

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • May 2022



VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

"I did not get this support from AAE."

Also inside:

**Recommended
Candidates:
VOTE MAY 10!**

**2022 Delegate
Assembly Recap**

**NSEA U Registration
and Information**



THE VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association
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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, 2022.

Capitol District

NSEA Board: Deb Rasmussen
NSEA Board: Robin Ankrom
President: Burke Brown
Exec. Committee: Gina Boltz
Julie Colby
NEA Representative Assembly
Cluster Delegate: Devin Garcia

Elkhorn District

NSEA Board: Kimberly Erickson
Treasurer: No candidates
Secretary: No candidates
Exec. Committee: Pamela Anderson
Exec. Committee: No candidates
NEA Representative Assembly
Cluster Delegate: Lisa Hanson

Metro District

NSEA Board: Tanishia Jacobs
Kathie Garabrandt
President: Marsha Edquist
Vice President: Stacie Stevens
Exec. Committee,
Subdistrict 3: No candidates
Exec. Committee,
Subdistrict 6: Stacy Johnson
Exec. Committee,
Subdistrict 9: Judith Ann Stucky
NEA Representative Assembly
Cluster Delegate: No candidates

Panhandle District

NSEA Board: Bryan Regier
Treasurer: No candidates
Secretary: Shannon Kinsella
Exec. Committee,
Area 3: No candidates
Exec. Committee,
Area 6: No candidates
Bylaws Amendment: Passed
NEA Representative Assembly
Cluster Delegate: Bryan Regier

Sandhills District

Treasurer: No candidates
Secretary: Becky Meyer
Exec. Committee: No candidates
Exec. Committee: Lynette Svenson
NEA Representative Assembly
Cluster Delegate: No candidates

Tri-Valley District

NSEA Board: Elena Garcia
Vice President: Jade Bartunek
Exec. Comm.,
East: Rebecca Mousel
Exec. Committee,
Central: Judy A.
Henning, Ed. D.
NEA Representative Assembly
Cluster Delegate: No candidates

R.A. At-Large Delegates

Devin Garcia, Stacy Johnson

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: When a "cheap dues" organization cost her time, money, stress, and provided no real help, Elba teacher Donna Wratten turned to NSEA and learned the true value of membership. Read her story on page 7.

What do you recommend?



NSEA
President
Jenni Benson

A friend of mine recently recommended a new show to watch on a streaming channel. Although it sounded like something I would like, I chose not to start it because I didn't want to be pulled into another series. I tend to stay up late watching TV after I get home from work, typically after 8 or 9 p.m. most nights. I enjoy just sitting and unwinding after all the family has gone to bed. There is not a lot of "quiet time" in my home.

I live with my husband Mike, my daughter, her boyfriend, and four of my 10 grandkids (18-year-old twins, a 6-year-old, and a two-year-old). Our multi-generational home is a choice we made because my husband has significant health issues.

Numerous medical experts have recommended that we keep a watchful eye on Mike. As a family, we acted on this recommendation. Even with my busy schedule, we all take turns as a family making sure he is well-cared for and never left alone for long periods of time.

Just as with other recommendations we're given, it is our choice whether we accept it or ignore it. It is a suggestion. Recommendations can be off the cuff, some come as advice and others are simply opinions.

We receive recommendations every day. Flipping through TV channels or scrolling through social media, we are inundated by opinions and ads for seemingly everything. Oddly enough, sometimes all I have to do is think about something and a similar product or ad will pop up in my social media feed or on my television screen.

In this May edition of *The Voice*, we have included a list of NSEA's recommended candidates in this year's Primary Election. Each year I send an email to NSEA members to share candidate recommendations and explain the education issue-based process by which candidates are evaluated. Each year I receive a few questions and some concerns about our recommendations.

NSEA's recommendations for candidates are a member-led process resulting in a vote of the interview committee and a board of leaders. All have been duly elected to represent you, our members.

NSEA's local and district leaders are involved in the process. Each set of elected positions has its own guidelines, similar but not identical depending on the election. The work of approving the guidelines is done by NSEA's Government Relations Committee.

- Questionnaires are developed and revised for each election year based on NSEA's stance on issues such as: supporting public education, service to students, as well as supporting collective bargaining and benefits for educators.

- Every candidate who has filed receives a questionnaire.

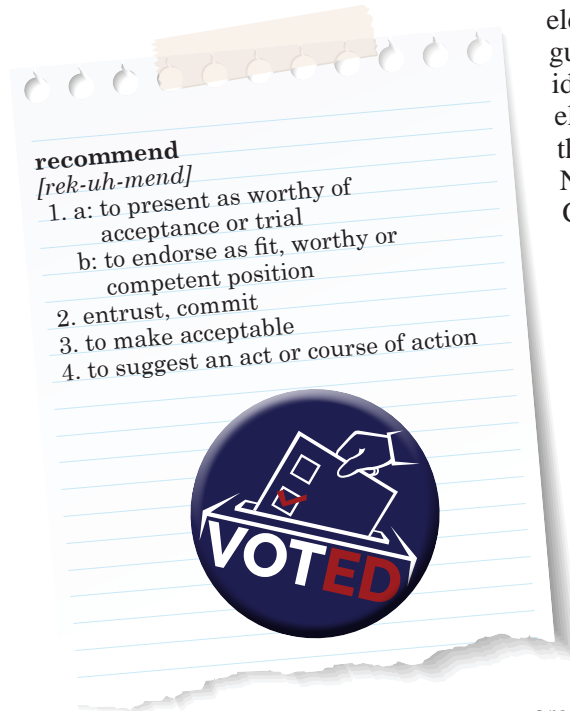
- Member interview teams are selected based on the election area represented.

- Diverse representation is sought reflecting geographic, self-identified ethnic members and political party affiliation.

- Member-led teams interview candidates and vote on a recommendation to forward to the elected board of members.

NSEA has provided candidate recommendations for many years, and it will continue to do so with the guidance of our members through a very specific and comprehensive process. Our history shows a process that produces balanced recommendations for candidates who are registered Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. In the past 20 years, NSEA has recommended 44% Republicans, 53% Democrats, and 3% Independents for the legislature.

My columns this year have focused on inclusion, common ground, and relationships. NSEA's candidate recommendations strive to balance all three of those areas by following our Association's resolutions, guidelines and recommendation process.



“
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”

Support mental health

Recognize the signs and know where to go for care

Mental health and physical health are often thought of as separate components of a person's overall well-being. However, the two go hand-in-hand – affecting one another and influencing a person's health journey.

In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, mental illnesses, such as depression, can increase an individual's risk for physical health problems, like diabetes, heart disease and stroke. The same can be said for physical health issues increasing the chance of developing a mental health condition.

A widespread issue

One in five U.S. adults experienced mental illness in 2020, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Yet less than 50% of people received treatment.

Dr. Josette Gordon-Simet, chief medical officer at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE), said the stigma associated with mental health can prevent patients from seeking help.

"They don't want to have the diagnosis for fear that they may be judged, not only by their coworkers, but by their treating providers, family members and other individuals about whom they care and love," Gordon-Simet said.

Overcoming the stigma associated with mental illness, learning how to recognize the warning signs and knowing where to go for care are important factors in maintaining well-being. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, making it the perfect time to grow your knowledge.

Recognizing the signs

Spotting mental health red flags can be challenging because symptoms vary by illness. A few common signs in adults include the following:

- Feeling excessive worry, fear or sadness;
- Avoiding friends and social activities;
- Inability to carry out daily tasks or handle problems and stress;
- Overuse of substances, such as alcohol or drugs.

The signs in children can differ.

Gordon-Simet said caregivers should monitor children for:

- Lack of interest in favorite activities;
- Regression in behaviors, such as loss of bowel and bladder control;
- An increase in aggression, anxiety or difficulty sleeping.

