

THE VOICE

The National Education Association ❖ December 2012



LEFT BRAIN. *Right Brain.*

2013 Teacher of the Year Angela Mosier uses creative methods to teach math.

Keeping the Promise:
Retirement Plan Update

Measuring Quality:
Catsup and Kids

Upcoming Assignments

Jan. 9

Legislature Convenes

■ **What:** The 2013 session of the Nebraska Legislature opens with a dozen or so new faces and retirement, state aid and other issues – all of which affect you – on the agenda. Watch the NSEA website for news and updates.

Feb. 2

Blue Cross Scholarships

■ **What:** Looking to improve skills or keep your certificate up-to-date? Get a scholarship to help with that schooling!

■ **Details:** Now in the 26th year, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska has given out more than \$600,000 in scholarships. Learn more on Page 18.

March 4

Legislative Lobby Day

■ **What:** Every year, NSEA members gather in Lincoln on an appointed day to visit with state senators about the needs of public schools and public school students.

■ **Details:** Watch these pages and nsea.org for details. Or, to register, call NSEA's Cathy Schapmann at 1-800-742-0047. Or e-mail to:

cathy.schapmann@nsea.org

Caution Ahead!!

NSEA, Coalition, Urge Watchfulness, Caution With Tax Policy as Economy Recovers

Improved revenue projections by the Nebraska Economic Forecasting Board should not be a 'green light' for state policymakers to halt preparations for the next economic storm, the Rebuilding Nebraska Coalition said.

The board projects state revenues to grow by 4.5 percent each of the next two years. If so, the state cash reserve would grow to about \$442 million. However, the board still projected that the Legislature will face a revenue shortfall of \$195 million when it convenes in January.

For that reason, NSEA has joined the Rebuilding Nebraska Coalition, an alliance of organizations advocating for responsible tax and budget policy. NSEA President Nancy Fulton said the Economic Forecasting Board news was pleasing. Yet she urged deliberation.

"Caution remains the byword when it comes to the economy and our state tax revenues," said Fulton. "A 'steady as she goes' approach is in order. Replenish the cash reserve fund, meet the obligations of the state, and then identify the investments we need to make in education and other priorities."

Becky Gould, executive director of Nebraska Appleseed, said now is the time to focus on rebuilding after years of cuts to critical programs and services.

"We can continue to strengthen our state's economic foundation by making

prudent investments in areas that benefit Nebraskans hit hardest by the recession," said Gould.

The Rebuilding Nebraska Coalition has proposed these building blocks for Nebraska's economic prosperity:

■ Begin to restore the state's cash reserve to pre-recession levels of approximately \$700 million.

■ Invest in essential infrastructure – schools, colleges, safe communities, transportation, health care, and an educated workforce.

■ Target state investment in innovation, entrepreneurship and growth industries that will raise the level of prosperity for Nebraska families.

"Nebraskans know that you save for a rainy day in better economic conditions and make thoughtful choices about spending in areas of need," said Jon Bailey of the Center for Rural Affairs. "It is just prudent planning in these economically uncertain times to save when you can, and carefully invest in that which will help our state move forward."

Members of the Rebuilding Nebraska Coalition include the Nebraska Appleseed, AARP, Voices for Children, Center for People in Need, Nebraska State Education Association, Center for Rural Affairs, Nebraska Association of Public Employees/AFSCME, and the Nonprofit Association of the Midlands.

On the Cover:

Angela Mosier has joined the roll call of Nebraska Teachers of the Year. The Westside District 66 science teacher considered the art classroom before turning to science, but now combines the best of both disciplines.

Page 6.



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Great Public Schools For Every Child

The Good Life at Risk

Wayward Tax Plan Could Gut Funding For Schools, Other Needs



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“
**Nebraska
is in a great
position to
continue to
meet our
obligations
responsibly,
without
implementing
reckless
economic
policy that
would invite
instability...**

”

Part of my job as your NSEA president is to work to protect the state’s investment in public education.

Indeed, near the top of NSEA’s list of Resolutions is a call that “state funds provide at least one half-of the operating costs of K-12 public schools.” In an ideal world, that would mean state funds would pay half of your salary, fund half the cost of textbooks, computers and other materials in your classroom, and so forth.

Nebraska struggles to meet that goal now. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Nebraska ranks 44th in terms of the state’s share of funding of K-12 public schools. So imagine what might happen if the state of Nebraska suddenly lost \$1.7 billion in income tax revenue each year. State aid to public schools would evaporate. At the local level, arts funding would vanish, extra-curriculars would disappear, class size would balloon and libraries would close.

Scare tactics, you say? The elimination of – or at the very least, very deep cuts to – our income tax rate will likely be on the agenda when the Legislature convenes in January. Sadly, there are a few Grinch-like characters out there who don’t seem to mind if your property taxes skyrocket and your classroom has 30 kids.

Another of my jobs as your president is to work with other organizations, when feasible, to promote the good work of public education and push other common issues.

It was with tax fairness in mind that I worked with Carolyn Rooker, Beatty Brasch and Julie Dake Abel to pen an op-ed that appeared in the *Omaha World-Herald* in November. Rooker is executive director of Voices for Children. Brasch is executive director of the Center for People in Need. Abel is president of the Nebraska Association of Public Employees/American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

You may have seen these remarks, but they deserve repeating, even in this pared-down version.

Investment from the Past

In recent years, surveys and rankings have shown that Nebraska really does offer “The Good Life.” One of the lowest unemployment rates in the country; the No. 2 ranking in highest quality of life by *Forbes*; consistently ranked one of the best places for business by Gallup — the list goes on.

The Good Life didn’t happen overnight, or by

accident. Our state has carefully planned for things like top-notch schools and world-class health care. The systems we have today weren’t solely paid for with the taxes we just paid. They were also paid for by past taxpayers — the services they paid for have an effect on our quality of life today.

Recent discussions on the state budget have mentioned eliminating the state income tax in 2013. This idea would have very dangerous effects on the Nebraska economy and risk all of the basic, needed public services for which the state is responsible.

Imagine if, long-ago, taxpayers had not budgeted for our schools, or roads or public safety. Would we enjoy the same quality of life that we do today?

The state income tax provides more than half of Nebraska’s general fund revenue. It pays for essentials like schools, law enforcement, roads and streets, and public safety. The rash move of eliminating the state income tax would make Nebraska choose between deep cuts to services or new revenue sources to avoid budget deficits.

That could force counties and cities to raise property and sales taxes to pay for basic government necessities. It could mean eliminating sales tax exemptions on groceries, making it even more expensive for working families to put food on the table.

