

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • May 2023

NOT IN NEBRASKA

Members, public school allies rally to oppose private school tax scheme



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NSEA Board Certifies District Elections

Elections for vacancies in leadership positions in NSEA's six governance districts and on the NSEA Board of Directors were held in late February and early March. The NSEA Board certified those elections in mid-March. These electees begin their terms on September 1, 2023.

Capitol District

NSEA Board: Gina Boltz
Vice President: Jordan Martin
Exec. Committee: Kate Regler
NEA Representative Assembly Cluster Delegate: No candidates

Elkhorn District

NSEA Board: No candidates
President: No candidates
Exec. Committee: MacKenzie Waltke
NEA Representative Assembly Cluster Delegate: No candidates

Metro District

NSEA Board: Kathy Poehling
NSEA Board: Tim Royers
Treasurer: Carrie Pratt
Secretary: Julie Adams
Exec. Committee, Subdistrict 1: Terri Childers
Exec. Committee, Subdistrict 4: No candidates
Exec. Committee, Subdistrict 7: Gail Sherrell
NEA Representative Assembly Cluster Delegate: No candidates

Panhandle District

NSEA Board: Renae Noble

Exec. Committee, Area 1:

No candidates

Exec. Committee, Area 3:

No candidates

Exec. Committee, Area 4:

No candidates

Exec. Committee, Area 5:

No candidates

NEA Representative Assembly Cluster Delegate: Dashiell Rohan

Sandhills District

President: Mary Gregoski
Exec. Committee: Amanda Evens
Exec. Committee: Katrina Shaw
Bylaws Amendment: Passed
NEA Representative Assembly Cluster Delegate: No candidates

Tri-Valley District

NSEA Board: Melissa Boutwell
Treasurer: No candidates
Secretary: Holly Ortega
Exec. Committee, West: Janet Sheaffer
Exec. Committee, Central: Lori Pflaster
NEA Representative Assembly Cluster Delegate: No candidates

R.A. At-Large Delegate

Kim Gardiner

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

On the Cover: Hundreds of NSEA members and public school supporters rallied at the State Capitol to oppose a bill that would give public funds to private and religious schools. See the story and photos, pages 7-9.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JENNI BENSON

Resolution Opposing LB753's Tax Scheme to Give Public Funds to Private Schools

WHEREAS, the Nebraska State Education Association is opposed to LB753's tax scheme to give public tax dollars to fund private schools because it will hurt students in our Nebraska public schools; and

WHEREAS, LB753 does not help all children – in fact, it even subsidizes discriminatory practices. Unlike public schools, whose doors are open to all, private schools can discriminate against kids. Taxpayers' hard-earned dollars should not be used to support educational models that are not required to serve all children; and

WHEREAS, LB753 is expensive and would cost Nebraskans \$25 million the first year and grow to \$100 million annually; and

WHEREAS, we believe the state must prioritize funding the K-12 public schools that serve nine out of ten kids in Nebraska and not divert millions of dollars to LB753's private school tax scheme; and

WHEREAS, while private schools would receive public funding under LB753, they are not held to the same accountability and reporting requirements as public schools; and

WHEREAS, LB753 provides only minimal academic standards for a school to be eligible to receive public dollars; and

WHEREAS, the lack of oversight and accountability provisions in LB753 will leave students, their families, and the state in a precarious position with no ability to gauge whether the funds are being used effectively or appropriately; and

WHEREAS, we are aware of the damage inflicted upon public schools and residents of other states due to similar tax schemes draining funding from their public schools. In other states, these private school tax schemes have proven to be enormously expensive and ineffective; and

WHEREAS, the millions of public dollars given to private schools would otherwise be dollars available for public schools and property tax relief. Nebraska already consistently ranks nearly last in the nation for state support of K-12 education and, as a result, has some of the highest property taxes in the country; and

WHEREAS, LB753 will hurt Nebraska communities, local public schools and students, and Nebraska taxpayers.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Nebraska State Education Association opposes LB753 and encourages state lawmakers and all Nebraskans to oppose this harmful legislation and to sign a referendum petition to repeal the bill if it passes.

Sign the petition to oppose LB753 at: www.notinnebraska.com.



The NSEA Board of Directors moved a resolution opposing LB753's tax scheme that would give public funds to private schools. More than 200 delegates at Delegate Assembly unanimously passed the resolution.

We are so grateful for those who came together at Delegate Assembly April 28-29 to do the business of NSEA. Please consider being a delegate for next year's Assembly. We will need your help to continue our work ensuring a great public school for every child.

The Delegate Assembly timelines and elections information is published each December in The Voice. Together, we can achieve more!

“

Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.

- Vince Lombardi

”

Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program

The Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program (EETP) is a forgivable loan program designed to provide support for **current educators** pursuing master's degrees or endorsements in shortage areas across the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has approximately \$1,850,000 for EETP program distribution this year. The 2023-2024 EETP application is available on the NDE EETP website from Monday April 17 through May 15, 2023.

It is important to note the following:

- Applicants will be requesting funds for approved classes that BEGIN on or after July 1, 2023, through on or before June 30, 2024.
- The EETP requires an individual to apply for the award each year that funding will be requested.
- Only Nebraska institutions are eligible for this forgivable loan program.
- Completed application materials are sent to the institution per the instructions on the website. The institutions then forward all documents to NDE by May 29, 2023.

