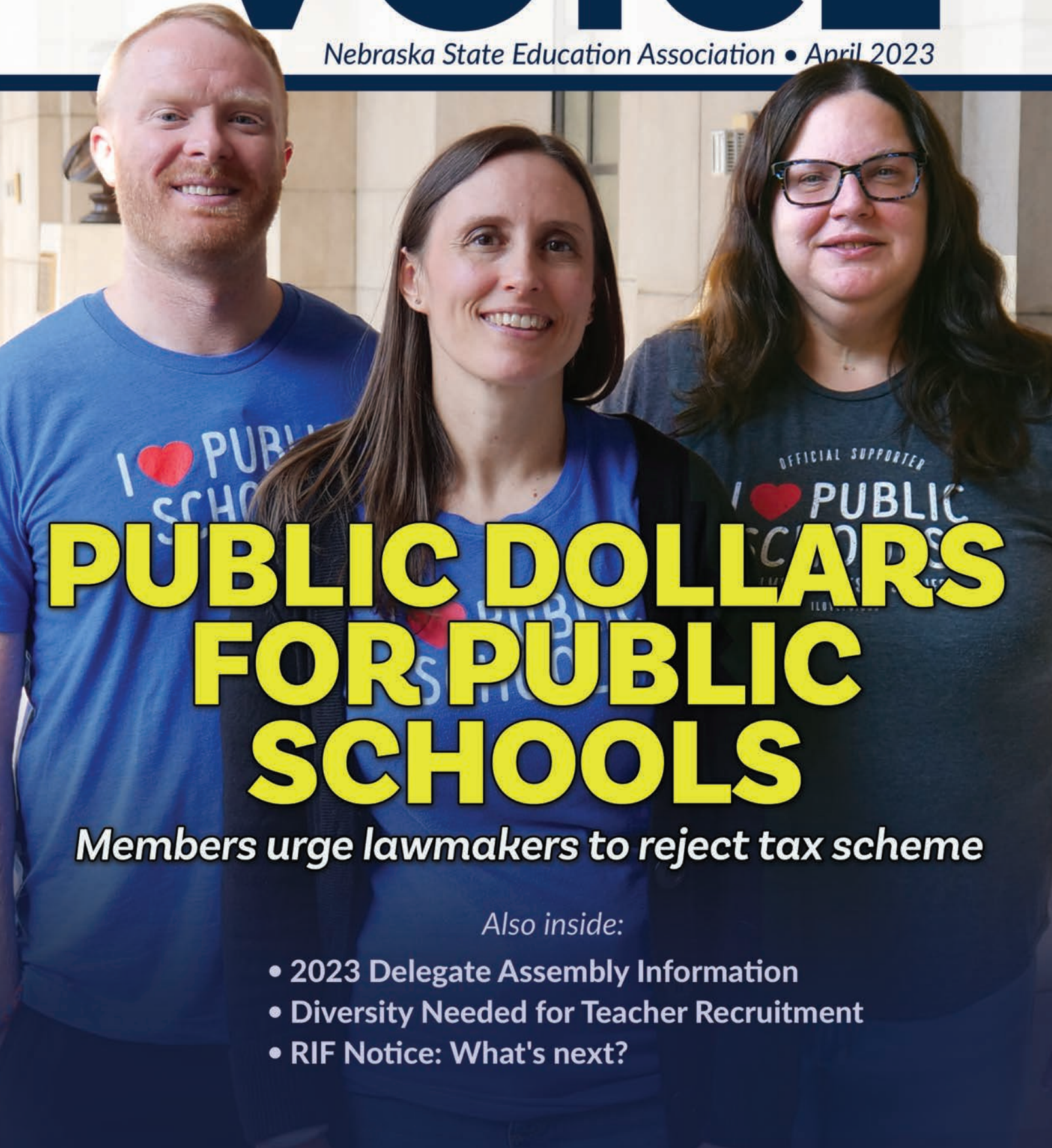


# The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • April 2023



**PUBLIC DOLLARS  
FOR PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS**

***Members urge lawmakers to reject tax scheme***

*Also inside:*

- 2023 Delegate Assembly Information
- Diversity Needed for Teacher Recruitment
- RIF Notice: What's next?

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# TEACHING AG, FEEDING KIDS

## Ag Sack Lunch Program



The 13th Annual Ag Sack Lunch program, designed to increase awareness to fourth-grade students and their families of the importance of agriculture to Nebraska, heads into the spring semester offering presentations to schools across the state.

The in-person version of the program is offered to classes visiting the State Capitol Building in Lincoln as part of their curriculum.

This spring many schools have resumed their Lincoln visits, so in-person reservations are full, according to Karen Brokaw, program coordinator. “While our in-person reservations are full, we encourage teachers to sign up for virtual presentations,” she said. The virtual presentations provide an opportunity to reach students from schools across the state. Teachers can register online for a virtual presentation by visiting [AgSackLunchProgram.com](http://AgSackLunchProgram.com).

For fourth-grade classes that are able to make the trip to Lincoln to visit the State Capitol Building, the program provides free sack lunches for students while they listen to a short presentation about the importance of agriculture in Nebraska. Students also receive fun card games that feature Nebraska agriculture facts to take home to play with their families. The sessions are led by “Ag Ambassadors,” students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agriculture.

Teachers who have had their classes participate in the program, both in-person and virtual, say the presentations are very informative, and their students learned about the importance of agriculture in the state.

The Ag Sack Lunch Program is sponsored by the Nebraska Corn Board; the Nebraska Soybean Board; the Nebraska Pork Producers Association; Nebraska Beef Council; Midwest Dairy; Nebraska Poultry Industries; and Nebraska Wheat Board. For more information, call Brokaw at (402) 432-2299.

## Would You Like to Write for The Voice?

Would you like to write an item for *The Voice*? Perhaps an opinion column or an article on what is working in your classroom? Submissions can be classroom-related, humorous, inspiring or otherwise teaching related. Submit your questions about the process, and your topics to us at:

[thevoice@nsea.org](mailto:thevoice@nsea.org)

**On the Cover:** NSEA members are urging lawmakers to defeat a school voucher scheme that would benefit the wealthy and won't help kids. Members tell lawmakers what students need most to be successful.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JENNI BENSON

## Judgment Reflects Ourselves

**judgment** (noun) 1. the ability to make considered decisions or come to sensible conclusions: "an error of judgment" · "that is not, in my judgment, the end of the matter" 2. an opinion or conclusion: "they make subjective judgments about children's skills"

Every day we make dozens of judgments. Some are based on facts, others are based on opinions. We judge how a person looks, acts and feels. Our judgments are sometimes very personal and caring. They can also be harsh and hurtful.

The Nebraska Legislature has made 820 judgments for what Nebraskans need this year with the introduction of bills. NSEA reads, monitors, and takes positions on nearly 150 of those bills. As an association, we make judgments and decisions based on Association resolutions and the agenda approved by the NSEA Board.

Our valued NSEA members make judgments based on information, opinions, and personal values. Whether it is work-related or personal, we often act on judgments we make.

The bills in the legislature evolve from their original form daily. The bills are introduced during public hearings conducted by legislative committees. NSEA has had dozens of members testify on education-related bills this session; many have been featured in *The Voice*.

This past week, Sen. Vargas introduced LB724 to eliminate the Praxis Core Tests as a requirement for teacher certification. Under the bill, the Praxis Subject Assessment would still be required for certification. The State Board of Education has also proposed changes to Rule 23, which includes the Praxis.

Sometimes the judgments and assumptions I hear during and after testimony can be difficult to process. What I heard during LB724 testimony was no exception. The judgment by non-educators

regarding the ability to pass a standardized test was disheartening.

We are facing a teacher shortage across the nation. Many states have done away with the Praxis Core Test requirement to help get more people into teacher education. NSEA has been working on the elimination of the Praxis Core for a number of years. Last year we made progress to eliminate the Praxis Core Test as a requirement for admission, but, currently, it is still required for certification, as well as the Praxis Subject Assessment.

We know and support numerous current

educators on provisional certificates who have finished their course requirements, have graduated from college, yet still have not passed the Praxis. My daughter Joy was one of those who volunteered to tell senators about her experience with the Praxis Core Test at a hearing in March (See more on page 11). Thanks to Joy's hard work and her amazing tutor, Dr. De Tonack (NSEA-Retired President—who also testified and gave the committee math problems to solve), Joy has one more test to pass.

Here is an excerpt from Joy's testimony: "In 2020, I transferred to UNK to finish my degree. I was finally admitted to the Teacher Education Program last semester—after the elimination of the Praxis Core requirement. I

will student-teach this fall and will graduate in December. However, I still need to pass the writing portion of the Praxis to get my teaching certificate. I currently have a GPA of 3.6. I am a nontraditional student. I am a mom of four children... Currently, I am working part-time in a childcare center, as well as subbing for LPS while finishing school and supporting my family.