"I would encourage the parent, if they're seeing a change, to connect with their pediatrician or family physician to discuss where the right resources are and the right approach for their family in their specific situation." Gordon-Simet said. "Every treatment plan has to be individualized."

Additionally, Gordon-Simet stressed the importance of having trained professionals treat those who are struggling. Family, friends and coworkers can provide support.

Care options

BCBSNE has several mental health resources available that offer members convenient and confidential assistance, including Teletherapy. This benefit, provided through the Amwell® app, gives members access to licensed therapists, who are available by appointment seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. local time, to assist with a variety of

conditions, including:

- Depression;
- Anxiety;
- Panic attacks;
- Stress;
- and more.

Other in-network health care providers offer telehealth services as well. For additional information, visit NebraskaBlue.com/Telehealth.

Care management: BCBSNE's care management team includes behavioral health nurses who assist members in managing their health conditions by:

- Sharing resources;
- Managing medications; and
- Coordinating care.

This resource is powered by the Wellframe app. Visit NebraskaBlue.com/Member-Services/Getting-Care to learn more.



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Life-long learners welcome at NSEA U!

NSEA will host its annual NSEA University July 12-14.

Registration is now open to all NSEA members.

Registration is now open for NSEA University! The three-day, members-only conference features guest speakers and breakout sessions to help educators grow professionally while relaxing and networking. NSEA U is planned for July 12-14 at Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln.

What to expect

Subject-matter experts invited to present at NSEA U offer some of the best professional development on trauma-informed classrooms, bargaining, member advocacy, and more. Brittney Hodges-Bolkovac, a member of the Lincoln Education Association, attended her first NSEA U last summer.

“We’re lifelong learners and at NSEA U you’re going to get valuable concepts that you can apply in your classroom and beyond,” Hodges said. “You’re getting a wealth of knowledge in a short amount of time.”

Hodges-Bolkovac attended a session aimed at helping educators create inclusive spaces for students. As a teacher at Dawes Middle School, she finds many of her students are coming into their own identities. Hodges-Bolkovac said the session offered practical takeaways she can use to address the interpersonal needs of her students.

“That session gave me some different tools that I can use with my students. It also offered ways that I can show my students that I’m an ally and advocate for them,” Hodges-Bolkovac said.

Hear from Stakeholders

More than just professional development, educators have the chance to meet with stakeholders to discuss issues that affect classrooms statewide. NSEA U offers a listening session with members of the Nebraska State Board

of Education. Other tracks will offer topics under the five provisions of NSEA’s strategic plan: Bargaining, Membership, Politics, Governance, and Social Justice.

“There’s a political track at NSEA U and I’m like, ‘Whoa, I didn’t know all this stuff that was going on behind the scenes,’”

said Leslie Green, an educator for the Douglas County Youth Center. “I’ve learned a lot about how public education is affected by who we elect as leaders.”

New this year

New this year, NSEA U will host “Preparation to Ratification: A Bargaining Strategy Workshop.” The workshop is designed to walk local negotiations teams from across the state through the entire negotiation process. From preparation to ratification, your team will develop a plan for negotiations, learn strategy from others and explore both unusual and common pitfalls encountered along the way. Space is limited for this day-and-a-half-long workshop. Negotiations teams are encouraged to register for

the workshop online at www.nsea.org/NSEAU22.

A well-deserved respite

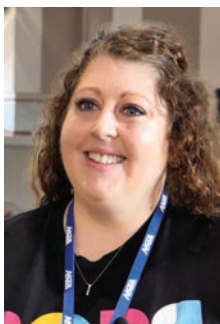
After yet another year of COVID-19 disruptions, educators are in need of a reset. NSEA U offers space for educators to reflect and reconnect with others from around the state. Jessica Foland and her family made the 6-hour trip to Lincoln from Scottsbluff last year. Foland attended sessions regarding professional development on mindfulness and compassion fatigue during the day before joining her family at the so-



Brittney Hodges-Bolkovac smiles for a photo near the banquet hall at Nebraska Innovation Campus during NSEA U 2021. Hodges-Bolkovac is a member of the Lincoln Education Association.



Leslie Green



Jessica Foland

cial event. This year’s social event will kick off with dinner at Morrill Hall, the University of Nebraska State Museum. Morrill Hall hosts exhibits on Nebraska paleontology, meteorites and wildlife. It is home to one of the largest mammoth skeletons ever discovered. Families are welcome to attend the social along with educator members.

Registration

Registration for NSEA U is open to members only. Those wishing to participate in the Morrill Hall social may bring their families along and must sign up by June 30. There is no cost to attend NSEA U or the Morrill Hall social. Members attending NSEA U may reserve a room at the Graduate Lincoln Hotel at a discounted rate, though attendees are not required to stay at the Graduate and may book elsewhere. Members are required to make their own hotel arrangements. NSEA will reimburse members who live more than 60 miles from Innovation Campus for partial hotel costs and will reimburse all participants who drive to the conference for mileage. To register, go to www.nsea.org/NSEAU22.

A woman with grey hair in a braid, wearing a bright yellow jacket over a dark blue top, stands in a classroom. She is smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, a whiteboard has some faint writing, and the back of a student's head is visible on the right. The text "Learn. Challenge. Empower. Transform." is overlaid in the top right corner of the image.

Learn. Challenge. Empower. Transform.

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Elba Education Association member Donna Wratten learned the true cost of AAE’s “cheap” dues: A lack of support and guidance.

Slow help is no help for former AAE member

When cheap dues cost her time and money, Elba teacher Donna Wratten turned to NSEA for help and learned the true value of membership.

When Donna Wratten started teaching at Elba Public Schools in 2017, she felt like a brand-new educator. Yet she had begun her career in education twenty years earlier, teaching Life Science to freshmen at Grand Island Senior High.

“I wanted a job and Grand Island needed a science teacher. Since science is not my thing, we agreed that I would only teach Life Science on a one-year contract,” Wratten said.

As with many new teachers, Wratten said her first year in education was difficult and at the end of the year she was burned out and ready to leave the profession. So, she opened a childcare center and managed it for the next 17 years. She returned to teaching after accepting a position with the Elba Public Schools District.

“I thought maybe it was time to get back into public education,” she said. “So, I did. I started teaching Business and Computers at Elba Public Schools. Two years later my grandchildren enrolled with the district and started busing from Grand Island.”

Wratten admits when she returned

to teaching, she never gave joining the Elba Education Association or the NSEA much consideration.

“I just thought, ‘why do I need liability insurance?’ I come to school, I teach, and I was getting along with the students, so I just didn’t sign up,” Wratten said.

An unfair evaluation

Wratten loves teaching at Elba and describes herself as a team player, always willing to volunteer when help is needed.

“Anytime anybody asks, I always step up,” she said. “I volunteer for a lot. I’m very involved with the school.”

Wratten was leading a technology committee when a relationship with a fellow teacher went south. Last year, that same colleague was appointed interim principal while Elba Public Schools searched for a new administrator. Wratten said things came to a head when the interim principal handed her an unfair evaluation.

“He didn’t have one positive thing to say about me,” she said. “Given our history, I felt having him conduct my

evaluation was unfair.”

Wratten didn’t want the evaluation in her file. She knew she needed help and began looking for answers. Promotional materials provided by the Association of American Educators (AAE) touted similar benefits to NSEA but with a smaller price tag.

“AAE was cheaper, and they said they covered the same things as NSEA,” she said. “It sounded very appealing.”

Wratten called AAE and after a brief conversation with a representative about her situation she joined. Only after she joined did Wratten realize the benefits and level of service provided by AAE fell far short.