Please go to the NDE website for more EETP information, www.bit.ly/Neb-EETP

Teach in Nebraska Today Act

The Teach in Nebraska Today Act, adopted in LB1218 (2022), will be made available by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) soon. It is a \$5 million state repayment program providing qualifying teachers with up to \$5,000 annually for five years. The Department will send the NSEA information as soon as it is made publicly available, and we will forward that information to you.

The application period for the Teach in Nebraska Today Act will begin mid-May 2023 through June 10, 2023. NDE will activate a website providing additional information.



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1) Secure and Premier checking accounts include Identity Theft Solutions; Classic checking does not. For more information, visit firstnebraska.org/identity-theft-solutions.

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Recommendations are clinical, research-based and best practice approaches to concussion RTL management.



TACT

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getschooledonconcussions.com/nebraska

Password: TACTnebraska2020



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NOT IN NEBRASKA: Members, public school allies rally to oppose private school tax scheme

A different kind of Sea of Red flooded the streets of the capital city in late April. Chants of “Go Big Red” were replaced with chants of “Red for Ed” as hundreds of educators, students and other public education supporters marched to the steps of the Nebraska State Capitol.

A high-spirited, pom-pom wielding crowd of NSEA delegates were greeted with enthusiastic honks from drivers as they made their way from the annual Delegate Assembly at the Cornhusker Hotel down Centennial Mall. In all, more than 400 Nebraskans gathered on the north steps of the State Capitol in a show of support for students, educators and public schools.

Public School Support

“This is a tremendous show of strength and support for Nebraska public schools,” NSEA President Jenni Benson said in her opening remarks to rally-goers. “We are here because we believe that public funds should be used to support public schools – your tax dollars should

not be siphoned off to fund private schools!”

In mid-April, state legislators advanced LB753 to the third and final round of debate. The bill, introduced by Sen. Lou Ann Linehan, would provide tax incentives to corporations and the wealthy for donations to scholarship funds for private and religious schools. A final vote on the bill is expected in the coming weeks.

The tax scheme in LB753 is costly and would grow exponentially if passed, taking funds that would otherwise be available to fund public schools and other state priorities. State Sen. George Dungan, Lincoln, is among a cadre of lawmakers working to stop LB753. Sen. Dungan, a product of Nebraska public schools himself, told

the crowd at the rally, “I’m where I am today because of public schools and because dedicated teachers did everything to support me.”

Sen. Dungan said that Nebraska is unique in its continued refusal to divert public dollars to fund private schools. He explained in his remarks that when neighboring states—like Kansas—failed to fund public education, students and communities paid the ultimate price.

“I went to college in Kansas, and I was there when the Brownback experiment failed,” Sen. Dungan said. “I was in Kansas when teachers couldn’t get

paid. I was in Kansas when schools couldn’t open and there were kids that weren’t in classrooms because the state had failed to fulfill its promise.”

“This is a tremendous show of strength and support for Nebraska public schools.”
 — Jenni Benson
 NSEA President

Parents for Funding Public Schools

Nebraska already consistently ranks nearly last in the nation for state support of K-12 education and, as a result, has some of the highest property taxes in the country. Molly Gross, Legislative Director of the Nebraska Parent-Teacher Association, spoke directly to many educators in the crowd, thanking them for their dedication to students.

"I want you to know that Nebraska PTA stands strong in support of keeping public funds for public schools," Gross said. "We have not forgotten your Herculean efforts to continue educating our kids even through a worldwide pandemic."

Gross said many parents believe the state should prioritize fully staffing and funding the K-12 schools that serve nine out of ten kids in Nebraska.

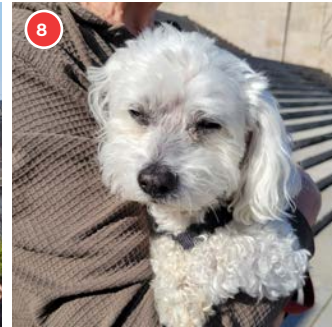
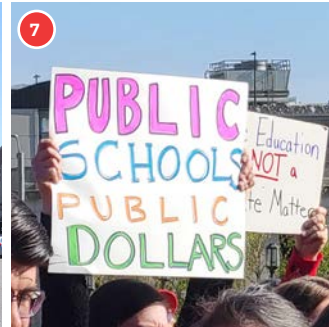
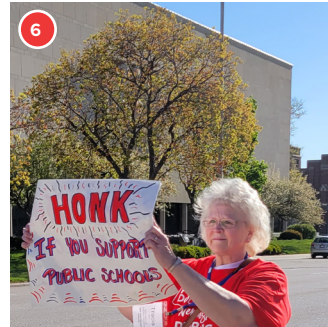
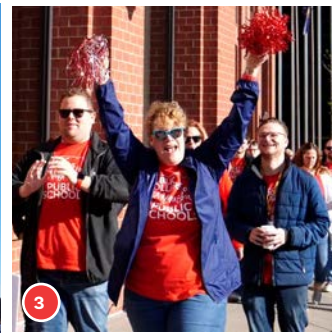
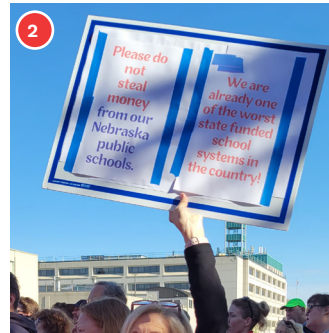
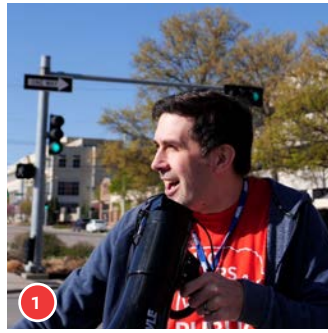
"Nebraska taxpayers cannot afford to give \$100 million away. That should be spent to support our public schools," said Gross. "That money could be used to reduce class sizes. We all know that students learn faster and perform better in smaller classes."

