

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • January 2023



EDUCATION FOR ALL

*Focus Programs Offer Alternatives
for Successful Student Learning*

- January 18:
I Love Public
Schools Day!
- Preparing for the
2023 Legislative
Session
- Be A Leader!
NSEA Leadership
Opportunities



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Letter of intent date: March 15

Know your rights if asked to sign letter early

Signing and returning a letter of intent to your district employer is important, but don't let the pressure get to you – especially if you're asked to do so too early.

A letter of intent (and/or accompanying contract) signifies your plan to return to teaching in your district next year. State law allows school districts, on or after March 15 each year, to require certificated employees – teachers, counselors, speech pathologists, psychologists and others – to sign binding letters of intent and/or individual contracts.

Yet some administrators distribute letters – and ask for them back – even before the winter holidays. Often in an effort to get a handle on next year's staffing situation, superintendents might suggest letters be returned by Feb. 1 or March 1.

Knowing your rights is important. Members should not rush to sign, but rather be deliberate and use the time allotted by law. Making a decision months in advance may cause problems down the road if your personal situation changes.

State statute is clear: A school district cannot require teachers to make a commitment before March 15.

However, failure to sign and return the letter by stated deadlines that fall **on** or **after** March 15 is a threat to a teacher's employment.

If administrators distribute such a letter or contract prior to March 15 and ask for its return prior to March 15, a local association representative should fax a copy to their assigned NSEA organizational specialist at 1-402-475-2630.

In the meantime, an appropriate response to the letter is "I don't know yet" or "I'm not sure."

Letters that ask for a signature and return **on** March 15 or on a specified date **after** March 15 are appropriate. In such cases, it is vital to sign and return it by the due date.

Have questions? Call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 to speak with your region's organizational specialist.

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: Across the state, public schools have the local control and understanding of how to best serve students and their communities. Learn more about how focus programs are benefiting Nebraska on page 7.



From left to right: NSEA-Retired member Jane Erdenberger, NSEA Board member Paul Schulte, NSEA President Jenni Benson, Commissioner of Education Dr. Matt Blomstedt, Nebraska State Board of Education member Maureen Nickels, retired NSEA staff member Jay Sears.

Neb. Education Commissioner Blomstedt says farewell

After serving nearly nine years as the Nebraska Commissioner of Education, Dr. Matt Blomstedt will officially step down from his post on Jan. 3.

During his public service he has worked to meet the needs and challenges of schools, educators and students. Blomstedt served the state through an unprecedented pandemic and worked collaboratively with NSEA to answer member's pandemic-related questions in a series of Facebook Live events in 2020.

"Nebraska was fortunate to have Matt guiding the education community during the COVID-19 pandemic," said NSEA President Jenni Benson. "His calm, steady leadership helped our schools navigate the many challenges presented by the pandemic."

As Commissioner, Blomstedt actively sought and uplifted the voice the Nebraska educators with the creation of an Advisory Panel of Teachers to assist him in gaining insight into and understanding of the issues that affect educators, their students, classrooms and schools.

For his work with educators, Blomstedt was recognized with the

Association's highest honor, the NSEA Friend of Education Award.

Blomstedt has announced that he will join a national education consulting group to work on federal education policy. In December, leaders in education and others thanked Blomstedt for his work and dedication to education and the state

with a farewell reception held at the SAC Museum in Ashland.

The effort to find Blomstedt's successor is already underway. The State Board of Education has selected the Omaha-based consulting firm of McPherson & Jacobson to head up the search for Nebraska's next commissioner of education.

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Applications Open for 2023 Belz, Lynch, Krause Grant

Good teachers are always looking to improve their skill set, and the NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz, Lynch, Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2023 application deadline is Tuesday, Feb. 28.

Grants are awarded for projects related to improving a local association, development of instructional materials or for staff development for individuals of a local association. Eligible recipients are any NSEA member, group of NSEA members or any NSEA local association.

The application must include an abstract of the project (not to exceed four typed pages) including the following information:

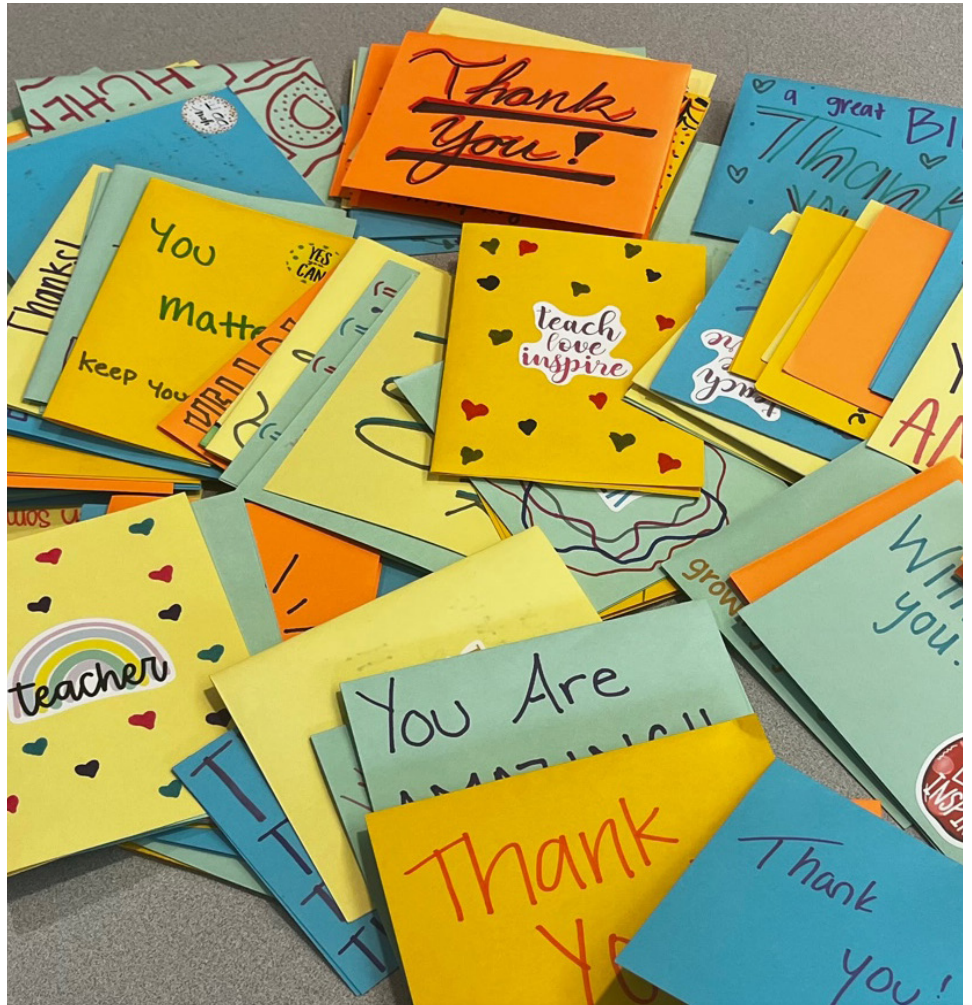
- need;
- how the project will address that need and relate to professional growth goals;
- project description;
- timeline;
- a budget statement; and
- methods of evaluating project success.

Applications must be submitted online by 11:59 p.m. CST on Feb. 28, 2023. Recipients will be notified in March.

A letter describing and evaluating the project must be submitted by the recipients to NSEA's Scholarship and Grants Committee within three months of project completion.

The grants are named for John Lynch, NSEA's executive director from 1959 to 1974; Paul Belz, executive director from 1974 to 1984; and Helen Krause, NSEA president in 1966 and the first Nebraskan to serve on NEA's Executive Committee.

Further details and the application form may be found at www.nsea.org/BLK. For questions, contact Brandon Langlois at 1-800-742-0047 or email brandon.langlois@nsea.org.



Thank you, educators: When NSEA Aspiring Educators gathered for their fall conference, they took time to pen more than 100 notes of thanks to Nebraska educators. NSEA will work to distribute the notes this winter.

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Neb. Loves Public Schools Announces Plan for the Future

For more than a decade, Nebraska Loves Public Schools has worked to connect audiences to the humanity of public schools. The campaign originated in late 2010, when the Sherwood Foundation approached film director Sally Nellson to help change the narrative around public schools.

Since 2011, Nellson, the executive producer for Nebraska Loves Public Schools, has interviewed hundreds of educators, administrators, students, and more resulting in scores of films designed to raise awareness about the high-quality public education in Nebraska.

"What began as a 3-to-5-year project is wrapping up after 12 remarkable years," Nellson said. "One of our goals has been to make sure the people who work in our Nebraska public schools feel seen, heard and appreciated. Beyond our films, we've done what we call 'community rallying' in which social media, special events, and 'I Love Public Schools' merchandise all help to promote the films and amplify the message."

Changes Ahead

In December, Nebraska Loves Public Schools announced that, due to a loss of funding, it will cease to exist. However, a new 501(c)3 organization has been formed by an independent board of directors to support public schools through similar activities with its mission to connect people with the humanity of public schools. The new non-profit organization will be

led by a board of directors comprised of Nebraska educators, school administrators and professionals. As the new organization waits for official tax-exempt status from the IRS, the Omaha Public Schools Foundation is acting as its fiscal agent. No administrative fees are taken by the OPS Foundation and 100 percent of all donations are being allocated to the mission. The current Nebraska Loves Public Schools campaign will officially conclude and its online merchandise store will close on Jan. 27, 2023.

What about the t-shirts?

Although the online store will close, it is hoped that branded merchandise will be available in other ways, according to Liz Renner, deputy director for Nebraska Loves Public Schools.

"We're going to be having a huge 'bye for now' sale in January," Renner explained. "We hope to still see people continue to wear the I Love Public Schools shirts. We hear all of the time that the shirts are people's first touch point with the campaign and with the Nebraska Loves Public Schools mission. Those shirts and their message have a proven ability to ignite constructive conversation about our public schools."

Mission

"We've worked to highlight the many societal issues affecting students and families. We've sought to help people outside of our public schools better understand that what happens inside schools today bears little

resemblance to what school looked like when they were there. We aimed to build awareness, empathy and support," Renner said.

I Love Public Schools Day is Jan. 18, 2023

Renner wants to remind everyone that the eighth annual I Love Public Schools Day will take place on Jan. 18, 2023. "On this special day, we are asking Nebraskans to share on social media why they love public schools using the hashtag #ilovepublicschools."

"Over the years we've been excited to see how engaged educators have become in sharing their own stories. They've helped to create a culture of storytelling in Nebraska public schools and one that has become the envy of districts across the country," said Nellson.

Want to show your support for the campaign?

Anyone wishing to show their support for the new organization as it waits for official tax-exempt status from the IRS can make a tax-deductible donation www.bit.ly/ILovePSDonate

"From the beginning, the support from our public school educators and education support professionals has been imperative and is deeply valued by our organization," said Nellson. "With your help, the mission will live on through more storytelling and amplification of the critical benefits our public schools to our children, our communities, and our state."



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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A creative public school for creative minds: Lincoln Education Association members Ethan Carlson (left) and Brent Jarosz (right) review artwork created by students in their first semester at Bay High.

Nebraska Chooses Education for All

Lincoln Education Association members Brent Jarosz and Ethan Carlson just completed teaching their first semester at a one-of-a-kind public school in Lincoln. This fall, Bay High opened its doors to 75 high school juniors and seniors to offer curriculum that is focused on emerging digital technology and content creation.

Created in partnership with The Bay (a program for economically and culturally disadvantaged youth sponsored by the nonprofit Rabble Mill), Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) and Nebraska's business and charitable community, the Bay High Focus Program is one of several focus programs offered by LPS.

Students in the program focus on four subject areas: photography and videography, coding and development, design and digital asset creation, and digital storytelling and podcasting.

"Monday, Wednesday and Friday students focus on core academic classes, but we teach them in a contextualized way to allow students to link these core concepts back to their area of interest. Tuesdays and Thursdays is a special course where we get to dive into the

content creation," said Jarosz.

The Bay is also home to Nebraska's only public, indoor skatepark. It houses a coffee shop, a venue for concerts and offers after school programs for the community. In planning for Bay High, The Bay modified its facilities to create open-concept classrooms, a computer lab and edit bays for audio and video recording.

"We want this program to help develop the future workforce," said Carlson. "Our focus programs are meant to fit with upcoming trends in business. We need bright minds and Gen Z are incredible creatives."

Public schools for every student

While Bay High is the newest focus program for the LPS District, it's not a new concept for Nebraska public schools.

In 2012, state lawmakers passed

legislation that allowed the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to establish quality standards and guidelines for career academy programs in the state's secondary schools. The state now boasts career academies in 12 school districts. From Omaha to Scottsbluff, public school students have the choice to explore career fields of interest in agribusiness, construction, welding, early childhood

education, information technology, engineering, software development, biotechnology research, video production, web design and web development just to name a few.

Belonging and purpose for every student

Across the state, public schools have the local control and understanding of how to best serve students and their communities. Research has shown that students involved in career academy programs like Nebraska's have higher

"We want this program to help develop the future workforce. Our focus programs are meant to fit with upcoming trends in business."

— Ethan Carlson,
LEA member

GPA's, increased graduation rates and a sense of belonging.

Just a few months into Bay High, Jarosz can already see the difference in his students.

"We've had a few parents tell us, 'I've seen a huge change in my child this first semester.' So maybe their student is not getting all A's or B's as this point, but they can see that difference. I know this program is already hitting home for students," said Jarosz.

Such programs can make a huge difference for individual students as well as for communities and businesses. Even given disruptions caused by the pandemic, Nebraska's 4-year high school graduation rate was over 87% in 2022. And Nebraska students continue to have one of the nation's top ACT scores. According to NDE, when compared to the 15 states where 100 percent of graduates took the ACT, Nebraska tied for the second highest percent of students meeting the English benchmark and the third highest percent meeting the math benchmark.

No one understands the important investment of public schools more than educators preparing young Nebraskans for their future. Public schools are free and open to all.

Nebraska chooses public schools

Public schools serve more than 90% of the children in Nebraska and there are many public school options available. Parents may choose to send their child to another public school in the same or different school district or enroll their child in various public school focus programs and academy schools like Bay High.

"I think a focus of the district is to provide that school choice," explained Carlson. "As educators, we have to meet every student in their individual way. That's our goal at Bay High. We, as a program, want to create choice in our projects and in our assignments, knowing, of course, we have a rigorous district curriculum to meet and exceed expectations. We meet students exactly where they are."

The Independence Academy

Special education teacher and Lincoln Education Association member Megan Britton's classroom is a zoo. To be specific, Britton's students are learning age-appropriate curriculum, community-based training inside the Lincoln Children's Zoo.

Students receiving special education services who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) can access services through ages 18 to 21 within Nebraska public schools. Lincoln Public School provides students with relevant educational, life, social and career experiences in business settings through a program called the Independence Academy.

"The work we do with students in the Independence Academy is something I'm passionate about because it gives students a leg up on what they're going to see post public education," said Britton. "So rather than just finishing high school and going straight into a job or into a program, they have the opportunity to gain job skills."

Through the Independence Academy, the community becomes an extension of the classroom and provides opportunities for skill development in the areas of communication, employment, independent living, and

recreation. Students work, learn, and prepare in the community.

"In a regular school building, our students don't have the opportunity to interact in their community—they're isolated to the school. But when we're working in the zoo, students are interacting with little kids and adults. Having them practice those social skills is important," explained Britton. "A lot of these students have spent their whole lives mostly interacting with only family members or they've been isolated to special education courses. Working in the zoo gives them the opportunity to interact with those who don't have disabilities."

The Academy's mission is to prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate a positive transition into adult living after high school. The Independence Academy operates at several locations including Duncan Aviation, the Food Bank of Lincoln and now, inside a coffee shop at Bay High.



Megan Britton



SAYING NO TO VOUCHER SCHEMES IN NEBRASKA

NSEA opposes legislation that would privatize public schools. We will continue to fight tax scheme proposals that hurt public schools and which have proven to be a costly mistake in other states. There are only two ways to pay for such private school voucher schemes—take money from already underfunded public schools or raise taxes. Both are unacceptable.

Private schools can choose to accept or reject any student, and many have long waiting lists and only admit top students. On average, parochial schools reject 67% of all applicants. Other private schools reject nearly 90% of applicants. "Choice" does not reside with parents but with private school admissions committees.



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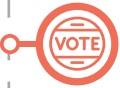
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FILE FOR OFFICE



Jan. 1 - Feb. 5, members file for state and district offices to be elected during Feb. 17-March 12 voting.

VOTING



Voting for district officers, NSEA Board, RA At-Large & Cluster Delegates will take place **Feb. 17 - March 12**.

DA CLUSTER DELEGATES



Filing for NSEA Delegate Assembly Cluster Delegates runs **Feb. 21 - March 5**.

NSEA VICE PRESIDENT & NEA DIRECTOR



Elected at Delegate Assembly. Candidates' campaign materials for delegates are due by **March 14**.

VOTING



Locals with fewer than 26 members will vote for NSEA Delegate Assembly Cluster delegates **March 12 -21**.

LOCAL NSEA DELEGATES



Locals of 26+ members will elect delegates by secret ballot and report verified delegates by **March 23**.

NSEA-RETIRED



Election of NSEA-Retired officers, and delegates to both DA and RA will be by mail-in ballot in **March**.

ASPIRING EDUCATORS



Aspiring Educators members will vote for their NSEA Delegate Assembly delegates at the AE Delegate Assembly on **March 24-25**.

NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY



April 28 - 29
Election of NSEA Vice President and NEA Director, plus Bylaws and 2023-24 Association dues.

REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY



National Education Association Representative Assembly **July 3 - 6, 2023**

ALL NSEA MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR DISTRICT OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY AT-LARGE DELEGATES. VOTING WILL BE FEB. 17 - MARCH 12.

ALL MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR THEIR LOCAL ASSOCIATION DELEGATES TO NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY. CLUSTERED LOCALS WILL VOTE MARCH 12 - 21. LOCALS WITH MORE THAN 26 MEMBERS, TALK TO YOUR LOCAL PRESIDENT FOR YOUR LOCAL ELECTION TIMELINE.

NSEA ELECTIONS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

It is time to consider filing for Association office or as a delegate to the statewide and national assemblies. Elections will occur in the coming months in order to comply with federal statute which dictates all officers and delegates must be elected by secret ballot. Here are the details:

NSEA Vice President and One NEA Director (3-year terms)

Elected at NSEA Delegate Assembly

Candidates seeking these offices must declare their candidacy by Tuesday, Feb. 15, in writing to the NSEA Executive Director, trish.guinan@nsea.org. Alternatively, candidates may mail their declaration to NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508. Candidates are responsible for reviewing the candidate policy guidelines found at:

www.nsea.org/delegateassembly

NSEA Board of Directors, 3-year terms

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 5

Elected during statewide online elections

Members in four of NSEA's six governance districts will elect representatives to serve on NSEA's statewide Board of Directors.

The NSEA Board of Directors meets at least seven times each year, and as needed. The board carries out the Association's mission as directed by members at the April Delegate Assembly.

There is one open seat each from the Tri-Valley, Elkhorn and Capitol districts, and two seats in Metro. There are no NSEA board vacancies in the Sandhills and Panhandle districts (*see map*).

District Officers, 2- and 3-year terms

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 5

Elected during statewide online elections

Each of NSEA's six governance districts includes a set of officers and executive committee members. Officers are elected by members in that district. The term of office is determined by the Bylaws in each district. Members will fill these vacancies:

- **Capitol District:** vice president and one seat on the executive committee.
- **Elkhorn District:** president and two seats on the executive committee.
- **Metro District:** treasurer, secretary and four seats on the executive committee (subdistrict seats 1, 4, 7 and 10).
- **Panhandle District:** President and four seats on the executive committee (Areas 1, 3, 5 and 6).
- **Sandhills District:** president and two seats on the executive committee.
- **Tri-Valley District:** treasurer, secretary and two seats on the executive committee (one each from the West and Central sub-districts).

NEA RA At-Large District Cluster Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 5

Elected during statewide online elections

The 2023 NEA RA will be held July 3-6, 2023 in Orlando, Florida.

To elect members to serve as voting delegates to the National Education Association's annual Representative Assembly business meeting, **local associations with fewer than 76 members** are grouped in clusters per district. For instance, all local associations in Elkhorn District with fewer than 76 members will vote on a common set of candidates to serve as delegates to RA.

Cluster delegates fund their own RA costs. The exact number of openings will be set after the membership count for 2022-23 is finalized in mid-January, but there are approximately:

- **Capitol District:** 10 openings
- **Elkhorn District:** 11 openings
- **Metro District:** 1 opening
- **Panhandle District:** 5 openings
- **Sandhills District:** 6 openings
- **Tri-Valley District:** 9 openings

Aspiring Educators (formerly Student Education Association of Nebraska) Delegate to NEA RA: 1-year term

Members of Aspiring Educators will elect delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly at a virtual AE Delegate Assembly on Saturday, March 24-25. They also will elect region representatives, secretary, president elect and an underclass representative. Watch for the Aspiring Educators newsletter for details on how to attend.

Aspiring Educator members will then elect delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in statewide balloting following the March AE Delegate Assembly.

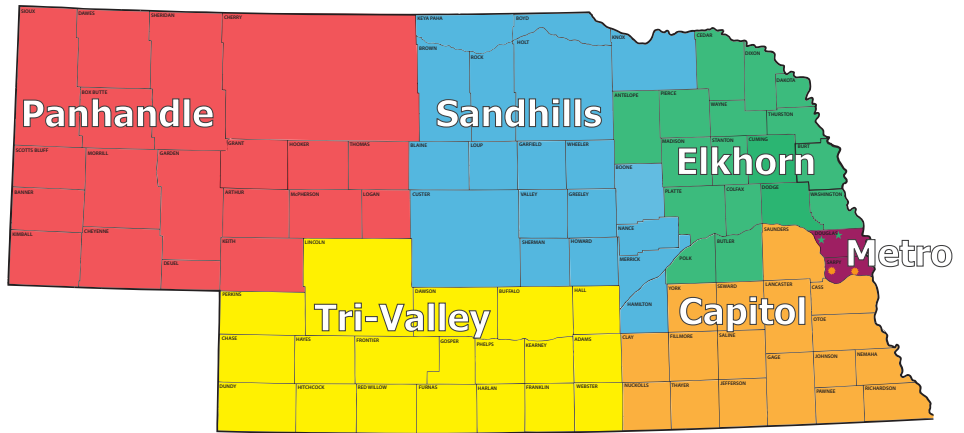
NEA RA At-Large Statewide Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 5

Elected during statewide online elections

Delegates from **local associations with more than 76 members** must be elected by secret ballot, according to federal statute.

Any active NSEA member is eligible to place his or her name on the state-



In order to comply with NEA guidelines, the ■ Gretna Education Association and ■ Springfield/Platteview Education Association will be included in Capitol District. ★ Metro Community College Education Association and ★ Bennington Education Association are included in Elkhorn District.

wide, at-large delegate ballot for NEA Representative Assembly by filing at nsea.org. Members elected as statewide delegates will be reimbursed for transportation, lodging and meal expenses. Depending on the final mid-January membership count, three to five delegate slots will be available to at-large candidates.

NSEA-Retired Officers; Delegates to NSEA Delegate Assembly and NEA RA (1-year terms)

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 5

Elected during mail-in ballots in March

Members of NSEA-Retired will use mail-in ballots in March to elect the following positions:

Retired Board of Directors

- **President** (3-year term)
- **Vice President** (3-year term)
- **Capitol District** (3-year term)
- **Elkhorn District** (3-year term)
- **Sandhills District** (3-year term)

Delegate Assembly

- **Capitol District:** 4 delegates
- **Elkhorn District:** 2 delegates
- **Metro District:** 5 delegates
- **Panhandle District:** 1 delegate
- **Sandhills District:** 1 delegate
- **Tri-Valley District:** 3 delegates
- **At Large:** 2 delegates

Representative Assembly

- **Metro and Capitol Districts:** 1 delegate
- **Other Districts and Out of State:** 1 delegate
- **At Large:** 3 delegates

NSEA Delegate Assembly At-Large District Cluster Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Sunday, March 5

Elected during online election by cluster locals per district, March 12-21

To elect voting delegates to NSEA's annual Delegate Assembly business meeting, **local associations with fewer than 26 members** are grouped in "clusters" in each of NSEA's six governance districts. For instance, all local associations in NSEA's Capitol District with fewer than 26 members will vote on a common set of candidates for delegates to DA.

The exact number of openings will be set after the membership count for 2022-23 is finalized in mid-January. There are approximately:

- **Capitol District:** 8 openings
- **Elkhorn District:** 10 openings
- **Metro District:** 1 opening
- **Panhandle District:** 6 openings
- **Sandhills District:** 7 openings
- **Tri-Valley District:** 12 openings

NSEA Delegate Assembly Local Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Set by each Local Association

Secret ballot elections held at the local association level, with delegate names reported to NSEA by March 23

Delegates from **local associations with 26 or more members must be elected by secret ballot**. Presidents from those associations will be notified of the number of delegate representatives they may elect, based on their local association membership.

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Nominate colleagues for top honors

Now is the time to discuss who you or your association might nominate for one of the honors to be given at NSEA's Delegate Assembly in April. Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, Education Support Professional or deserving group. The 2023 Assembly will be held April 28-29 at Lincoln's Marriott Cornhusker Hotel. Members are eligible for:

- ★ **Early Career Educator:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in their first five years of teaching.
 - ★ **Award for Teaching Excellence:** Honors a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a period of time.
 - ★ **Education Support Professional of the Year:** Honors an ESP who has excelled in his or her job. Finalists will be notified in March, with winners announced at the Assembly.
 - ★ **Community Service:** Honors NSEA members or local associations involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.
 - ★ **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding internal communication.
- Members can also nominate individuals or groups for these awards:**
- ★ **The Great Plains Milestone:** Honors an individual or group for promoting human and civil rights.
 - ★ **Administrator of Excellence:** Honors an administrator who strives every day to help students and staff be successful.
 - ★ **Friend of Education:** Honors a newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.
 - ★ **Outstanding Media:** Honors newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.

Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 17, 2023, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online at www.nsea.org/DA, with required supporting material mailed to the NSEA.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Virtual 2022 Special Delegate Assembly Action Update:

The Virtual Special Delegate Assembly 2022 was held Saturday December 10, 2022

Two proposed bylaws were considered. Proposed Bylaw Amendment 1, which updated the notification of delegates for proposed bylaws amendments, passed.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 2, which staggers and defines the terms of the NSEA President and Vice President, passed.

All information regarding the Special DA was shared in the November and December Voice magazines.



Mark Your Calendar

- **February 15, 2022**
Deadline to declare intention to run for NSEA Executive Officer Vacancies
- **February 17, 2023**
Award Nominations Due
- **March 15, 2023**
Deadline to propose amendments to the NSEA Bylaws
- **April 28-29, 2023**
Annual DA, Lincoln



Capitol District Dinner (left to right): LEA Retired member Pat Etherton, Senator-elect Jane Raybould, LEA Retired member Linda Lannin and Sen. Tom Brandt.



Capitol District Dinner: LEA member Jake Bogus talks with Sen. Anna Wishart.



Capitol District Dinner (left to right): NSEA President Jenni Benson with Waverly Education Association member Michael Cobelens and Senator-elect George Dungan.



Capitol District Dinner (left to right): Milford Education Association member Sean Nutzman talks education with Senator-elect Jana Hughes.

Dine and Discuss: Budget, Retention & Mental Health

Ahead of the convening of the Nebraska Legislature this January, NSEA members from the Capitol and Metro districts met with senators to share their biggest challenges and concerns with the goal of supporting their students and Nebraska’s public schools.

The Capitol District Dinner was attended by more than 70 NSEA members, governance leaders, State Board of Education members and senators for the November gathering. Members discussed how teacher and support staff shortages are creating a significant strain on educators, students and schools and the need to address the decades-old, near-last-ranking in state aid to K-12 education. Nebraska ranks 49th in state aid to education which forces Nebraska public schools into an overreliance on local property taxes for funding.

The Metro District Dinner was held in early December and was well attended with more than 65 attendees gathering in Omaha at the Scott Conference Center.

This session, NSEA will push for legislation that expands both the quality and quantity of learning in our public schools, because learning is how we prepare future generations to succeed. NSEA will fight for the protection of the health –

both mental and physical – of students and school staff, and work to help recruit and retain qualified educators. During the 2023 Legislative Session, NSEA will focus on:

- Legislation to increase state aid for public education that supports quality public education and equal opportunities for every student;
- Legislation expanding both the quality and quantity of learning in our public schools;
- Legislation designed to recruit and retain qualified educators because well-trained educators provide professional excellence in our classrooms;
- Ensure public school students and staff have respectful, safe and secure learning and working environments;
- Provide additional funding for behavioral health services and resources, and provide all school staff with behavioral health training and much more.

Stay up-to-date on important information that affects you and your classroom by subscribing to the Capitol Update at www.nsea.org/subscriber.



Metro District Dinner (left to right): Omaha retired members Liz and Roger Rea, Senator-elect John Fredrickson, Elkhorn member Leanna Klimisch and Bellevue member Cindie Watts.



Metro District Dinner: Senator John Cavanaugh with Metro District President Marsha Edquist.



Metro District Dinner: NSEA Ethnic/Minority Affairs (EMAC) Committee Rep. Christina Running Hawk Ellison with EMAC Executive Committee Chair Nora Lenz.



Metro District Dinner (left to right): EMAC Executive Committee Chair Nora Lenz, Omaha Education Assoc. (OEA) member Justin Potts, Neb. State Board of Education Rep. Jacquelyn Morrison and OEA member Christian Schuerman.

What's going on in the legislature?

Nebraska's 108th Legislature will convene on January 4, 2023. The 90-day session is expected to cover a wide range of proposed bills that will affect Nebraska public schools, students and staff.

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

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

Stay up-to-date with legislative decisions that affect public education. Receive updates about legislative activity in NSEA's Capitol Update, sent to your personal email inbox each week of the legislative session.

Subscribe to the Capitol Update at www.nsea.org/subscriber.

An Insider's Perspective on Growing up in Poverty

NSEA members will have an opportunity to hear remarks from special guest Dr. Donna Beegle at NSEA U this summer. The three-day conference will be held in Kearney at the Younes Conference Center, July 17-19, 2023. Dr. Beegle is set to present the lunchtime keynote address on Wednesday, July 19.

Dr. Beegle will share her journey from growing up in generational poverty to eventually earning her doctorate in Educational Leadership.

Dr. Beegle will give an insider perspective on what works to improve outcomes for students living the crisis of poverty. According to Beegle, information on poverty comes from the media, which predominately provides stories that perpetuate myths and stereotypes. Beegle explores the attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and language that get in the way of student success.

Poverty a top concern for NSEA members

Surveys conducted by NSEA show that finding ways to help students living in poverty is a top concern for many educators. During her information-packed session, Dr. Beegle will engage members in interactive activities to raise consciousness and explore how assumptions and judgments may prevent us from breaking barriers.

Breaking Poverty Barriers for Students

Dr. Beegle said she grew up not knowing the words her teachers used. She said "ain't" in almost every other sentence and did not know when to say "gone" or "went," "seen" or "saw." According to Beegle, she didn't believe that education was for her or for people like her. So, she dropped out during her freshman year of high school. She wouldn't earn her GED until the age of 26.

Beegle said that research has shown that students and families who live in the crisis of poverty communicate and relate differently than their middle-class peers and educators. Dr. Beegle will provide an engaging activity to assist participants with understanding their communication, relationship, and learning styles and present concrete tools for building stronger relationships and communicating more effectively across poverty barriers.

Learning Objectives:

Dr. Beegle hopes that NSEA members who attend her keynote will:

- Enhance their knowledge of poverty and its impacts on education success;
- Develop a common definition of poverty and a common language to discuss issues with peers and partners;



NSEA U 2023: Dr. Donna Beegle will give a NSEA U keynote address at the June 19, 2023 lunch banquet.

- Gain an understanding of the different life experiences of poverty and how they affect communication styles and educational success;
- Gain a framework for improving communication, teaching and learning skills; and
- Gain tools and strategies for individual and organizational actions that have proven to improve education outcomes and learning styles and present concrete tools for building stronger relationships and communicating more effectively across poverty barriers.

Dynamic presenters sought for NSEA U 2023

NSEA is looking for dynamic presentations for its annual NSEA U conference. The conference is a chance to provide members with the skills needed to lead in their local associations and to provide the best social-emotional learning in their classrooms. Topics are expected to cover issues such as social justice, leadership, educator wellness,



advocacy and more.

Present at NSEA U:

If you have an area of expertise and would like to share your knowledge with teachers from across the state, complete the request for proposals (RFP) application form found at:

www.nsea.org/nseau.

Looking for more information? Visit NSEA.org/NSEAU

Save with exclusive member offers

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

GNC

Find everything you need to reach your wellness goals: vitamins, supplements, minerals, herbs, protein powders, and diet and energy products. Join GNC Rewards for free and earn cash back on purchases!

BowFlex

Make fitness your priority! Check out the full lineup of Bowflex cardio and strength equipment: indoor cycling bikes, Max Trainers, home gyms, treadmills, adjustable dumbbells and more. Get free shipping on select products.

New Balance

Choose from hundreds of quality footwear and apparel items and accessories for the whole family—outfitting them for their favorite sport or recreational activity! Free shipping on most orders over \$50.

Gaiam

If yoga is more your style, find great deals on yoga mats, props, clothing, and accessories—plus meditation supplies. Gaiam Yoga Studio offers over 75 fitness classes for all levels—even some free ones on YouTube!

Samsung

Explore the latest foldable mobile phones like the Galaxy Z Fold4 and Z Flip4. Track sleep and exercise with Galaxy smart watches. Earn points from eligible purchases on Samsung.com and the Samsung App!

If you don't find what you're looking for in the exclusive member deals above, simply search for your favorite retailer by entering the store name in the search box on the NEA Discount Marketplace page!

Have a student teacher? Recommend joining Aspiring Ed!



SIGN UP

Will you have a student teacher in your classroom this semester?

If your answer is 'yes,' then there's an easy way to help that student teacher thrive and survive: encourage them to join the NSEA-Aspiring Educators. You may even set aside some time to walk them through the process and help them understand the myriad of benefits they'll receive as part of the Association.

Feeling especially generous? Pay their Aspiring Educators dues for the year (only \$30 for NSEA/NEA AE dues)!

Benefits of membership for

Aspiring Educators include student loan forgiveness workshops, access to year-round professional development opportunities, big savings through the NEA Discount Marketplace, the \$1 million Educators Employment Liability insurance policy and much more.

First-year educators will also benefit from involvement in NewGEN, NSEA's New Generation of Educators in Nebraska. The organization is comprised of early career educators in their first seven years of teaching who network and support each other through the challenges of a new teaching career.

For more information or to help a new member register, go to www.nsea.org/JoinNow, or contact the NSEA Membership Department by calling 1-800-742-0047 or emailing membership@nsea.org.

BINGO!

Educators: This two in one Bingo! card game is a fun way to teach second through fifth graders about the many useful items made from pig and soybean by-products. The "Pork" game is on one side of the card, the "Soy" game on the other. The free Bingo kit includes game tokens, worksheets, call-out-cards, and a classroom poster.

The Nebraska Pork Producers Association is proud to offer this educational resource and several others, all available to you for **FREE**.

Order your Bingo! kit today by visiting neporkeducation.com or scan the QR code.



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Dr. Julie Downing,
NDE Educator
Effectiveness
Specialist



Ryan Ricenbaw,
NDE Leadership and
Learning Network
Specialist



Dr. Sara Skretta,
NDE Educator
Effectiveness
Specialist at UNL

It is a new year and the S.E.E.D. team hopes you had a restorative holiday break. The importance of taking a vacation from the stress of work can improve your physical and mental health, your perspective and help you feel refreshed, resilient and ready to handle what comes next. The Mayo Clinic found that not taking time to rest and recover can cause damaging effects as a person and an employee.

Educators are the most important and impactful influence on the success of students, and the S.E.E.D. Team is honored to work daily with educators that deserve gratitude and admiration for their work, but the most important thing that educators deserve is to have their practitioner perspectives heard. The global pandemic has exposed gaps in Nebraska's educational system, and the impact of these gaps is being felt by educators in classrooms statewide. The S.E.E.D. Team believes that connecting with educators and understanding the circumstances that educators face today is foundational to the success of Nebraska students. That success starts with educators that feel healthy so they can grow, learn, inspire, and be effective.

Stress from accelerated learning, covering classes, and higher student needs might have educators feeling less effective. "More than 40% of teachers surveyed told the EdWeek Research Center they feel less effective in their job as a result of stress." (Sparks, Education Week, December 14, 2022) The S.E.E.D. Team is invested in supporting conditions where educators can find support for their own learning.

One of the indicators in the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards (NTPPS) states: "An effective teacher... creates and maintains a collaborative learning environment that supports each student's diverse academic,

social-emotional, linguistic, and physical strengths and needs." (Teacher Standard: Learning Environment, Indicator C). While effective educators are busy ensuring that the student needs in this indicator are being met, districts need to ensure that the system provides conditions for educators to take care of their own needs as well, so that they can continue to meet the needs of their students.

It is well documented that to be in one's best health and be most effective in the classroom, a balance of personal and professional responsibility is required. Recent research suggests we are getting better at caring for ourselves and colleagues and the S.E.E.D. Team is grateful to support that growing and learning balanced with REST for Nebraska educators.

R-Reflect. Decide what your goals as an educator are and calibrate them to the definition of excellence in your school.

E-Eat well. Drink water and sleep. Physical health is the foundation of all effective practices.

S-Seek effectiveness. Practice your gifts and improve your practice. Do both every day. Find a colleague who is interested in the same. Let them help you and be helpful to them.

T-Take time to learn. No one looks perfect when they are learning a new skill so give yourself time and space to learn. Share your learning with your colleagues and school leaders, so they can grow with you.

As you care for and educate Nebraska's students this semester, the S.E.E.D. Team encourages you to REST. Prioritizing rest, recovery, and balance will ensure that you are at your most effective in the classroom.



NSEA-Retired elections coming with new year

Consider running for leadership roles in NSEA-Retired. Candidate filing for the upcoming elections will be available online at www.nsea.org/retired by Jan. 6, 2023. Filing deadline is Feb. 6, 2023.

Open positions on the Retired Board of Directors, each for a three-year term, are president, vice president and one board member each from the Capitol, Elkhorn and Sandhills districts.

Probable numbers for NSEA Delegate Assembly will be four delegates from Capitol District, five from Metro, three from Tri-Valley, two from Elkhorn, one from Panhandle, one from Sandhills and two at-large.

NEA Representative Assembly delegates will include one from the Capitol and Metro districts combined, one from the remaining four districts and out-of-state members combined, and three at-large delegates. NSEA-Retired President Dr. De Tonack serves as a delegate at both DA and RA by virtue of office.

Candidates are encouraged to provide a 50-word statement with their applications. All of these positions take office Aug. 15, 2023.



Lincoln Education Association-Retired celebrates the holiday season

LEA-Retired celebrated the holiday season with a catered lunch on Dec. 7. Lunch was followed by some classic old-time country music presented by a group called *3 Chords and a Cloud of Dust*. The musical group passed on a donation for their entertainment to fund holiday presents for children.



Update your Contact Information today!



NSEA-Retired is mailing all members a letter requesting them to confirm or update their contact information. Please watch for this mailing and return the requested information in the postage-paid envelope or by following the online link provided in the letter to confirm or update your information. We want to stay “in touch” with you – and, remember, you may be one of three members to win a \$50 gift card for your efforts!



NSEA-Retired receives \$7K NEA grant

As the new year begins, NSEA-Retired will begin utilizing \$7,000 in grant money awarded by NEA-Retired.

The grant funds will be available to local retired groups for events to increase membership, assist in local communities, or for educational projects. Grant money will be distributed through an application process.

The NEA grant dollars will also be provided to support Aspiring Educators and Educators Rising events.

Register for Professional Development Opportunities offered in 2023!

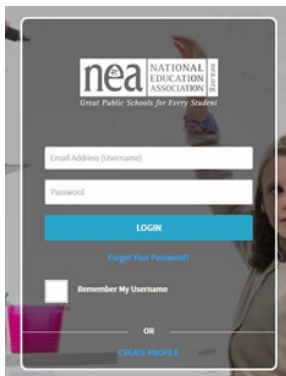
One of the many perks of your NSEA membership is access to exclusive webinars tailored to the education profession.

A full slate of sessions is set for 2023, with topics ranging from financial essentials to planning a summer vacation. Go to www.nsea.org/webinars for a complete list of sessions.

NSEA members only

- **2023 NEA Member Benefits Overview:** Tuesday, Jan. 10, 5:30 p.m. Join NEA Member Benefits to learn how you can save on hotels, car rentals and flights with your membership.
- **Delegate Assembly 101:** Thursday, Jan. 12, 5 p.m. Learn about NSEA Delegate Assembly's role in driving the focus of the association and how to become a delegate.
- **NSEA Legislative Update:** Tuesday, Feb. 7, 7 p.m. Receive a 2023 Legislative Update from Brian Mikkelsen, NSEA Director of Political Action.
- **Retirement Seminar:** Monday, Feb. 13, 7:30 p.m. The presentation will provide attendees basic information about the benefits that they will be receiving upon retirement from the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System.
- **Student Debt Management:** Thursday, Feb. 16, 5:30 p.m. During this presentation, members will learn about two Student Loan Forgiveness Plans and how they can qualify for loan forgiveness.
- **Budgeting:** Thursday, Mar. 14, 7 p.m. Budgeting for some is easy. Budgeting for others is nearly impossible. This session will convey the basics of budgeting and provide the tools needed to help you on your budgeting journey to financial tranquility.
- **Financial Essentials:** Tuesday, March 14, 5:30 p.m. Specifically designed to help education professionals plan for retirement by reviewing financial concepts that can affect members during each life stage, especially as they move closer to retirement.
- **Retirement Seminar:** Tuesday, April 4, 7:30 p.m. The presentation will provide attendees basic information about the benefits that they will be receiving upon retirement from the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System.
- **Vacation Planning:** Tuesday, April 11, 5:30 p.m. Hear about the services and cost saving opportunities available to you as a member. Benefits are available all the time, but can be especially useful during holiday shopping and summer vacation planning!

UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION



- Go online to www.myNEA360.org
- Click **CREATE PROFILE** (if you are new to edCommunities) or
- LOGIN (if you already have an edCommunities profile)



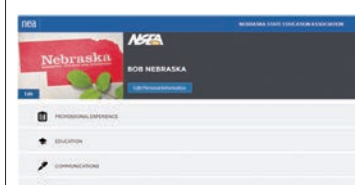
- Enter your information
 - Click **REGISTER FOR ACCESS**
- Skip this step if you have already created an edCommunities profile.



- A verification message will be sent to your email.

- Click **MyNEA360 Profile**

[MyNEA360 Profile](#)



- Click Edit Personal Information to access your personal data
- Ability to review and update your own record as necessary.
- Quick links to resources
- Help Desk - Get answers on your time.

If you experience technical difficulties with the myNEA360 website, you can send your updated information by email to membership@nsea.org or call NSEA at (800) 742-0047.

Speaking of Education

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

— Franklin D. Roosevelt



Request PAC Refund by Feb. 15, 2023

NSEA's Political Action Committee is supported by voluntary donations collected with NSEA dues. Support for the election of recommended candidates is provided by an annual contribution of \$15 from each NSEA member.

Any member may request a refund of those contributions for the current membership year. Alternatively, members may direct the \$15 contribution to be used for bond

elections and school ballot issues only.

Refund requests must be in writing to NSEA President Jenni Benson. Each letter must be individually composed and contain an original signature of the member. Photocopied, computer-generated letters or email messages are not accepted. Each letter must indicate whether all or part of the contribution is to be refunded or designated for

ballot issues.

Requests must be postmarked no later than Feb. 15, 2023. In order to efficiently use dues dollars, requests for refunds received by the due date will be processed and mailed in a single batch after that date.

Mail requests to NSEA President Jenni Benson at 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508. For questions, email Jenni.Benson@nsea.org or call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

Turn to the Children's Fund this winter

Nebraska winters can make even the most warmly dressed children shiver. Imagine walking to school in the biting cold of the early morning

without a coat or warm

mittens, or with shoes that are falling apart. Unfortunately, this is a reality for many children in Nebraska. Teachers frequently spend their own hard-earned dollars to help these children. But a teacher can't assist every child encountered during the school day, much less during the school year. That is why NSEA created the Children's Fund. Since 1994, donations

to the Children's Fund have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to help children in need.

Contributions to the NSEA Children's Fund come from teachers and businesses across the state.

Locals, businesses contribute

Contributions are tax deductible — and it's important to note that every penny contributed goes to help children. NSEA picks up the administrative expenses.

Local associations are encouraged to brainstorm fundraising ideas; to challenge other local associations; to collect change; to host a jeans day fundraiser; or consider other ways to contribute toward the fund.

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; purchase a bus ticket for a child with no other means to get to school; and more. During the pandemic in 2020, the NSEA Board of Directors, along with NSEA-Retired, directed a combined \$60,000 to food banks serving all 93 Nebraska counties to help reach students and families in need of meals.



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.