

## WHO WE ARE

PSEA is a member-driven organization. Our members - a diverse community of educators and other professionals – are committed to promoting, protecting, and advocating for our schools, students, and our profession. Such a commitment requires ongoing reflection, growth, learning, and constant change for every member within our union.

As educators and support professionals, we aspire to be role models - not just in education, but in leadership and human engagement.

As union members, we recognize that part of our professional craft is setting an example of valuing all people we serve, thus promoting human and labor rights.

PSEA's strength is rooted in our members, our values and beliefs, and our shared passion for ensuring all students have equitable opportunities to succeed. As the largest public-sector union in the Commonwealth and a leader in shaping education policy, we have a responsibility to use our collective power for effecting racial and social justice within our sphere of influence.

## WHAT DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION MEAN TO US

Defining what these terms mean for PSEA helps center our work and keep us accountable to it. It provides the foundation for establishing opportunities and dismantling barriers to living our vision as an *informed, engaged, inclusive and collaborative union that is the leading voice for education and labor* in Pennsylvania.

**Diversity in PSEA** means PSEA will be intentional in its efforts to ensure a variety of social and cultural identities are represented in all our spaces – including leadership, membership, and PSEA staffing. PSEA will take action to expand representation from historically underrepresented people in the union and the education profession to ensure a multiplicity of experiences and perspectives are incorporated into PSEA's decision-making.

**Equity in PSEA** means PSEA will promote justice and fairness within the procedures, processes, priorities, and resources of our organization. This requires understanding the root causes of the disparities, based on race or other identities that have faced oppression, within our union and public education as a whole. PSEA commits to identifying and dismantling the systems in our organization that reinforce disparate outcomes. We also commit to creating and providing opportunities for systemic change in our union – including engaging in the difficult but necessary discussions and actions to practice and live our value of equity.

**Inclusion in PSEA** means PSEA will be intentional in creating welcoming and respectful environments in all PSEA spaces. Welcoming and respectful environments embrace differences and foster the full engagement of members representing diverse identities. To effectuate this change, PSEA will be transparent in its efforts to increase accessibility, with a

focus on groups that have been historically underrepresented at all levels of our union and in our communities.

## WHY DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION ARE ESSENTIAL

Authentically engaging in the work for diversity, equity and inclusion is not ancillary or optional; it is essential. PSEA members are living in unprecedented times and facing historic challenges. The ability of our union to meet these challenges, both in the immediate and long-term, requires an unwavering commitment by PSEA to bold and collective action, rooted in solutions developed with our members most directly and disparately impacted.

Acknowledging and respecting our individual experiences and social identities is essential in the fight for racial, social, and economic justice. Simply put, if the voices and lived experiences of all PSEA members, particularly those that have been historically underrepresented, are not clearly reflected in PSEA's decision-making processes and leadership roles then we are not advancing our vision with integrity.

Systemic racism and discrimination are unconsciously and consciously rooted into our society's institutions, policies, and practices. PSEA is not immune from this reality. We acknowledge we have a responsibility to analyze and change the role we have in perpetuating these inequitable structures, beginning with our own policies and practices.

## HOW WE WILL APPROACH THIS ESSENTIAL WORK

**Courage Over Comfort:** Integrity, a core PSEA value, and courage are inextricably linked. Courage is doing what needs to be done, even when there are risks. Integrity is a commitment to doing the right thing, even when it is not easy. To live our values and not simply profess them, PSEA and its members must practice *Courage over Comfort*. It takes courage to look inward; to discuss and address biases within ourselves, our association, and communities. This work is challenging and comes with strong emotions that make us uncomfortable. Choose courage.

**Respect and Empathetic Listening:** A fundamental building block for ensuring PSEA's core value of respect in our association and in our workplaces is listening. But not just any listening – *we need empathetic listening*. Empathetic listening is not about finding agreement or a solution in the moment. It is about creating the space for each of us to respectfully express our thoughts and emotions without judgment. It requires compassion, for ourselves and for the speaker, and an open mind that isn't focused on listening "just enough" until we can speak to advance our own "agenda". Empathetic listening is about finding a connection with the other person by truly *seeing* and *hearing* them, even if you do not agree with what is being said.

**Fostering Personal and Professional Growth and Learning:** PSEA commits to providing high-quality learning and supports for our members' personal and professional growth. Learning

opportunities will focus on building the essential skills, knowledge, capacity, and social-emotional competencies our members need to advance equity within the union and within their own educational environments. Supporting our members in this way can help increase awareness of our own implicit biases, assumptions we may need to challenge, and reflection on how these impact interactions with colleagues and students.

PSEA also commits to cultivating safer spaces for our Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) members and the LGBTQ+community. This includes building a culture of trust, with continuous efforts for embracing hard, honest conversations about racism and discrimination in all PSEA spaces with opportunities for honest dialogue and empathetic listening. The hope is to build a deeper understanding and compassion to fight these challenges united.

**Advocate for Transformational Change in our schools:** PSEA is committed to an organizational culture that understands the historic roots of structural racism and its legacy of injustice. We commit to actively and continuously educating our members on the necessity of full inclusion and honest reflection on those efforts. While training and professional learning is essential, ultimately, we seek to recruit BIPOC educators and staff which starts with our own students and college students. Recruitment works hand in hand with creating an environment in which people, of diverse backgrounds, are accepted and respected. We want more educators that look like our BIPOC students. We want our students to see themselves better reflected in their school staff.

**Choose Courage over Comfort. We challenge everyone:**

**Create an Impact  
Create fairer systems  
Interrupt inequity**

## **HOLDING OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE**

Implementing this work requires PSEA's ongoing commitment to embed equity in all aspects of our organization: communications, professional development, bargaining, advocacy, and recruitment. PSEA must create a roadmap of what we need to continue to do, stop doing, or change to create a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within PSEA. There is no "end" to this work; it demands continuous and consistent action, evaluation, reflection, and change if it is to be genuinely and authentically incorporated into PSEA's culture.

**But the hard truth is this:** If PSEA does not implement this work with urgency and ongoing commitment, then we have failed in our responsibility to advance equity and racial and social justice.