My dream and my goal is to be a preschool or kindergarten teacher with Lincoln Public Schools. I love teaching children and my seven years as a Head Start teacher proved that I am and will be an outstanding certificated teacher. I know I am not alone in believing the Praxis tests are an unnecessary barrier to becoming a certificated teacher. No studies indicate that passing the Praxis ensures that teachers can positively impact student learning, nor do these exams predict teacher effectiveness. Sadly, the Praxis is keeping potentially great teachers from finishing Nebraska's Teacher Education Programs. It's exacerbating the teacher shortage—and that is hurting children. Please support LB724 by advancing it to the full Legislature."

I am incredibly proud of Joy for stepping out of her comfort zone to testify. I was also disappointed at the unfair judgments of some that I read in a few media reports following the hearing. There continue to be misguided notions that test scores predict success.

Joy's story is the same story of hundreds of students who struggle with standardized tests of any kind. Scores on a single test should not make or break a student's future. NSEA will continue to advocate and model good judgment to support ALL students.



**COLLEGE**

**Time to Make Plans for Summer Class!**

## Summer Coursework Options Found Inside

Nebraska colleges and universities offer the necessary summer classes to enable teachers to enhance their skill and knowledge base, add endorsements, and to advance on their school district's salary schedule.

What is the best method for determining which courses might best meet your needs? Start by reviewing the informational ads from Nebraska colleges and universities in this issue of *The Voice*.

All of Nebraska's colleges and universities were invited to participate by advertising. Those who chose to advertise offer details about programming, as well as contact details and information.

Let your college or university of choice know that you read about their course offerings in *The Voice*!

## School Retirement Planning Seminars

If you are nearing retirement age, it makes good sense to start considering your retirement benefit options.

To learn about those options, staff from the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems office will offer seminars throughout the spring.

Educators can choose to attend an in-person seminar at one of nine locations across the state or join a virtual webinar.

The seminars are for school plan members and their spouses, age 50

and over. Each eligible employee is entitled to receive leave with pay to attend up to two retirement planning programs (one per fiscal year). The seminars are scheduled at locations across the state. Members must enroll in advance to attend at [npers.ne.gov](http://npers.ne.gov).



In-Person Seminars (Location/Dates)	1/2 Day Webinars
<b>LA VISTA:</b> April 12, April 13, May 23, May 24	April 4
<b>LINCOLN:</b> May 17, May 18	April 5
<b>O'NEILL:</b> April 18	April 25
<b>NORFOLK:</b> April 19	April 26
<b>GRAND ISLAND:</b> May 9	May 25
	June 6
	June 7

**Interested in attending? Members must enroll in advance to attend. Visit [www.npers.ne.gov](http://www.npers.ne.gov) today!**

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# The Need for Awareness, Diversity & Inclusion in Teacher Recruitment

by Beverly Duran

In order to create a learning environment that is inclusive and equitable, diversity and representation in the education sector are essential. Regrettably, there remains an ongoing issue with the underrepresentation of teachers of color in the teaching profession, which continues to have an effect on the academic and social results of children. This is a call to action for all parties involved in education to acknowledge the significance of hiring teachers of color and increasing public awareness of diversity in the sector.

## The Evidence is Clear

Systemic disparities have traditionally afflicted the American educational system, especially with regard to children of color. According to research, students of color experience considerable difficulties in the educational system, such as academic gaps, discrepancies in discipline, and high dropout rates. Likewise, when taught by teachers of the same race or ethnicity, pupils of color are more likely to achieve academically and socially. Despite this apparent evidence, the majority of teachers in the United States are still white, with teachers of color making up only a small percentage of the workforce.

It is crucial to hire teachers of color in the education industry for a number of reasons. First, regardless of

a student's race or ethnicity, teachers of color can offer special perspectives on culturally sensitive teaching techniques that can be beneficial to all students. They could contribute various viewpoints and experiences that could aid in dispelling preconceptions and fostering a supportive learning atmosphere where all students feel valued and appreciated.

Also, teachers of color can act as positive role models for students, particularly those from backgrounds that are underrepresented. A sense of belonging and academic success can be fostered and promoted by having teachers who are from the same racial or ethnic origin as their students. We can also fight prejudice and stereotypes that exist in the educational system and foster a more inclusive learning environment by increasing the number of teachers of color.

But, hiring teachers of color is only the first step in transforming education into a more diverse and inclusive sector. It is also crucial to increasing understanding of diversity and inclusion among all parties involved in education, such as administrators, decision-makers, and teachers. This may entail offering ongoing training and chances for professional growth that concentrate on cultural competence, anti-bias education, and techniques for engaging with various student populations.

## Inclusive Education

Also, schools can place a high priority on fostering an inclusive and diverse culture that motivates teachers of color to seek positions and stay in the field. This can involve fostering a friendly and encouraging work atmosphere, giving competitive pay and benefits, and offering chances for professional progression. We can recruit and keep teachers of color and develop a more diverse teaching workforce by fostering an inclusive culture.

There are structural impediments present in the educational system that make it difficult to attract and keep teachers of color. The lack of resources and access to high-quality education for minority kids is one of the biggest obstacles. More opportunities for students of color to pursue teaching jobs must be made available by the educational system in order to address this problem. This could entail collaborating with historically black institutions and universities, awarding grants and scholarships to minority students interested in teaching, and setting up mentorship programs for brand-new teachers of color.

The systemic prejudices in the educational system, notably in the recruiting and promotion procedures, are another obstacle. According to research, unconscious bias can affect the hiring and selection of teachers of color which results in a lack of diversity in the teaching profession. Schools and districts must develop inclusive and equitable recruiting processes, such as blind resume reviews, diverse hiring committees, and focused outreach to underrepresented communities, to solve this problem.

## A Diverse Workforce

Finally, it is essential to recognize the benefits of having a diverse teaching workforce. When teachers of color feel valued and supported in their jobs, they are more likely to stay in the profession and positively impact the education of their students. Having diverse teachers in schools can improve academic outcomes for students of color, increase cultural competence among all students, and create a more equitable education system. By prioritizing diversity and inclusion in the education field, we can create a brighter future for all students.



# Online

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**Voices at the Capitol:** Wes Jensen, Christian Schuerman, Courtney Gerdes, Kathy Poehling and AJ Bowen.

# PUBLIC DOLLARS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

## Members urge lawmakers to reject private/religious school tax scheme

During committee hearing testimony on a tax scheme outlined in LB753, Governor Jim Pillen said the quiet part out loud.

“We all agree we don't want Iowa to beat us... Yet Iowa just committed \$345 million a year to their budget to help support private schools. This [LB 753] is a step and I believe it's a really important step.”

It's a fact the Governor – perhaps inadvertently – made clear: LB753 is only the first step in moving towards a massive, multi-million dollar voucher system in Nebraska. The bill would let corporations and the wealthy avoid paying up to 50% of their income taxes while reducing revenue to the state's general fund by millions of dollars, dollars that are needed to support Nebraska's public schools and other essential public services. Under LB753, public funds would be diverted to private and parochial schools, including those that discriminate against children and their families. In other states, vouchers have proven to be enormously expensive and ineffective.

As public schools grapple with an increased need for student support and chronic underfunding, NSEA members have continued the fight to keep public dollars from being siphoned away from public schools and given to private schools.

### Public Funds and Opportunity

Wes Jensen is in his 15th year of teaching and his fourth year within the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) District. Jensen currently teaches at the Secondary Success Program (SSP), which serves as the middle school alternative program for OPS.

“When I hear the word opportunity, I don't think of private schools. For many of my students who haven't done well in a traditional public school classroom, SSP is an opportunity. With the structure

we provide—behaviorally, socially, academically, and emotionally—they do well. A big reason SSP students are so successful is our small class sizes. I can only wonder what kind of opportunities we could create for all Nebraska students if the funding was there to provide smaller classes for everyone,” said Jensen. “It's not going to happen if the state is planning to take \$25 million plus away from public schools.”

### Students and Families

Kathy Poehling is Vice President of Advocacy of the Omaha Education Association and currently teaches fifth grade at Castelar Elementary School. Poehling says Castelar has one of the highest student populations of English language learners (ELL) within OPS.

“Success looks different for every student. When I think about

**“I can only wonder what kind of opportunities we could create for all Nebraska students if the funding was there to provide smaller classes for everyone.”**

**— Wes Jensen  
Omaha Education Assoc.**

my students, I think about the opportunity that my students have that their parents never had. Many of the parents I work with don't read or write English. Some of them have had only a few years of schooling. These are not parents who are going to fill out a private school application for their child," said Poehling.