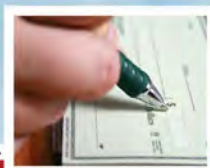
The Kansas Mistake

The Kansas Legislature substantially lowered income tax rates and eliminated their state’s income tax on business income this spring, a move the Kansas Legislative Research Department said will cause a \$4.2 billion budget deficit over the next five years. That means Kansas will have to raise other taxes or do significant damage to schools, law enforcement, highways and hospitals. The Kansas quality of life will suffer.

Nebraska is in a great position to continue to meet our obligations responsibly, without implementing reckless economic policy that would invite instability, explode our budget deficit, stifle economic growth and hurt hardworking people.

A healthy and educated work force, safe streets, emergency medical care and a sturdy economy are the result of wise decisions our state has made in the past using our state income tax dollars.

Elimination of the income tax would be a step backward for “The Good Life.”



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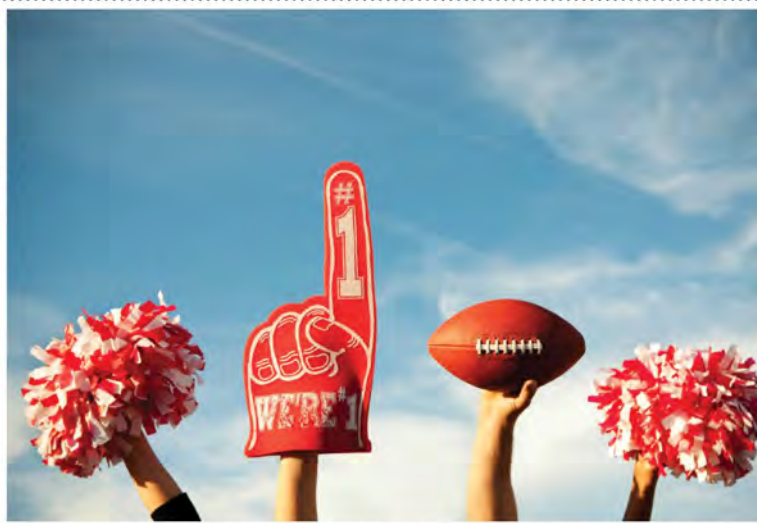
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 2. To receive the \$25 bonus, member must enroll in eStatements through Online Banking, and still be enrolled, as of 12/31/2012.
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Each earned bonus will be credited to the checking account by 1/15/13. Limit of one combined bonus per mailing address. The total combined bonus and gift card payout will not exceed \$100. Cannot be combined with any other offers. Checking accounts with a \$0 balance, overdrawn or closed as of 12/31/12 are not eligible and will not be paid any bonus. Offers do not apply to second or multiple checking accounts.

**Mobile banking requires phone with internet capabilities. A fee may be charged by the mobile phone carrier for text messages or internet service.

A Stocking Full of Savings!

Hard to believe the holiday season is at hand!

Whether you're looking for a great gift, winter clothes, or some holiday treats, NSEA's Access membership program can assist with the savings that are very much appreciated during the holidays. You'll find everything you need and more with these seasonal savings.

Find a Great Gift: Search through a wide selection of presents at Office Depot this holiday season and get up to 50 percent off. If you're looking to stock up on gifts, join Costco and receive coupons for free products and other great savings. And if you don't feel like going out in the holiday traffic, shop online at Sears.com and save \$5 on your \$50 purchase.

A Winter Wardrobe: It's time to shop for some new clothes to keep you warm this winter. Stay toasty with \$10 off! Stock up on mittens, scarves and sweaters from New York & Company and get \$25 off your \$75 purchase, in-store or online. And with 10 percent off at Tommy Hilfiger, you can wrap up in amazing outerwear that's both functional and stylish.

A Holiday Feast: Need some delicious treats for stocking stuffers? Choose from chocolate, sour, chewy, hard and crunchy candy, plus more, with 15 percent off at Sweet Factory. Or prepare a nice dinner for family and friends with up to 62 percent off at Omaha Steaks.

'Tis the Season for Toys: Kmart.com has everything from Barbies and puzzles to games and trains for your holiday donations, and will earn you an extra \$5 off orders of \$45 or

NSEA Membership Cards to Arrive Soon!

The 2012-13 NSEA Membership Card will be in your mailbox soon.

The new card – a gateway to savings – will arrive in your mailbox before the end of the year. In the meantime, your current card is good until the new card arrives.

As is usual, the NSEA card opens a whole world of savings, and gives members the opportunity to save much more than the cost of annual membership. And during the holiday season, with the New Year ahead, saving money is important.

NSEA's Access Card serves double duty. It's both an Association membership card and a discount card that can be used at thousands of merchant sites across the country. Whether you're shopping for new clothes, dining out, looking for hotel discounts or buying home electronics, your NSEA Access Membership Card can save you lots of cash.

The new card is valid through December 2013. All NSEA members, including first-time members, can access savings by using their individual 10-digit Association identification number, which appears above the name on every Association mailing.

To start saving, members must activate their card once it arrives. It's easy to do, by following these steps:

- Log on to the NSEA website at nsea.org.
- Enter your member ID number (located on the front of the card or on the mailing label above your name).
- Create your personal account by following the registration instructions.

You can also activate your account by calling the toll-free number listed on the back of each card: 1-888-313-6591.

Some merchants require that you present your card at the time of purchase. Others require that you print a coupon from the Access website, so be certain to check the individual merchant page on the website for specific instructions.

Start saving!



more. And Mattel Shop is offering free shipping when you shop for action figures, hot wheels, electronics, and more online.

You'll save more than ever this holiday season with these great discounts. To start shopping and saving, visit the NSEA website and use your Access membership card to log in for savings. Look for the Access card icon at the lower left corner of the homepage at nsea.org.

You're Covered by the EEL Liability Policy

Every NSEA Member has the Backing of Insurance Purchased by NSEA

Every member of NSEA is covered by the Educator's Employment Liability (EEL) Insurance policy purchased by the National Education Association.

In general, the EEL policy provides coverage for members arising out of their educational employment activities. Those activities are generally defined as duties performed pursuant to the express or implied terms of their employment or at the express request of

the member's supervisor acting within the supervisor's school employment.

In addition to defending civil matters, the EEL insurance provides reimbursement for bail bonds in employment-related criminal matters and reimbursement for personal property damages caused by an assault at school or while performing school duties.

Further, the EEL insurance provides reimbursement in criminal matters

arising out of educational employment activities if the member is found not guilty.

The specific terms and coverage provided by the EEL insurance policy are governed by the insurance company.

For additional information, contact your NSEA UniServ director, who will be happy to provide you with additional details. Reach your UniServ director at 1-800-742-0047.



