblies

TEA strength comes from members willing to get involved and speak up on issues that matter to our students and our profession. Two of the best opportunities for TEA members to make their voices heard and have an impact on the future of the association are to delegate to the TEA and/or NEA representative assemblies. The NEA RA convenes every July for delegates to debate issues that impact American public education, elect NEA officers, and set policies that guide the national association. This is where Tennessee educators can voice their opinions on where our national affiliate should focus its resources.

For Category 1, NEA members can vote for one or two delegates representing the district in which they teach. Category 2 members include those who are classroom teachers, education support professionals, or persons who serve in non-supervisory positions. In Category 2, NEA members may vote for one of the candidates. This category includes members who are supervisors, administrators, and those who work in an educational support capacity.

Any NEA-retired life, education support or active member not affiliated with a local association who wishes to vote in the election may receive a ballot by writing or calling TEA. Run as a delegate to the TEA RA

TEA members who wish to represent their local association at the TEA RA in May still have time to be nominated. Please contact TEA or Uniserv coordinator for more information.

LaDowne B. Hodgins* - TEA

District 1 Board Member:
July 2017 – current, TEA Executive Board Member: 2018 – current, Co-Chair of TEA Membership Committee: 2019, Member of NEA Board: 2018 – current, Vice President of the Tri-Cities Women of Color: 2019, Co-Chair of TEA Strategic Work Group: 2019 - current. Over my career I have taught grades 1-8 and I currently teach 3rd grade ELA/Social Studies. I have been fortunate to teach all 40 years at Full Branch. I have served WCEA as secretary, vice-president, and president. I have also been the association’s financial secretary and a member of the negotiators team for 30+ years. I have continued to serve on the PECCA. I have attended many TEA RAs and NEA RAs I would appreciate your vote to support great public schools.

Rhonda Lankford - Teacher with a Master of School Leadership from U of Tennessee, Member Doak High School, serving as President (2017-current) and elected to serve on the TEA Board of directors in May 2019. Am a member of the LEA CEC Chair, Teacher of the Year, and a member of the negotiators team for 30+ years. I have continued to serve on the PECCA. I have attended many TEA RAs and NEA RAs I would appreciate your vote to support great public schools.

Kimberly Thomas - 2019 NEA delegate. I have represented our school district at two NEA National teacher conventions. I am currently the 4th-grade coach at Haywood Elementary School in Sevierville, TN. I have been working at Haywood elementary for 23 years. I have taught grades 3rd-6th in a self-contained classroom setting. I am currently serving as the President of the Great Smoky Mountains Regional Education Association. I have been a member of the Knoxville Education Association for 27 years. I have served as an officer in my local union. I am currently serving as the President of the Great Smoky Mountains Regional Education Association.

Robert Holbrook - Bryan Masengale - Bund Director, Rhea Middle School, Rhea County Schools, Rhea County Education Association, served as president of the LEA, a member of the organizing committee of the NEA Republican Caucus. She is a member of the TEA ESSA Cadre.

Part-Presidents, Newsletter Editors, Chief Negotiators, Building Representatives, Collaborative Conferencing. Has served on the Board of Directors, and on the Speaker’s Advisory Board for the NEA Publication NEA Today. Attended many previous NEA-Representative Assemblies.

Tanya Coats - Vice President of TEA and presently serving as the KCEA President, Instructional Coach, 22 years, Knox County School System & Maryville City Schools, KCEA, Executive Board Member, Collaborative Conferencing, Teacher, Knox County Minority Affairs Chair, former Elections Chair, TEA Concerns, former Board of Directors Chairperson. I am a former East TN Black Classroom Teacher, served on the following committees: Administrative Task Force, NCTA, KCEA, legislative editing, Member Benefits, Minority Affairs and Knots, County Coaches! Networks and the Tri-colors. I enjoy knowing that the Association makes me qualified to represent the Tennessee Education Association. You will find me to be strong, conscientious voice who will work hard for the education professionals across the state. I would appreciate your support for my delegate vote. Therefore, I would appreciate your vote of confidence to ELECT me as a delegate to the NEA RA.

Patricia Gallo Rich - Physical Education (PE) Teacher at Belle Morris Elementary School in Knox County. I have been a member of the Association for all of my professional career over 25 years. I have served my local in several areas of leadership including but not limited to serving as a KCEA Executive Board Member, AR, election committee member and the local president’s advisors team. I have served TEA on many state committees including Member Benefits, Minority Affairs as well as Racial and Social Justice. My extensive experience in the Association makes me qualified to represent the NEA as a delegate. I have been a member of the organizing committee for 4 + a decade to the NEA RA. You will find me to be a strong, conscientious voice who will work hard for the education professionals in my district and across the state. I would appreciate your support and vote for me, Patricia Fontenot-Ridley, TEA State Delegate to the 2020 NEA RA! Thank you very much!

Oliver Parks - KCEA Association Representative District 1, Northwest Middle School, Math Teacher at Northwest Middle School in Rutherford County. I have been a member of the Association for all of my professional career over 20 years. I have served my local in several areas of leadership including AR, minority affairs committee member president’s advisor team. I have served on many state committees including Professional Negotiations, Communications, Member Benefits, IPD Commission, Legislative Affairs, Minority Affairs and currently on the organizing Summit Committee. My extensive experience makes me qualified to represent District 1 as a delegate to the NEA RA. You will find me to be a strong, conscientious person who will work hard for the education professionals in my district and across the state. I would appreciate your support and vote for me, Oliver Parks, TEA State Delegate to the 2019 NEA RA! Thank you very much!