**Private Schools and Discrimination**

Private schools can choose to accept or reject any student, and many have long waiting lists and only admit top students. Private schools can discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, citizen status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or special education status.

Courtney Gerdes, an early childhood special education teacher, has seen the selection process of private schools firsthand.

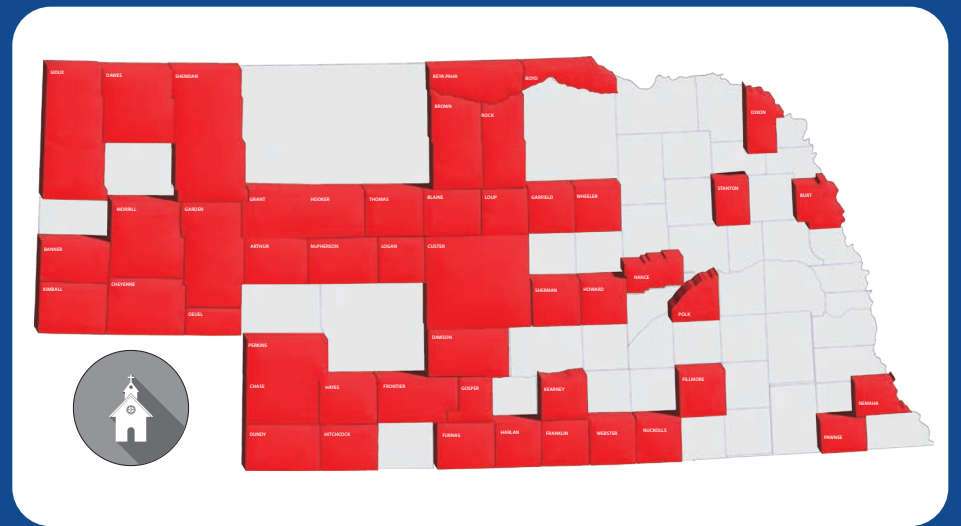
"I have seen private schools refuse to take some of the students I have served. We have had parents who try to enroll their students in a private school's kindergarten class and these private schools will interrogate our staff on how much Special Education support the student will need," explained Gerdes. "Some parents I know have found that the private school has accepted an older sibling but then won't accept their younger child because of the student's special education status."

**The Need to Address PK-12 Staffing**

Tax dollars that would be siphoned away to pay for this scheme would otherwise be available to help fund Nebraska's public schools and other state priorities like public health and safety. Nebraska already consistently ranks 49th in the nation for state support of K-12 education and, as a result, has some of the highest property taxes in the country. Jensen, Poehling and Gerdes all agree that lawmakers must prioritize fully staffing and funding the K-12 schools by investing more state funding in public education.

"Due to staffing, I've seen schools 'mainstream' some students who would normally be in a self-contained classroom for one-on-one instruction. Since those classrooms have been

**There are NO PRIVATE SCHOOLS in more than half of Nebraska's Counties**



**Get the Facts**

**48**

of Nebraska's 93 counties do not have a private or parochial School

**300K**

For the 2023 school year, there are 1,015 public schools serving more than 329,219 students, and 210 private schools serving 36, 656 students in Nebraska.

**84%**

of private schools in Nebraska are religiously affiliated

**NOTE: Many counties with private schools offer only elementary level, no high school grades.**

[www.bit.ly/NESchoolStats](http://www.bit.ly/NESchoolStats) • [www.bit.ly/NEPrivateSchools](http://www.bit.ly/NEPrivateSchools) • <https://educdirsrc.education.ne.gov/CustomC.aspx>

shut down because of staffing those students are placed in regular classrooms with 20 other students. It causes disruptions in learning but also classroom safety issues for students and teachers," explained Poehling. "That's not just a money problem, it's a people problem. But we need money to pay our paraeducators more, we need to make sure all educators are making a living wage so it's still a profession people want to enter."

For his part, Jensen urged legislators

to prioritize fully staffing and funding the PK-12 schools that serve the majority of Nebraska children.

"Public schools are the ones stepping up to provide opportunities for families," he said. "Public education and public educators are making sure that the majority of Nebraska kids have a safe space to grow and develop in their learning environment. Taxpayers should not be asked to support two school systems."



# DINE AND DISCUSS: Talking education with the Senators

NSEA members met with 11 state senators and four state board of education members at the 2023 NSEA Legislative Dinner in Lincoln. The event gives educators a chance to voice their concerns with their elected leaders on many issues affecting public education in Nebraska. Below are scenes from that evening.



**From left to right:** OEA member Faith Johnson, Senator Justin Wayne (Dist. 13) and OEA-Retired member Tamara Bailey with Sen. Terrell McKinney (Dist. 11).



**Senator George Dungan (Dist.26) with LEA-Retired member Rita Bennett.**



**From left to right:** Neb. Board of Education member Deb Neary, OEA member Wes Jensen, NSEA Executive Director Trish Guinan, Sen. Lynne Walz (Dist. 15) and Elkhorn EA member Jordan Burns.



**From left to right:** NEA Directors Edward Ventura Jr. and Linda Freye with NSEA President Jenni Benson and NSEA Vice President Robert Miller.



**From left to right:** NSEA-Retired member Pat Shepard, Neb. Board of Education member Lisa Fricke and NSEA-Retired member Margie Nowak.



**From left to right:** Sen. Mike Jacobson (Dist. 42) with his wife Julie, NSEA Organizational Specialist Kristen Sedlacek, Sen. John Lowe (Dist. 37), Kearney EA members Kevin Witte and JD Carson.



# LEGISLATURE

## VOICES IN EDUCATION: NSEA members testify before lawmakers

### NOT IN NEBRASKA

In March, state legislators gave first-round approval to **LB753**, a school privatization bill – but this battle is far from over! The NSEA strongly opposes this tax scheme that would divert public dollars to pay for private school tuition. By working together, we can still stop this bill from becoming law. Sign the petition and email your senator to oppose LB753 at: [www.notinnebraska.com](http://www.notinnebraska.com).

The tax scheme in LB753 is terrible public policy that would harm Nebraska’s public schools and students. Research shows this type of private school tax scheme harms student achievement, lacks accountability, invites corruption and waste, promotes discrimination, exacerbates segregation, and fails to protect students with disabilities. Nebraskans are opposed to giving public dollars to private schools – they have rejected public funds for private schools at the ballot box on three separate occasions.

This bill is not about scholarships or helping children out of poverty. It is about circumventing the Nebraska State Constitution and defunding public schools. LB753 allows corporations and taxpayers to take 50% of their state income tax liability and divert it to a “scholarship



**Voices in Education:** Loup County Education Association member and 2020 Neb. Teacher of the Year Megan Helberg testified in support of LB679, which would ensure that teachers can receive the quality resources they need to teach about genocide and the Holocaust.

granting organization (SGO)” which in turn would use those tax dollars to pay K-12 private school tuition. The Nebraska Constitution Art. VII, Sec. 11 is clear that public funds shall not be used to fund private schools.

The bill will be scheduled for Select File soon. Continue to contact senators and urge them to oppose this bill.

### SCHOOL SAFETY TASK FORCE

**LB516**, introduced by Sen. Lynne Walz of Fremont, would implement recommendations from the state’s School Safety Task Force. The task force was chaired by Walz and former Nebraska Commissioner of Education Dr. Matt Bloomstedt and was comprised of a variety of education stakeholders from across the state that included state officials, city officials, school board members, school administrators, school security personnel, school nurses, and educators. They reviewed current school safety, security, and preparedness practices and identified areas to update necessary infrastructure and best practices to keep schools safe.

Key areas that were identified to help support schools across the state included creating regional



**On the Front Lines:** NSEA President Jenni Benson spoke in support of LB792 in March. The bill would appropriate \$25 million in general funds to create pilot programs to address PTSD. Benson testified that educators are on the front lines of kids experiencing trauma.



**School Safety Task Force: NSEA Organizational Specialist Jason Wiese testified in support of LB516, which would implement recommendations from the state’s School Safety Task Force. Wiese served on the task force alongside state officials, city officials, school security personnel, school nurses and educators.**

security specialists, funding for security infrastructure projects, and funding for mental health practitioners and school psychologists. The Task Force’s legislative recommendations are:

- Hiring a regional specialist in the northeast, southeast, central and western regions of the state to provide tailored support and increased training;
- Appropriating general funds to support the Safe2HelpNE anonymous reporting hotline once federal funding ends in 2024;
- Creating a \$15 million grant program related to security infrastructure such as surveillance equipment, door-locking systems or double-entry doors; and
- Establishing a \$5 million grant program so local health departments or educational service units could hire mental health practitioners or school psychologists.