On the job: Angela Mosier works with a student in an Advanced Algebra class at Westside District 66 High School. Mosier is Nebraska's 2013 Teacher of the Year.

The Art of Math

Teacher of the Year Angela Mosier Mixes Math, Art to Reach Westside's Visual Learners

When Angela Mosier was an undergrad considering a career, her love of math pulled her in one direction while her artistic ability pulled her in another.

It wasn't until her college advisor suggested she consider physics that her life course was set.

Today, Mosier chairs the 20-member math department at Westside District 66 High School in Omaha. She teaches three classes of advanced algebra each day. She is a National Board Certified teacher with an endorsement in early adolescence math.

Don't think for a moment that Mosier has abandoned art. Her artistic skills – and a fearless embrace of technology – transform her algebra classes into visual displays that help students “see” math.

“Math and physics it was,” said Mosier. “But today I use art to make the math more visual than my own teachers did, and physics to explain the ‘why’ behind mathematics.

“I want students to understand math because they see what is going on and how it is useful, rather than because

they can write numbers or work formulas on paper.”

Her success at combining math and physics with a daily dose of art and interactive technology have led to her selection as Nebraska's 38th Teacher of the Year. As such, she has received a gift package of cash, hardware and other items from sponsors of the Nebraska Department of Education's Teacher of the Year program. The program also recognized three other NSEA members as finalists: Pat Olson, Blair; Sandi Seckel, Columbus; and Judith Stucky, Westside.

No Failure

After her advisor suggested math and physics, Mosier realized that, as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field, she would stand as a role model for the young women she would teach.

“I want them to feel they can do math, too,” she said. “I don't want them to say they hate math, or they can't do math. I want them to be able to say they can do it.”

Regardless of gender, Mosier enjoys

The Mosier Dossier

- Taught Algebra I, Advanced Algebra, and Advanced Algebra Honors classes at Westside High School since 2008. From 1999-2008 taught Math 7, Pre-Algebra and Honors Algebra at Westside Middle School.



- Undergraduate degree in math and physics from the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Master's degree in secondary education from UNO.

- 10-year National Board Certification in Math: Early Adolescence, 2007.

- Sponsor of Westside Mathematics Honor Society. Past sponsor for Student Council, yearbook and Westside Student Forum.

- Nebraska Mathematics Professional Development Series team leader.

- Chair of Westside High School Mathematics Department.

working with students who struggle.

“That's where I feel like I can have the biggest impact,” she said. “Failure is not an option for these kids with me.”

Failure can be averted, she believes, through hard work.

Blair, Westside, Columbus Teachers Honored

Pat Olson, Business Education Blair High School

Olson taught at Arlington for four years and has taught at Blair since 1981.

She refuses to become a teacher who is no longer passionate and effective.

"Educating children is the most important job a person can do; students deserve teachers who unconditionally want to teach," she wrote in her Teacher of the Year application.

Thus, it is "imperative that we attract competent educators to the teaching profession and provide ample support for them to succeed."

Beginning teachers need quality mentoring programs to become good educators. Good mentoring programs in turn can benefit veteran teachers, she said. "Many times, veteran teachers can learn a great deal from the new teachers who bring creativity and a fresh dose of enthusiasm."

Constant improvement is a must for educators.

"When we stop learning, our students will stop learning."

Sandi Seckel, Second Grade Columbus Public Schools

Seckel has taught at Columbus since 1982.

Teaching, she said, is an art. Teachers are artists.

"As an artist, my work is impacted by several different factors: my personality, training, colleagues, administrative leadership, students, their parents, my own family and my successes and failures."

Seckel said it is imperative that "we need to attract and hold the brightest and best applicants for the field of education."



Olson



Seckel



Stucky

To that end, Seckel works to strengthen the teaching profession by participating in staff development, networking with fellow educators to implement "best practice" and by collaborating with colleagues both in her district and across the state. That helps Seckel to "improve my instructional skills while supporting my colleagues to improve theirs."

As a "proud member" of the teaching profession, Seckel said she stays actively involved in the "professional organizations that provide direction and support

for teachers."

Judith Stucky, Grades 9-12 Science Westside High School

Stucky joined Westside in 2007, after teaching in South Dakota.

Stucky believes that "we are all teachers and we are all learners."

She wrote this in her Teacher of the Year application: "Teaching and learning is a personal, human experience. Every teacher's biggest challenge is to find a way to personalize learning for every student."

She also believes that learning should be active, not passive.

"I never have students just sit and listen, or take notes for an entire period," she said. "I try to incorporate as much active participation as possible by asking students to share their ideas with each other and demonstrate their understanding of concepts during the class period."

Finally, Stucky wrote, "Great teachers love what they teach and look forward to sharing what they know to many different students in many different ways."

"I want to help students develop the strong work ethic that leads to success," Mosier wrote in her Teacher of the Year essay. "I know students who fail too often stop working. I teach my students not to be afraid of failure and to know it is OK to get things wrong as long as they keep working to get them right."

Techno Whiz

She has not forsaken her artistic roots. Mosier admits to being a visual learner who needs to see content to understand content. That helps her relate to her digital native students, she said, who are visual learners in need of immediate feedback. She inserts images and video into lessons to combine art with technology, making learning interactive.

"When I teach sine and cosine, interactive graphs created on a graphing program like Geogebra or Grapher help me show students what happens when you change the amplitude, period, horizontal shifts and vertical shifts for these trig functions," she wrote.

When teaching the graphing of linear equations, she imports photos of local architecture into Grapher, and challenges students to match the equation of a

specific line to a line on the photograph.

Software like Blackboard and Geogebra, as well as Web 2.0 tools like Diigo dot her Teacher of the Year application. The Westside math department has purchased two iPads to explore their classroom functionality, and Mosier's math colleagues use a remote desktop application to give them mobility while they teach. Mosier is always on the lookout for math applications that might assist students in coursework or Advanced Placement test prep. She subscribes to blogs, follows Twitter feeds and examines websites for ideas to share with departmental colleagues.

"We have a fantastic department," she said. "They're all very professional. They all help create a fun, positive and productive working environment."

Making the 'Rounds'

Just as Mosier believes all students can learn, she believes teachers must strive to improve their skills, as well. Mosier is a believer in collaboration and in constant re-examination of lessons and skills. A perfect example is Westside's participation last spring in the Marzano Academy Cohort.

Following the cohort, Mosier worked with colleagues to implement an instructional rounds plan. Teachers from all disciplines make "rounds" – a la the medical field – to observe other educators at work. Mosier called the rounds a "tremendous staff development program" and said research by the Marzano Center for Teaching and Leadership Evaluation shows such observations aid instructional growth. Mosier observed a strength and conditioning class.

