Rather than focusing on directing curriculum, NEA was primarily concerned with promoting professionalism for teachers. Training and certification were seen by the Association as the best way to achieve this goal - make teachers better at their job, and their value as professionals will be acknowledged.

In 1935, the Educational Policies Commission was created to improve the theories and conduct about education. After WWII, the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards (TEPS) was created with a more explicit purpose of training teachers to get certifications.