By creating regionally focused security specialists to assist schools, security measures can be consistent across the state while ensuring technical support for the unique regions of the state is met for both urban and rural schools. By creating security specialist positions in coordination with the Nebraska Department of Education, we can establish security continuity for school districts throughout the state. By providing a grant program for security infrastructure, all schools will have the opportunity to provide quality safety devices such as

security cameras and self-locking doors that are proven to help create safe schools.

Finally, by providing funding via grants to schools for mental health practitioners or school psychologists, schools will be able to provide the much-needed mental health care we know our students desire and need. Research shows mentally healthy students are more likely to go to school ready to learn, actively engage in school activities, have a supportive and caring connection with adults and peers, use appropriate problem-solving strategies, have nonaggressive behaviors, and add to a positive school culture.

### **ADDRESSING THE TEACHER SHORTAGE**

**LB724**, introduced by Sen. Tony Vargas, would eliminate certain basic skill and content test requirements for eligibility for teaching certificates. Many states have done away with the Praxis Core Test requirement to combat the teacher shortage and to help get more students into teacher education. NSEA has been working to eliminate the Praxis Core Test requirement for a number of years as the tests create an unnecessary barrier to becoming a certified teacher. No studies indicate that passing the Praxis Core Test ensures that teachers can positively impact student learning, nor do these exams predict teacher effectiveness.



**Teacher Shortage: NSEA-Retired President De Tonack and NSEA Aspiring Educators member Joy Absalon testified in support of LB724. The bill would eliminate certain basic skill and content test requirements for eligibility for teaching certificates. During her testimony, Tonack tested lawmakers’ math skills by challenging them to solve a Praxis Core math question in the committee hearing.**

## FOCUSED ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

A bill heard in the Education Committee this week, **LB518**, would help address educational achievement gaps throughout the state by targeting increased state funding to students who may need extra support. The bill creates the Reducing Education Risk Factors and Property Tax Relief Aid Trust Fund under the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA). Every year beginning in 2023, the Department of Revenue would certify to the State Treasurer the amount of credits that remain unclaimed under the Nebraska Property Tax Incentive Act for the tax year completed two years prior. That amount would then be transferred from the General Fund to this new trust fund.

Students not working at academic grade level, those with a high rate of absenteeism, repeated suspensions or expulsions, who have been identified as English Language Learners or who have been identified as students with characteristics of dyslexia would be able to receive additional services through the fund. Funding to school districts would be based on the number of free lunch students within a district and on the number of students residing in sparse and very sparse school districts.



**Retirement:** NSEA Director of Government Relations Jason Hayes testified in support of LB198, which would allow school employees, who desire to leave full-time employment but not retire, to return to work with a school plan employer in some other capacity such as a substitute teacher, a volunteer, or a temporary employee without the 180-day limitation.

The NSEA supports creating the Reducing Education Risk Factors and Property Tax Relief Act. Increased funding to schools has been shown to boost student outcomes and, in turn, increase future wages. This proposal will allow schools to better serve their students, allowing them the flexibility to provide those services best suited to each student's need.

**LB518** provides that the State Board of Education would work with all Nebraska school districts to implement programs and interventions to improve school attendance, academic progress, graduation rates, and most importantly, the pursuit of post-secondary education and career advancement. Helping school districts promote that life-long learning mentality to be successful for every student across the state is imperative in retaining our students and having them stay to work and raise a family in Nebraska.



**LB610:** Bellevue Education Association member Stephen Johnston testified in support of LB610 which would appropriate funding for each of the next two years to school districts for their Career and Technical Education programs. Johnston has been a public school Industrial Tech teacher for the past 28 years.

## LEGISLATIVE DAY OF ACTION

NSEA members spent part of their spring break working on behalf of their students and public education. Members lobbied lawmakers on March 14 as part of the annual Legislative Day of Action. Members spoke with lawmakers about bills that would affect students. (Photo on page 13.)

## VOICES FOR EDUCATION

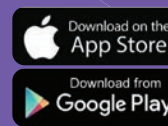
Public hearings on proposed bills have featured NSEA members and staff as they share information and stories with the goal of supporting Nebraska public schools, students and educators. NSEA will continue to meet with senators as the Legislature begins its full day debate schedule. If you or someone you know is interested in providing information to senators on pending legislation, please contact NSEA Government Relations Associate Cathy Schapmann at [cathy.schapmann@nsea.org](mailto:cathy.schapmann@nsea.org) or by calling (402) 475-7611.

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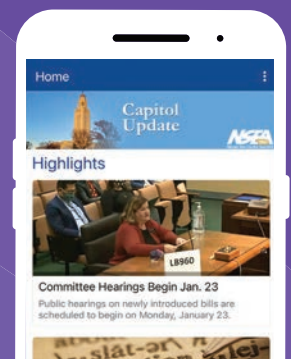
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Search NSEA Capitol Update





**Public Funds and Discrimination:** NSEA Director of Advocacy Isau Metes testified in support of LB487, which would prohibit any school in Nebraska to receive public funds if it discriminates. NSEA values equal access to a quality education that is adequately and equitably funded.



**Voices in Higher Ed:** Chadron State College Assistant Professor Dr. Chris McCarthy testified in support of LB159 to Adopt the Fostering Independence Higher Education Grant Act. The bill would provide educational support for foster youth in Neb. through scholarships and financial aid.



**Voices at the Capitol:** (Front Row, Left to Right): Andrew Hillmer, Courtney Gerdes, Wes Jensen, Kathy Poehling, AJ Bowen, Walta Sue Dodd and Amanda Kloke. (Back Row, Left to Right): Christian Schuerman, Joe Higgins, Dave Richardson, Mike Kmiecik, Rod Karr and Terri Childers.

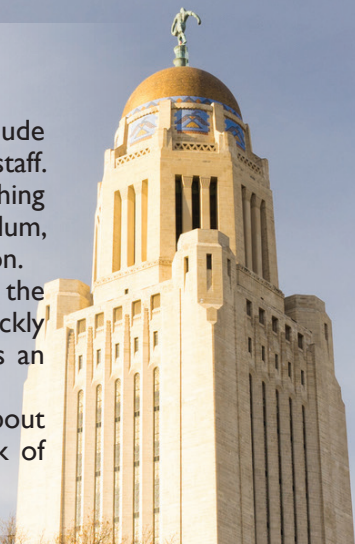
## What's going on in the legislature?

Nebraska's 108th Legislature convened on January 4, 2023. The 90-day session will include consideration of a wide range of bills that would affect Nebraska public schools, students and staff.

Every decision made regarding education is a political decision. How you receive your teaching certificate, the standards you teach to, the number of students in your classroom, your curriculum, the resources you can access, and the amount on your paycheck are all tied to legislative action.

The NSEA's Government Relations team monitors legislative activities and advocates for the best interests of our members, students and public education. Legislative bills change quickly throughout the session, and NSEA works to keep you in the loop about how your job as an educator or education support professional may be affected.

Stay up-to-date with legislative decisions that affect public education. Receive updates about legislative activity in NSEA's Capitol Update, sent to your personal email inbox each week of the legislative session. Subscribe to the Capitol Update at [www.nsea.org/subscriber](http://www.nsea.org/subscriber).





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CSC has also designated an individual to coordinate the college's efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Inquiries regarding Title IX may be directed to: Title IX Coordinator, Chadron State College, 1000 Main St. Chadron, NE 69337, Telephone: 308-430-0980, Email: [titleixcoordinator@csc.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@csc.edu).

# Those who *lead*, learn at Doane



**Marco Pedroza,**  
'12E, '14E, '21DE,  
principal at Scott  
Middle School

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what it is to be a  
servant leader."

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School principals  
are Doane  
graduates



**Charity Iromuanya**  
'22E, counselor at  
Lincoln Northeast  
High School,  
earned her Master  
of Education in  
School Counseling.



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core to me is being  
selfless and helping  
others. Having this  
master's allows me  
to continue fulfilling  
that purpose."



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EMPOWER.  
TRANSFORM.**







# 2023 Spring Delegate Assembly

**TENTATIVE ORDER OF BUSINESS**  
**NSEA President Jenni Benson, Lincoln, Presiding**  
**Grand Ballroom • Cornhusker Marriott Hotel, Lincoln**

All times listed are Central Time.