"I might never have gone into a physical education classroom, but I learned from how the class was structured and how the teacher was floating around interacting with all the students – it was really great to see a colleague from another department in his element," she said.

After they observe, participants are asked three questions: Was there something the subject teacher did that reinforces your teaching? Is there something the subject teacher does that you would like to try? What are you going to try?

"These 'rounds' are non-evaluative, and those who are observed always get very positive feedback," said Mosier. "We just try to learn from the great instruction going on in this building."

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ART 807P-01	Art Methods for Young Children	CSP 899P-03	ST: Professional Development Academy I: Effective School Counselor Coordination with Community Agencies & Resources	HIST 896	Thesis (3 & 6 cr. hrs.)
ART 825-03	Intercultural Aesthetics & Pedagogical Practice			MUS 812P-01	Brass Pedagogy
ART 844-01	History, Theories & Philosophies of Art Educ.	CSP 899P-04	ST: Professional Development Academy II: The School Counselor's Role in Helping Self-Harming Students	SFED 310-01	Driving Task Analysis
ART 846-01	Seminar in Art Education			SFED 430-01	Developing Driver Education Classroom Skills
ART 848-01	Art for Students with Diverse Needs	CSP 899P-05	ST: Professional Development Academy III: How to Use Data to Develop & Market Your School Counseling Program	SFED 431-01	Developing Driver Education Vehicle Skills (Lecture)
ART 855-01	Art Education in American Culture			SFED 431-02	Developing Driver Education Vehicle Skills (Lab)
ART 861-01	Art of Americas: Native American & Latino Art History	CSP 899P	ST: Globalization of School Psychology (2 sections)	SPAN 808P-02	Comparative Grammar
				TE 800	Educational Research (3 sections)
ART 895-02	Art Education Research Paper	CSP 921-02	School Psychology Interventions Practicum	TE 803	Philosophy of Education (2 sections)
BIOL 802	Organic Evolution (2 sections)	CSP 922-02	Problem Solving Assessment Practicum	TE 804	Curriculum Development in Multicultural Education
BIOL 804-01	Evolution of Epidemics	CSP 931-01	Scholarly Study	TE 805P-01	Overview of Assistive Technology
BIOL 815-01	Great Plains Heritage	EDAD 842P-01	Administration of Special Education	TE 810	Design & Development of Instruction (2 sections)
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BIOL 827-01	Biological Statistics	EDAD 854-01	Introduction to Educational Administration	TE 846-01	Diagnosis/Correction of Reading Difficulties
BIOL 830P-01	ST: Mycology	EDAD 855-01	Supervision of Instruction	TE 850-01	Elementary School Curriculum
BIOL 830P-02	ST: Bat Biology	EDAD 859	Legal Bases of Education (2 sections)	TE 853A-01	Improvement of Instruction in Early Childhood Education
BIOL 830P-03	ST: Advanced Plant Nutrition	EDAD 869-01	The Principalship		
BIOL 830P-04	ST: Cold-Blooded Vertebrates	EDAD 870-01	Principal as Instructional Leaders	TE 854-01	Reading in the Content Areas
BIOL 831A-01	Biological Research: Hypothesis & Justification	EDAD 899P-01	ST: Introduction to Educational Administration Research	TE 869-01	Introduction to School Library Program
BIOL 831B-01	Biological Research: Methodology			TE 870-01	Developing Web-Based Portfolios
BIOL 831C-01	Biological Research: Annotated Bibliography	EDAD 899P-02	ST: Athletic Director	TE 875-01	Administration of the School Library
BIOL 831D-01	Biological Research: Data Collection	EDAD 940-01	Administrative Theory	TE 876-01	Integrating of Curriculum Technology & Media Resources
BIOL 831E-01	Biological Research: Statistical Analysis	EDAD 944-01	Seminar in Educational Administration		
BIOL 831F-01	Biological Research: Manuscript	EDAD 957-01	Public School Finance	TE 886P	Technology Tools for Teachers (2 sections)
BIOL 834-01	Conservation Biology	ENG 843P-01	Reading Problems in Secondary Schools	TESE 821P-01	Nature & Needs of Exceptionalities
BIOL 835P-01	Herpetology	FSID 886P-01	Families in Crisis	TESE 825-01	Curriculum Design & Development for Gifted/Talented Education
BIOL 839-01	Human Physiological Systems	HIST 801-01	America Interpreted		
BIOL 844-01	Molecular Biotechnology	HIST 803-01	Historical Methods	TESE 862-01	Formal & Informal Assessment in Special Education
BIOL 863-01	Biological Perspectives	HIST 848-01	ST: Readings in The Great Depression	TESE 863-01	Research Based Instructional Strategies for Students with Disabilities
BIOL 866-01	Functional Morphology	HIST 848-02	ST: Reading in Public History		
BIOL 876-01	Natural Science Curriculum	HIST 848-03	ST: Readings in Native American History	TESE 867-01	Applied & Functional Behavior Analysis
BIOL 881	Current Issues in Biology (4 sections)	HIST 848-04	ST: Readings in The Cold War	TESE 875P-01	Curriculum Content for Secondary Students with Disabilities
BIOL 883-01	Aquatic Trophic Ecology	HIST 848-05	ST: Readings in the Age of Jackson		
BIOL 886-01	Sexual Selection	HIST 848-06	ST: Readings in Popular Culture	TESE 879P-01	Developing Social & Personal Skills in Individuals with Disabilities
CHEM 820P-01	Inorganic Chemistry I for High School Teachers	HIST 848-07	ST: Readings in American Religion		
CSIS 850P-01	E-Commerce Information Systems	HIST 849-01	ST: Readings in 17th Century Europe		
CSIS 858P-01	Computer Security	HIST 849-02	ST: Readings in Seapower History		
CSP 804P-01	Counseling & Mental Disorders	HIST 849-03	ST: Readings in Stalin's Russia		
CSP 807P-01	Clinical Treatment Issues in Addictions Counseling	HIST 849-04	ST: Readings in World War I		
		HIST 849-05	ST: Readings in Medieval Europe		
CSP 830-01	Professional Issues in Clinical Mental Health Counseling				
CSP 875-01	Career & Lifestyle Development				

Evaluation Plan Moves Forward

Nearly Two Dozen Districts Will Take Part in Pilot Program

While proposed new state standards for social studies drew much of the attention of the public and the press in early November, action by the State Board of Education on teacher evaluations has the potential to affect all Nebraska teachers.

About 340 members of the public commented on development of revised social studies standards, and more will do so via on-line submissions and through a Nov. 15 video conference at five sites across the state.