Private Schools Choose Their Students

Proponents of voucher schemes tout "choice" for families who can't afford private school tuition but LB753 is not about scholarships or helping children out of poverty. Speaking at the April rally, Dunixi Guereca, executive director of Stand For Schools, doubted that families get the ultimate "choice" under LB753.

"This is not about giving students choice, it's about giving schools choice. Choice to pick and choose the students that they serve, unlike our public schools that serve all students," he said.

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



RALLY TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS: 1. Millard Education Association President Tim Royers led the way to the capitol, megaphone in hand. 2. Neb. State Board of Education Member Deb Neary supporting public school funding. 3. Lincoln Education Assoc. President Deb Rasmussen with pom poms. 4. Rebecca Firestone, OpenSky Policy Institute Executive Director, addresses educators and supporters. 5. NSEA board member Stacie Blackmore en route to the capitol. 6. Member Tracia Blom with a "Honk if you support public schools" sign. 7. A clear and concise message. 8. This pup is doggone tired of tax breaks for the wealthy. 9. Supporter asking an important question!

"When I moved to Nebraska. I traveled to every corner of this state. There was something that stood out to me—a denominator that overcame political, geographical and generational divides and that was a love for our local schools," Guereca said. "By keeping public schools public, Nebraskans have managed

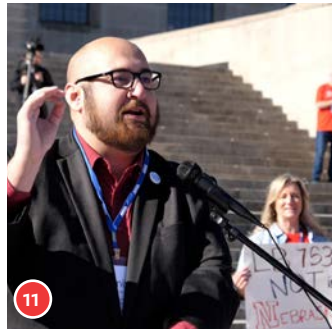
to avoid the disasters we've seen in other states."

Vouchers are costly

Although proponents of school privatization promise the state will see savings, such savings have not been realized in other states. OpenSky Policy Institute Executive Director



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RALLY TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS: 10. That's a lot of love from a young public school supporter! 11. Dunixi Guereca, Stand For Schools Executive Director, addresses rally-goers. 12. Attendee shows off pride for Lincoln Public Schools. 13. This rally-goer is about ready for their mid-morning nap. 14. Supporters line the steps of the Neb. Capitol. 15. Molly Gross, Nebraska PTA, on parental support for public education. 16. Duff Martin, Wisconsin Educator & NEA Executive Committee Member, on how voucher schemes in Wisconsin have harmed students in the state. 17. Local media films scenes from the rally.

Rebecca Firestone shared the fiscal effect a similar voucher program had in Arizona.

"Arizona has had a scholarship tax credit program since 1998. It has ballooned in cost. It now costs Arizona \$250 million a year," Firestone said.

The first-year limit on the total

amount of vouchers in LB753 is \$25 million, and the cost to Nebraskans could grow to \$100 million under LB753.

Additionally, Firestone said research shows that these tax credits overwhelmingly benefit corporations and the wealthy while shifting the burden of funding critical programs

and services to less affluent taxpayers.

"The evidence suggests that the people who are most likely to claim these tax credits are people who know to get first in line. Who are the people who know to get first in line when they're doing their taxes? People who can afford good accountants. Who can afford good accountants? The wealthy," she said.

Don't be like Wisconsin, Be like Nebraska

National Education Association (NEA) Executive Committee member Duff Martin told those gathered for the rally that vouchers in his home state of Wisconsin have proven to be enormously expensive and ineffective at helping children in need.

"I know firsthand how vouchers are not working in Wisconsin since being introduced in 1990. Over 41% of the voucher schools have closed. The sad part of all this is we have them close in the middle of the night, pack up and shutter up their buildings. Those kids show up and there's no school. Why? They took our dollars and left our state. That kind of turnover is bad for kids," he said.

Martin encouraged the crowd to keep fighting.

"Vouchers have failed miserably in Wisconsin. Be better, Nebraska," Martin said. "Remember Nebraska—don't be Wisconsin. Be Nebraska."

Not in Nebraska

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. Benson ended the rally with a call to action for those who support public education.

"If this legislature passes LB753, we will launch a statewide petition drive allowing Nebraskans—for a fourth time—to say no to giving their tax dollars to private schools," Benson told the crowd. "I'm asking each of you to sign up now to register your opposition to LB753. Let's send a strong message to our Nebraska state senators: public funds for public schools!"

Sign the petition and email your senator to oppose LB753 at: www.notinnebraska.com.