**Friday, April 28: Registration, Vendors and Special Meetings (5 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.)**

## FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2023

**5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.** — EMAC, NSEA-Retired, Higher Ed, ESP, and New Delegates Sessions

**6:15 p.m.** — Audit Committee

**7 p.m.** — Call to Order

- Presentation of the Colors, Central High School's JROTC
- Pledge of Allegiance
- National Anthem: Stephanie Wright, NSEA-Aspiring Educators President
- Report of Credentials Committee
- Adoption of Standing/Procedural Rules
- Adoption of Order of Business
- Keynote: Renee Jones, 2023 Nebraska Teacher of the Year
- State of the Association Annual Report: Jenni Benson, President and Trish Guinan, Executive Director
- Adjournment: Marriott Cornhusker Hotel Reception, Hotel Atrium

## SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 2023

**6:30 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.** — Breakfast: Cornhusker Marriott Lower Lobby

**7:30 a.m.** — Elections Committee

**8:30 a.m.** — Call to Order

- Legislative Update
- RED for ED Rally at the Nebraska Capitol
- NEA Director Candidates' Remarks
- Report and Debate on Proposed Bylaws Amendments
- Voting on Candidates and Bylaws
- Report of the Auditing Review Committee
- Horace Mann Awards Luncheon
- Budget Presentation for 2023-2024
- Elections Committee Report (when available)
- Report and Actions on Resolutions
- Committee Reports to the Assembly
- Action on New Business Items
- Action on the Dues Proposal for 2023-2024
- Adjournment

Parliamentarian: John Heineman

# 2023-24 Dues Recommendation

## NSEA Active, Certificated Full-Time Staff Dues Summary

The NSEA Budget Committee has recommended a \$6 dues increase for 2023-24. NSEA dues and assessments for the current year and the proposal for next year are summarized below:

	2022-23	2023-24	Change	%
General Fund Dues	\$401	\$407	\$6	1.5%
Ballot Contingency Fund	\$10	\$10	\$0	0%
State PAC	\$15	\$15	\$0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$426</b>	<b>\$432</b>	<b>\$6</b>	<b>1.41%</b>

## Dues for Educational Support Professionals

The 2001 Delegate Assembly approved a separate dues structure for Educational Support Professionals (ESP). The action created four levels of dues for ESP members, and the NSEA Board of Directors modified the ESP dues structure to a six-tiered structure. The ESP dues structure is motivated by an effort to establish equity between the wide range of ESP salaries, while taking into consideration the fact that beginning teachers or teachers in lower-paid school districts pay full NSEA dues. In this model, the ESP member's total base salary, regardless of the hours or number of days worked, establishes the state dues for that member. The percentages are based on the lowest starting teacher salary in the state, which was \$35,200 in 2023-24. The 2023-24 proposed dues are summarized below:

ESP Dues Tier	NSEA Dues	% of teacher dues
Active ESP (Salary of \$35,200+)	\$432.00	100%
Active ESP (\$28,160 to \$35,199)	\$388.80	90%
Active ESP (\$21,120 to \$28,159)	\$302.40	70%
Active ESP (\$14,080 to \$21,119)	\$216.00	50%
Active ESP (\$7,040 to \$14,079)	\$129.60	30%
Active ESP (\$7,039 or less)	\$43.20	10%

## Dues for Certificated Staff

The NSEA Board of Directors has recommended the following annual fee structure for Association membership by certificated staff. Delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly on April 28 will consider and act on this proposal. For the 2023-24 Association year, the NSEA Board of Directors recommends the dues for certificated classes of NSEA membership as outlined below:

Certificated Class	Dues
Active	\$432.00
Half-Time Active	\$216.00
Active Substitute	\$216.00
Non-Active Sub	\$108.00

## State Dues

All amounts listed are for state dues only. NEA dues for 2023-24 have been proposed at no more than \$208, a \$4 increase.

As noted, the 2023-24 dues amount for full-time, active members of NSEA includes a voluntary contribution of \$15 to NSEA's Political Action Fund and \$7.50 for half-time active members and active substitute members. This contribution is refundable upon receipt of a written, individually composed request. A reminder of the opportunity to seek a refund is published in the January issue of the NSEA Voice.



**NORA  
LENZ**

**Nebraska  
NEA Director**

**NSEA Delegate  
Assembly**

**April 29  
2023**



NSEA Dues History		
Budget Year	NSEA Dues	Percent Increase
2023-24	\$432	1.41%
2022-23	\$426	1.19%
2021-22	\$421	1.20%
2020-21	\$416	0.72%
2019-20	\$413	1.45%
2018-19	\$407	0.002%
2017-18	\$406	1.75%
2016-17	\$399	3.10%
2015-16	\$387	0.78%
2014-15	\$384	1.05%
2013-14	\$380	1.06%
2012-13	\$376	1.08%
2011-12	\$372	4.20%

# 2023-24 Proposed Bylaws Revisions

## Current Bylaw

### ■ Article II: Officers

**SECTION 2.** The term of office of the President and the Vice President shall be three years, and no person shall be elected to the office of the President or Vice President for more than two consecutive terms; provided, however, the term of the office of the President for the term commencing the 2020-2021 NSEA year shall be a four-year term. The term of office of each such officer shall commence on September 1.

## Proposed Bylaw Amendment 1

### ■ Article II: Officers

**SECTION 2.** The term of office of the President and the Vice President shall be three years, and no person shall be elected to the office of the President or Vice President for more than ~~two~~ **three** consecutive terms; provided, however, the term of the office of the President for the term commencing the 2020-2021 NSEA year shall be a four-year term. The term of office of each such **for each** officer shall commence on September 1.

*Remaining sections stay the same.*

***Rationale:** Restructuring the expiration of officers' terms will ensure the Delegate Assembly of the NSEA has the opportunity to better affect the balance of the capacity of the officers of the NSEA Governance with the capacity of the NSEA Management. This will strengthen the voice of membership regarding the overall operations of the NSEA.*

## Proposed Bylaw Amendment 2

### ■ Article III: Board of Directors

*New Language: Add Article III, SECTION 13*

**SECTION 13.** Any member of the NSEA Board of Directors shall be required to incur a minimum 2 year break in service prior to employment as an NSEA staff member. This break in service will begin the day after the last day of an NSEA Board member's term.

***Rationale:** The proposed new Bylaw language strengthens the positive separation between governance and staff roles. This separation helps eliminate conflicts of interest. For example, the NSEA Board approves all professional hires and the contract for the staff. A break in service also provides distance from confidential governance issues prior to serving in an NSEA staff position.*

## Proposed Bylaw Amendment 3

### ■ Article II: Officers

*New Language: Add Article II, SECTION 8*

**SECTION 8.** Any officer of NSEA shall be required to incur a minimum 2 year break in service prior to employment as an NSEA staff member. This break in service will begin the day after the last day of an NSEA officer's term.

***Rationale:** The proposed new Bylaw language strengthens the positive separation between governance and staff roles. This separation helps eliminate conflicts of interest. For example, the NSEA Board approves all professional hires and the contract for the staff. A break in service also provides distance from confidential governance issues prior to servicing an NSEA staff position.*

**Vote: ✓ Renae Noble  
NEA DIRECTOR**

**✓ BE MINDFUL OF EXPERIENCE, DEDICATION  
& KNOWLEDGE.**



*"I will be mindful of the entire state and every teacher in our state. I want to work for all members of the NSEA for the best teaching environment we can achieve. I will be mindful of the future environment for teaching in our state. I will serve you, the members of the NSEA!"*

- ❖ 32 year Member of NSEA.
- ❖ Panhandle District Board President & Officer positions for the past 15 years.
- ❖ Local President & Local Leader for over 20 years.



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- **Special Education Supervisor**  
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# Nebraska's Recruitment and Retention Reality

S.E.E.D

Supporting Educator Effectiveness through Development



**Dr. Kim Snyder,**  
Director,  
NDE Statewide  
Teacher and Principal  
Support



**Dr. Julie Downing,**  
NDE Educator  
Effectiveness  
Specialist



**Ryan Ricenbaw,**  
NDE Leadership and  
Learning Network  
Specialist



**Dr. Sara Skretta,**  
NDE Educator  
Effectiveness  
Specialist at UNL

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) conducted the 2022-23 Teacher Vacancy Survey in the fall of 2022. All public school districts, nonpublic school systems and Educational Service Units (ESU) were included in the collection of data. With a strong return rate of 92%, this data gives educators a picture of the recruitment and retention concerns in schools and ESUs across the state.

In 2022 there were 768 unfilled vacancies in Nebraska, up from 482 in 2021. The top unfilled positions were in special education, elementary education, career education, language arts, and science. The highest reported reasons for the vacancies were “no applicants” or “no fully qualified applicants.”

Nebraska is not alone in this trend. According to the National Center for Education Statistics ([https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press\\_releases/12\\_6\\_2022.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/12_6_2022.asp)), as of October 2022, the average public school had two vacant teaching positions. This extends to non-teaching staff as well. On the same date, the average public school had one vacant non-teaching staff position.

The national statistics increase when schools are in high poverty and/or high minority neighborhoods. A larger percentage of public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods had at least one teaching vacancy compared to public schools in low-poverty neighborhoods. Finally, a larger percentage of public schools with a high-minority student body had at least one teaching vacancy compared to schools with a low-minority student body.

