



National Marine Educators Association

Lindsay Patterson

NMEA Past-President

*Equity & Belonging Committee
Member*



National Marine Educators Association

Our Mission

*To make known the world of water,
both fresh and salt*



1976

NMEA was founded in 1976 in Pacific Grove, California.

700 +

Formal, Informal, and Non-formal Educators

We're a diverse community of educators working together to improve the public's awareness and appreciation for marine and freshwater resources.

1985

NMEA's Current Organization was incorporated in 1985.

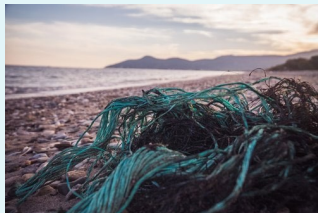
300+

Different Organizations

- Government agencies
- Non-profit organizations
- Science & Research Entities
- Aquariums, Museums, Science Centers

NMEA Initiatives

CONSERVATION



We strive to research, verify and share information to NMEA membership and its audiences in order to provide tools to make informed "blue-green" decisions.

OCEAN LITERACY



This initiative aims to build ocean literacy among children, youth, and adults locally and globally through formal and informal education.

INTERNATIONAL MARINE EDUCATION



The U.S. NMEA International Committee supports increasing global participation in marine education and the promotion of ocean literacy around the world.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



We support the engagement of NMEA student members by creating opportunities for middle, high school, and college students to learn more about marine education and engage with professionals in the field.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION



We are working to increase the number of members who represent and/or educate underrepresented population and non-U.S. audiences.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE



We promote recognition, understanding and respect of traditional knowledge and rights as it relates to marine resources and ecosystems.

Equity & Belonging Committee



Looking back to go *forward*



2019

2020

2021-
2023

2024

Ad Hoc Committee Formed

Inspired by conversations at the annual conference in Durham, NH

One task

Write a diversity, equity, & inclusion [position statement and action plan](#).



Equity & Belonging Committee Established

1. Advise NMEA committees on discrete tasks
2. Implemented a Conversation Series to engage members in courageous conversations
3. Begin building connections with equity-oriented aquatic education organizations

2024 and Beyond

1. Continue advisory role with NMEA Leadership
2. Provide input to NMEA Strategic Plan
3. Revisit the 3 initiatives
4. Actively engage and build relationships with equity-oriented organizations

3 Action Pathways

Pathway 1. *Enable NMEA to make systemic changes towards equality and justice within the organization and across the field.*

Pathway 2. *Cultivate NMEA to be a place where all people feel they belong.*

Pathway 3. *Position NMEA as a co-conspirator with local, regional, and national efforts working towards environmental and educational justice in marine and aquatic science.*

Equity & Belonging Committee Community Initiative

The Community Initiative's work is centered on the driving question: **“How can we cultivate NMEA to be a place where all people feel they belong?”** At the outset, the ad hoc [Diversity Equity and Inclusion] Committee did not have a clear line sight about who NMEA served and what their feelings were about their membership.

After months of discussion the Committee agreed that “sense of belonging” meant when the conditions and climate were ideal members *feel welcomed and be accepted for who [they] are, unconditionally. Belonging, or being fully human, means more than having access.* Work in the Community Initiative dovetails with the Membership, Conference and Chapter Committees.

Priority areas:

- **Survey:** What is the composition of the NMEA community?
 - *Who are members? Who's not? Where are they located (geographically & within the organization)? Are their needs being met? How can we support?*
- **Audit:** How are existing practices decentering dominant groups (e.g., whiteness, maleness)?
- **Structure:** What mechanisms can we set up to ensure a habit of reflection & feedback across our organization?

Equity & Belonging Committee

Communications Initiative

The Communications Initiative is to clearly articulate the expectation of the membership body through providing a safe space for dialogue, regular conversations, community partnerships, and sharing instructional strategies. We recognize the use of technology as a form of communication is extremely important as we look to keep up with the ever-evolving 21st Century landscape. Work in the Communications Initiative dovetails with the Comms Pod.

It is imperative that NMEA is a leader in social and racial change and equity to create systemic change in our field. Before we are able to effectively communicate our overall mission and vision to the outside public, we must first have a clear understanding within the organization of what it means to be diverse, provide equity, and embrace inclusivity.

Priority Areas:

- **Social Events:** Virtual Happy Hours and Creation of Affinity Groups
- **Audit:** How are existing communication practices limiting engagement with diverse audiences?
- **Structure:** What mechanisms can we set up to ensure effective communication in various forms (e.g. email, social media, website)?
 - Uplift and highlight members and organizations with common goal in the current Newsletter and NMEA Website
 - Develop meaningful welcome packets for new members

Equity & Belonging Committee

Conversation Initiative

The Conversation Initiative is an acknowledgement that **it is our responsibility to educate ourselves** in the issues, concepts, and concerns underlying social inequalities and injustices in marine and aquatic sciences and education (and our society). We must be willing to do the work to learn, be teachable, and be critically reflective.

We know there is need for NMEA members to read, discuss, and talk about antiracism, equity, and inclusion in science and society, and how these ideas show up in our work. Our goal is to explore ways for our members to engage in this work, which we know requires us all to be comfortable being uncomfortable and capable of talking with one another about the ideas and issues of inequality, oppression, power, and privilege.

Priority areas:

- **Series:** What are the key ideas and how do they pertain to me, personally & professionally?
 - Facilitated, small group conversation series for members of NMEA. Pilot fall & winter, Expand spring & summer
- **Audit:** How are existing practices preventing/constraining dialogue and ongoing learning?
- **Structure:** What mechanisms can we set up to ensure opportunities for sustained dialogue across groups in NMEA?

NMEA Strategic Plan Focus Areas

OCEAN LITERACY & GREAT LAKES LITERACY

FOCUS AREA 1
MEMBERS & PARTNERS

FOCUS AREA 2
CHAPTERS & COMMITTEES

FOCUS AREA 3
EQUITY, BELONGING & OCEAN JUSTICE

FOCUS AREA 4
FORMAL & INFORMAL EDUCATORS

FOCUS AREA 5
ORG EXCELLENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

FOCUS AREA 6
INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

**Focus areas are not listed in any rank order*

DRAFT

Thank you!

Contact information:

Jacqueline Lewis, NMEA Executive Administrator

nmea@marine-ed.org

Tara Hicks Johnson, NMEA 2024 President

tjohnson@ccomm.unh.edu

Lindsay Patterson, NMEA 2024 Past-President

lpatterson@georgiaaquarium.org

Rae Quadara, NMEA Equity & Belonging Committee Chair

raequadara@gmail.com