Slow help is no help

After that initial call, Wratten was sent a confirmation email that stated that AAE had received her legal contact form. The form, Wratten was told, was still being reviewed and so she waited – and waited.

“I didn’t hear anything,” Wratten said. “So, ten days later I started emailing them and asked, ‘Are you going to help

me here or not?”

Finally, an out-of-state AAE representative replied to Wratten’s email acknowledging they had received her documents and asked if they had permission to find a local attorney to review her case.

“I emailed them back and said, ‘Yes, of course, but you know, that’s kind of what I’ve been waiting for.’ Then they went quiet again. I continued to wait and did not receive any updates,” Wratten explained.

Weeks passed and Wratten had yet to meet with an attorney or talk with anyone who had information or answers. Fed up with the delay, she scoured her phone for an AAE contact in Omaha whose number she had saved.

“So, I texted him and said, ‘I’m not hearing any updates on my case. Do you know what’s going to happen here?’” Wratten said. “At this point, we’re not that far off from beginning a new school year. This evaluation was from the previous school year. I didn’t want to start off the new year like this.”

Her Omaha contact put her in touch with yet another AAE representative. Wratten emailed her but said the process felt like *déjà vu*.

“It was like starting all over again. She was a new AAE person, and I had to explain the whole situation over again.”

The AAE representative eventually explained to Wratten that they were having trouble finding an attorney in her area. Additionally, Wratten was told she wouldn’t qualify for the AAE liability coverage for this matter. They told her this was due to her join date and because the other party involved was an AAE member.

“This is the part that really made me mad. AAE knew all of this when I joined,” she said. “I realize now that they just wanted my money.”

AAE eventually agreed to pay for up to \$500 for a one-time legal consultation – but with a caveat. The nearest attorney AAE could find was in Lincoln and Wratten would have to make the two-hour drive for the meeting. Wratten said the attorney she was assigned didn’t offer much help.

“I wrote down a few things she said, but I had already known most of the

How NSEA Works on Your Behalf



Member Led | Association work is governed by members elected by their peers – educators like you – to serve at the local, district, state and national levels.



Professional Development | NSEA offers professional development opportunities throughout the year on topics ranging from child trauma to stress reduction, and more.



Teaching, Learning | NSEA monitors and works with the State Board of Education as it develops rules and policies that affect your teaching certificate and your classroom.



Health Care | More than 50 years ago, NSEA formed a statewide health insurance plan. Today, NSEA is a managing partner of that plan, the Educators Health Alliance, providing health care coverage for educators, public education employees, and their families.



Advocacy, Bargaining | Established rules govern bargaining and teacher dismissal processes. When schools stray from those rules, NSEA intervenes.



Negotiations | NSEA provides training and research for your local association negotiators to better equip them in their pursuit of improved contracts and working conditions that benefit you and your students.



Friends of Education | NSEA works with members to recruit and elect pro-education candidates for elected positions. From school board members to state senators, elected officials set policies that affect you and your classroom.



Retirement | Teachers deserve to retire with dignity. NSEA works to ensure your retirement plan is well-funded and secure.

legal tips she was giving me because I had already done some research myself,” said Wratten.

On her own

When August rolled around Wratten made the decision to take the matter to the school board. Wratten had already filed a formal grievance but acting on advice from a friend, Wratten sent a 10-page write-up explaining her situation to school board members.

“When it came time to actually go to the board meeting, I was told by the board that they could not help me because then they knew all the information,” Wratten said.

Frustrated by the lack of support and guidance Wratten decided to drop her AAE membership.

“I did not have any support. None at all,” she said. “I felt like I was kind of thrown out there to the pack of wolves to fight for myself.”

Value of NSEA Membership

When Wratten joined NSEA she said the difference in the level of advocacy skills, knowledge of Nebraska’s school laws, and responsiveness was immediately apparent. Wratten began attending Elba Education Association meetings and met with NSEA Organizational Specialist Jen Dubas.

“Jen answered a lot of the questions that I had. She was very informative. She knows our contract and has been there through the whole process,” Wratten said.

Dubas is one of 18 organizational

specialists who work closely with local associations and members. Most of NSEA’s organizational specialists, including Dubas, are former teachers who understand negotiated contracts and salary schedules. With decades of experience and knowledge, NSEA staff can help with anything from legal issues to professional development to communications skills training. They know your school district and are able to deal with superintendents, administrators, school boards and school attorneys on an equal footing.

“I feel like the support I’m getting now from NSEA is the support I should have been getting all along,” Wratten said. “I did not get this support from AAE.”

Wratten was able to include a 10-page write-up explanation to accompany the evaluation in her file. She has since had an evaluation conducted by a different administrator which Wratten feels was fair.

“I feel like I am on a more forward path now that NSEA has been there beside me,” she said. “I now feel like I belong and I am not just a number. Looking back on the entire situation now, I feel AAE just wanted me to be part of their membership number statistics.”

“The NSEA has been the voice for Nebraska public education for more than 155 years,” said Dubas. “No other organization can come close to matching NSEA’s years of experience, member capacity or advocacy for public education.”



Keynote speaker Noel Candelaria takes a selfie with Nebraska NEA Directors Linda Freye and Tracy Hartman-Bradley.

Delegates Back In-person!

Delegates act to address mental health services, elect new leadership and show unanimous support for Education Support Professionals.

NSEA President Jenni Benson dropped the gavel to open the 2022 Delegate Assembly, welcoming more than 200 educators to Lincoln for the first in-person DA in two years. The pandemic led delegates to meet virtually in 2020 and 2021.

Forward Together

Friday evening's keynote speaker, NEA Secretary/Treasurer Noel Candelaria, shared a message of collaboration and solidarity with the assembly and praised the NSEA's 2022 theme: Forward Together.

"The work you do today and tomorrow will determine the direction of NSEA and your work in your classrooms, schools, and communities for the next fiscal year," Candelaria said. "I want to thank you for your leadership, your expertise, and your commitment to advancing racial and social justice for our students and excellence in our professions and public education."

The following day, members were all business, electing two new officers; taking action to improve the working

conditions of education support professionals; and approving an update to the Association's strategic plan.

Support for ESPs

Delegates approved four New Business Items, calling for action by the Association over the next 12 months.

A new business item aimed to help education support professionals drew unanimous support from delegates.

It calls on the Association to establish a statewide task force to study and survey the working conditions of education support professionals in Nebraska.

The task force will focus on three key areas: salary, health care benefits and professional growth. The task force will produce a report with action recommendations for the 2023 Delegate Assembly.

New Leadership

Omaha Education Association EMAC chair Edward Ventura Jr. was elected to serve a three-year-term on the NEA Board of Directors.

Ventura faced former Millard Education Association President Paul Schulte in the race to replace current NEA Director Tracy Hartman-Bradley,

who has served two, three-year terms as a Nebraska representative on the NEA Board of Directors and was term limited.

Ventura's win left a vacancy for the EMAC Chair on the NSEA Board of Directors.

Two candidates were nominated from the floor following Ventura's

win: EMAC Vice Chair Nora Lenz and Millard Education Association member Tonya Stutzman. Delegates voted to appoint Lenz to serve as the new EMAC Chair on the NSEA Board of Directors.



Ventura



Lenz

Student Safety

Hoping to address mental health and safety challenges, delegates approved a New Business Item to establish a task force comprised of members and stakeholders. Task force members will develop legislative and policy recommendations along with staff training that addresses safety, discipline, chronic absenteeism, mental health services, and chemical dependency issues among Nebraska youth.

Bylaw Change

Two proposed bylaws were put forth for members to consider. Proposed Bylaw amendment 2, which staggers the elections for the President and Vice president of NSEA, passed. The election for Vice President will be held at the 2023 Delegate Assembly and the President election will be held during the 2024 Delegate Assembly.