LEGISLATURE

VOICES IN EDUCATION: Success in the Legislative Session

MAJOR EDUCATION BILL ADVANCES

With filibusters on every bill and only a few days remaining in the session, the Education Committee has taken 19 bills and combined them into one bill – LB705. Four additional bills – LB222, LB585, LB774 and LB805 – were amended to LB705 before it was advanced to the second round of debate.

While the NSEA does not support all 23 bills now contained in LB705, when taken as a whole we support the advancement of LB705. Here is a summary of a few of the key bills now a part of LB705:

LB705 changes the distribution of lottery funds used for education as follows:

Creates the Career-Readiness and Dual-Credit Education Grant Program Act and changes provisions of the Excellence in Teaching Act. Eight percent of lottery funds (about \$2 million) will be allocated to the Excellence in Teaching Cash Fund / Career Readiness and Dual Credit Fund. The Career Readiness and Dual Credit Education Grant will be administered by the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. Grants will be provided to teachers enrolled in education pathways leading to qualification to teach dual-credit courses and career and technical education courses.



Mental Health: Brandy Rose, ESU7, School Psychologist, and Deb Rasmussen, Lincoln Education Association President, testified in support of LB527, which would provide reimbursements to school districts and educational service units for mental health expenditures.

Establishes a Mental Health Training grant program funded with 1.5% of lottery funds through the Mental Health Training Cash Fund.

Adopts the Behavioral Intervention Training and Teacher Support Act. Eight percent of lottery funds (about \$2 million) will be used for training teachers in safe behavioral management strategies, tactics, and de-escalation procedures. Funding for the training courses will be in coordination with the Nebraska Department of Education's model behavioral management policy.

LB385 creates the Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act, funded by the Education Future Fund. New teachers would be eligible for a \$2,500 grant at the beginning of years two, four, and six. Teachers with a high-need certification will be eligible for a one-time grant worth \$5,000 at the beginning of a school year in which such high-need subjects are taught by the grant recipient.

LB762 creates the Nebraska Paraprofessional to Teacher Program to increase the number of teachers in Nebraska by assisting individuals employed as a paraprofessional or paraeducator. Participants may receive a grant of up to \$3,000 per semester to fund educational expenses such as



Support for Librarians: Stacy Johnson, Millard, teacher librarian testified in opposition to LB441, which would open the door to criminal prosecution of Nebraska school teachers and library professionals.



Support for LB527: Drew Garrison, NSEA Aspiring Educator at Doane University, testified in support of LB527, which would provide reimbursements to school districts and educational service units for mental health expenditures.

tuition, books, or other materials as required to receive a teaching certification. One million dollars will be transferred each fiscal year from the Education Future Fund to carry out this program.

LB153 creates the Extraordinary Increase in Special Education Expenditures Fund to be funded by \$2.5 million from the Education Future Fund for fiscal year 2023-24.

LB516 appropriates \$870,000 from the State General Fund each fiscal year to carry out the School Safety and Security Reporting Act to continue serving Nebraskans via the Safe2HelpNE hotline.

LB520 changes provisions relating to high school graduation requirements and academic content standards and the Computer Science and Technology Education Act.

LB724 addresses the ongoing teacher shortage in Nebraska by removing basic skills testing (Praxis Core) from certification requirements, while retaining content knowledge testing (Praxis Subject) requirements.

LB603 allows persons who possess a bachelor's degree and have been certified to teach through alternative organizations to become certified to teach in Nebraska after participating in a school district clinical experience for one semester in such individual's first semester of employment.

LB372 Allows homeschooled students to participate in extracurricular activities in the school district in which they reside and directs school boards in their policy to require a homeschooled student to enroll in not more and no less than five credit hours offered by the school in any semester.

LB632 prohibits a school in a city of the metropolitan class from suspending a student in Pre-K through second grade. Exceptions are granted if such a student brings a deadly weapon on school grounds, or to a school-sponsored activity or athletic event, or in a vehicle being used for a school purpose or by a school employee.

LB698 changes provisions relating to residency for enrollment in a public college or university.

LB787 Creates the STEEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Mathematics) Development Act using funds from the NDE Innovative Grant Fund. Such grants are to be used for developers to create learning platforms which provide game-based interaction to develop students in the fields of STEEM.



Oppose LB177: Tim Royers, Millard Education Association President, spoke in opposition to LB177's public funds for private schools scheme. "This bill is a copy and paste of a program that already exists in other states, has a demonstrated history of fraud and abuse. It fails to help kids. Furthermore, it is clearly in violation of our state constitution," said Royers.

LB585 amends current law to provide schools greater flexibility in providing more comprehensive behavioral and mental health training that focuses on suicide awareness and prevention.

LB774 updates the Student Discipline Act in pursuit of protecting rights to due process and fairness within an orderly and effective educational process.

LB811 changes provisions relating to the Student Discipline Act and requires the NDE to provide school districts with criteria for the safe use of physical intervention or removal from a class in response to student behavior, and provides for mandatory behavioral awareness and intervention training.



DEMOCRACY IN ACTION: Members decide the direction of Association

Following powerful messages of inspiration and a high energy rally to support Nebraska public schools, more than 200 NSEA members got down to business on Saturday, April, 29, moving the association forward on a number of key issues.