Meanwhile, at the same Nov. 9 meeting, the eight-member State Board of Education adopted a Teacher & Principal Performance Framework. Even though the board adopted the 14-page document, it remains a work in progress. Twenty-one Nebraska school districts have agreed to give the teacher and principal evaluation program a test run over the next year.

NSEA Instructional Advocacy Director Jay Sears has worked with state board members throughout the development of the frameworks, and will serve on the framework pilot design team. Sears said the 21 districts have each assembled a core team of teachers and administrators to help design and implement the model, and to analyze the evaluation instruments.

Review of Data

After the test period, the Nebraska Department of Education will collect and review data from the pilot school districts, said Sears. The state board will then accept, reject and/or make changes to any recommendations that come from the review, and will then put the final draft out as models for use by Nebraska school districts. The process is well-designed and deliberate, he said.

“Everything is tied back to the stan-



Hashing it out: Talking over education issues, from left, are Carla Rohwer, president of the Elkhorn Education Association; Cama Charlet-Sayles, Millard Education Association; and Rebecca Valdez, Omaha, a member of the Nebraska State Board of Education.

NSEA Hosts State Board ‘Meet & Greet’

About 15 NSEA members had an opportunity to chat with three members of the Nebraska State Board of Education at a “meet and greet” event hosted by NSEA and the NSEA Metro District.

In attendance were Omaha-area state board members Mark Quandahl, John Sieler and Rebecca Valdez.

A wide-ranging discussion with the state board members touched on testing, Common Core Standards, time to teach in-depth content, evaluations, educator preparation and other topics.

Jay Sears, NSEA’s director of instructional advocacy, said that state board members are interested in hearing from teachers.

“This event gave our members an opportunity to have input on education decisions that affect members and their students,” he said.

More such meetings are planned in the Omaha metropolitan area, said Sears, and similar gatherings may also be scheduled with state board members from other areas of the state, as well.

dards of good teaching practice,” said Sears.

Sears said the final product has the potential to help all school districts improve the evaluation process for administrators and teachers.

“Not all small locals, in particular, have the time or the staff to develop and implement the kind of in-depth evaluation programs that will help their teachers become better educators,” said Sears. “The evaluation models should

be of good use to many school districts.”

Sears said the pilot team includes a dozen or so developers and technology coordinators from various Educational Service Units from around the state, as well as representatives from the 21 Nebraska school districts that have agreed to pilot the program (see below).

To read the entire framework document, go to the Nebraska Department of Education website at:

www.education.ne.gov

Evaluation Program Pilot Schools

These 21 Nebraska school districts will participate in a one year pilot of a new teacher and administrator evaluation model:

Ashland-Greenwood
Ainsworth
Bellevue
Central City
Centura Public
Dorchester
Dundy County/Stratton

Falls City
Fort Calhoun
Fremont
Hitchcock County
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Retirement Plan Reviewed

Actuarial Study: Modify Assumptions, Consider Investment Mix

Every five years the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems (NPERS) Board of Directors orders an actuarial experience study to compare the actuarial assumptions with actual experience of the teacher retirement plan.

The most recent study, released this fall, recommended changes in several plan assumptions, which are used to quantify the amount and value of future benefit payments. While there are no “right answers,” there are ranges of acceptable assumptions for each variable studied.

Three changes recommended by Buck Consultants would lower the amount of money needed to fund future benefit payments. These changes included lower assumptions for salary increases, retirement rates, and the number of individuals who will qualify for disability retirement.

Changes in the assumptions reflecting increased mortality (how long active members and retirees live), as well as a decrease in the number of members withdrawing and taking refunds, would increase the money needed to fully fund future benefit payments.

The net result of these modifications in assumptions is that changes must be made to ensure benefits for future retired educators, said Dave Slishinsky, an actuary with Buck Consultants.

Slishinsky said the retirement plan’s basic equation is simple: money going into the plan must grow to equal the amount of money going out.

“If you expect investment returns to be less, contributions have to go up, or some other change has to be made. The equation has to hold true,” he said.

Review Investment Mix

The study also reviewed future investment returns. While the returns for 2010 (13.6 percent) and 2011 (23.3 percent) were far above the assumed 8 percent annual rate of return, the projection is that, in the immediate future, the investment performance is not likely to meet that 8 percent goal, given the current asset mix of 30 percent fixed income, 60 percent equities, 10 percent real estate and private equity. Slishinsky noted the 2012 return of less than 1 percent fell short of 8 percent. Further, and importantly, the plan’s five-year smoothing formula still recognizes losses from the Great Recession of 2008 and 2009.

During his report at the once-yearly joint meeting of the Nebraska Investment Council and the NPERS Board, Slishinsky said that if the investment mix is not changed, the board should reduce the 8 percent assumed rate of return. He said investment returns for the current asset mix are likely to continue at a rate lower than 8 percent in the next few years of slow economic recovery.

Returns will eventually increase to a level higher than the assumed 8 percent rate. Even so, Slishinsky recommended a reduction in the return assumption to 7.75 per-

cent. The NPERS Board approved that step in August, but reconsidered and held steady at 8 percent pending further review of the asset mix and investment performance.

The investment return goal figures heavily into calculations that project future funding and system viability.

Employee Contributions

Currently, education employees contribute 9.78 percent of pay, employers contribute 9.88 percent, and the state contributes 1 percent. The total contributions is 20.66

percent of pay, with almost half of the contributions used to pay off poor investment performance from the past decade or so. Slishinsky’s report indicated that the underlying cost of benefits is about 11.5 percent of pay.

Teachers and other school employees have been paying the state’s obligation of the unfunded liability through higher contribution rates. Over the past four years, Nebraska educators have stepped up to ensure future benefits. In 2008, school employees gave 7.28 percent of their salary retirement benefits. In 2009-10, that contribution rate rose to 8.28 percent, and in 2011 rose to 8.88 percent. In September, it rose again, to 9.78 percent. Local school districts also contribute, at a rate equal to 101 percent of each employees’ contribution.

NSEA Will Defend Plan

As a result of the poor investment performance for 2012, the teacher retirement plan was 77 percent funded as of July 1; a year earlier that figure was 80 percent. An 80 percent funded ratio is manageable and a bit above current national averages, Slishinsky said.

NSEA will work with the NPERS Board of Directors, state lawmakers and the governor to keep the system sound and viable.

“This is an important asset, a vital asset for Nebraska educators,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

“We will do all in our power to see that it remains sound.”

The Nebraska Investment Council invests contributions made by Nebraska school employees into the retirement plan. The Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems Board of Directors is the fiduciary for the retirement plan.

By the Numbers

Key numbers for the school retirement system:

39,477

Number of active plan members.

19,097

The number of plan retirees, or their beneficiaries.