Proposed Bylaw amendment 1, which would have extended the consecutive term limits of the offices of NSEA President and Vice President from two 3-year terms to three 3-year terms, failed.

Leadership Study

Delegates passed a New Business Item to examine the advantages and drawbacks of the current structure for NSEA officers. As part of the study, a poll will be conducted of members to sample their level of support for the current leadership structure as well as for any possible changes in that structure. The committee will report its findings and make recommendations for possible changes in that structure at the 2023 NSEA Delegate Assembly.

New Resolution

Delegates passed a resolution supporting racial healing and support for honest and open conversations about racism. The resolution directs NSEA to work with community, business, and education partners to develop, initiate, and promote programs that will lead to achieving racial justice so that every student and educator can fulfill their full potential.

Strategic Plan & Dues

NSEA Vice President Robert Miller presided at Friday's budget hearing for members and



Support Public Education License Plate

NSEA is in the process of creating a specialty Nebraska license plate to celebrate public school educators. A New Business Item calling for the plate was passed during the 2021 Delegate Assembly. A committee of members and NSEA staff researched the requirements and has received approval from the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to proceed with submitting NSEA's design for review, possible modifications, and approval. The DMV requires 250 pre-orders to qualify for an organizational specialty plate. To pre-order the plate, complete the Application for Organizational License Plates form at www.nsea.org/LicensePlate and mail the completed form with a check for \$70 to: NSEA Celebrate Public Educators License Plate, 605 S.14 Street, Lincoln, NE, 68508. Checks must be written to NSEA.

presented the committee's report and recommendations on Saturday. Delegates voted to set the dues for 2022-23 at \$426, a \$5 or 1.19% increase. A breakdown of dues can be found in the April edition of *The Voice*.

A team of members representing the six governance areas presented its proposed additions to NSEA's Strategic Plan. Delegates voted to approve changes Saturday. Look for the updated Strategic Plan in the 2022-23 Member Service Guide.

Delegates heard a report from President Jenni Benson and Executive Director Trish Guinan about NSEA's work during the past year.

Special Guests

Members were treated to brief remarks from two NSEA-recommended candidates for statewide offices: Sen. Carol Blood, seeking the governor's office and Sen. Patty Pansing-Brooks, a candidate for Nebraska's First Congressional District seat in the House of Representatives. Both shared a message of support to educators and support staff. Sen. Tony Vargas, NSEA's recommended candidate in the 2nd Congressional District

Democratic Primary, visited with delegates during Saturday's breakfast.

Nebraska's 2022 Teacher of the Year, Lee Perez, drew lots of laughs from delegates on Saturday during his keynote address. He called his journey from a troubled youth to the Nebraska Teacher of the Year his "Robert Downey Jr. redemption story" and emphasized the effect teachers have in the lives of their students. Perez is an English as a Second Language teacher at Omaha's Buffett Magnet Middle School.

Locals Honored

Two local associations were honored for their exemplary job raising funds for the Children's Fund. The Papillion-LaVista Education Association was recognized as the local that has raised the most money for the Fund – a total of \$5,392. The Battle Creek Education Association was recognized for its per-member average donation to the Children's Fund of \$10.83 per member. Benson also thanked NSEA staff for contributing \$9,028 to the Fund.

This year the William Gallagher Jr. award was presented to the Metro District for enrolling the largest percentage of eligible members.

Leaders in education honored

NSEA Award recipients were honored during the Delegate Assembly at a luncheon banquet, sponsored by Horance Mann. NSEA Executive Committee members presented the awards and thanked the recipients.



NSEA Friend of Education Award: NSEA's highest honor was awarded to Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors. The NALHD brings expertise and capacity to coordinate quality public health initiatives across communities. Nebraska is fortunate to have the NALHD providing important information to help guide our state and our schools.

Teaching Excellence: Melissa Kriz received the award for her outstanding teaching. Kriz is a member of the Palmer Education Association.



Community Service Award: Palmer Education Association member Kristin Reimers was recognized with the 2022 Community Service Award for her contributions to the Palmer Community.

Administrator of Excellence Award: Jeff Schneider accepts his award for Administrator of Excellence. Schneider is the Superintendent for Hastings Public Schools.



Early Career Educator Award: Juliana Kroeger, Palmer, accepted her award from NSEA Vice President Robert Miller.

Education Support Professional Award: Palmer Education Association member Patricia Harrahill.

Outstanding Media Award: The Stanton Register was recognized for its outstanding work covering education issues.

Public Education Candidates



SEN. BLOOD



SEN. LINDSTROM



SEN. PANSING-BROOKS



SEN. VARGAS



REP. BACON



SLATTERY



SEN. CAVANAUGH



SEN. HUNT



SEN. DEBOER



RICHARDS



BORGESON



YOUNG



DORNAN



FREDERICKSON



DUNGAN



RAYBOULD



SEN. DORN



SEN. BRANDT



LAURITSEN



BOWERS



RAIKES



HELZER



STEVENS



NEARY



SEN. WILLIAMS

The candidates listed below were interviewed by members and because of their support of public education, earned their recommendation and that of the NSEA.

The Primary Election is Tuesday, May 10! Please VOTE!

GOVERNOR

Sen. Carol Blood (D)

Sen. Blood is from a family of educators and has been supportive of teachers and public education during her years as a state senator. Blood is an advocate for early childhood education and has worked closely with the NSEA to develop legislation to improve public education. She has proven to be an effective leader in the legislature, fighting against private school voucher schemes and supporting adequate and equitable state funding for public schools.

“It’s imperative that the professionals in our state education system know they are not only appreciated but also compensated. This includes not only pay but also providing services for mental health, physical health and other potential tools that will help to lift our teachers and support staff,” Blood said.

Sen. Brett Lindstrom (R)

During his time as a state senator, Sen. Lindstrom has worked to pass legislation to eliminate the state income tax on Social Security benefits and to make college more affordable for Nebraskans. He has focused on technology and innovation to expand rural broadband—a key priority for NSEA. Lindstrom has supported legislation to ensure future state aid funding for public schools. As a member of the Revenue Committee, Lindstrom said funding is key to providing quality education.

“Ensuring equalization aid to all 244 school districts and making sure we are innovative for the needs of the future,” he said. “It would be my top priority to fulfill this duty and provide a world-class education for all Nebraska’s children.”

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1

Sen. Patty Pansing-Brooks

Sen. Pansing-Brooks has been a powerful, knowledgeable and effective voice for education during her legislative career. Her philosophy is that most decisions affecting public education are and should remain at the state and local level. Pansing-Brooks said she will be a partner in supporting schools and educators at the federal level to provide data collection research and resources for financial aid to ensure equal access to education.

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2

Congressman Don Bacon (R)

Rep. Bacon believes the federal government has a responsibility to ensure equity and opportunity for all children. He was one of seven Republicans to support a House immigration bill to help undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children. Bacon believes education is an essential component to the future prosperity of America. While in office, Bacon has worked to build a relationship with NEA and the NSEA.

“We will continue to maintain the open dialogue that we have fostered over the last several years,” Bacon said.

Senator Tony Vargas (D)

As a state senator, Sen. Vargas has worked to improve educational opportunities for kids and to support educators. Vargas is a former public school science teacher and previously served as a member of the Omaha Board of Education. Vargas believes every child is entitled to quality public education.

“The right to a free, high-quality public education means that our government should fully fund our schools—including increasing teacher pay,” Vargas said. “I have a strong relationship with NSEA – they know my door is always open.”

NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

District 2

Sarah Slattery

Slattery is passionate about helping Nebraska families and young people. She describes herself as a working-class, single mother who has spent her life dedicated to serving her community. She has years of experience working in schools and is currently head of a school lunch program in Plattsmouth. She is campaigning with the slogan #LunchLadyforLegislature. The interview team of NSEA members said Slattery was “approachable, with an unwavering dedication to public schools and teachers.”

District 6

Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh

Cavanaugh has been an ardent supporter of public schools as a state senator. She has held state and local governments accountable for wasteful spending and stood against attempts to divert public school money to private corporations through so-called “opportunity scholarships.” Before her time in the legislature, Cavanaugh worked at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska.

District 8

Sen. Megan Hunt

Sen. Hunt received NSEA’s support four years ago and has unflinchingly

supported the needs of Nebraska children and public schools. Hunt advocates for high-quality and well-funded public schools as they are instrumental to the success of all children. Hunt is a human rights champion and fights for equality for everyone who wants to call Nebraska home.

District 10

Sen. Wendy DeBoer

Sen. DeBoer comes from a long line of teachers and understands quality public education provides opportunities for all kids to be successful. Before she was elected to the legislature, DeBoer taught at the college level for many years. As a state senator, she fights to make schools stronger by providing teachers with the resources they need to be successful and to help every child be successful.

District 12

Robin Richards and Bob Borgeson

This dual recommendation offers a win-win for education supporters. Richards has strong ties to public education in District 12. She worked as a paraprofessional, a music teacher, and a school board member for Ralston Public Schools. Richards vows to fight to increase pay for all public employees by supporting retention payments and increasing pay for education support professionals.

Borgeson has been a union member and leader for more than 50 years and is currently the state legislative director of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART Union). He will work to protect education employees’ right to collectively bargain for wages, benefits and working conditions.

District 18

Michael Young

The interview team described Young as personable and well-informed on education issues. Young is opposed to school vouchers and believes the conversation should be refocused on equity and wages for our future public educators. Young has served as vice-chair of the Metropolitan Community College of Nebraska for District 2 in Omaha. The interview team wrote that Young, “would be a champion for teachers, paras and students in Nebraska.”

District 20

Stu Dornan and John Fredrickson

Dornan describes himself as a strong and effective advocate for school districts, parents and students. He has served on the Board of Education for Westside Community Schools and currently works as a member of the Educational

Service Unit #3 Board. Dornan seeks to secure additional state funding for public education and to push for more mental health programs for students in need.

As a social worker, John Fredrickson has more than a decade of experience providing mental health counseling services. He is adamant that public education is the backbone of a flourishing society and will ensure that public schools, teachers, support staff and administrators have the resources they need to provide our children “a world-class education.”

District 26 George Dungan

Dungan considers education the great equalizer. He supports fully funding K-12 public education and will work to ensure access to higher education for people of all backgrounds. Dungan hopes providing loan repayment programs will help recruit and retain quality teachers to the state. Dungan will oppose any attempt to use taxpayer dollars to fund or otherwise assist private schools or charter schools.

District 28 Jane Raybould

Raybould describes herself as a staunch advocate and supporter of public education. Raybould hopes to reduce the burden of property taxes by fully funding public education. Raybould supports strengthening the teacher quality pipeline by exploring incentives such as tuition reimbursement, student loan repayment assistance and housing support. She opposes vouchers and tax credits for K-12 schools and supports making college more affordable for all.

District 30 Sen. Myron Dorn

Sen. Dorn is an advocate for local control and voted against a bill that would have capped school spending at 2.5% (LB 986). Dorn said Nebraskans strongly support local control with the election of local candidates for school boards. He believes many Nebraska school districts are doing a good job controlling spending. He says that, generally speaking, when a school district has a high increase in spending, there is a reason, such as growth in student population or building maintenance needs.

District 32 Sen. Tom Brandt

Brandt understands that our children are our greatest asset. Brandt supports adequate funding for public schools to ease the burden on local property taxes. He has worked to increase the capacity of broadband in rural areas to ensure high speed internet access is provided for a reasonable cost throughout Nebraska. Brandt is past chair of the Jefferson County Republican Party.

District 36 Angie Lauritsen

Lauritsen supports strong K-12 education and will work to ensure public schools are supported. She believes every child should be given the opportunity to be successful and that economic opportunities for Nebraskans begin with quality education. Lauritsen believes all employees should have the right to collectively bargain and that public dollars should be used to support only public schools, not private schools.

District 46 James Michael Bowers

Bowers is a social worker at Dawes Middle School. He has been successful on the Lincoln City Council and is an active NSEA member. He knows a strong educational team supports students to reach their potential and how bad policy can hamper even the most seasoned professionals. If elected, Bowers will work to ensure support for public schools by fully funding the state aid formula.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

District 5 Helen Raikes

Raikes retired from UNL as an early childhood education professor in 2020. She is a past policy fellow for the Society for Research in Child Development and served with the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services in the mid-1990s. She pledges to protect our schools in rural communities and stand up for local control to ensure quality, transparent education for all children.

District 6 Danielle Helzer

Helzer is a Nebraska native and

former educator with experience teaching students in Grant, Ogallala, Gretna and Omaha. Helzer currently works in the nonprofit sector. She pledges to be a strong advocate for public education by supporting teachers, prioritizing the needs of students and by working with families and communities.

District 7 Robin Stevens

Stevens spent 40 years as a professional educator. He served Nebraskans as a teacher, coach and administrator, including the last 13 years as superintendent of the Schuyler Public Schools. He supports mentoring programs for new teachers, due process, and balanced funding sources for K-12 schools.

District 8 Deb Neary

Neary is a strong advocate for students, public schools and educators. She believes addressing the teacher shortage is an urgent need and could be helped by offering alternatives to the basic skills test required to enter teacher-prep programs. She has worked as executive director for the Midlands Mentoring Partnership and on education policy for 25 years.

BOARD OF REGENTS

District 7 Sen. Matt Williams

For the last eight years, Williams has served as District 36 state senator. He is a well-respected legislator and a graduate of the NU system. Williams said he will be an advocate for students and families seeking high-quality education that is affordable and accessible. The interview team said Williams supports faculty unions and will support academic freedom.

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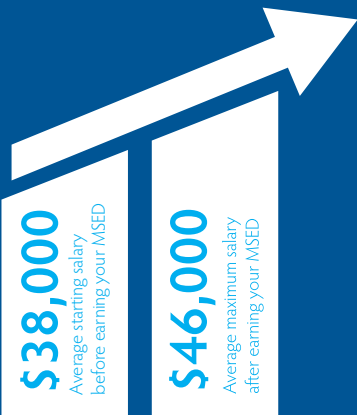
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Lawmakers and onlookers recite the Pledge of Allegiance to open the final day of the 107th Legislature on April 20, 2022.

Success in the Legislative Session

The NSEA Government Relations team tracked more than 76 education- and school finance-related legislative proposals during the 60-day legislative session.

The Nebraska Legislature plays a significant role in all things involving public education and education employees. From funding to curriculum, decisions made in the Nebraska Legislature can determine what public school employees can do and what and how students learn. Your NSEA Government Relations team tracked more than 76 education- and school finance-related legislative proposals during this year’s 60-day session. This session, lawmakers passed several bills that benefit public educators and put a stop to many more proposals that would have hurt school funding and restricted student learning.

Loan Forgiveness

Billed as a new education workforce development law, LB1218 is a comprehensive package that improves student loan forgiveness, teacher certification rules, and education college program entrance exams. It provides \$1,000 in loan forgiveness to student teachers under the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program. A student-teacher must provide service for a full academic semester within a public or private school and meet certain requirements to qualify.