Special Guests

NSEA President Jenni Benson dropped the gavel to open the 2023 Delegate Assembly on Friday evening, April 28. Following the adoption of Standing Rules, delegates heard from Nebraska 2023 Teacher of the Year, Renee Jones.

Jones teaches English at Lincoln High School and encouraged delegates to write down one thing a day that brings them joy.

"[Write down] that visceral reaction you experience when you feel full, that moment when your eyes are sparkling, where the pride in your heart is outwardly recognizable," Renee said. "Write down the simple moments that you felt connected and write down the moments where you remember—even for just one second—why you became an educator."

Also on Friday, Wisconsin Educator and NEA Executive Committee Member Duff Martin shared a message of solidarity with

the assembly. President Benson and Executive Director Trish Guinan gave their annual report to delegates about NSEA's work during the past year.

Dues

NSEA Vice President Robert Miller presided at Friday's budget hearing for members and presented the committee's report and recommendations on Saturday.

Delegates voted to set dues for 2023-24 at \$432, a \$6 or 1.41% increase. A breakdown of dues can be found in the April edition of The Voice.

New Leadership

Paul Schulte, Millard Education Association, was elected NSEA Vice President, and Renae Noble, Chadron Education Association, was elected as one of two Nebraska representatives to the National Education Association (NEA) Board of Directors.

Schulte and Noble will take office on September 1, 2023.

Bylaw Revisions Fail

Three proposed amendments to the NSEA Bylaws were presented for members to consider, none were adopted by a 2/3 majority vote.

Forward Together

Delegates strengthened several of the Association's existing resolutions to include gender neutral language and added consistent language throughout the document.

Seven new resolutions were passed to highlight the contributions Education Support Professionals (ESP) make in education and to support public service

loan forgiveness. Five of the new resolutions emphasized the importance of several observed holidays. These include: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, César Chávez Day, Veterans Day, Juneteenth and observances celebrating women.

Delegates approved four New Business Items to include:

- Work with members, other relevant groups, and advocacy organizations to study the feasibility



The 2023-24 NSEA Executive Committee: Jenni Benson, Renae Noble, Edward Ventura and Paul Schulte.

Delegate Assembly 2023

of developing and proposing state and/or federal action that would provide school districts the necessary additional funding to raise the starting teacher pay in Nebraska and to raise veteran compensation by similar amounts.

- Develop a diverse, statewide task force that will create a plan of actionable steps to facilitate and foster unity among NSEA members.
- The NSEA President will form an AdHoc Committee that will work with the NSEA Children's Fund Board to review policies and procedures.
- Study the feasibility and cost/benefit of adding "full-time-release" to the duties of the NSEA Vice-President.



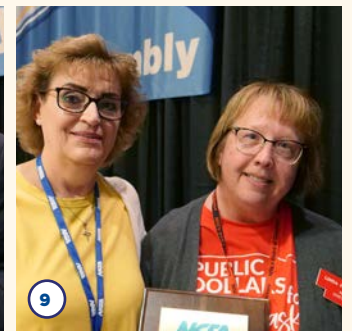
Leaders in Education

NSEA Award recipients were honored during the Delegate Assembly at a luncheon banquet, sponsored by Horace Mann.



Delegate Assembly Awards Photos:

1. Nebraska attorney Scott Norby was honored as the 2023 NSEA Friend of Education. **2. Barbara Miller**, the Multicultural Empowerment Coordinator for Lincoln Public Schools was presented with the NSEA Great Plains Milestone Award. **3. Amy Winters**, Western Neb. Community College, was honored with the 2023 NSEA Award for Teaching Excellence. **4. Elkhorn District President Lisa Hanson** accepted the Gallagher Award. **5. Tayma Rasmussen**, Palmer Education Association, was presented with the 2023 Early Career Educator Award. **6. The Millard Education Association** received the NSEA's 2023 Local Association Public Relations Award. **7. The Scottsbluff Star-Herald** was honored with the NSEA Partner in Education Award. **8. Dr. Andrea Haynes**, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and District Operations for the Westside Community Schools, was presented NSEA's 2023 Administrator of Excellence Award. **9. Lori Anderson**, paraprofessional for the North



Platte Public Schools, is NSEA's 2023 Education Support Professional of the Year. **10. Fremont and Harvard Education Associations** were recognized for leading the way with their contributions to the Children's Fund over the last

year. **11. NSEA-Retired member Art Tanderup** was presented with the 2023 NSEA Community Service Award. His daughter, Vanessa Brand, Oakland Craig Education Association, accepted the award on his behalf.

New Growth Same Direction

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

Spring brings the warm sun, baby animals, and the end of a school year. Congratulations to educators for finishing strong! Assessments are done, graduation caps have flown, and the students of Nebraska have excelled because of your dedication, knowledge, and excellent teaching.

As summer approaches and you reflect on your year, it is the S.E.E.D. Team's hope that you can identify successes and let go of challenges you've encountered. The seasons of our midwestern year offer the chance for new growth. This is the best time to slow down, to rest and to enjoy a break from challenges. Educators should take time to restore, reflect and come back renewed and re-energized in the fall.

