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We need to educate ourselves, our members, and our communities about the role of Taxes and Economic development policies for the Funding of public schools. In our NEA circle, this has come to be known as TEF.

The majority of revenue for public schools comes from the state and local levels. As a result, each state must look at their tax policies and economic development policies in order to assess how to best fund public schools and other tax-based services. While corporations may have many tax attorneys and lobbyists working to lessen what they call the tax “burden,” we as professional educators must learn enough to know how to advocate for a system in which everyone pays their fair share. This is critical in order to meet our tax “responsibility” in ways that promote the public welfare and serve as investments in our future and the future of our children—and move us closer to creating great public schools for every student.

Representatives from state and local NEA affiliates requested some basic lessons on TEF to help them inform members and the general public. These eight interactive lessons are designed specifically for that purpose. This product uses all the best strategies for adult learning in one-hour, non-sequential segments. Affiliates may pick the lessons that meet their needs and tailor them accordingly. It is designed with the flexibility for states and locals to add relevant information for their advocacy efforts directly to the material. And because it is available online, it allows us to change the product as the times change.

It is our desire that state and local affiliates will use this tool to help rally members and the general public around a shared goal of building stronger public schools and stronger communities. Together, we can build a fair and equitable tax system, a level economic development playing field for business, and adequate and equitable funding for public schools. These three pillars of the American Dream are inseparable from one another.

We are proud to offer this tool through the partnership of NEA New Products and Programs, Research, and Field Operations. Let’s build a better system for all students and communities with the TEF Lessons and improved education and advocacy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Van Roekel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis Van Roekel  
President