The new law also contains provisions of LB945, which authorizes the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to provide qualifying teachers \$5,000 per year in loan repayment assistance for up to five years. To qualify, an individual must be a Nebraska resident teaching full-time at a public or private school or performing dual-credit instructional duties for public or private school students while employed full-time at a public or private nonprofit college or university in Nebraska. Applications for student loan repayment assistance must be submitted no later than June 10, 2023. The Department will establish rules and regulations prior to that date outlining the application process. NSEA will update our members as information regarding the application process is developed. This loan program will be first come, first serve and available to 1,000 teachers statewide.

Praxis Core Changes

LB1218 also clarifies the State Board of Education’s authority to approve teacher education programs in Nebraska. It specifically provides, “that such approval (of a teacher

education program by the Board) shall not require a statewide examination as an entrance requirement related to basic skills competency....” Currently, postsecondary institutions are using the Praxis Core examination as an entrance requirement to their education programs. The new law prevents the State Board from making the examination an entrance requirement, although colleges may choose to continue to use the Praxis Core in that capacity. There is language permitting an alternative college admission examination, such as the ACT, to demonstrate basic skills competency. The State Board would have to make a rule change to designate the ACT rather than the Praxis Core Exam for this to take effect.

The bill also allows a teacher from another state to demonstrate eligibility for a Nebraska teaching certificate or permit if they possess a similar certificate or permit in that state. Going forward, the State Board must authorize the issuance of a permit or certificate to an applicant who has been offered employment to teach, administer or provide special services by public and private schools in Nebraska.

Mental Health Training

LB852 requires the identification of “behavioral health points of contact” in each school building with access to community providers. In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students being diagnosed with mental health conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the concern. The bill is a commonsense step to ensure access to behavioral health services in communities by identifying points of contacts in each school building who have access to current listings of community behavior providers located in their geographic area and making that information available to parents and students for any needed services. In addition, this new law contains language from LB912, providing mental health first aid training to school personnel. It requires the Nebraska Department of Education to create a mental health first aid training program for teachers and other personnel employed by a school district or ESU. The program will be delivered by trainers who are properly certified by a national organization for behavioral health and must include training on skills needed to assist a student in crisis, including knowledge of available resources for referrals; de-escalation skills; recognizing signs and symptoms of mental illness, and making timely referrals for students needing treatment.

State Aid to Education

The mid-biennium budget bill, LB1012, passed and was signed by the Governor. While the budget fully funds K-12 education – the largest item in the state budget – in accordance with the state’s current school finance formula, K-12 funding decreased in FY 2021-22 compared to the prior year. The budget shows that K-12 funding growth is projected to grow slowly in the next two fiscal years, 2.3% in FY 2022-23 and 1.3% in FY 2023-24. This low funding growth is being caused in part by rising property valuations, which, under the K-12 formula, reduces the amount of aid schools receive.

American Rescue Plan Act

More than \$1 billion of federal funding available from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has been allocated through LB1014. One provision supported by the Governor

that was not included in the final bill – thanks to numerous phone calls made and emails sent by NSEA members – was a proposal that would have appropriated a total of \$60 million in one-time ARPA funds to fund private school vouchers. The defeated plan would have established a pilot “Education Recovery Accounts” program to provide up to \$2,000 for eligible K-12 students to offset the cost of tuition at private and parochial schools. It would have been fiscally irresponsible to use these one-time COVID emergency dollars to fund private school tuition vouchers. Further, using public funds to pay for private schools would siphon needed financial support from public education.

Tax Scheme Defeated

Last year, LB364 was filibustered and failed to advance from General File. Sen. Lou Ann Linehan re-prioritized the bill this year and, thanks to the work of NSEA members and supportive senators, it suffered a similar fate. The bill would have annually diverted up to \$10 million in public tax dollars to fund private K-12 schools. It would have created a so-called “Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit,” a dollar-for-dollar tax benefit for corporations and individuals that donate to organizations that provide private school scholarships. This private school scholarship tax credit would have been significantly more generous than any other tax credit, including those for other charitable donations.

This year, LB364 was defeated on Jan. 12, 2022 – very early in the session. Seeking another “bite at the apple,” a similar private school tax scheme proposal was then introduced by Sen. Tom Brewer in the form of LB1237. This iteration would have allowed a non-refundable tax credit equal to 50% of the amount a taxpayer contributed to a scholarship-granting organization. The clear intent of both efforts was to grow the amount of public tax dollars spent on private schools. Scholarship tax credits have proven to be a costly mistake in state after state. These tax schemes give wealthy individuals and corporations a big tax break while shifting the cost of funding public education to middle- and lower-income taxpayers.

Revenue Cap Bill Fails

The school revenue cap bill, LB986, faced extended debate and failed to advance. It would have limited school district revenue growth, regardless of enrollment growth or other educational needs. While the bill contained potential cap override mechanisms, most would never be triggered as they covered unlikely scenarios for implementation. A large majority of school districts would be subjected to a provision in the bill limiting property tax growth to 2.5% or less over the previous year’s tax request. Large districts with high needs would have likely seen significant revenue losses under this cap.

Censorship Bill Fails

State legislatures across the country have been faced with a spate of bills seeking to ban or narrowly restrict antiracist and anti-sexist education. LB1077 is one such bill – and it failed to advance from the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. The bill sought to narrowly restrict how public postsecondary institutions and public K-12 schools in Nebraska teach a range of topics, including analyses of the centrality of racism and sexism to U.S. institutions. LB1077 is a censorship bill. NSEA supports open discussion and debate in classrooms and the consideration of topics crucial to understanding the past, present, and future challenges we face as a nation and as citizens of our world.

Changes to Parental Involvement Act Stalls

One proposal that did not advance was LB1158, which would have amended the Parental Involvement Act, originally enacted in 1994. The proposal would have required each school district to make all district and school policies available on a public website for each school in the district with a prominently displayed link. It also would have added a new section to the Act stating, “to the extent practicable, each public school district shall make a reasonable effort to make any learning materials, including original materials, available for public inspection upon request.” Impracticable requests for learning materials would not be permitted under the Act. NSEA had concerns that if the bill became law, it would have increased workloads for teachers in some school districts.

Untangling Support, Development and Evaluation



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

It is the season of change. Many educators are staying, some are leaving, others are anticipating the fall start in a new school or trying out a new assignment. Recruiting and retaining educators so that every Nebraska student is surrounded by effective educators every day is the mission of the Nebraska Supporting Educator Effectiveness through Development (SEED) process.

Just like many Nebraska educators, the SEED team is winding down the school year and reflecting on the articles shared in the NSEA VOICE over the last several months. The highlights include:

1. The Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards (NTPPS) are the foundation of a common language within standards that define effective teachers and effective principals in Nebraska. As Nebraska moves toward post-covid education, these standards call for more emphasis on support and development of educators with traditional evaluation playing a smaller part in the system.
2. Research shows teachers stay in districts where they:
 - a) Have a sense of belonging or “fit” with the school and community;
 - b) When they sense their voices are heard and there is collective efficacy; and
 - c) Where the entire system (department or school) is committed to both support and development.
3. Support is provided for foundational student-facing initiatives, such as a teacher’s effective use of materials, classroom procedures, and behavior interventions. Development, on the other hand, is teaching-facing personal and professional growth over their career.

This nuance between support and development will be a new approach to professional development in many schools. To be effective with this shift, education leaders and the people they lead must first understand the nuances between support and development, and more importantly, all must perceive these support and development efforts to be authentic.

The shift comes with one more important nuance: Traditionally, educator development often came from external sources. For the SEED to be impactful, schools need to be

open to growth from many sources. One characteristic of SEED teachers and principals is the shared responsibility for this growth. The days of principals as the solution to teacher effectiveness through evaluation are outdated..