SEE YOU AT NSEA U

The S.E.E.D. Team has been a dedicated partner with NSEA and will again be presenting at NSEA University in July. Part of restoration is taking time to learn, and we invite you to join us for our interactive session and discussion on the use of data to guide classroom decisions. We will explore the importance of data-informed decisions to the culture and the overall employee experience. The S.E.E.D. Team will use this discussion time to engage participants in conversations about elevating teacher voice within their own context and linking decisions made about educators to student success. The S.E.E.D. Team will introduce ways that districts can enhance current practices through the layering of student and educator data together, linking the

decisions and experiences of both. This may be an evolution in thinking for some, but for Nebraska's students to succeed, an intentional focus must be placed on supporting the adults to ensure they are highly effective.

CHANGES COMING

The S.E.E.D. Team will be evolving over the summer as well. Dr. Kim Snyder will be leaving NDE and moving into a faculty position at Wayne State College. We are truly grateful for the time, expertise and dedication Dr. Snyder has provided Nebraska education and our team, and we wish her much success. Dr. Sara Skretta will also be leaving the S.E.E.D. Team and transitioning back to her full-time role with UNL. We thank her for sharing her time and expertise with the team during this last year.

Change is an opportunity to refocus and reset. The S.E.E.D. work will continue to take an innovative approach to support and development. Dr. Ryan Ricenbaw and Dr. Julie Downing will continue as members of the team and will work to ensure a smooth transition.

COUNT ON US!

The S.E.E.D. work will continue during the summer and educators can count on the team to be back in publication in September. The state's educational landscape will have new leadership and a new look, and the S.E.E.D. Team will be ready to continue its partnership with educators, working together toward educational excellence for all of Nebraska's students.



New programs

Undergraduate Degree

- Nutrition and Dietetics

Undergraduate Minors

- Data Analytics (online)
- Political Science

Undergraduate Options

- Media Production in Communication Arts
- Natural Sciences in Secondary Education (online)
- Pre-Art Therapy in Art

Undergraduate Certificate

- Unmanned Aircraft Systems for Remote Sensing

Graduate Degree

- Athletic Training

Graduate Certificates

- Digital Marketing (online)
- Healthcare Management (online)



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Agenda for Kearney Conference Takes Shape

Register Today

As the school year heads into its final month, many educators are already busy solidifying plans for the summer. Any member who hasn't yet taken time to check out the schedule for NSEA U may want to do so soon.

The three-day conference will be held in Kearney at the Younes Conference Center, July 17-19. Professional development of interest is on the agenda for the Kearney conference and space is limited for some key sessions. Topics at NSEA U will cover issues such as poverty, leadership, educator wellness, advocacy, collective bargaining and more. Sessions will be held during the mornings and afternoons of July 17 and 18, and the morning of July 19.

Tentative agendas, registration and hotel information are now available for viewing at [NSEA.org/NSEAU](https://www.nsea.org/NSEAU).

NSEA U Keynotes

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

Peter H. Reynolds: On Monday, July 17, the New York Times best-

selling author/illustrator and founder of FableVision Learning, will provide an inspirational virtual keynote message, which will include Reynolds reading one of his books, followed by a question and answer session.

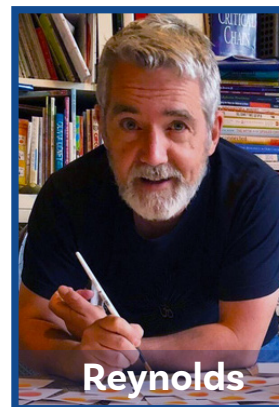
Following Reynolds' keynote, FableVision Learning will deliver in-person sessions for teachers. Sessions will use Reynold's books as scaffolding and will provide hands-on activities to help teachers explore concepts, build self-esteem and, finally, have activities to support bringing the skills back into the classroom. These sessions are limited to 40 participants each, so register today to reserve your place.

Robert Rodriguez: National Education Association (NEA) Executive Committee member Rodriguez has been tapped to present on Tuesday, July 18, during lunch. Rodriguez is a special education

teacher in the San Bernardino City Unified School District in California.

A passionate educator and longtime activist, Rodriguez has represented California on the NEA Board of Directors for six years. He has worked at the elementary, middle, special day class and resource specialist levels. He believes that only through organizing and collective action can we effect real and lasting change for educators, students and public education. He is committed to ensuring that every student—regardless of race, zip code, or economic status—has access to great public schools.

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



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

Nebraska's counties in a wide variety of legal matters. Norby is set to present during the general session on Tuesday morning, July 18.

Dr. Donna Beegle will share her journey from growing up in generational poverty to eventually earning her doctorate in Educational Leadership. She offers an insider perspective on what works to improve outcomes for students living in poverty.

Dr. Beegle is set to present the keynote address Wednesday morning, July 19. She will give an extended training on Wednesday afternoon following lunch. Pre-registration is required.

Josh 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



Norby



Beegle

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.

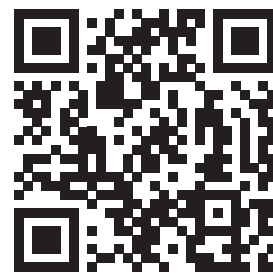
Tom Whisinnand, an educator for 18 years, holds a Master's of Science in Curriculum and Instruction and a Master's of Science in Educational Leadership. Whisinnand (A.K.A.- Mr. Wiz) was instrumental in bringing harmony to his school district and continues to be a staunch advocate of the importance for social emotional learning to be taught so that each student can reach their fullest potential.