\$7.267 billion

The plan’s actuarial value on June 30.

\$1,626

Average monthly benefit for school employees (2010 NPERS report to the Legislature’s Retirement Committee).

“This is an important asset, a vital asset for Nebraska educators. We will do all in our power to see that it remains sound.”

— Nancy Fulton,
NSEA President

Honor a Colleague at DA in April

Nebraska has 250 school districts, hundreds of school buildings and more than 30,000 school employees. Each of those employees has a skill or talent that should be honored.

Any NSEA member may nominate an individual or group for these awards. All mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 1, 2013, and sent to: NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online, with any required supporting material scanned and e-mailed or mailed to the NSEA. Online forms for the awards, as well as more details, may be found under the 'Call for Nominations' link on the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

NSEA members are eligible for:

- **NSEA Rookie of the Year.** For a teacher who sparked in his or her first year of teaching during the 2011-12 school year.
- **Award for Teaching Excellence.** To a classroom teacher who has excelled over a long period of time.
- **Education Support Professional of the Year.** Awarded to an ESP who has excelled in his or her job.

Honorees will be notified in March and announced at Delegate Assembly in Kearney on April 19-20, 2013. Each honoree receives \$250. The Award for Teaching Excellence honoree will compete for the NEA Teaching Excellence Award and a \$25,000 prize.

NSEA members are eligible for these honors:

■ **The Great Plains Milestone Award:** Recognizes an individual or group that has promoted human and civil rights in their locale or the state.

■ **Community Service:** Honors an NSEA member(s) and/or local associations involved in non-paid volunteer work outside of classroom hours.

■ **Local Public Relations:** Honors a local association for outstanding communication within the association, and promotion of educational excellence in the community.

These awards are also presented:

■ **Friend of Education:** NSEA's highest award honors an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education.

■ **Media:** Recognizes a newspaper, television or radio station for outstanding work in covering education issues and promoting community involvement in education.

It's a Big Deal! You Should Be at DA!

NSEA is your Association. Like every other NSEA member, you are eligible to be elected to serve as a delegate to the April 19-20, 2013 event in Kearney. It is at that meeting where difficult policy decisions will be reached, budget and dues will be set, and a vacancy on NSEA's elected board will be filled.

For details, contact your NSEA UniServ director at 1-800-742-0047.



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Hayes Takes NSEA Policy Duties

NSEA's new Director of Governmental Public Policy and Legislative Research brings a wealth of experience to the table.

The NSEA Board of Directors hired Jason Hayes in November, after Jerry Hoffman resigned to enter private business. Hayes is an attorney, teacher, legislative liaison and more – a excellent combination of attributes for NSEA's lead legislative lobbyist.

For the past two years, Hayes has worked as the legal counsel to the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems, the state government agency that collects and disburses retirement dollars for Nebraska school employees (except those in Omaha). In that role, Hayes has testified at legislative hearings, served as the agency's legislative liaison, and written legislation and rules for the school retirement plan.

"Jason's experience at the Retirement Systems office alone brings a wealth of knowledge to the table on NSEA's behalf," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "But he also has years of valuable experience in other aspects of state government, excellent connections in state government, and he's an educator – a great combination of experience and knowledge."

Hayes served as president of the Nebraska Tax Research Council, and from January 2007 through the end of 2009 as



Hayes

chief deputy state treasurer. In that role he managed a staff of 50, reviewed state financial information and contracts for compliance; oversaw treasury operations; and handled legislation, appropriation issues and agency budgets, among other duties.

Prior to his years at the treasurer's office, Hayes was legal counsel to the Legislature's Retirement Committee for three years, where he drafted statutory language, and authored and oversaw interim reports and legislative studies.

From November 1998 to October 2003, Hayes was an assistant attorney general, serving as legal counsel to several state agencies and as the attorney in charge of the Consumer Protection Division.

Since 2000, Hayes has been an adjunct professor at Doane College, where he has taught both undergraduate and graduate level courses. Hayes has also held elected office: beginning in 2003, he served two terms as a director of the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District.

Hayes has a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska-Omaha. His law degree is from the University of Nebraska College of Law.

Hayes is the son of long-time NSEA activist and retired Westside District 66 teacher Bill Hayes.

Auburn Education Association Gives \$500 to Children's Fund

'Happy to Help' Such a Worthy Cause

The following note was received from Kandi Rohrs, president of the Auburn Education Association.

Dear NSEA,

I attended the NSEA Membership meeting in Nebraska City in early August. Marlene Wehrbein is my UniServ director and she mentioned the Walk-A-Thon fundraiser for The Children's Fund. I made a note in my planner to mention this at our first AEA meeting.

At the meeting I brought up the Walk-A-Thon, explaining that there was a fundraiser this upcoming weekend in Omaha. I also explained The Children's Fund to my new teachers who were in attendance. I had a feeling that we wouldn't be represented at the Walk-A-Thon, so I brought up the idea of making a donation from the Auburn Education Association treasury. NSEA has been very generous with AEA in the past with matching funds to promote two levy overrides and (the passage of) a bond issue. I was pleasantly surprised that a motion was made to donate \$500 to the Children's Fund. It was seconded and passed with 100 percent of our members voting yes!

AEA was in a position to give back to NSEA, which helps countless children every year. We were happy to help such a worthwhile cause. Auburn has incredibly caring teachers and I am honored and proud to be their president. A check will be mailed Monday.

Kandi Rohrs, President
Auburn Education Association



About the NSEA Children's Fund

The Children's Fund can make a difference in a child's life.

Every NSEA member is aware of children who are underdressed in cold weather; of students who eat well only when school is in session; and of students who can't see the front of the room clearly because they receive no eye care.

Teachers frequently spend their own dollars to help these children. But they can't help every child. That's 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. In just the past two years, the Children's Fund has provided \$120,000 in relief.

Contributions to the NSEA Children's Fund come from teachers and businesses across the state. Contributions are tax deductible — and it's important to note that every penny contributed goes to help children. NSEA picks up all administrative expenses.

For teachers to receive funding to help a child, there is no red tape, no form to fill out. Simply contact the NSEA at 800-742-0047 and ask for Sally Bodtke. Or e-mail her at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

SEAN Members: Deadline Near for Scholarships

\$1,000 NSEA-Retired Stipends to Aid Student Teaching Costs

Attention Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) members who will soon enter your student teaching semester: The NSEA-Retired Board of Directors has available three \$1,000 scholarships for use during your student teaching semester.

Applicants shall be college juniors or seniors who have been SEAN members for at least two years, including the current year. Scholarships will be awarded based on financial need and answers to essay questions.