Jeanette Omekahal - I have been an educator for 35 years. I have worked in private, public and government in Georgia, California, Massachusetts and now Tennessee. I have worked with learners of all ages. I have been a member of TEA since I started working in Tennessee in 1986. I have been involved in my fellow members to serve as their Association Rep for our building. I was the chair of the TEOA Organizing Committee for 2005-08. I was elected to serve as the Vice President for HCEA prior to becoming the President of HCEA last year. I have served as the MNEA Representative Assembly meetings and NEA Representative Meetings. This is my 5th and final year as President of the MNEA Board of Directors. I have served 3 years as the chair of the State School Board liaison team. I have trained as a Teacher Leader through TEA and have trained with NEA in Communications and leadership.

Beth Brown - TEA President: 1993-1995; Knox County Superintendent of Schools: 1995-2017; Greenville County High School: Local Association Representative, President 1994-2017; Graduate of the NEA Republican Educators’ Caucus. I have attended many TEA RAs and NEA RAs. I would appreciate your support and vote for me, Beth Brown, the middle Tennessee Black classroom teacher representative on the TEA board of directors. I have over 20 years of teaching experience. I am currently an early childhood special education teacher in Lincoln County. I have served in my local association as a bargaining representative, local membership chairperson, current treasurer, an RA delegate, and NEA delegate. I have my BA in Early Childhood Education and an MA in Administration and Supervision. I am an advocate for public education and our profession.

Emilly Mitchell

District 8

Brenda Mummusay - Hello, I am Brenda Mummusay, the middle Tennessee Black classroom teacher representative on the TEA board of directors. I have over 20 years of teaching experience. I am currently an elementary school special education teacher in the Metropolitan School District of Nashville. I have served on the HCEA Organizing Committee for 2 years. I was elected to serve as the Vice President for HCEA prior to becoming the President of HCEA last year. I have served as the MNEA Representative Assembly meetings and NEA Representative Meetings. This is my 5th and final year as President of the MNEA Board of Directors. I have served 3 years as the chair of the State School Board liaison team. I have trained as a Teacher Leader through TEA and have trained with NEA in Communications and leadership.

District 9

Eric Huth - District 9 member of the TEA Board of Directors, chair of the TEA Operations and Rules Committee and vice president of the Tri-Cities Urban Education Association. He distinguished himself as one of the longest-serving president, chief bargaining spokesperson for 10+ years and was instrumental in creating the plan to construct the Metropolitan Shelbyville Building Dr. Huth is the chair of the Metropolitan Professional Employees' Retirement Committee, a member of the Administrator of Retirement Committee, which oversees the Metropolitan Nashville Teachers Retirement Plan. Dr. Huth also served six years at the Metropolitan Nashville Teachers Retirement Plan. Dr. Huth also served as a member of the NEA Board of Directors in the 2019 NEA RA. He has attended numerous RAs and find that there is the likelihood of the Association, the place where business, policy and direction of the organization is debated and set for local associations nationwide. Being a delegate is facilitating and rewarding work to be done on behalf of fellow Tennessee educators. I have been a member of the NEA for 33 years. I have run for caucus leadership. Your vote is very important for me as I will do the work of the caucus members. I would alsolike to be a member of the NEA Concerns Committee for Tennessee, which gave me the opportunity to learn more about my capacity, helping to interpret new business items for our state caucus.

Jacqueline Burton - I am a DEPSA Assistant and have been a member of the Tennessee Emerging Leaders and NEA ESLPI student. I was a Classified Rep on the TEA Board of Directors. I am the burden barrier for all ESPA. I am a voice for Education.

Samantha Craig

District 10

Becky Adams - I am Becky Adams, a member of the Rutherford County Education Association (RCEA) as a delegate to the RCEA RA in May 2020 for the NEA 2020 NEA Representative Assembly. I have attended numerous RAs and find that there is the likelihood of the Association; the place where business, policy and direction of the organization is debated and set for local associations nationwide. Being a delegate is facilitating and rewarding work to be done on behalf of fellow Tennessee educators. I have been a member of the NEA for 33 years. I have run for caucus leadership. Your vote is very important for me as I will do the work of the caucus members. I would also like to be a member of the NEA Concerns Committee for Tennessee, which gave me the opportunity to learn more about my capacity, helping to interpret new business items for our state caucus.

Randall Woodward -
Fetch a book!
Unleash your brain!

Read Across Tennessee
Monday, March 2, 2020

FOR MORE CLASSROOM MATERIALS GO TO TEATEACHERS.ORG
You deserve to celebrate life, without the looming stress of student debt. Get a fresh start with NEA Member Benefits. You'll have access to tools made to help members repay student loans, and resources to help navigate the forgiveness process. Which means you can focus on what's ahead.

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YOU DESERVE MORE
Including a clean break
Any teacher who meets all of the following requirements, is eligible for tenure:

- Has a degree from an approved four-year college or any career and technical teacher who has the equivalent amount of training established and licensed by the state board of education;
- Holds a valid teacher license, issued by the state board of education, based on training covering the subjects or grades taught;
- Has completed a probationary period of five (5) school years or not less than forty-five (45) months within the last seven-year period, the last two (2) years of which were employed in a regular teaching position rather than an interim teaching position;
- Has received evaluations demonstrating a overall performance effectiveness level of “above expectations” or “significantly above expectations” as provided by the evaluation guidelines adopted by the state board of education pursuant to § 49-1-302, during the last two (2) years of probationary period, provided, however, that a teacher who has met all other requirements for tenure eligibility but has not acquired an official evaluation score during the last one (1) or two (2) years of the probationary period due to an approved extended leave; transfer to another school or position within the school district; or invalidated data due to a successful local level evaluation grievance pursuant to § 49-20-20(2)(A)(B) may utilize the most recent two (2) years of available evaluation scores achieved during the probationary period to meet the provisions of this subdivision (4);

Is reemployed by the district for schools of service after the probationary period.


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