Whisinnand and Monroe's keynote presentation will be on Wednesday, July 19, during lunch.

Fun at 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.

REGISTER



Visit [NSEA.org/NSEAU23](https://www.nsea.org/NSEAU23)

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Outstanding Nebraska Teacher Awards



Educators from across the state were honored for their outstanding work before the Nebraska Red-White Spring Game in April.

BCBSNE collaborated with Nebraska Athletics to host Touchdown for Teachers, a program recognizing educators from across Nebraska. Through the program, community members nominated local teachers to win an Outstanding Nebraska Teacher Award.

More than 500 nominations were received and five educators were selected as winners for the 2023 Outstanding Nebraska Teacher Awards. Four NSEA members were among those honored at Memorial Stadium.

Pictured above (left to right): Papillion La Vista Education Association member Lynn Johnson, Omaha Education Association member Samantha Koehler-Overton, Lincoln Education Association member Carmen Zalman and Schuyler Education Association member Brante Hayes.

All winners were notified of their achievement ahead of the spring game while surrounded by their students. BCBSNE and Nebraska Athletics partnered with each teacher's school to host an award ceremony with a surprise visit from Herbie Husker. Each winner received a football signed by Matt Rhule, the Huskers' head coach, a framed certificate, Huskers merchandise and tickets for their students to attend the spring game.



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 Omaha. Stipend and graduate credit available. Visit www.geonebraska.com for more details and application. Workshop funding provided by the Library of Congress.

Thanks for another year of inspiring Nebraska's future, and for letting us be part of *your story*.

We're proud to be here for you:
NebraskaBlue.com/EHAPop

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.

Save with Exclusive Member Offers in May



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 May and search more retailers at neamb.com/marketplace:

Old Navy

Ready to update your wardrobe for the season? Check out fresh and fun styles at Old Navy. Members get special deals and earn extra cash back.

H&M

Get spring and summer looks for less with H&M! With extra cash back and members-only deals, you'll be ready for warmer days while staying on budget. Plus, save even more when you sign up for fashion news and text updates.

Oriental Trading Company

Check out themed décor, prizes for the classroom, party supplies, and more through the Oriental Trading Company on NEA Discount Marketplace. Between members-only deals, extra cash back, and every day sales, the savings add up!

Zappos

Are your feet ready for spring? Discover the latest styles when you shop at Zappos. You'll find comfortable shoes for every day, breezy sandals for warmer temps, and so much more! As a member, you have access to special deals, cash back, and free shipping and returns.

Dell

Explore exclusive deals on Dell laptops, desktop computers, and accessories through the NEA Discount Marketplace. Members get more – free shipping, fast delivery, and extra cash back!

Apply for your Costco Membership today!

1

Make sure you're logged in to your NEA Member Benefits account.

2

Click "Join Now" to purchase your Costco Membership.

Note: To qualify for the \$30 Digital Costco Shop Card, you must agree to auto renewal of your Costco membership on a Visa card at the time of sign-up.*

3

Enter the special NEA Promo Code (found below the orange button at the top of this page) when you enter your payment information.

4

You will see a \$0.01 deduction on your membership cost after the promo code is entered. This indicates that your promo code has been accepted!

Save your hard-earned dollars by paying less for thousands of products. NEA members will receive a \$30 Digital Costco Shop Card* with a new Costco membership and access to over 500 member-only warehouse locations across the country.



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Message from the Executive Director



TRISH GUINAN

“
There are few topics that can solidly unite a majority of Nebraska voters on a singular issue – and support for our public schools happens to be one of them.
”

A Cause We Believe In

It was awe-inspiring to watch the incredible show of solidarity as hundreds of educators marched up Nebraska's Centennial Mall to fight to keep public dollars for Nebraska Public Schools.

Indeed, educators with a shared set of values and a keen understanding of the democratic process are a force to be reckoned with.

There are few topics that can solidly unite a majority of Nebraska voters on a singular issue – and support for our public schools happens to be one of them. Even as an educator, I hadn't fully realized how deep-rooted this support was until I found myself going door-to-door in my own community.

Organizational Power

In 1996, the NSEA mounted a major petition drive that placed two proposed constitutional amendments on the ballot. I was the Fremont Education Association (FEA) president at the time those initiatives—411 and 412—were being considered. The NSEA and the Nebraska Farm Bureau formed a coalition supporting the proposed amendments that would have placed a guarantee in the constitution for the state support of education and a limit on the local property tax levy.

I remember taking a call from my NSEA Organizational Specialist at the time, Tom Martin, who asked if he could bring some NSEA staff to Fremont to meet with our FEA leadership team. The ask was simple: Could FEA members gather enough petition signatures in our legislative district to get these measures on the ballot? The answer was a resounding, “Yes!” Our members split into teams, heading door-to-door, asking Fremont residents to support public education.

When people found out we were teachers they were willing to listen and once we explained how these amendments would help public schools in Fremont, they were ready to sign.