Nebraska districts are setting recruitment and retention goals and developing and implementing strategies to address this alarming data. As the S.E.E.D. work evolves in our state, the shift towards a more robust analysis of educator data is happening and can assist educators in making decisions to mitigate the shortage issues in their districts.

Looking at the shortage issues through an “educator effectiveness lens” means schools must reconsider their mission, vision, and

branding statements. For years, these types of belief statements have been written from the student outcomes perspective. What if schools considered them from the educator perspective? For example:

**All students are capable of thinking in new and interesting ways.**

What if this statement also considered that ALL EDUCATORS are capable of thinking in new and interesting ways?

**Students asking questions is an essential part of the learning process.**

What if EDUCATORS asking questions is an essential part of the learning process?

**If students aren't grappling with and creating their own meaning, then students aren't learning as effectively as they could be.**

What if EDUCATORS aren't grappling with and creating their own meaning? Then EDUCATORS aren't learning as effectively as they could be.

Schools redesigned with a culture of learning based on a strong instructional model like the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards and others, with both student and educator in mind, are the path forward. The intentional focus on educator effectiveness is a hallmark of S.E.E.D. Taking time to consider educator data in regard to educator demographics, perceptions, effectiveness, and programs is the next frontier in data analysis and helping to solve the retention and recruitment crisis.

The NDE and its partners are committed to leading and supporting all Nebraskans in learning, earning, and living. The S.E.E.D. team's work demonstrates that dedication to leading and supporting the necessary shifts toward educator voice, efficacy, and leadership.

Find the full report on NE Teacher Vacancy at: <https://bit.ly/Teacher-Vacancy-Info>

## Download the My EHA App by April 30 for a Chance to Win a \$25 Amazon Gift Card

Educators play a key role in helping students gain the knowledge they need to live a happy and healthy life. Part of living a happy and healthy life yourself includes making the most of your health insurance coverage. And now, Educators Health Alliance (EHA) benefits are available to you in the My EHA App. Check out the app today to get a personalized view of your benefits!

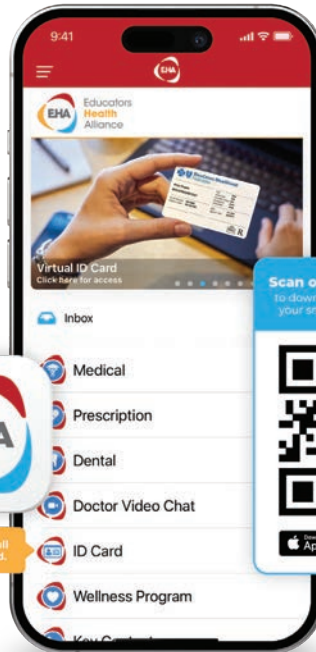
The EHA is a non-profit corporation created by the Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA), Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB) and Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). Together, we procure quality, affordable healthcare insurance for Nebraska education employees and their families. There is strength in unity and working collaboratively. As a member of the Educators Health Alliance, you are part of the largest insurance pool in the state of Nebraska. This statewide pool provides long-term stability and significant bargaining power to negotiate with our health insurance provider.

**Scan the QR code and download the My EHA app and be entered for a chance to win a \$25 Amazon gift card. Follow the instructions below to enter today.**

- 1. Download the My EHA App** before April 30. Use the QR code for the App Store or Google Play and enjoy!
- 2. You'll be entered to win.** Once you download the My EHA App you will be entered into a drawing to win a \$25 Amazon gift card. And yes, if you've logged into the My EHA App, you are already eligible to win.
- 3. Winners** will be selected and \$25 gift cards will be mailed.

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- 4. Wellness Program:** EHA wellness is available to EHA members and connects you to monthly challenges.
- 5. Dental Benefits:** ID card, coverage and in-network dentists are now easier to find.
- 6. Prescription Benefits:** View ID card and find an in-network pharmacy.



## Course offered on Infection Prevention in School Settings

Nurses and other health professionals interested in preventing and controlling infections in school settings are invited to attend a course offering provided by The Nebraska Infection Control Network (NICN). The Infection Prevention and Control in School Settings course offers a combination of lectures, discussions and educational activities on preventing and controlling infections in school settings. NSEA is a sponsor of the course. School nurses and anyone who has oversight of health

needs in schools are encouraged to attend. The course will be held Friday, April 28 at Educational Service Unit (ESU) #3 in Omaha. Participants may also join at satellite locations. Visit [bit.ly/InfectionPreventionCourse](https://bit.ly/InfectionPreventionCourse) to register and learn more about the course.

An advertisement for BlueCross BlueShield Nebraska. It features a woman in a green shirt and a young child sitting on the floor. The woman is holding a smartphone that displays a video chat with a doctor. The child is holding a white marker. The background is a blurred indoor setting. In the top right corner, there are logos for a cross, a shield, and the EHA Educators Health Alliance. The main text reads 'MORE FACE TIME. LESS WAIT TIME.' Below this, it says 'Your EHA health benefits give you access to virtual visits with doctors and specialists. So you can get the care you need — wherever you are, whenever you need it. Visit NebraskaBlue.com/EHAPop to connect with a coach and schedule a screening today.' At the bottom, there is a logo for BlueCross BlueShield Nebraska. A small text at the bottom right states: 'Health benefits for EHA are provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.'



**NSEA University 2023: The three-day conference to be held in Kearney at the Younes Conference Center, July 17-19.**

**Registration is open!**

Registration and hotel information is now available! Visit [NSEA.org/NSEAU](https://www.nsea.org/NSEAU)

**NSEA U Keynotes**

Four keynote speakers for the conference have been finalized. They are:

**Scott J. Norby:** As legal counsel to the NSEA, Norby has represented the Association, its members and affiliates in member rights, professional negotiations, and legislative and organizational matters for more than 40 years. He has appeared on behalf of the Association, its members, and affiliates in all of Nebraska’s counties in a wide variety of legal matters. Norby is set to present during the morning general session on Tuesday morning, July 18.

**Dr. Donna Beegle:** Dr. Beegle will share her journey from growing up in generational poverty to eventually earning her doctorate in Educational Leadership. Dr. Beegle is set to present

the keynote address on Wednesday, July 19.

Dr. Beegle will give an insider perspective on what works to improve outcomes for students living in poverty.

**Josh Monroe:** Monroe is a fifth grade teacher at Bryan Elementary in the Millard Public Schools District. He is the co-host of the “What the World Needs Now” podcast which seeks to provide inspiration to educators around the world. Monroe will present on creating classroom communities that are built on empathy and love. Monroe believes that this type of learning environment is critical in helping students not only be successful in class, but beyond, as they enter adulthood. Monroe will deliver a keynote address at NSEA U, with Tom Whisinnand.

**Tom Whisinnand:** Whisinnand, an educator for 18 years, holds a Master’s of Science in Curriculum and Instruction degree and a Master’s of Science in Educational Leadership. Whisinnand (A.K.A.- Mr. Wiz) was instrumental in bringing harmony to his school district and continues to be

a staunch advocate of the importance for social emotional learning to be taught, so that each student can reach their fullest potential. A date for Whisinnand and Monroe's address has not yet been set.

**Topics to Look For**

Topics at NSEA U are expected to cover issues such as poverty, leadership, educator wellness, advocacy and more. Sessions will be held during the mornings and afternoons of July 17 and 18, and the morning of July 19. Other tracks will offer topics under the five provisions of NSEA’s strategic plan: governance, membership, racial and social justice, politics and bargaining.

**Visit the Archway**

The NSEA U social event will be held at the Archway in Kearney on July 17 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. The Archway’s family-friendly historical exhibit tells the story of the adventurers who followed the Great Platte River Road and helped to build America. More details are available at: [NSEA.org/NSEAU23](https://www.nsea.org/NSEAU23).

**Registration is now open for NSEA University 2023! Visit [NSEA.org/NSEAU23](https://www.nsea.org/NSEAU23)**



## Rain Or Shine: Turn to the NSEA Children's Fund

Thank you for the clothes for my family. You are very nice and generous. I am happy to have boots for winter. Thank you very much!



Every NSEA member knows of children in heartbreaking conditions. Whether the child is in need of season-appropriate clothing, new eyeglasses or a good meal, the Children's Fund is here to help. Educators often give of their own cash to help, knowing that they can't help every child. That's why NSEA created the Children's Fund in 1994. As an NSEA member, you can use the Children's Fund, and you'll find it quite simple: just call NSEA. No red tape, no forms needed.

A recent note, at left, from a beneficiary of the fund is why so many contributions to the NSEA Children's Fund come from teachers and businesses across the state. Contributions are tax deductible — and it's important to note that every penny contributed goes to help children. NSEA picks up the administrative expenses.