Consider these ideas to bring Nebraska educators into an authentic culture of growth:

- a) Personal reflection through the SEED rubrics;
- b) Participation in coaching toward goals born out of self reflection using video;
- c) Courses in higher education and continuing education, programs to grow leaders;
- d) System-wide processes to observe, get feedback and converse about teaching between and among grade bands, content areas, and contexts.

Principals will always appraise the effectiveness of teachers in their charge. This process serves to ensure that ineffective teachers are counseled out of the profession. The shift to a system of unrivaled support and development will require that education leaders spend the majority of their time and effort supporting those they lead, developing professionals, and using evaluation to remove those who cannot deliver what all Nebraska students deserve.... effective teaching and learning. Evaluation tools are necessary, but evaluation should not be confused with support, development, and growth for educators.

Untangling support, development, and evaluation is a step toward aligning the effort, resources, and purpose for each. Change will be visible when the process includes educator voice in goal setting. Reflection and dialogue will become regular, expected, and valued time spent with colleagues and administrators.



Dr. Julie Downing,
NDE Educator
Effectiveness
Specialist



Ryan Ricenbaw,
NDE Leadership
and Learning
Network Specialist

RESOURCES

Visit the Educator Effectiveness site at www.education.ne.gov/educatoreffectiveness. The standards are available at bit.ly/330g138.

End of the Year Classroom Activities

Add some additional excitement to your class with these fun and easy activities:



Make a Countdown Bulletin Board

Help your students count down to the end of the year with a fun bulletin board! Each day a different student will get their chance to pop a balloon and reveal how many days are left until Summer Break. This is a fun activity they can look forward to at the end of the day, and it's an easy way for you to remind them to stay on-task and get their work in.



Incorporate a Sweet Treat

Nothing beats an end-of-year lesson that includes some fun, summer-inspired foods or drinks! In this activity, students get to compare pink and yellow lemonade and make a graph or chart on everyone's favorite lemonade. After graphing, the students will brainstorm words to describe their favorite and then write opinion pieces about which kind they like best!



Fill Up End-of-Year Memory Bags

Reflect on the year by making memory bags. Here's how: Give students a bag to decorate. You can put a few of your own memories on the sides and back, and/or have them decorate the bag with their own reflections. Then have students place different items in the bag that represent the school year, with a notecard for each item explaining its importance. Finally, each child can present their bag on the last day of school.



Host an Awards Ceremony

Celebrate each student in your classroom on the last day of school by hosting your own class awards ceremony and giving them their own special award – you could even decorate your classroom like a stage! Have students vote on who gets these awards or pass them out! They don't have to be serious – you can make silly awards to give out and the students will still love them.



Host an Interactive Themed Day

Make your classwork reviews interactive and fun by turning them into a whole day or week of activities! Like camping week, market week, movie day, beach day, popcorn day, or surgery day! Use these themed days to incorporate and review skills that you have learned all year before you go into testing (or just as a general year-end overview). Your students will have so much fun they won't even realize that they are practicing their new skills!



Play Friend BINGO

Give each student an End of the Year Bingo sheet and something to write with. The rules: children will find a classmate matching each description and write his/her name in the box. Kids can fill in blanks they already know or they can wander around asking friends if they fit one of the characteristics. The first person to mark five boxes in a row wins. This is a great way to encourage student interactions with classmates!



Write to Next Year's Class

During the last week of school, have your students get together to write letters or a "Survival Guide" for next year's class. Have them write what the incoming class will learn, their favorite class activities, and everything they'll get to do in your classroom. Then save all of the letters, or the guide, and give them to your new class next year.



Host a "Minute To Win It" Game Day!

Here's a fun and inexpensive way to host a game day in your classroom on the last day of school. Have your students compete against each other by playing "Minute To Win It" games. You could even get prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Host a tournament or just do games that students can move around the room and compete in one at a time.



Make an End-of-Year Backpack Book

These Backpack Books are the perfect year-end activity! The backpack book fosters reflection and goal setting for students in science, reading, writing, math, social studies, and more. Display them in your classroom and send home as a keepsake of their year. Find examples at www.bit.ly/BackpackBooks



Give Students a Year-End Surprise

Surprise students on the last day with a "thank you for being in my class" gift. Simple gift ideas include bubbles, goodbye stars, slap bracelets or snacks! Giving your students a little keepsake or treat at the end of the year will show them you care and will remember them.



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Executive Director
Trish Guinan

“
The
liability
potential can
be serious
for public
education
employees.
”

The arrival of May means educators and students awaiting their well-deserved summer break will not need to wait much longer. As education employees, we know that summer doesn't always mean a "break" for educators. Many teachers will lead summer-learning programs, participate in professional development opportunities, take college graduate courses, oversee summer weight-lifting programs, or even travel with students on school-sponsored trips.

I vividly remember watching my daughter Ali sing with her high school choir in Washington D.C. in the summer of 2007. It was her junior year and Ali and her classmates were in the care of Fremont choir instructor Mark Harman.

Giving students opportunities to travel for educational-related events like this one goes a long way in helping them develop life and social skills.

For the educators who help create these opportunities, there are also legal risks. Mark is a long-time Fremont Education Association member and because of this he can travel with the peace of mind that whenever and wherever he is traveling for a school-sponsored trip, he is covered by the Association's liability protection.

All of our NSEA members are protected through the NEA/NSEA Liability Policy. Your coverage is worldwide and includes coverage on and off school grounds. Your liability protection is in force 24 hours a day, as long as you are performing your educational employment activities.

I suspect most of you who are reading this article may already know about this important benefit that comes with your NSEA membership. My intent for focusing on liability coverage this month is to encourage you to reach out to your education colleagues who are *not* NSEA members and let them know that the time to join NSEA is **now**, through our Early Enrollment period.

What is Early Enrollment?

NSEA's Early Enrollment period is April 1 through August 31. Potential members can join NSEA at no cost during this time. They will receive

liability insurance from the date of signing, have access to member-only professional development opportunities offered by NSEA, and have access to the services of NSEA staff to answer questions. Former members are also welcome to join during this time. While access to an attorney is not part of Early Enrollment benefits, Early Enrollment signees may have access to an attorney for incidents that occur when their contract for the 2022-23 school year begins.

It Can Happen to Anyone

The liability potential can be serious for public education employees. As an educator, being well-liked by your administration or having good relationships with students and parents doesn't mean that you are exempt from risk. It can happen to anyone.



My daughter Ali (left) with classmates in Washington D.C. for a school choir trip.

During my time as Advocacy Director, I once answered a late-night call from a frantic music instructor who said that a child was missing from her bus. The teacher had taken two or three buses of band students from northeast Nebraska to Lincoln to play for the state tournament. After the event, she took roll on every bus. They were halfway back when she learned that a student was missing from one of the buses. Before contacting me, the instructor called her principal and the student's parents. She

would later learn that the student got off the bus after she had already taken attendance and that nobody had reported it. The student had left intentionally. The student's parents eventually confirmed their child was safe and with friends.

The member had done the right thing by taking roll and calling her principal right away. She didn't receive any discipline for the ordeal. It's a good reminder of how quickly life can change when something goes wrong. It was the best-case-scenario in a worst-case-scenario kind of situation. When you're sponsoring students there is always a liability risk—period.

You can't buy insurance after the fire

NSEA recognizes the importance of liability protection and it's just one of many benefits of membership provided at no additional cost to our members. You can't buy insurance after a fire and if you wait until you find yourself in a legal mess it will be too late for NSEA's help. To protect your career and good name, the time to join NSEA is right now.

Retired and ready to celebrate!

NSEA-Retired is hosting several retirement parties throughout the state this spring. Registrations for the Kearney area and the Columbus area are available at nsea.org/retired under Events and Registrations. Contact for the Grand Island celebration is provided in the details below. Lincoln Education Association-Retired just completed its welcome and celebration for new retirees on April 28 at Robber's Cave. Omaha is planning an August 5, 4-6 p.m. celebration at the OEA Office. Norfolk and North Platte are also planning retiree celebrations.

Grand Island Area May 11

The celebration will be from 4:30-6 p.m. at Balz Banquet & Reception, 213 North Sycamore, Grand Island. The event will include gifts, prize drawings and refreshments to thank and celebrate new public school retirees. For additional information, contact Guy Roggenkamp at groggenk@charter.net or 308-383-3579. Walk-ins are welcome.



Columbus Area June 3

With the assistance of NSEA Organizational Specialist Mike Wiesen and NSEA-Retired member Dan Schiefelbein, new public school retirees in Columbus and surrounding areas are invited for a celebration Friday, June 3, 9-10:30 a.m. at ESU 7, 2657 44th Ave., Columbus. Food, conversations, gifts, prize drawings and some entertainment will help us celebrate. NSEA-Retired members and new retirees in the area, please RSVP by May 31 at nsea.org/retired under Events and Registrations. For any questions, please contact Dan Schiefelbein at dan.schiefelbein@gmail.com or 402-910-6009 or Mike Wiesen at 800-742-0047.

Kearney Area June 14

With the assistance of NSEA's Kristen Sedlacek and NSEA-Retired member Kathy Gifford (who is also a member of the Kearney School Board), new retirees from Kearney Public Schools and the surrounding areas are invited to attend a retirement party on Tuesday, June 14 at Cunningham's at the Lake, 610 Talmadge St., Suite A, Kearney. The event will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. with food, conversations, gifts, prize drawings as well as a presentation from the local Early Childhood Collaborative of Buffalo County Community Partners. Local NSEA-Retired members will be on hand to thank and greet retirees. Retirees and NSEA-Retired members, please RSVP by June 4 at nsea.org/retired under Events and Registrations. For any questions, please contact NSEA-Retired President Dr. De Tonack at dtonack@neb.r.com or 402-525-4264 or Kristen Sedlacek at 800-742-0047.



NSEA-Retired members attend the 2022 NEA-Retired Conference in Baltimore in March. From left to right: NSEA-Retired members Guy Roggenkamp, Chris Martin, Margie Nowak, Deb Gnuse, Roger Rea, and Arlene Rea.



Chris Martin and Margie Nowak meet with NEA Retired President Sarah Borgman (center) on their way to Baltimore.

NEA-Retired Conference: Retired and ready for action

NSEA-Retired members Guy Roggenkamp and Deb Gnuse of Grand Island, Chris Martin, Margie Nowak, and Arlene Rea of Lincoln and Roger Rea from Omaha attended the 2022 NEA-Retired Conference in Baltimore, MD, March 16 – 18, 2022. The theme was “Uniting for a Better Future for Our Students, Our Educators and Our Communities—Retired Ready for Action.”

Before attending, the group identified a goal: To increase retired membership in Nebraska by establishing new locals. NSEA-Retired applied and received an NEA-Retired grant to help with this goal. Current locals can also apply for monies for the purpose of increasing membership. Wilber-Clatonia

has applied for a charter. Other possible locals are McCook, Kearney, North Platte and Columbus.

Participants went to several sessions and shared ideas they learned that could be implemented to fulfill the purpose of increasing membership and locals. The ideas include: Establish a Member Benefits ambassador position for NSEA-Retired; expand lobbying efforts during our Governance Day and beyond; remind members “We are all doing the best we can with what we have and what we know.” Also, “Sharing thankful thoughts with others, adds joy to all.” We must be mindful of the backgrounds of the many different students and staff we meet, serve, and work with every day.

Are you the next Teacher of the Year?



In 2023, one teacher will represent the good work of all Nebraska teachers as the Nebraska Teacher of the Year. Application forms are now available through your school administration or at the website listed below. Teachers may self-nominate or nominate a colleague for the honor.

Applications must be postmarked by midnight (CDT) July 15, 2022. A panel will review applications, and up to five finalists will be selected for interviews in August. The 2023 recipient will be recognized at an awards luncheon in November 2022.

Since 1972, the Nebraska Teacher of the Year program has recognized outstanding certified teachers in a pre-K-12 classroom setting who plan to continue in active teacher status in a state-approved or accredited school.

A two-minute public speaking video is required.

The application seeks information on educational background and personal development, community involvement, philosophy of teaching and learning, and commentary on the teaching profession.

The 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.

For additional details, visit www.education.ne.gov/toy. Those interested may reach program coordinator Lora Sypal at (402) 471-5059 or lora.sypal@nebraska.gov.

GIEA case moves closer to trial

A case filed with the Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) is one step closer to trial. The Grand Island Education Association (GIEA) contends its bargaining unit members are being paid inconsistently with its Negotiated Agreement with the school district.

Attorney Nick Welding, on behalf of GIEA, filed a petition with the CIR against the Grand Island Public Schools (GIPS) on Jan. 21, 2022, alleging a violation of the Industrial Relations Act. GIPS responded by filing a motion to dismiss the case and on March 28, the CIR denied that motion.

GIEA's petition states that the school district is misclassifying several members of its staff who are filling vacant positions. GIPS has incorrectly classified these certificated educators as long-term substitutes and is paying them much less than the salaries agreed to under the GIPS-GIEA Negotiated Agreement.

GIEA contends this violates the integrity of the collective bargaining process and is a practice prohibited by state law.



Just One pays off: Southeast Community College Professional Staff Association members Susan Kash-Brown and member Yolanda Gomez received a \$50 check for their efforts to grow membership during the Just One campaign. Local associations that sign up at least one member during January and February received \$50 for a membership event of its choosing.

Education Support Professionals Unite in NOLA for national conference



NEA ESP National Conference attendees: Jenny Wood (South Sioux City), Christy Hodge (Millard), Travis Vo (Westside) Judy Roach (NSEA) and Mary Reynolds-East (Millard).

Four education support professionals represented Nebraska at the NEA ESP National conference in late March.

Jenny Wood with the South Sioux City Education Association, Christy Hodge and Mary Reynolds-East, both with the Millard Education Association and Travis Vo with Westside Education Association were joined by NSEA Organizational Specialist Judy Roach for the conference.

ESP members working in Pre-K to

Higher-Ed convened in New Orleans and over three days took part in interactive workshops to enhance their knowledge and skills to advocate for students and educators.

Vo was honored as a nominee for the NEA Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year Award, which honors a member whose achievements reflect the vital role ESPs play in public education.

In Memory

We recognize these educators and NSEA members whom we've lost in the last few months.

Linda A. Hartman, 73, Alliance
Dean E. Meisinger, 88, Plattsmouth
Leah Woofter, 97, Beatrice
Steven Delay, 77, Hebron

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



THE PRIMARY ELECTION IS TUESDAY, MAY 10! PLEASE VOTE!

The candidates listed below are recommended by NSEA. They were interviewed by members – your colleagues – and deserve your vote on **Tuesday, May 10!**

GOVERNOR

Sen. Carol Blood (D)

Sen. Brett Lindstrom (R)

NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

Dist. 02: Sarah Slattery

Dist. 06: Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh

Dist. 08: Sen. Megan Hunt

Dist. 10: Sen. Wendy DeBoer

Dist. 12: Robin Richards &
Bob Borgeson

Dist. 18: Michael Young

Dist. 20: Stu Dornan &
John Fredrickson

Dist. 26: George Dungan

Dist. 28: Jane Raybould

Dist. 30: Sen. Myron Dorn

Dist. 32: Sen. Tom Brandt

Dist. 36: Angie Lauritsen

Dist. 46: James Michael Bowers

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