

Eastern Region Black Educators' Conference Report

26–27 June 2026 District and Branch Report

I attended the Eastern Region Black Educators' Conference on 26–27 June as a member of the steering group and as a conference panelist. The event brought together Black educators, activists and union representatives from across the region to share experiences, develop leadership and strengthen collective organising.

A particularly positive outcome for our district was the attendance of a first-time Norfolk teacher. They were encouraged to become more involved in the union.

Conference Opening: Representation in Literature

The conference began with a powerful keynote address from **Safiyyah Umar** on **Representation in Literature**. Her presentation explored whose stories are told, whose voices are amplified and the impact representation has on identity, confidence and belonging.

Safiyyah highlighted that representation matters not only within our schools and classrooms, but also in the books, resources and narratives we place before young people. Delegates were encouraged to engage further with her work and support her book *The Crusher*, helping to amplify Black voices in literature and ensuring diverse stories continue to reach our communities. This session reinforced the important message that representation is not simply about numbers; it is about visibility, recognition and creating environments where people feel seen, valued and included.

Keynote Address: "Our Time. Our Voice. Our Leadership."

A keynote address delivered by **Denise, NEU Black Executive Seat Holder**, focused on the progress Black educators have made across the union and the work still required to ensure meaningful representation and equity.

The keynote celebrated the increasing number of Black workplace representatives, learning representatives, health and safety representatives, district officers and activists. Particular attention was given to the growing number of Black members taking on leadership roles within district structures, organising forums and regional bodies.

Denise also highlighted ongoing work to:

- Build stronger networks between Black educators across England and Wales.
- Engage and develop new Black activists.
- Encourage more Black members to become workplace representatives and leaders.
- Represent Black members on the NEU National Executive Committee.
- Represent the NEU on the TUC Race Relations Committee.
- Strengthen member support through casework and equality initiatives.
- Support Qualified Teacher Status recognition routes for teachers from additional countries.

A significant achievement highlighted was the success of the national Black Educators' Conference, bringing together approximately 600 Black educators and demonstrating the strength of Black educator organising, leadership development and solidarity.

The central message throughout was clear:

Representation is not simply about holding a position; it is about using that position to create change.

Issues Raised by Delegates

Several common workplace concerns emerged during discussions, including:

- Poor communication within schools.
- Excessive workload and workplace pressure.
- Workplace bullying.

- Challenges faced by teachers working in core subjects.
- Supply teachers' concerns regarding holiday pay.
- Pension issues.
- Insecure employment.

Delegates also discussed member experiences relating to representation and casework, with concerns raised about delays in communication, lengthy case handling and confidence in managing complex cases, particularly those involving race discrimination.

Recognising Positive Practice

Alongside identifying areas for improvement, delegates highlighted examples of effective member support across the Eastern Region.

These examples showed that strong practice already exists across the region. Delegates agreed that sharing learning and promoting effective approaches will be essential to ensuring consistently high standards of representation and support for all members.

My Contribution

As part of my role at the conference, I participated as a **panelist**, sharing my personal journey of becoming involved in the union. I spoke about the different pathways available to members who wish to become active within the NEU and encouraged delegates to consider taking on representative and leadership roles.

The discussion provided practical insights into union involvement and highlighted the importance of ensuring that Black educators are represented at every level of the organisation.