The generosity of Children's Fund donors has helped to pay for glasses, warm clothing, medical and dental needs of children; provide assistance to a family whose home and belongings were destroyed by fire; and more. Rain or shine, turn to the NSEA Children's Fund for help.

There is never red tape or lengthy delay for members wanting to use the fund. A call to Karen Hunt at the NSEA (800-742-0047) is usually all that is needed. For more information, go to [nsea.org/childrensfund](http://nsea.org/childrensfund).

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Kearney, Nebraska

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# Creating Space for Students

"It felt like years of my own advocacy had come full circle." That was the reaction of Dr. Chandra Diaz, associate professor of education at UNK, after being approached by a student who wanted to start a chapter of Future Educators of Color (FEOC) at the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

"When I was an undergraduate, I was a part of the group of students who created the Future Teachers of Color at UNL," she explained.

The student who approached Diaz previously belonged to the UNL chapter before transferring to UNK. At the time, the student had no knowledge of Diaz's involvement as an undergraduate.

"You know as people go away, sometimes organizations go away, but UNL's Future Teachers of Color student organization has come back to life and this student was really passionate about continuing that effort to create change," Diaz said.

With a core group of dedicated members, the FEOC has continued to expand its reach on UNK's campus.

"We currently have around 25 students on our email list," said Diaz.

### Space for Conversation

The goal of the FEOC group is simple and to the point: it's a space for diverse future educators to engage in reflection, learning, support, and community building as they prepare for a career in education.

"I care deeply about all students, but for those students who come from backgrounds that have been historically

marginalized, we need to make sure they are being prepared in our programs and making sure that they feel supported," she said.

### Visibility

Data shows that the K-12 teaching force remains predominantly white both nationally and in Nebraska, but classrooms have an increasingly diversified student body. Diaz believes that recruiting and keeping teachers of color will take time and that support is only the first intentional step forward.



Diaz

"We know our students of color often feel very hypervisible while at the same time invisible in the curriculum," she said. "Being able to exist in a safe space and being able to name that feeling and talk about it will help students feel empowered to advocate for change."

While the FEOC group at UNK has less than two semesters under its belt, Diaz and co-advisors Dr. Janet Eckerson and Dr. Rebecca Nelson, are already looking to add a mentoring element—pairing those who are in the classroom now with future educators.

"The mentoring element would provide our future educators with someone to lean on – whether it's a teacher of color who is in their subject area or perhaps someone in a city or school district in which the future educator hopes to teach in someday," said Diaz.

A member of the UNKEA, Dr. Diaz is Chair, Associate Professor and Advisor of Middle Level Education at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. She joined the UNK faculty in 2017.

## Educators Rising LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



Nebraska high school students from around the state gathered in Lincoln in March to learn new skills at the Nebraska State Leadership Conference. The event was held on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus. NSEA was a sponsor for the conference. Students were welcomed by NSEA President Jenni Benson and heard presentations from NSEA Director of Advocacy Isau Metes and Millard Education Association President Tim Royers. NSEA-Retired also assisted by volunteering for the conference.

Educators Rising is a program that helps provide high school students interested in the teaching profession with hands-on experience to help them cultivate the skills they need to be successful educators.



**Geographic Educators of Nebraska (GEON)** is offering a summer workshop for 7-12th grade social studies teachers, June 12-14, 2023, at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Stipend and graduate credit available.

Visit [www.geonebraska.com](http://www.geonebraska.com) for more details and application. Workshop funding provided by the Library of Congress.

### Save with exclusive member offers

The NEA Discount Marketplace, powered by Rakuten, enables members to earn cash back when they shop and save on brand-name merchandise from more than 3,500 top retailers and online stores. Check out the following member-exclusive deals in April and search more retailers at [neamb.com/marketplace](https://neamb.com/marketplace):

#### H&R Block

With H&R Block's DIY tax software, you can complete your taxes at your own pace. Pick the plan that meets your needs and get started today. Plus, members earn extra cash back!

#### TurboTax

Get your taxes done right and your maximum refund guaranteed with TurboTax. Get free live help from tax experts, including a final review before you file. Earn extra cash back as a member.

#### The Container Store

Spring is the perfect time to get organized at work and home with smart systems from The Container Store! Check out the latest deals and earn extra cash back.

#### Ace Hardware

Looking forward to making the most of the outdoors this season? Check out all Ace Hardware has to offer – lawn care tools and supplies, patio furniture, grills, and more – all at a discount for members.

#### Kohl's

With Kohl's, you don't have to break the bank to get great style and great prices on clothing and home essentials. As a member, you save even more with extra cash back!



## 5 Ways Potholes Can Damage Your Car

Potholes can pop up on roadways during any season, but why do they seem so prevalent during the first few months of the year?

When winter is ending and spring is on the horizon, the weather is constantly fluctuating between mild and freezing temperatures. Rain, snow, and ice get into smaller holes and cracks in the pavement, and as the temperature jumps back and forth from high to low, the precipitation continually freezes and thaws expanding those pavement cracks and causing others to form. As cars and heavy trucks drive over them, the asphalt chips away, thus creating potholes.

Potholes, no matter how small, can wreak havoc on your entire vehicle. Here are 5 ways hitting a pothole can cause damage.

### 1. Steering & Suspension

Your vehicle's suspension absorbs bumps so you can't feel them when you drive. If you cause enough wear and tear on your suspension system, it could result in a number of problems with your steering, including: vibrations, noises when you turn, the vehicle pulling to one side, etc.

### 2. Undercarriage

Vehicles that ride lower to the ground have a better chance of being damaged by a pothole. They can cause scratches and scrapes, that aren't dangerous until they start to rust or leak. They can also rip off low-hanging bumpers.

### 3. Tires & Wheels

It's no secret that debris from potholes can cause holes, leaks, and

tears in your tire, but when you hit a pothole fast enough, it can also cause a complete tire blowout. Potholes can also damage your wheels by bending or cracking your rim. And if there is visible damage, you'll likely have to replace the entire wheel.

### 4. Body & Exhaust System

Pavement debris and rocks can scratch the paint on your vehicle and cause rips and leaks in your exhaust pipes, muffler, and catalytic converter. If your exhaust pipes have been damaged, it can be a serious issue. Ripped pipes can leak exhaust fumes into the cabin of your vehicle and cause serious health issues (including death). If you hear a strange noise or lose power after hitting a pothole, there is a good chance your exhaust pipes have been damaged and you need to pull over.

### 5. Loss of Control

One of the most dangerous consequences of hitting a pothole is that it could cause you to lose control of your vehicle. Losing control for even a few seconds, could not only cause damage to your vehicle, but could also be deadly for you and your passengers. That is why it is important to watch the road for potholes when you drive and try and avoid them.

So, what if you accidentally hit a pothole, is damage done to your vehicle covered by insurance? Typically, pothole damage is covered if you have collision insurance. If you aren't sure, call your agent and review your coverage today.



# NEA Member Exclusive

Get this benefit at no cost to you

As an NEA member, did you know you receive \$1,000 of term life insurance at no cost to you? You're already enrolled in the NEA® Complimentary Life Insurance Plan, but it's a good time to make sure you've selected a beneficiary.

When you do, you'll not only get peace of mind that your loved ones will receive their benefits in a time of need, but you'll also get our new tote bag—free!



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TRISH GUINAN

# Message from the Executive Director

## Reflection

In the fifth grade, when our teacher gave us an assignment to write about what we wanted to be when we grew up, I wrote about becoming a cosmetologist. Up until this point, I had not given a career in education much thought. My mom was a “stay-at-home” mom—a full time job in its own right. So were both my grandmothers. I don’t know if anyone ever asked them what career they wanted to pursue or if it was just a foregone conclusion that they would work in the home. Throughout Women’s History Month (March), I found myself reflecting on those who opened doors for women like me to become math teachers, athletic coaches and association leaders.

## Women in Education

Title IX had a huge impact on my life both as an educator and a coach. By the time I took my first teaching position, Title IX had already changed the course of education for women and girls. I grew up in western Iowa playing sports just like my mom and all girls—or so I thought. I was surprised when I started teaching and coaching in Nebraska that many of the teams I was helping coach had only existed for a few short years—after the passage of Title IX.

In the 50-plus years since its implementation, many still think only of Title IX's impact on women's athletics but it's so much more than that. It requires that women and girls be provided equal opportunities in education, free from discriminatory barriers. It opened the doors for women to pursue many careers in all fields, including science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). It was my passion for math that led me to teaching.