FEA's extraordinary effort in the collection of petition signatures to place

Initiatives 411 and 412 on the ballot was recognized at the Delegate Assembly that year. I was photographed (below) holding the awards for FEA along with Jim Hesse of Shelton and Dee Gillham of Wheeler Central. Hesse wrote numerous letters supporting the



Awards for 1996 Petition Drive: From left, Trish Guinan, Jim Hesse, Shelton, and Dee Gillham, Wheeler Central.

petition to area newspapers. Gillham personally collected nearly 500 petition signatures.

Collectively, the efforts of NSEA members were successful at getting Initiatives 411 and 412 on the ballot but both amendments failed at the ballot box.

Our Ask of You

At the time that I penned this article, the private school tax scheme outlined in LB753 had yet to come up for a final vote in the Legislature. There is still hope that LB753 will not end up on the Governor's desk but if it does, please know NSEA will need your help.

The issue of giving public tax dollars to private schools has come before Nebraska voters thrice before and all three times Nebraskans rejected the proposals. Similar private school scholarship tax schemes have proven to be a costly mistake in other states that has hurt students, public schools, residents and their communities.

For 156 years, NSEA has supported educators, students and public education. Together, we can defeat LB753 and continue to build support for our Nebraska public schools and children.

WCEA-Retired Welcomes Vrbka

The Wilber Clatonia Education Association-Retired met in early January for their first meeting of the year with the help of funds provided by an NSEA-Retired membership grant.

President Sarah Brown and Secretary/Treasurer Nancy Fulton were re-elected for the 2023-2024 year.

More than 20 people attended the dinner meeting in Crete and welcomed new NSEA-R member Judy Vrbka. Vrbka taught music for 34 years, spreading her talents in several school districts including Dix Public Schools, Shelby and Shelby-Rising City, and retired from Wilber-Clatonia. Retirement has not stopped the music for Vrbka. She currently teaches private lessons for voice, piano and guitar, is an adjunct at Doane University and plays for several area churches.



Left to right: Judy Vrbka, Sarah Brown and Nancy Fulton.

The members attending the January meeting reviewed NEA Member Benefits and discussed Lobby Day, as well as upcoming NSEA-Retired conferences.

Several members expressed interest in attending the Spring Conference at the Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha. Plans for the next WCEA-Retired meeting are in the works.

NEA 2023 Retired Conference Theme: Joy, Justice and Excellence

Three NSEA-Retired members attended the 2023 NEA Retired Conference in San Francisco in March.

NSEA-Retired Vice President Roger Rea, NSEA-Retired President-elect John Heineman and NSEA-



Left to right: Roger Rea, John Heineman and Sarah Brown.

Retired Secretary and Membership Chair Sarah Brown met with retired members from across the United States and many of the NEA officers while attending the conference. The participants attended general and breakout sessions and contributed in a brainstorming session for the future directions that NEA should take in promoting public schools and styles

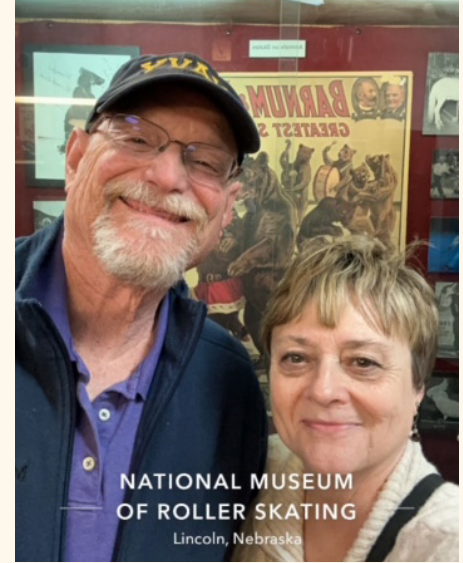
of learning.

Conference topics included: NEA Member Benefits, staying connected after retirement, organizing grant writing, cybersecurity, mindfulness for stress reduction, organizing and NEA 360.

Heineman and Rea also attended the presidents and liaisons meetings led by NEA Retired President Sarah Borgman. The NEA executive committee served as keynote speakers. The final session, led by NEA General Council Alice O'Brien presented current information on legal challenges to public education.

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

Local Events Offer Opportunities for Retired Members



Lincoln Education Association-Retired members Neal and Shelley Clayburn visited the National Museum of Roller Skating for an LEA-Retired event in March.

CORE (Call On Retired Educators)



Many NSEA-Retired members volunteered to help with the Educators Rising Nebraska State Leadership Conference. The event was held on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus. Nebraska high school students from around the state gathered in Lincoln in March to learn new skills. NSEA was a sponsor for the conference. NSEA-Retired contributed \$500 from grant money for prizes for participating students.

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.



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.

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

In Memory

We recognize these members whom we've lost recently.

Kathleen L. Bryant, 78, Lincoln

Gordon J. Peeks, 77, of North Platte

Claude Wingrove Jr., 80, Lincoln

Arthur G. Bates, 93, Lincoln

Robert D. Owen, 87, St. Paul

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

Nominations Open for 2024

Teacher of the Year

2023 Teacher of the Year: NSEA member Renee Jones was a keynote speaker at the 2023 Delegate Assembly in April.



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. 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.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

#ThankATeacher



National Teacher Appreciation Week

Dear Educators,

THANK YOU

for going above and beyond for our students.

Teachers, we will continue to support and advocate for you.

In the classroom and beyond.

THANK YOU

nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION