



New Teacher Handbook

*“Alone we can do so little.
Together we can do so much.”*

– Helen Keller

Welcome to the Profession



Dear New Teacher,

Welcome to a wonderful career and a great profession. Welcome to teaching.

Welcome also to association membership. Your NSEA membership includes many benefits – from negotiating for and protecting your income and benefits, to professional development, to offering discounts at merchants around the state and nation. We advocate for you.

NSEA's 18 field staff meet or talk daily with teachers across the state to provide them with answers and direction in their professional lives. They are here to serve you, to answer your questions, and to help

you succeed in your chosen profession.

A \$1 million liability policy, which protects you if a civil suit is brought against you as a result of your teaching duties, is also a benefit of membership.

Regular use of your NSEA membership discount card can save you more than the cost of membership each year. The NEA Member Benefits program can save you even more, with financial services, credit card offers, investment and insurance programs.

Importantly, NSEA represents you in the legislative arena, which affects everything you do, everything you learn and everything you earn in the classroom.

You'll find there is great benefit from joining your professional organization. Thanks for your membership, and have a great year!

Sincerely,

Nancy Fulton, President

Vision Statement

We, the members of the Nebraska State Education Association, believe the purpose of public education is to promote a democratic society. Therefore the following principles guide our union's work.

Our Vision

Our vision is a great public education for every student.

Our Mission

The mission of the Nebraska State Education Association is to advocate for all education professionals, empowering them to provide an excellent public education for every student.

Our Core Values

We value equal access to a quality education that is adequately and equitably funded.

We value diversity as being vital to the education process and integral in preparing students to function in a democratic society that protects human and civil rights.

We value being accurately-informed activists contributing to the ever-changing system of public education.

We value partnerships that foster excellence, nurture a desire for life-long learning, and create responsible, productive citizens. We value the expertise of education professionals, and recognize that fair compensation and respect are vital for a quality public education.

Code of Ethics

The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach, and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

The educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The desire for the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of members of the community provides the incentive to attain and maintain the highest possible degree of ethical conduct. The Code of Ethics of the Education Profession indicates the aspiration of all educators, and provides standards by which to judge conduct.

The Code can be found in its entirety at www.nsea.org/nsea-code-ethics

Important Contacts

NSEA

Toll Free..... 800.742.0047
Lincoln 402.475.7611
Fax 402.475.2630
Omaha 402.731.0800
Lincoln Ed. Assoc. 402.489.7500
Millard Ed. Assoc. 402.731.0400
Omaha Ed. Assoc. 402.346.0400
Email info@nsea.org

National Education Association

Switchboard..... 202.833.4000
Member Benefits 800.637.4636

Teacher Retirement

Toll Free..... 800.245.5712
In Lincoln..... 402.471.2053

State Government

Governor's Office 402.471.2244
State Operator 402.471.2311

Nebraska Dept. of Education

Switchboard..... 402.471.2295
Certification..... 402.471.0739

Insurance Programs

BC/BS (claims)..... 800.642.6004
Blue Cross/Lincoln 800.562.6394
(Kent Trelford-Thompson; rep.)
Calif. Casualty/A+ 800.346.6840
Horace Mann 800.999.1030
First NE Credit Union... 800.882.0244
EHA 866.465.1342
online: www.ehaplan.org
EHA Advocate:
Greg Long 402.440.1358
email: greg@ehaplan.org



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NSEAMedia



nsea_org



nseao.org

NSEA: Your Expert Partner

Teaching is the noblest of professions.

Yet as noble as your work may be, you will encounter bumps and adversaries along your career path in the coming years. That is why NSEA is at your side.

Your local association, the NSEA and the National Education Association form America's leading organization committed to advancing public education. While you teach, NSEA works to smooth the road for you and your students, ensuring that education policy, finances, rules and regulations enhance, rather than hamper, your work with children.

For instance, in recent sessions of the Nebraska Legislature, a group of senators pushed to replace your retirement plan with a less secure, reduced retirement benefit. One senator proposed to introduce charter schools in Nebraska, which would have pulled funding from K-12 public schools.

Another bill proposed to replace the elected State Board of Education with gubernatorial appointees.

None of those schemes would have advanced public education.

Meanwhile, a suburban school district asked teachers to sign seemingly innocent paperwork that ultimately would have given the district authority to conduct credit checks, to interview friends and family, to collect details about each employee's "character and general reputation" and even check into a teacher's living arrangements.

Nearly every day, there are efforts to chip away at quality public schools; to reduce your pay, benefits or rights; to hamper the forward progress of public education.

In each case above, NSEA's response was swift and effective. Your retirement



“While you teach, NSEA works to smooth the road for you and your students, ensuring that education policy, finances, rules and regulations enhance, rather than hamper, your work with children.”

Millard's Matt Heys knows well the expertise of and support of NSEA.

plan was saved; the charter school bill died; the plan to gut the State Board was killed. The background check plan was withdrawn.

NSEA works daily with educators entangled in sticky or job-threatening workplace situations. Millard teacher Matthew Heys recently checked his school mailbox to find a subpoena in a case involving a student's family.

“I'm the last possible person you would think would walk into a buzz saw like this,” said Heys, a respected social studies teacher at Millard West High School.

Heys eventually found himself being deposed in front of a half-dozen attorneys representing the school district, parents, the state and other interests. Fortunately, Heys had NSEA on his side. He had valuable guidance from Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan and, ultimate-

ly, NSEA attorney Scott Norby.

“Being able to talk to Trish and to Scott, and to get practical advice from them, validates everything I've ever told anyone about the benefits of joining NSEA,” said Heys.

From the 18 organizational specialists on the ground and in school buildings across Nebraska, to Guinan and her work on member rights, or staff on guard in the halls of the Legislature to protect your interests, NSEA works on your behalf.

No other organization matches such expertise when it comes to Nebraska school issues.

“NSEA membership means I have this partner, these experts, that can navigate me through this process,” said Heys.

That's NSEA expertise!



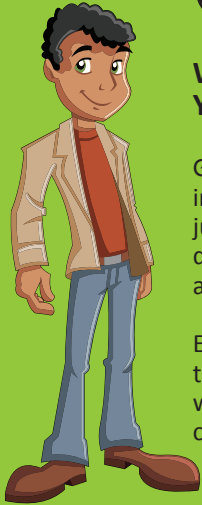
Ex-SEAN Member? Get A Rebate!

Are you a first-year teacher who belonged to the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) during your college years? If so, NSEA will rebate to you \$10 for every year (up to four years) of student membership. In addition, NEA will rebate to you \$20 for every year of student membership, up to four years. That's up to a \$120 rebate of your student dues!

To qualify, you must be an Association member paying active dues and the application for rebate must be made during your first year of educational employment in Nebraska.

To learn more, download the rebate forms at NSEA's website. Click on 'Members' in the tool bar, and then click on the "Local Treasurer's Info" link to find both rebate forms. NSEA's website is at: nsea.org

START IT OFF RIGHT!



With a Little Bit of Planning, Your Year Can Get Off to a Good Start

Getting your school year off to a good start is important for you and for your students. With just a little early planning, you'll reap huge dividends in your first weeks in the classroom, as well as throughout the rest of the year.

Each school building is essentially a self-contained community. As such, each is different when it comes to rules, regulations and policies. These tips will help you plan ahead.



Be in your room when students arrive. Have your name on the board and greet them with a "Good Morning" or "Good Afternoon."

Post your bio outside your door, or share about yourself on the first day of class. A student may find something in common and strike up a relationship that could be a positive experience.

Set routines: Establish a system for collecting books and materials, sharpening pencils and entering and leaving the room.

For discipline to work, start the year by setting class rules. Keep the list short and simple. If students help set rules, they will be more likely to follow them. Post the rules.

Work to improve: Set your sights on improving your ability in at least one area during the coming year.

Build spirit: If you teach elementary youngsters, you might give your class a name such as the "Room Three Bumblebees."

Set a class goal: Develop enthusiasm with a class project such as a holiday project to help a needy family, or a class trip or party at the end of the year.

Be realistic: Don't let your sincere concern for each child turn into a depressing experience through a fear of failure. Remember, you will be more successful with some students than others.

Send a positive note home with every student. Catch the kids being good!

Know your students: Study the records of students to learn their capabilities and problems. Keep a folder for every student. Record observations and grades.

Foster curiosity: Keep in mind that if you want students to be curious, you have to set an atmosphere that encourages curiosity and doesn't stifle it.

Communicate with parents: Let them know you are available to discuss issues and student progress, and tell them how to reach you. Introduce yourself; include your policy on homework.

BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS



Learn student names: Review class rosters. Students appreciate correct pronunciation.

Class up your room in a manner that will catch the eyes of students while giving them something to think about.

Meet other teachers in your building; they can be of real help. Get to know librarians, counselors, nurses, cafeteria workers and custodians.

Review school policies and procedures, such as opening and closing hours, attendance requirements, fire drill and cafeteria rules. If you will teach controversial matter, be sure you're within board policy.

Start a records file: Organize your personal papers. You never know when you'll have to produce a job-related document. Save receipts for items that could provide tax deductions (see sidebar).

Join your local Education Association for the moral support and assistance from people who understand the complexities of your job.

THE FIRST DAY



Find a mentor: a friend who knows the ropes. The best place to start is within your local Association. Attend the first Association meeting. Don't be afraid to ask for a "buddy."



Plan your drive: If you drive to school, try a dry run. Check traffic patterns to find the best route.

Know the building, specifically where to find exits, the principal's office, the gym, the nurse's office, the cafeteria, the supply room, the faculty lounge, media center and restrooms.

Get ready: Make sure you have the materials needed to get school under way.



Do you have students with learning or physical challenges? Plan how to deal with them in the best interests of the student and the rest of the class.

How do you involve parents? How will you approach conferences? Are there special messages to send home to parents?

Create detailed, written lesson plans for the first few days with twice as much as you think you'll cover. Know your objectives. Set times for each subject, restroom and lunch breaks.

Start a file of information and resources. When help is needed, know where to go, including NSEA.

Get to work: Make opening exercises brief and make the first day of school a real one. A good start yields big dividends later on.



THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

Brief your students: At the high school level particularly, let students know exactly what you expect. Most students rise to the teacher's expectations.

Go over material slowly the first grading period, so that most students can find some success while the material is not too difficult.

Look for learning moments: Give yourself a lift by watching for something hopeful. It may be as simple as a student who gives you an indication he or she learned something in the first week of school.

Three qualities: Keep three qualities of good teaching in mind: be flexible, be patient, and keep a good sense of humor.

BE PREPARED: File Your Professional Papers

Every educator should have quick, easy access to a professional papers file with every record, document and note relating to his or her employment.

In case of a problem affecting your position, salary, reputation or financial status, you may be required – on short notice – to produce such documents.

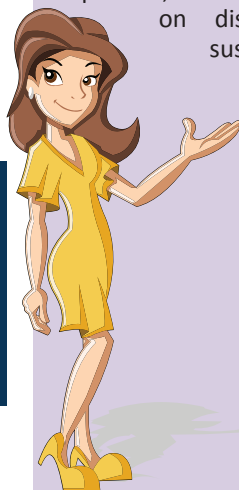
Begin your file by placing your contract in the school employee file folder provided in your NSEA membership packet or in a plain, heavy-duty manila envelope.

Then check off these items as you collect them:

- Your teaching certificate and licenses.
- Your record of education, diplomas, college or training, technical or vocational certificate.
- Transcripts or higher education credits, degrees.
- Letters of appointment/hire. Include a record of your appointment/hire as recorded in the school board minutes.
- Minutes of all board action affecting your contract duties and status.
- Employee contracts, including supplemental.
- Salary schedule and yearly salary notice supplied by your employer.
- Records of accumulated sick leave.
- Personal record of use of sick leave and personal leave days.
- Records pertaining to retirement.
- Documentation of commendations, awards and honors.
- Record of non-college job-related seminars, workshops and conferences.
- All professional evaluations.
- Record of disciplinary techniques and methods used in handling student problems (note the dates/witnesses involved).
- Records of any incidents, violence or workplace thefts.
- School calendar.
- Brief accounts of parent conferences.
- NSEA's phone number: 1-800-742-0047.

You may also want to review your school's personnel policies, and collect and file any general school policies on discipline, corporal punishment, student suspension, access to school records, etc.

If you have questions about how or where to obtain some of these items, contact your NSEA Organizational Specialist at 1-800-742-0047.



NSEA
Nebraska State Education Association



Build Your Name, Create a Professional Image

First-year teachers come into a school district with the opportunity to build a great reputation.

As with any profession, your behavior and interaction within your work community and your community at large will define your image and polish your reputation. Your action will also affect the image of your profession and school as a whole.

Here are some ideas to help you succeed:

1

From Day One, let parents know you believe a working partnership with them is best for students.

2

Give students practical writing experience. Teach them to write letters to community members, then send them. The letters may relate specifics of a class project that ties to a community activity or state an opinion about how young people might be persuaded to participate in community affairs. Students learn how to state a suggestion tactfully and gracefully; how to write with a positive tone; and how to make clear, concise points.

3

Send messages home about what parents can do to support learning.

4

Each November, send home a list of good books for parents to consider for holiday giving or to check out of the public library. You might also divide your students' names into lists according to the month of their birthdays. Send home a book gift list the month before each student's birthday, making the distribution a first-of-the-month activity. In May, distribute book lists for June through September birthdays.

5

Assign an essay or paragraph with the topic "The Best Thing About My School Is..." After using samples to discuss form and content, submit three or four of the best to the newspaper, expressing pride in these students' perception of their role as learners.

6

Send home requests for a parent/grandparent to jot (in a space on the request sheet) a note about

a strong memory or an anecdote from their own lives in reference to a topic being studied in class.

7

Everywhere you go – bowling, shopping or community events – refer with pride to the fact that you teach. Mention concerns (class size, etc.), but temper those remarks: relate how you are trying to have something done about such problems. Let people know that as a professional you are worried, but that you haven't given up reaching for solutions.

8

Display degrees, certificates and your NSEA Professional Educator Room Card. Many professionals have these documents framed on their office walls. It has a positive effect on students and parents!

9

Let parents know of their child's successes. If parents only hear from you when there is a problem, they transfer those negative feelings to you.

10

Send letters of welcome to new students. When students transfer in, they and their parents often have questions. Put together a survival kit for new students with a Chamber of Commerce map of the area; locations of favorite student hangouts; dress code (or what's normal – perhaps a student could write this part); homework expectations; and a list of what has already been covered in each subject.

11

One other idea: Get involved in any community projects your local association may initiate. Your visibility builds your recognition and reputation.

SETTING the RULES

Classroom Discipline Starts and
Ends With the Teacher



Since the beginning of organized education, the responsibility for good student discipline has mainly rested in the hands of the classroom teacher. Without a comfortable disciplinary situation, a teacher's job becomes frustrating and often unbearable, and as a result, little teaching or learning takes place.

It is important that you establish clearly and immediately the behavior pattern and expectations to be followed by students. Students usually welcome reasonable discipline and will respect teachers who follow a consistent policy.

Ask for copies of discipline policies for your district and/or building. Your classroom policy should reflect district guidelines.

Veteran teachers offer the following ideas for classroom discipline:

- **Get to know students:** This will help you anticipate problem situations.
- **It's all relative:** Know the characteristics of the age group and what is regarded as 'normal' behavior. Don't judge students by adult standards.
- **Be consistent:** Be fair in application of discipline in your requirements and assignments.
- **Be courteous:** Show courtesy to all students. Display trust and confidence in all. Avoid showing dislike for any student.
- **Vive la différence!** Your class is composed of individuals. Don't require the same response of every pupil.
- **Recognize signs:** Some situations lead to discipline problems, including tardiness, disorder, disobedience or silence.
- **Hear both sides:** Let students tell you their side. Be willing to consider miti-

gating circumstances.

- **Mum's the word:** Talk about the misdeeds of students only to those who have a right and need to know. Avoid openly comparing one student to another.
- **Maintain poise:** Discussions about class work are invaluable, but arguments are not.
- **You may be wrong:** If you've made a mistake, admit it. Apologize if you've treated a student unjustly.
- **Make the discipline fit:** Make sure punishments are appropriate for the misbehavior. Explain to the student why he or she is being disciplined.

Good classroom discipline should not be viewed as being strict, but as a cause-and-effect relationship. The student should be made aware that certain types of behavior will cause unpleasant results, while others will elicit teacher recognition and praise. If you use this cause-and-effect approach, most students will naturally develop good behavior attitudes and responses.

In summary, you can achieve good classroom control, acceptable student conduct and real student achievement if you are firm, fair, friendly, consistent and prepared.

**If you need assistance, call NSEA at
1-800-742-0047.**

What if...

If you are firm, fair and friendly, you can achieve classroom control and enhance student achievement.

Here are several common discipline concerns for teachers:

- What do you do when you have a confrontation with a student?
- What do you do when a student seems to be a constant distraction to the rest of the class?
- What do you do when students have tuned you out and are not listening?
- What do you do when a student curses or uses an obscene gesture?
- What do you do when two students are fighting?

Learn what you should know before your deal with these issues, and learn how to deal with them at:

www.nsea.org/setting-rules



WWW.NSEA.ORG

Find answers to many of your questions, as well as contact information, links and other resources you may find useful!

Make Your Parent-Teacher Conferences a Success!


This Vital Communication Link Can Enhance Student Learning

Communicating with the parents of students is important. When teachers and parents work together, learning is improved.

Your district will set certain days or evenings for parent conferences. Learn about those dates and what is expected. Plan ahead, but don't limit yourself to these sessions. Most successful teacher-parent "teams" begin with a conference conducted before there's a real need to meet.

These tips will help make your conferences productive:

		REACH OUT.	INVITE BOTH PARENTS.
		Get the relationship with parents off to a good start by contacting them early, perhaps by sending home a memo or newsletter. Provide an outline of what their children will study. Let them know you'll be happy to meet with them. Tell them how to contact you to arrange a conference.	Encourage both parents to attend. Misunderstandings are less likely if both hear what you say, and you can gauge support both parents give the child. Know that both parents may not be available; many children come from single-parent homes. You could hurt a child's feelings by always asking to meet the mother.
GIVE IT TIME.	CONSIDER SPANISH.	PLAN AHEAD.	GET ORGANIZED.
If you set back-to-back conferences, allow time to make notes on the first and to prepare for the next. On conference days, you may have up to 30 conferences in seven hours.	Prepare for non-English speaking parents. Do you need an interpreter?	Have in mind a general, flexible outline of what you plan to say, including a record of student progress, a review of strengths and needs, and a plan of action.	Assemble your grade book, test scores, student work samples and attendance records.
STRESS COLLABORATION.	AVOID PHYSICAL BARRIERS.	KNOW NAMES.	OPEN ON A HIGH NOTE.
Let parents know you want to work together. "You need to see me right away to discuss John's study habits" arouses hostility. Instead, try "I'd like to discuss with you how we might work together to improve John's study habits."	Don't sit behind a desk while forcing parents into student desks or folding chairs. Use conference-style seating, if possible. Face the clock to avoid looking at your watch.	Don't assume that Jane Peabody's mother is Mrs. Peabody. Jane's mother may have remarried, so check records ahead of time. Don't assume that the gray-haired man with Billy is his grandfather. It could be his father or an uncle.	Stand to greet and shake hands. Begin conferences on a warm, positive note. Start with a positive statement about the student's abilities, schoolwork or interests.
HAVE ANSWERS.	LISTEN.	USE BODY LANGUAGE.	NO JARGON.
Be prepared to answer specific questions from parents.	Though we spend a third of our lives listening, many adults are poor listeners. You learn more by listening carefully.	Nonverbal cues set a mood. Smile, nod, make eye contact. Lean forward slightly to show parents you're interested.	Jargon like "criterion-referenced testing" and "perceptual skills" is double-talk to parents.
ASK ABOUT THE STUDENT.	SEEK OPINIONS.	FOCUS ON STRENGTHS.	BE SPECIFIC.
Don't pry, but ask if there's anything they think you should know (such as study habits, relationship with siblings, important events) that may affect the student's work.	Hear parents out, even if comments are hostile or negative. Take notes, remain calm.	It's easy for parents to feel defensive; many see their faults in their children. Review the child's strengths and areas of need, rather than by dwelling on criticism or weaknesses.	Parents may flounder if you generalize. Instead of "She doesn't accept responsibility," point out "She had a week to finish her book report, but she wrote only two paragraphs."
OFFER SOLUTIONS.	SUMMARIZE.	CLOSE ON A HIGH NOTE.	KEEP RECORDS.
Parents appreciate direction. If Jane is immature, it might help to suggest parents give her a list of weekly chores or have her write down assignments.	Before parting, review the discussion and the actions that you and the parents have decided to take.	Close on a high note: Save an encouraging comment or remark about the child for the conference conclusion.	You may have reason later to refer to a record of what was said and what suggestions were made. Make notes while details are fresh.



EVALUATIONS

WHAT EVERY TEACHER SHOULD KNOW

Procedures for teacher evaluation vary by district, yet one rule should be constant for every teacher: know your district's evaluation policy.

Early in their employment, every teacher should secure a copy of the district evaluation policy, as well as the forms used for evaluation. Review them, and structure your teaching strategies appropriately.

At the first sign of difficulty with your performance, or if you are in disagreement with your evaluation, call your NSEA organizational specialist at once at 1-800-742-0047.

These guidelines are designed to take you step-by-step through the process. It is imperative to focus on the improvement of instruction, which is the primary purpose of evaluation.

Pre-Observation Conference

Preparing for the observation is as important as planning lessons. You must show the evaluator the learning atmosphere that prevails in your classroom. Prepare for the pre-observation conference by:

- Selecting the area(s) of your teaching performance to be observed.
- Selecting the day, time and subject.
- Clarifying evaluation criteria.
- Making the appointment to confer with your evaluator.
- Preparing lesson plans for the class to be observed.

At the pre-observation conference, share the purpose and format of the lesson. Explain any special student needs, and give the evaluator a copy of your plan.

The Observation

The observation is, at best, awkward. Students know it is a change in routine, are sensitive to your reactions and are quick to note differences in your approach. Sometimes this affects their ability to cooperate. If possible, plan a lesson that uses techniques familiar to students.

Try to lead the class as you usually do. Have the lesson so well prepared that you don't have to stop to read notes; doing so creates awkward pauses that students may fill with restlessness. Try to put them at ease and to make them forget an observer is present.

Post Observation Conference

This conference should occur shortly after the observation when you and the evaluator have clear memories of the event. Remember to:

- Let the evaluator do the talking. You take notes and respond to direct questions.
- Ask for clarification or elaboration of observation material. Request specific examples, for instance: What did you see that makes you say that my discipline is good/bad?
- Bring your personal summary of the observation for reference. This is particularly helpful if your view of the facts differs from the evaluator's. If inaccuracies have occurred, be sure they are corrected and initialed by both of you.
- Accept all suggestions for improvement and request a

demonstration of techniques in your classroom.

- Do not allow yourself to be put in the position of agreeing to an interpretation of poor performance. Agree only that you are open to concrete suggestions to improve your performance. Do not be drawn into a self-incriminating stance.
- Maintain focus on the actions of the class period observed and the purpose stated to promote professional excellence and improve teaching skills.

When the conference is done, be sure you have received all written materials to which you are entitled and that your signature merely indicates that you have reviewed the written material — not that you agree to it.

Final Evaluation Conference

The final conference should summarize your year's performance, recognize your growth, direct you in the pursuit of educational excellence, and complete final evaluation forms. Normally, only you and your evaluator are present. If other administrators are present and the situation is threatening, you may request the presence of an Association representative. Points to remember:

- Take good notes during evaluation conferences. Writing will help you focus on what is being said and it will assist you in later recalling what was covered.
- Ask clarifying questions in a professional manner, but for the most part be prepared to remain in a "listening mode." Do not be argumentative.
- Before signing the evaluation, carefully read any statements that denote what your signature indicates. If you are uncertain whether to sign the evaluation but have been directed to do so, then add a statement such as "My signature only indicates that I have received a copy."
- Before submitting a written response to an evaluation, consult your NSEA UniServ Director for advice.
- There is no statutory time limit for submitting written responses to evaluations. If you are directed to conform to a time limit, request an extension of the deadline if you are unable to comply. As a general rule, it's customary to submit written responses within 2-3 working weeks.
- Maintain accurate records on the date and length of

evaluations, as well as dates of evaluation conferences. Be sure to keep copies of all signed documents.

Personal Records and Rules

At all points, keep a personal log summarizing the conference. The log should note: date, time, and length of the observation or conference; name and title of evaluator; copy of the lesson plan taught at the observation; your reaction to the lesson; your observation of the evaluator's behavior; comments from the evaluator; classroom condition; unusual student reactions; action taken.

It is crucial that the teacher keep a copy of this log as well as other related documents.

When in doubt — file it!



Know Your Students

It is important to know and understand as much about your students as possible. Here are some tips:

- Examine cumulative record folders for each student or randomly selected students, depending on the number of students and classes you teach.
- Note names of parents or guardians (don't assume they will have the last name of the student!) and how they can be reached.
- Note outstanding strengths, weaknesses, interests and talents — academic and non-academic.
- Make a note of whether students are/were enrolled in special programs; (e.g., speech therapy, gifted and talented, special education) be sure to obtain and read the Individual Education Plans for special education students.
- Note any chronic health problems, including allergies and asthma.
- Create a file folder — or have students create their own — in which you'll store records, work samples and other information.
- Keep an open mind; avoid forming negative opinions. Use the information you have to design instruction that meets the needs of your students.



40 Ways to Say 'Good Work!'

A little praise goes the distance in the classroom. But praise really needs to be more than just the same few phrases repeated over and over. Your students need more than the traditional "Good," "Very good," and "Fine," if encouragement is expected. Here are some other ideas:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. That's really nice. | 21. Now you've figured it out. |
| 2. Wow! That's great. | 22. Superior work. |
| 3. I like the way you're working. | 23. That's a good point. |
| 4. Keep up the good work. | 24. I appreciate your effort. |
| 5. That's quite an improvement. | 25. Marvelous! |
| 6. Much better! | 26. That's 'A' work! |
| 7. Keep it up. | 27. You put a lot of work into this. |
| 8. What neat work. | 28. That's the right answer. |
| 9. You really outdid yourself today. | 29. Nice going. |
| 10. This kind of work pleases me. | 30. Very interesting. |
| 11. That's right! Good for you. | 31. That's clever. |
| 12. I'm proud of you. | 32. Good thinking. |
| 13. You've got it now. | 33. Exactly right. |
| 14. You make it look easy. | 34. Congratulations, good score. |
| 15. You're coming along nicely. | 35. Super! |
| 16. Excellent work. | 36. You should be proud of this. |
| 17. My goodness. How impressive! | 37. Bravo! |
| 18. You're on the right track now. | 38. Superb! |
| 19. Terrific! | 39. Quality work! |
| 20. Very creative. | 40. You had your thinking cap on! |

Kids Can Count on the Children's Fund



It happens more often than one would think: somewhere in Nebraska a home burns to the ground and a family loses all possessions. That's when the NSEA Children's Fund steps in to help the children in that family begin the healing process. The fund helps to acquire new clothing and basic necessities.

Every NSEA member knows of children in such heartbreaking situations. Teachers frequently use their own money to help these children, knowing that they can't help every child. That's why NSEA created and continues to raise money for the Children's Fund. Since 1994, the Children's Fund has helped hundreds of children. In the past two years, the Fund has provided more than \$100,000 in relief.

Gifts to the Children's Fund come from teachers and businesses across the state. Contributions are tax deductible, and it's important to note that every penny contributed helps children. NSEA picks up all administrative expenses. There is no red tape, no form for teachers to complete. Simply call the NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 and ask for Sally Bodtke, or e-mail her at: sally.bodtke@nsea.org



Know Your Rights, Protect Your Job

Every year, as many as 500 Nebraska teachers find themselves in a job-threatening situation. Those that are members quickly turn to NSEA for help.

Whether it's a disagreement with an administrator, a question of proper salary schedule placement, or a complaint filed by a parent, NSEA's Advocacy team works to make sure that members are treated fairly; according to the law; and by school policy.

There can be outside threats to a teacher's job, too. Anyone may file a complaint against a teacher with the Nebraska Commissioner of Education. Without proper representation, such a complaint places a teacher's career at extreme risk.

As a member of NSEA, you are entitled to NSEA staff or attorney assistance or litigation for any incident that results in a job sanction, a grievance, a criminal proceeding related to corporal punishment, or a complaint to the Commissioner of Education.

NSEA staff has responded to reprimands, poor evaluations and complaints from parents and patrons. Those efforts to protect teacher rights can take the form of local complaints, grievances, complaints to state or federal agencies, and even litigation.

NSEA regularly works with teachers to improve their teaching skills, as well as on scores of other issues.

More Protection

NSEA's Legal Services Policy gives members protection in the event they are facing criminal charges specifically related to the alleged use of corporal punishment.

The NSEA provides legal services for a

criminal matter flowing from allegations of corporal punishment up to a limit of \$5,000. Any costs in excess of \$5,000 are the responsibility of the member.

If you have a complaint or grievance, in most cases it's best to contact an appropriate representative of your local association for assistance and referral to NSEA, if necessary. If for any reason you need or prefer to contact the NSEA directly, please do so. Contact either your assigned organizational specialist or the director of Advocacy at 1-800-742-0047.

In Jeopardy

Did you know that a member of the public could place your job at risk?

Anyone can file a complaint against a teacher with the Nebraska Commissioner of Education. Such a complaint simply means that someone alleges a teacher has violated the teaching profession's Code of Ethics.

Without proper representation, such allegations can put a teaching certificate, and therefore a teacher's livelihood, in jeopardy.

Upon receiving notification of such a complaint, your immediate first step should be to make a request for legal services to NSEA's Member Rights director. More importantly, do so before discussing the notification or allegations with anyone else.

If your request for legal service is approved, NSEA and NEA will share all costs of your defense related to the investigation by the commissioner's office — both before the Professional Practices Commission and before the State Board of Education, should the matter go that far.

For more information, contact the NSEA

toll free at 1-800-742-0047.

Here are some other rights issues you should be familiar with:

Open personnel file

All teachers have the right to inspect their personnel file upon request. Teachers have the right to file a written statement responding to any material in the file that they believe is inaccurate or untrue. Teachers should inspect their personnel file occasionally.

Educators should also know that the file does not follow a teacher to a new district, unless the teacher authorizes, in writing, the sharing of the file. Second, state statute 79-8, 109, says: No other person except school officials while engaged in their professional duties shall be granted access to such file, and the contents thereof shall not be divulged in any manner to any unauthorized person.

In regard to student files: Students and/or their parents have the right to inspect the student's file. Teachers should be aware of this and be careful that whatever they place in a student file is accurate and can be documented.

Retirement deductions

Nebraska's K-12 public school teachers are automatically members of the Nebraska Teachers Retirement System. As such, they contribute a portion of their total salary to the system to provide benefits at retirement. Nebraska teachers are also covered by Social Security. The retirement and Social Security contributions are deducted from their paychecks.

YOUR LIABILITY POLICY IS ADDED PROTECTION

As a professional educator, you might be held responsible if someone is injured in a classroom or school-related incident.

You may be personally liable for damages if, in the performance of your duties, your actions or your failure to take action result in harm to pupils, other teachers or others. You face the possibility of lawsuits for negligence, slander, libel, malpractice or assault and battery (arising out of classroom disciplinary actions).

Remember that when you join the NSEA, you are automatically covered by a \$1 million liability insurance policy which protects you if a civil suit is brought against you as a result of teaching duties. These six precautions can reduce your chances of being sued:

- Be familiar with school rules, procedures and board policies. Develop your own set of rules for classroom activities and make sure your students understand them.
- Check your classroom work area for hazards. Notify your principal in writing if you find any. Until repairs are in place, keep your students away from problem areas.
- Never leave your class unsupervised.
- Follow state law and school board policies on student discipline.
- Use caution on field trips. Get permission slips from parents of all students participating. Make certain students know rules that will apply during the field trip. Make sure there is adequate supervision.
- While details are still fresh, write a description of incidents you believe may have the potential to create liability problems later on.



Is It Time to Scrub Your Digital Identity?

By Tim Walker and Rebecca Logan

This article first appeared on the NEA Today website.

You might have forgotten about that off-color joke you posted to your Facebook page four months ago, or that unfortunate photo from what started out as a quiet Friday night late last summer, or that expletive-laced tirade against a political candidate you posted to a popular blog two weeks ago.

You might have forgotten but the Internet didn't.

Years of social media saturation led by Facebook and Twitter and way too much over-sharing has created an online archive documenting much of the daily lives, thoughts, and misadventures of millions of Americans. Everyone has a key to this archive — your family and friends, your students, their parents, school administrators, and any prospective employer. Someone who doesn't know anything about you may get to know you through some of your more embarrassing or unsuitable posts. First impressions, including digital ones, can be hard to shake.

"There is a heightened awareness about the horror stories regarding the use of social media," says Maria Anderson, an educator and technology blogger. "What is unfortunate about this is that it scares educators away. We need educators to be in these spaces helping to teach youth how to communicate effectively and treat each other kindly."

So the answer is not to wipe clean from the Internet anything and everything related to you and abandon it. That's overkill. But if you live and share a good part of your life online, you're probably due for a spring-cleaning. Once that's done, there are steps you can take to manage your content and avoid damaging your reputation.

Find Out What's Out There

The first step to your digital house cleaning is to find out what's out there about you. It might be painful but sit down,

brace yourself, and key in your full name into a search engine, such as Google or Bing to find out what the Internet has on you. When evaluating the results, focus on the first three pages. People usually don't bother to look beyond the few pages of search results. Once you know what is out there, you can make a plan to address it.

Start Scrubbing!

A good goal to set is to "take over" page 1 of search pages looking for information about you. The best way to do a quick cleanup is to simply change your profile picture and perhaps your "about" info on your Facebook page. If old posts or out of date information comes up, see if you can take it down or update it. Maybe someone you know posted embarrassing or personal content about you. Ask them to remove it. If you're nervous about any other digital dirt, add positive information to the Internet so that the positive results come up first. By perhaps starting a blog and/or website, you can point employers to what you want them to know about you. If you're a frequent commentator on websites and blogs, be aware that you generally have to log in through Facebook. That means whatever you say can be traced to you. Check to see if you have posted comments that might be perceived as derogatory or inflammatory.

Update Your Privacy Settings

If you want to keep some of your personal information private, use the privacy settings on your online profiles. Still, things aren't as private as they seem partly because sites such as Facebook and Google are constantly changing those settings, which many users don't bother to update.

Create, Manage Your Digital Brand

Once you've cleaned up your digital iden-

tity, be proactive and create your own digital brand. What do you want people to see when they search for you online? It could be a digital portfolio of your work, a well-written, regularly updated blog or a simple online resume.

"The effort to curate your digital brand will help when it points them to a collection of professional information that paints you as a thoughtful, hardworking and professional person who cares about student success," Andersen said.

Stay on Top of Things; Be Careful

Set up alerts via Google or some other service that will send you an e-mail when your name is mentioned in news stories, blogs, or videos. If you have a common name, add additional information like your school, town or city, and profession to the search description.

Even if you've completed a thorough makeover of your digital identity, however, unless you always think twice before you post, something can always come back and bite you.

"It doesn't matter how private you think your Facebook settings are," Andersen cautions. "It doesn't matter how carefully you choose who to send that email rant to. If you wouldn't want it to be forwarded on to your colleagues, your students, or your parents, then don't write it in a digital space. Some topics are best left to an old-fashioned conversation."

Protect Passwords!

Creating and maintaining a secure password may not seem related to your social media life, but it is at the core of online security and privacy. It may take a little time to complete the following steps, but it will certainly be much easier than dealing with an online security breach.

If your password is "123456" change it

immediately. It is the most common password and the easiest to crack. Do not use the same password or username for everything, instead think of a word or topic you can remember and use different combinations. Make sure your password includes capital letters, preferably in the middle, as well as numbers. 📧

Basic Do's and Don'ts:

Social Media Guidelines Just for Teachers

Gathered from <http://nancycarroll.net/social-media-for-teachers-101-basic-dos-donts>

Not sure what the real “rules” are about social media for teachers? Are you wanting to use social media more, but just thinking about the twitter icon fills you with trepidation?

More teachers are using social media than ever before. Follow these guidelines to get started the right way. They'll keep you out of hot water and in a strategic safety zone, whether you're using social media for networking with other educators, following the news, getting recipes on Pinterest, for your side job or business (hey, a teacher's gotta eat!) or keeping up with your Auntie Marge.

DO

- 👍 DO feel free to share status updates and comment on others' updates. In a public forum, keep it positive, light, and stay away from nasty, heated discussions.
- 👍 If you feel comfortable, DO connect with coworkers whom you feel safe, comfortable, and friendly with (as we are apt to do in the teaching field). Your teaching contract does not mandate you to be friends with any of your colleagues.
- 👍 DO control your privacy settings. Facebook changes their privacy policy frequently. If you don't want to be found by anyone, pay close attention to those settings.
- 👍 If you are running a tutoring business, giving music lessons, or running a part-time business online, DO set up a Facebook business page. Just remember that on the business page, anyone can see what you post.
- 👍 DO tag and post with care, especially when you're posting pictures of others.
- 👍 DO unfollow negative people and rela-

tives, if you feel the emotional need to.

DON'T

- 👎 DON'T friend your students.
NOTE: If you know and work with the parents, and have spoken with them, or work in a rural community, social lines can get blurry. Use your best judgment.
- 👎 DON'T mix excessive drinking and social media.
- 👎 DON'T post pictures of yourself partying or drinking alcohol, even after hours.
- 👎 DON'T post pictures of yourself engaged in drinking or serving alcohol, around alcohol, even if you bartend, wait tables, or cocktail on weekends and school breaks. What you do after hours is your business, don't make it everyone's.
- 👎 DON'T post pictures or videos of yourself naked or semi-clothed.
- 👎 DON'T overpost. If you post a change

to your status ALL the time, instead of looking like you have an exciting life, you look like the kid who will do ANYTHING for attention. In a closed Facebook discussion group you can post more frequently—just make sure it's after school hours or on breaks.

- 👎 DON'T post on social media during work hours.
- 👎 DON'T write nasty comments about your students, their families, coworkers, or administrators. Remember, HIPPA and FERPA laws! Would you want your doctor writing updates about you?
- 👎 DON'T assume that you are protected by your First Amendment rights. Like it or not, teachers are held to a different moral standard than the rest of society.

A smart rule of thumb: If you don't want it to be on the front page of the *New York Times* or the *National Enquirer*, **don't post it.**



Some tips on e-mail usage:

- Know your school district's employee computer use policy.
- Always assume there is no privacy. Districts can monitor not only your e-mail conversations, but also the websites you visit. Only send messages you would feel comfortable seeing on the front page of your local newspaper.
- Electronic transmissions can be a convenient way to communicate with parents and students, but it must be in a professional manner. If the contact is “too personal or frequent,” it may appear as if an improper relationship is forming.
- Once an e-mail has been sent, it cannot be retracted. Deleting it from your account will not delete it from the school district's computer system.
- Do not use irony, sarcasm or humor. They do not work in an electronic transmission.
- Remember to log off your account when finished. You are responsible for message sent under your name, whether you are the author or not.
- Do not share or post your password, and change it frequently. Turn off your computer when you leave your work area for extended periods of time.
- Be sure to review and edit before sending. Always double-check your recipients.
- Never discuss student records via e-mail, especially those of students with IEPs.
- Never include the name of a student in an e-mail.

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Money Management: Stretch Your Paycheck

Many a Nebraska teacher has set a target date of teaching for 30 or more years, and retiring comfortably at the age of 55 – all thanks to the Rule of 85, enacted into law with NEA's guidance.

You can follow that route as well, but doing so requires early establishment of a thorough, thoughtful financial plan early in your teaching career.

The first step is to assess your compensation. Be certain you are on the proper salary schedule step. Your gross pay, the amount the school district pays you based on the contract negotiated by your local association, is the pre-tax retirement, pre-deduction amount.

Taken from your gross salary are the following deductions: federal and state income taxes; FICA (Social Security); state retirement contributions; and other deductions you select, such as tax-sheltered annuities, additional insurance and your Association dues. The result is your net pay. Review the deductions regularly for accuracy. With your net pay, you will face the challenges of your first few years of financial planning.

Here are some suggestions for meeting those challenges:

- **Determine expenses.** Rent or mortgage, groceries, utilities (heat, water, phone), home and auto insurance, auto costs (loan, fuel, repairs), additional taxes, college loan payments, clothing, entertainment and savings.
- **Read.** Learn about financial planning and the time value of money.
- **Create and stick with a budget.** If you spend more than you earn, trouble is ahead.
- **Pay yourself.** Make savings a line item in your budget, and you'll be on the way to financial success.
- **Use one credit card.** People who max out on one credit card after another are on the road to ruin. Find a single card with a low, fixed interest rate. By paying high interest rates on balances, you're tossing money away. Pay on time: Late fees may be \$30 or more.
- **Research purchases.** Spending a bit more on a product is sometimes better than buying a cheap product over and over.
- **Drive a used car.** Used cars are the best investment, because someone else has already paid for the depreciation. Buy quality: models that are rated well when new will wear well when used.
- **Explore all options.** Begin by shopping for the bank that charges you the least for services on checking and savings accounts, and the one that pays interest on all accounts.
- **Be wary.** You'll receive calls and visits soliciting your business for insurance, retirement and financial plans. Assess whether you really need what's being sold. If yes, shop around. Talk with colleagues for advice. Read the fine print.
- **Comparison shop.** Look for quality auto and homeowners insurance with good terms and competitive rates. NEA Member Benefits offers quality companies with nationwide expertise, high-quality insurance policies and low rates. You'll often get better rates when buying car and homeowner insurance as a package.
- **Know your fringes.** Understand the fringe benefits your district offers. Those are benefits you don't need to purchase on your own.
- **You'll get called.** Life insurance agents and others will call. For now, additional life insurance may not be a necessity.
- **Trim expenses.** Bus, walk or car pool to work; pack your lunch; look for bargains when shopping; cultivate creativity by refinishing used furniture, or by making gifts; enjoy inexpensive or free entertainment; and remember that NEA Member Services can provide significant savings on many needs.
- **Seek advice.** A family member, co-worker or trusted advisor is recommended. The key: Find someone with good financial sense but no "sales pitch."



Belonging to NEA Can Save You Cash!

The NEA membership card serves as a discount card at thousands of merchant locations in Nebraska and across the country. The card is so valuable that you can save far more than the cost of membership each year. It offers discounts of up to 50 percent from more than 200,000 merchants nationwide, with savings on hotels, dining, clothing and more!

All NEA members, including first-time members, can access the same savings by using their 10-digit Association identification number, which appears above their name on Association mailings.

To begin saving, members must activate their card once it arrives. It's easy to do; just follow these steps:

- Log on to the NEA website at nea.org.
- Click on the membership card link at the lower left corner of the home page.
- Enter your 10-digit member ID number (located on the front of the card or on the mailing label above your name). Log in.

You can also activate your account by calling the toll-free number listed on the back of each card!

NEA members — always on the go — can save time and money with NEA's 'My Deals' smartphone application, available on iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch and Android devices. Search for "My Deals" in the iTunes App Store or on Google Play.

Some merchants require that you present your card at the time of purchase, while others ask that you print a coupon from the site or show the coupon on your mobile device. Be certain to check the individual merchant page on the website for specific instructions.



THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP



Dividends: that's what you expect from your investments. And that's just what you receive with an investment in NSEA membership. NSEA, along with its national and local association affiliates, gives you proactive and aggressive backing whenever and wherever you need it. Your investment is rewarded with unmatched value and service. Consider these issues:

Personal Assistance

NSEA's 18 field staffers work directly with you and your local association on all job-related matters and issues. They are assigned to specific regions across Nebraska.

Liability Insurance, Legal Services

Your NSEA membership comes with a \$1 million liability insurance policy that protects you in job-related incidents, including civil and criminal actions, as well as property damage. If your employment rights are threatened, NSEA is quick to provide you with staff assistance, the on-site help of NSEA attorneys, if needed, and legal fees.

Bargaining

Each year, your local association works to improve your salary, fringe benefits and working conditions. Providing support for that effort from behind the scenes is the NSEA, giving negotiators support and guidance in research, budget analysis and negotiations training.

Professional Development

Professional development is crucial to skills development as a teacher. It is also critical to your development as an Association leader. You have opportunities to

attend many workshops and conferences as an Association member. Such events, along with services like the NEA Professional Library and the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, support you in those roles.

Lobbying, Political Organizing

Every decision about your classroom is political. From standards to length of school year to the textbooks you use, a political body has weighed in. Your interests as an educational employee are well-represented in the Legislature and Congress through Association-wide lobbying efforts that propose and support pro-education bills. NSEA works to defeat measures that are harmful to public schools, students and educators. NSEA members also recommend and help elect education-friendly candidates to office.

Public Relations

You stay up-to-date on education issues through local association newsletters; NSEA's magazine, *The Voice*; NSEA's website, nsea.org; the NEA magazine, *NEA Today*; NEA's website at nea.org; and other special publications. NSEA promotes public education and educational employees through ongoing, proactive advertising and public relations campaigns.



JOB SECURITY: NSEA IS HERE TO HELP

Yes, you can be fired from your teaching job. With NSEA's help, however, your chance of surviving a job action against you is much greater!

The source of trouble might be a grade you gave to a student with influential parents. It could be a student discipline problem, or a comment you made to an administrator or parent in the heat of discussion.

Every teacher, at some time or another, makes a decision that causes ill feelings. It may take just one "incident" to provoke turmoil and job threats. Because you're in a new school, you are a probationary teacher. It is the unjust firing that a probationary teacher fears most.

Your chances for survival are much better as a member of the NSEA, NEA and your local association. Each year, NSEA assists 40 to 50 probationary teachers in potential dismissal cases. Most do not result in a dismissal notice, but when they do, NSEA's win/loss record is good.

NSEA organizational specialists are available to help you respond to a bad evaluation, to help you overcome deficiencies, or to represent you in a RIF. As a member of the NSEA, your colleagues will be there to give you the best shot you'll have at protecting your career.

Your Association's expertise can also be of financial help in other manners. The "incident" could be an injury or accident where staggering liability claims could wipe you out financially. In an era when lawsuits have become commonplace, the NSEA/NEA provides \$1 million professional liability coverage is an important part of your membership.

As a member of NSEA, you are part of one of the largest and proudest professions in the country. The Association needs the support of every teacher. Your personal support and the special leadership qualities you have can be a key to your professional association's success.

Survive, Thrive:

Avoid Stress, Stay Healthy

Within the first few weeks of school, there will be scores of “new” additions to your life: new texts, new techniques, new schedules, new students and a complete new way of life. It will be an exciting and sometimes stressful time!

People who don’t deal well with stress can become ill – unless they’ve mastered coping techniques. Experienced teachers have found these useful techniques and “preventative medicines” to protect against debilitating stress:

Leave your teaching at school

If you must lug home schoolwork, try to get it done early in the evening. Better yet, do it at school and leave it there. The late afternoon hours after student dismissal are quiet, immediate and focused.

Know your limits

Most of us set unreasonable and perfectionist goals for ourselves. While we can never be perfect (or even come close), we often have a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform. Are your goals achievable, or do they reflect an effort to reach perfection in an imperfect world?

Find a friend

This probably is someone in your building, someone who can be a trusted listener. Talking a problem out won’t make it go away, but it can relieve tension.

Exercise

After a day of teaching, you owe it to your body to shake out the “chalk dust.” Exercise helps to rid the body of chemicals that are discharged as a result of stress.

Invest in yourself

Set aside 30 minutes each day to be kind to your mind and body by reading, listening to or watching uplifting materials.

Always have something to look forward to

This will perk up your spirits.

Don’t schedule all of your leisure hours

You live by a schedule all day long. Leave some “open space.”

Sleep

If you’re tired, go to bed early. Don’t lie awake worrying about how you should have handled Johnny in class.

Eat well

Take your vitamin and mineral supplements. Eat wholesome foods so that your body takes in a sufficient

amount of the right nutrients.

Don’t procrastinate

Do what you have to do. Having something “hanging over you” will cause more tension than the project is worth.

You can’t do everything

You can’t and you won’t. So why worry about it?

Keep a ‘To Do’ List

Review it daily and do at least one or two things. When you cross something off the list, you get a sense of accomplishment.

Tolerate, forgive

Intolerance and judging others can lead to frustration and anger. Try to understand the other person’s concerns, fears and pressures. This will make you feel more accepting, even if you don’t agree with them.

Learn to plan

Plan ahead. Too many projects at the same time can lead to confusion, forgetfulness and a sense of uncompleted tasks. Develop your own personal style of getting things done in a calm, orderly way. Take on projects one at a time and work on them until completed.

Be positive

Learn to praise the good qualities in others. Excessive criticism of others almost always reflects dissatisfaction with oneself.

Learn to play

Escape from the pressures of life; have fun regularly. Find pastimes or hobbies that are absorbing and enjoyable.

Don’t worry

A study has shown that 40 percent of the items people worry about never happen; 35 percent can be changed; 15 percent turn out better than expected; and 8 percent involve needless concern. Only 2 percent really deserve attention.

STRESS REDUCERS

When the late Jim Griess, former longtime NSEA executive director, saw a large and challenging task on the horizon, he would pose this question: “How do you eat an elephant?” His answer – “one bite at a time” – served to ease anxiety and stress. That’s one of many tactics posed in this well-used list of *101 Ways to Cope with Stress*, credited to the Charter Barclay Hospital in Chicago.

So whether your job, your commute, or some other source is causing stress in your life, consider these 100 options for reducing your stress!

1. Get up 15 minutes earlier.
2. Prepare for the morning the night before.
3. Avoid tight fitting clothes.
4. Avoid relying on chemical aids.
5. Set appointments ahead.
6. Don’t rely on your memory...write it down.
7. Practice preventive maintenance.
8. Make duplicate keys.
9. Say “NO” more often.
10. Set priorities in your life.
11. Avoid negative people.
12. Use time wisely.
13. Simplify meals.
14. Copy important papers.
15. Anticipate your needs.
16. Repair anything that doesn’t work properly.
17. Ask for help with jobs you dislike.
18. Break down large tasks into bite-sized portions.
19. Look at problems as challenges.
20. Look at challenges differently.
21. Unclutter your life.
22. Smile.
23. Prepare for rain.
24. Tickle a baby.
25. Pet a dog/cat.
26. Don’t know all the answers.
27. Look for the silver lining.
28. Say something nice to someone.
29. Teach a kid to fly a kite.
30. Walk in the rain.
31. Schedule play time every day.
32. Take a bubble bath.
33. Be aware of your decisions you make.
34. Believe in yourself.
35. Stop saying negative things to yourself.
36. Visualize winning.
37. Develop a sense of humor.
38. Stop thinking tomorrow will be a better day.
39. Have goals for yourself.
40. Dance a jig.

7 Habits of a Healthy Educator

By Alexandra Moses

With a new school year comes the chance to get proactive about your health and fight off chronic low energy, constant sniffles and stress headaches before they pull you under. Not having a plan for your health while pouring passion into your profession will leave you fried by spring, says Mike Anderson, author of *The Well-Balanced Teacher*. “We have to consider taking care of ourselves as a primary part of our job,” he says.

To make it easier, we’ve got 7 habits to keep your mind and body running smoothly:

Take a mindful break: Even a few minutes of relaxation a day will help your body’s stress response, says Mindy Mayol, student wellness course director in the department of kinesiology at the University of Indianapolis. Find a peaceful place at school or home where you can try deep breathing exercises, or take a short walk in the halls or outside the building. Getting a bit of nature helps us relate back to our kinesthetic selves, and before you know it, you’re noticing the roses and those stress hormones let up a bit, Mayol says.

Squash allergens: Be pro-active about reducing mold, dust, pollen and other allergy triggers in your classroom. Wipe down computer screens, your desktop and other places that can collect dust quickly. Tony Abate, a certified indoor environmentalist, suggests keeping a portable air purifier in the classroom and putting a doormat outside the classroom door. The mat, he says, will keep some of the debris, including pollen, from tracking into the room.

Be vigilant about germs: Michigan first-grade teacher Jennifer Korte wipes down student desks every day with disinfectant, and makes sure kids wash hands every time they go near noses. To make sure the germs don’t travel, she washes her hands before heading to her car and changes her clothes when she gets home. Abate also suggests that teachers wipe down classroom doorknobs at the beginning and end of every day. Dozens of hands touch those door knobs all day long and might get overlooked by cleaning staff.

Get physical: It’s not enough to resolve

to move more — schedule it, says Jolene Moore, a wellness consultant for Jolene Moore Complete Life. Put exercise on your calendar as a visual reminder. Or make it a date with a friend so you’ll be accountable to someone else if you’re tempted to skip. Just be realistic about your time and interests. “Don’t be afraid of the time factor. You have lunch or 10 minutes after school—do something that’s reasonable,” Moore says. The results keep your body healthy, plus it helps keep your energy up.

Pack a healthy lunch: Tempted to skip lunch? Besides a growling stomach, you’ll also have low energy and an urge to polish off a bag of cookies after school. Plan ahead at home for your weekly meals, use leftovers for a quick lunch, or make packing your lunch part of the routine when making your kids’ lunches. Try to make lunch a balance of complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains, and fat, protein and fiber. That helps keep blood sugars stable in the afternoon, says dietitian Jennifer Reilly. “This helps with attention span, the ability to multitask and patience,” says Reilly, author of the cookbook *Cooking with Trader Joe’s Cookbook: Skinny Dish*.

Think before you drink: Our body needs a lot of water — half your weight in ounces, so 60 ounces for a 130-pound person — but many of us don’t consume that much. We do, however, reach for the caffeine and sugar to keep us going when we feel low on energy. While Reilly says regular coffee drinkers can count their favorite beverage in their daily water count, for some, coffee acts as a diuretic — not good when you need to stay at the head of the class — and keeps you from getting a good night sleep. For an afternoon energy boost, consider an energizing herbal tea, water with lemon or a quick walk in the hall.

Get some ZZZs: Aim for 7-8 hours a night, advises Reilly, and you’ll be rewarded with more energy, an inclination to eat healthier and less stress. When you run on empty, you produce more of the stress hormone cortisol, store more fat and find yourself with an increased appetite for simple carbs and junk food. To make sure you get enough sleep, plan for it. Mike Anderson suggests figuring out your daily routine, and how early you need to be up, then count back 7 hours to find your ideal bedtime.

41. Say hello to a stranger.
42. Ask a friend for a hug.
43. Look at the stars.
44. Practice breathing slowly.
45. Learn to whistle a tune.
46. Read a poem.
47. Listen to a symphony.
48. Watch a ballet.
49. Read a story curled up in bed.
50. Do something new.
51. Buy a flower.
52. Take time to smell the flower.
53. Find support from others.
54. Find a “vent” partner.
55. Do it today.
56. Be cheerful and optimistic.
57. Put safety first.
58. Do things in moderation.
59. Pay attention to your appearance.
60. Strive for excellence, not perfection.
61. Stretch your limits each day.
62. Enjoy art.
63. Hum a jingle.
64. Maintain your weight.
65. Plant a tree.
66. Feed the birds.
67. Practice grace under pressure.
68. Stand up and stretch.
69. Have a plan “B”.
70. Doodle.
71. Learn a joke.
72. Know your feelings.
73. Meet your needs.
74. Know your limits.
75. Say “Have a good day” in pig Latin.
76. Throw a paper airplane.
77. Exercise daily.
78. Learn the words to a new song.
79. Get to work earlier.
80. Clean a closet.
81. Play with a child.
82. Go on a picnic.
83. Drive a different route to work.
84. Leave work (class) early (with permission).
85. Put air freshener in your car.
86. Watch a movie and eat popcorn.
87. Write a far away friend.
88. Scream at a ball game.
89. Cook and eat a meal by candlelight.
90. Recognize the importance of unconditional love.
91. Remember stress is an attitude.
92. Keep a journal.
93. Share a monster smile.
94. Remember your options.
95. Build a support network.
96. Quit trying to fix others.
97. Get enough sleep.
98. Talk less and listen more.
99. Praise others.
100. Stop a bad habit.
101. Relax. Take each day at a time — you have the rest of your life to live!



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6

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7

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8

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9

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10

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