## Pioneers Before Me

The gender pay gap was and still is a battle we’re fighting in America. I was seven years into my professional career and had just started teaching in Fremont when I learned of the local association’s role in fighting for equal pay in education. Many of my union brothers and sisters

shared the association’s important role in fighting the pay discrepancies between men and women while also rallying against the blatant pay discrimination between elementary teachers and high school teachers. It drove me to want to do more. I could see that change was possible and that I could have a seat at the table through my association to positively influence the education field.

## Women in Leadership

Jodean Bridges was head of the Fremont English Department and a veteran teacher by the time I arrived at Fremont Public Schools. As part of a mentoring program, I was allowed to observe Jodean in her classroom. Even though I was a math teacher, and she was an English teacher, observing her taught me so much about what it means to be a leader and an educator. In this environment, I thrived in my professional career and sought ways to give back. I found my path through the Fremont Education Association. I served as an FEA delegate to NSEA’s Delegate Assembly, and then became a local building representative before being elected FEA vice president. In the early 1990s, I was elected to serve as president of FEA. It was through my local association leadership that I eventually came to work at NSEA. I’m now the fourth woman to lead as executive director of the NSEA and it is an honor to serve.

## Why it Matters

Public education is on the front lines of equality. Classrooms provide space for young women to be inspired to pursue careers their parents could never imagine. Beyond gender, my hope is that all students feel their classrooms are a space to explore a new world of possibilities. I hope that new and veteran educators feel valued and empowered through their local and state education associations to continue the work of educators before them. Education is—and always will be—an important and powerful ally for equity.

“

**Title IX had a huge impact on my life both as an educator and a coach. By the time I took my first teaching position, Title IX had already changed the course of education for women and girls.**

”

# NSEA-Retired Spring Conference

**APRIL  
27**

The NSEA-Retired spring conference will be held at Omaha's Lauritzen Gardens on Thursday, April 27. The program will include a presentation by James Locklear titled, "More Than Just a Pretty Place: The Conservation Vision of Lauritzen Gardens." Following Locklear's presentation, participants will be taken on a tour of the gardens and conservatory. After lunch, attendees will hear from Karen Gettert Shoemaker, author of the novel "The Meaning of Names." She is the recipient of a Nebraska Center for the Book Award for Fiction, two Independent Artist Fellowships from the Nebraska Arts Council, and a Nebraska Press Award for Feature Writing. Shoemaker will talk about the stories emanating from the pandemic challenges. NSEA-Retired Director Todd Crenshaw will also speak to attendees about grant opportunities. The event is free for members and \$10 for guests. Registration and refreshments will begin at 8:30 a.m. To register, go to [nsea.org/retired](http://nsea.org/retired) and select Calendars, Events & Registrations.

**Deadline for registrations is April 17.**

**SPECIAL OFFER**



**Special Offer: Become a Pre-Retired Lifetime Member at Delegate Assembly**

During the April 28-29, 2023 Delegate Assembly, Pre-Retired Lifetime members will be welcomed and thanked. Those signing up as new pre-retired lifetime members during those two days will receive a **\$50 rebate** on those dues and enter a drawing for a **\$50 gift card**.

No matter your age or years before retirement, this is the time to join NSEA-Retired. You are committed to education and the profession. That commitment does not end upon retirement!

Have an article idea for the NSEA-Retired Advocate or the NSEA Voice magazine? Send your idea to Dr. De Tonack at [dtonack@neb.rr.com](mailto:dtonack@neb.rr.com)

## Your Voices: NSEA-Retired Lobby Day at the Capitol



The NSEA-Retired held its annual Lobby Day at the Capitol in February. Members and guests were briefed on education issues by NSEA Director of Public Policy and Legislative Research Jason Hayes before meeting with senators in the State Capitol Rotunda. Members discussed issues involving funding needed for public schools, school safety and retirement. This year's event featured a virtual option allowing members who couldn't attend the in-person event to join by Zoom.

After meeting with senators, participants returned to the NSEA building for lunch and a presentation from Omaha Sen. Tony Vargas. Before his time in the legislature, Sen. Vargas was a teacher. He reflected on the value of the experience during his presentation. Vargas currently serves on the Appropriations and the Retirement Committees.

**Support for Public Education: 1. Sen. John Arch (Dist. 14) with Neb. Board of Education member Lisa Fricke. 2. NSEA-Retired member Deb Gnuse with Sen. Raymond Aguilar (Dist. 35). 3. Sen. Tony Vargas (Dist. 7) gives a keynote address during lunch. 4. NSEA-Retired members Maureen Nickels and Deb Gnuse of Grand Island with Jan Olmsted of Lincoln and Tamara Bailey of Omaha. 5. Retired Board member Pat Etherton with Sen. George Dungan (Dist. 26).**

# NEA Data Shows Neb. ESPs earnings fall below national average

To ensure a great public education for every student, education support professionals (ESPs) want and deserve to earn a living wage. The 2022 ESP Data Book published by the National Education Association provides a detailed state-by-state look at the Education Support Professionals (ESP) in our nation's public schools and colleges with a specific focus on demographics and earnings.

Findings show that earnings for Nebraska K-12 ESPs working full time (at least 30 hours per week) fall below the national average at \$29,429. The national average stands at \$32,837. Many Nebraska school districts are experiencing a staffing shortage of ESPs. Districts aren't likely to see an end to these problems without funding and support.

## There is strength in numbers!

NSEA works with ESPs to create learning opportunities and supports for them to elevate their professional excellence throughout their careers. Together, we can make good things happen, including:

- Securing better pay, benefits, and working conditions;
- Gaining Professional Development and leadership training;
- Having strong, effective representation in job-related disputes;
- Accessing affordable life, health, disability, and casualty insurance programs; and
- Receiving on-the-job liability insurance of up to \$1 million.

Contact NSEA today at (800) 742-0047 or email questions to [info@nsea.org](mailto:info@nsea.org).

Want to see the full NEA Report?

Find the full NEA report at [bit.ly/ESP-Earn](https://bit.ly/ESP-Earn) or scan the QR code with this story.



Scan for Report

**THE CHILD CARE CRISIS IN NEBRASKA IS HURTING EVERYONE.**



Quality early childhood education supports children's healthy development and future learning. Yet, too many Nebraska families can't find quality, affordable care.

**Let's solve the child care crisis. It's not going to solve itself.**

Support early childhood education at:

**NebraskaCaresForKids.org**

## Speaking of Education

“The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerated the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than the democratic state itself. That in its essence is fascism: ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or any controlling private power.”

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

Mailed By: The Nebraska State Education Association  
605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742



## Nominations Now Open for 2024 Teacher of the Year

If you are open to challenges—and the rewards that come with those challenges—consider applying to become Nebraska’s next Teacher of the Year.

The 2024 recipient will become a spokesperson for education and the teaching profession, will travel the state and country, and be continually recognized for excellence. Since 1972, the Nebraska Teacher of the Year program has recognized outstanding Nebraska certified teachers who work in a pre-kindergarten through grade 12 classroom setting, and who plan to continue in an active teacher status in a state-approved or accredited school.

Application forms for the 2024 Nebraska Teacher of the Year are now available through your school administration or at [www.education.ne.gov/toy](http://www.education.ne.gov/toy). Teachers may nominate a colleague for the honor or self-nominate.

The application seeks information

on educational background and personal development, community involvement, philosophy of teaching and learning, and commentary on the teaching profession. A panel will review applications, and up to five finalists will be selected for interviews. Once selected, the 2024 Teacher of the Year will maintain a regular teaching schedule while also participating in a year of professional learning through the National Teacher of the Year Program.

The NSEA, Nebraska Council of School Administrators, Nebraska Association of School Boards, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, Data Recognition Corporation, and the State Board of Education present cash awards or grants to the Teacher of the Year and other finalists.

Those interested may reach program coordinator Lora Sypal at (402) 471-5059 or [lora.sypal@nebraska.gov](mailto:lora.sypal@nebraska.gov).

## What to Do if You Receive a RIF Notice: Call NSEA.

**Notification Deadline: April 15**

APRIL

15

It happens every year: Some K-12 Nebraska teachers receive Reduction in Force (RIF) notices informing them that their teaching contract may not be renewed

for the coming year. The statutory deadline for school districts to hand out RIF notices is April 15.

The best way to deal with a RIF notice is to be prepared. The moment you receive a RIF notice, a countdown begins. To preserve your rights when facing a RIF you must always request a hearing. The hearing must be requested within seven days of receiving the RIF notice (five days for community college faculty). While your situation may never reach an actual hearing, immediately calling NSEA will give you and NSEA’s Advocacy department time to determine what steps are in your best interest.

Email a copy of the notice to your NSEA Organizational Specialist. Once a copy of the RIF notice is received at NSEA headquarters, members will be encouraged to request a hearing to preserve their rights.

If you have questions concerning the RIF process, contact your NSEA Organizational Specialist or Isau Metes by calling 1-800-742-0047.