Each application shall also require three letters of recommendation: one from a faculty or staff member of the college or university; one from a local SEAN chapter officer; and one from the local SEAN chapter advisor.

Scholarships shall be effective for the student teaching semester. Checks will be issued jointly to the student and his or her college or university.

Mail applications to Tamra Mick, NSEA, 605 South 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508, and must be postmarked no

GEOO Offers Travel for Educators in '13

Would you like to earn professional development/graduate school credit and see the world? Would your students benefit by learning from a teacher with firsthand experience in other countries?

For the summer of 2013, the Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEOO) offers travel programs to India/Nepal, Russia/Mongolia/China, China, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Turkey, Portugal/Spain, Italy, Eastern Europe, Romania/Bulgaria, Kenya/Tanzania, Southern Africa, Morocco and Ecuador, among other locations.

GEOO is a non-profit dedicated to helping educators travel internationally and bring their experiences to the classroom. For details, go to:

geoo.org

Or, call 1-877-600-0105, or e-mail:

jesse@geoo.org



Scholarly recipients: NSEA-Retired Vice President Tom Black presented three Student Education Association of Nebraska members with their scholarships last spring. From left are Melissa Sorensen and Brittne Muller, both of Nebraska Wesleyan University; Black; and Devin Garcia, Peru State College.

later than March 1. Download the current application from this website:
www.nsea.org/SEAN

For details, contact Mick at 1-800-742-0047 or via e-mail at:
tamra.mick@nsea.org

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Millard's Dykstra Tours Chinese Schools Via NEA

NEA/Pearson Foundation Global Learning Fellow Gets First-Hand Look

Matt Dykstra, a physical education specialist at Ezra Millard Elementary in Millard, was one of 32 NEA Foundation/Pearson Foundation Global Learning Fellows who worked on global competency skills this summer by going global. The 32 spent nine days in China.



Dykstra

The fellowship is an expansion of the NEA Foundation's annual Awards for Teaching Excellence (ATE) program and a continuation of its mission to advance student achievement by investing in public education that will prepare all students to learn and thrive in a rapidly changing world. It is designed to broaden how the Fellows navigate the global age to better prepare students for success in an increasingly interconnected world. Global competence is defined as the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance.

Dykstra visited schools in Beijing and Shanghai where he observed high-quality instruction and met with Chinese teachers and administrators. He also met with representatives from multinational corporations Intel and Fastenal to learn of the workplace skills students need to succeed in a global economy.

Prior to the trip, each Fellow completed an online course that provided them with a framework to contextualize their experiences in China.

"Our program has an intentional focus on strengthening each educator's global competencies: investigating the world beyond one's immediate environment; recognizing multiple perspectives; communicating ideas effectively with diverse audiences; taking action to improve conditions," said Harriet Sanford, NEA Foundation president and CEO.

The 2013 Teaching Excellence awardees will be invited to participate on a similar trip next year.



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A Very Successful Election!

Nebraskans – and 28,000 NSEA members – elected or re-elected candidates to the Nebraska Legislature, State Board of Education and the University of Nebraska Board of Regents in 28 races where NSEA made a candidate recommendation.

In those 28 races, 20 of NSEA’s education-friendly candidates won.

“Particularly in the Legislature, those education-friendly candidates will be important to teachers, students and K-12 public schools and higher education,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

Particularly satisfying was the re-election of State Sen. Ken Haar, a former teacher, in District 21. A member

of the Education Committee, Haar won by an 85-vote margin. Also re-elected was District 41 Sen. Kate Sullivan, who plans to seek the chairmanship of the Legislature’s Education Committee.

All three NSEA candidates for the State Board of Education won. Rebecca Valdez, Omaha, won in Dist. 4, while Lincoln’s Lillie Larsen won in Dist. 1 and former teacher and administrator Rachel Wise, Oakland, won in Dist. 3.

Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley, expected to seek the Legislature’s Revenue Committee chairmanship, was re-elected, as was Omaha Sen. Jeremy Norquist, Retirement Committee chair.

“These are senators we talk to nearly

every day during the legislative session, and frequently during the rest of the year, as well,” said Fulton. “They understand the complexities that face educators.”

Other senators re-elected with NSEA support included Sen. Heath Mello, Sen. Tanya Cook and Sen. Scott Price, all of the Omaha metro area; Sen. Kathy Campbell and Sen. Colby Coash, both of Lincoln; and Sen. Mike Gloor, Grand Island.

New to the legislature, with NSEA’s support, are Sara Howard, Omaha; Jim Scheer, Norfolk; Kate Bolz, Lincoln; Rick Kolowski, Millard; Al Davis, Hyannis; Sue Crawford, Bellevue.



A Harvesting of Books in Lincoln

The Lincoln Education Association celebrated 16 years of the Harvest of Books campaign in November by distributing books to 3,511 first-graders and to 3,486 second-graders.

The Harvest of Books campaign raises money through donations and gifts, with the LEA coordinating the entire effort. Participating bookstores gave discounts on books purchased for Harvest of Books.

The program’s goal: to help foster a life-long love of reading among Lincoln students.

Above, LEA President and NEA Board of Directors member Jenni Absalon helps five first-graders at Huntington Elementary School select the book they’ll take home.

At left, NSEA President Nancy Fulton helps a Huntington youngster get started reading her new book.

Dates Set for 2013 NEA ESP Conference

Meeting is Top Event for ESP Members; Includes Skills Training

The 2013 NEA Education Support Professional National Conference is set for March 8-10, 2013 in Louisville, KY.

The conference is NEA's premier event for ESP members nationwide, with opportunities for skills development and networking at the national level.

Attendees will receive professional development to help them: build stronger locals, build strong internal and external relationships, organize members, and enhance NEA ESP members' ability improve student achievement. These skills are available through two full days of professional development, as well as in five pre-conference workshop opportunities. More than 1,000 will attend this year's event.

NEA will reimburse up to \$1,000 of actual conference expenses, per NEA travel guidelines, for two ESP members designated as "Emerging Leader Nominees" by the state Association president. Those attendees will be required to attend the Emerging Leaders Workshop, March 7-8, as well as the ESP Conference, March 8-10. The Emerging Leaders Workshop is open to two members from each state with less than five years of experience that have not held a leadership position in the Association. Nominees are required to attend the workshop in its entirety to obtain reimbursement.

NEA will reimburse up to \$250 of actual transportation expenses for one ESP member and one ESP Local President nominated by the state president to attend the Presidents and Leaders Workshop, March 6-7, and the full ESP Conference. These nominees are responsible for all other expenses, including registration.

Registration deadline is Feb. 8, 2013. Find details at:

nea.org/grants/31430.htm



Hurricane Relief from Columbus

Members of the Columbus Education Association feel deeply for those affected by Hurricane Sandy. To help with relief efforts on the East Coast, CEA members voted to donate \$1,000 to The American Red Cross. They know The American Red Cross will effectively use the contribution to help those in need, and the CEA has challenged other local associations to consider a gift to help teachers and students affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Pictured from left to right are: Marilyn Lamb, CEA Building Representative; Lori Focher, CEA past president; Sandra Seckel, CEA treasurer; Robin Coan, American Red Cross; Angie Kruse, CEA president; and Jane Dodson, CEA secretary.

Honors & Awards

A Beatrice teacher and NSEA member was among 97 across the nation to receive the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Joan Christen, Beatrice, attended an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., to receive their honors.

Christen has taught grades 9-12 science at Beatrice for nine years.

Two NSEA members were honored at Homecoming festivities at the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Janet Boettcher, Ord, was inducted into UNK's Athletic Hall of Fame. **Dave Sackschewsky, Northwest High School, Grand Island**, received the Gary Thomas Distinguished Award.

Boettcher won national track and field titles in the weight throw and the hammer throw in 1999 and 2000.

Each year, according to OfficeMax officials, the average American teacher spends \$1,000 out-of-pocket on essential classroom supplies. That's more than \$4 billion, a number that is both "surprising" and "unacceptable," according to OfficeMax officials.

In early October, NSEA members **Alan Eighme** and **Tracy West of Lincoln** were surprised with a visit by OfficeMax representatives and given gift boxes that included \$1,000 worth of supplies as part of the annual OfficeMax A Day Made Better advocacy program.

OfficeMax joined with AdoptA-Classroom.org to create the event, and more than 1,000 educators across the country reaped the benefits. Learn more at one of these two websites:

ADayMadeBetter.com
AdoptAClassroom.org

Four Nebraska schools have been honored as 2012 National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education:

- Bloomfield Junior-Senior High.
- Elgin Elementary School.
- Norwood Park Elementary School, Lincoln.
- Potter-Dix Elementary School.

They were among 269 schools recognized by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, based on their overall academic excellence, or for making progress in improving student academic achievement levels.

It's That Time of Year....

Apply for Blue Cross & Blue Shield Scholarships; Defray College Costs

Are you looking to improve your knowledge base, sharpen skills or finish coursework needed to upgrade your teaching certificate? Then you might consider applying for a scholarship through the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska Professional Development Fund.

The competitive scholarships are awarded three times each year, and the next deadline, for the spring term, is Saturday, Feb. 2. All applications must be made through the NSEA website. Applicants will receive an e-mail confirming receipt of the application (if you do not receive an e-mail, call NSEA).

Scholarships may be used to pursue an advanced degree, seek additional teaching endorsements or to take course work for certification requirements. Stipends may cover up to 50 percent of the cost of a single, three-hour college course. Each applicant may apply for scholarship dollars for no more than three hours of course work. Books and supplies are not covered.

To apply, NSEA members must complete the application



form on the NSEA website. NSEA will post the form on the NSEA website through the Saturday, Feb. 2, deadline.

NSEA will notify scholarship winners in March. The goal is to award stipends to the largest number of members from each of NSEA's six governance districts. To be eligible, NSEA members must be covered by either single or family Blue Cross/Blue Shield health care.

Previous applicants, successful or not, may re-apply. However, applicants may be scholarship recipients in only two of the three scholarship cycles during a school year.

Winners must provide evidence of completion of course work at an accredited post-secondary institution before they receive the scholarship funds. All courses must be taken for credit.

Since 1986, 4,744 NSEA members have shared more than \$617,500 in scholarship dollars, thanks to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska.

The scholarship program does not affect Blue Cross and Blue Shield premiums. To apply, go to the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

For details, contact Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or via e-mail at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org



Meet EMAC 2012-13

NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee includes these the officers for the 2012-13 school year. At front right is the committee chair, Tracy Hartman-Bradley, Omaha.

Standing, from left are: Jasmin Mejia, Peru State College, student representative; Vernon Miller, Umo'ho Nation, vice chair; Tom Black, NSEA-Retired liaison; Broderick Steed, Umo'ho Nation; NSEA associate staff Tamra Mick; and NSEA UniServ Director Carol Hicks.

Seated, from left, are: Maria Burgos, Elkhorn Valley; Susan Loney, Omaha; Alberta Nelson, Omaha, secretary; Vida Stabler, Umo'ho Nation.

Not pictured: Dorothy Chambers and Judy Beveridge, Omaha; Irene Cuellar, Grand Island; and Bob DeHart, York College.

Save With Dave!

If you use a cell phone, you should be aware of an amazing discount available to NEA members: NEA Wireless!

NEA Wireless, provided by AT&T, is the choice provider for the union movement and the only nationally unionized carrier. The plan offers NEA members up to 15 percent off AT&T monthly cell phone service on the primary line of an AT&T individual or family plan.

In addition to the up to 15 percent service discount, NEA members also enjoy these benefits:

- \$50 credit for each new AT&T activation made through AT&T's Premier online store.

- Blazing fast speeds on the nation's largest 4G network.

- Free use of the 26,000 AT&T WiFi hotspots across the United States.

Even if you already have wireless service through AT&T, NEA members are eligible for the discount. Just sign in at neamb.com and go to the NEA Wireless page to access your discount code.

After that, take the code, along with proof of Association membership, to an AT&T retail location.

No Conversion Cost!

There is no conversion or activation fee for members who want to convert to an AT&T service plan. Plus, members can take advantage of any promotional pricing on cell phone equipment offered at the time of purchase.

For more information about the NEA Wireless discount, including answers to Frequently Asked Questions, visit the NEA Wireless page.

To obtain your discount, click on the 'Register' button. The discount will be applied on your next billing statement! This offer is good through Dec. 31.

Check it out!

David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative.



Glenn

Home Loans

How to Choose What's Right for Your Family

Selecting the right mortgage loan is central to the home buying process — that's why it's so important to understand your options. You'll need to consider two things at the outset: which loan type meets your home buying needs, and which loan term offers the ideal repayment schedule.

Loan Types

Most home loans fall into one of two general categories: fixed-rate and adjustable-rate mortgages (ARMs).

Fixed-rate mortgages have interest rates that stay the same for the entire life of the loan. You'll have predictable monthly payments throughout the life of the loan. You'll also be protected from rising rates, so your principal and interest payments do not change, no matter how high interest rates rise.

Adjustable-rate mortgages, on the other hand, have interest rates that adjust periodically based on market conditions. The initial rate is fixed for an introductory period (usually three to 10 years), and is typically lower than for a fixed-rate mortgage. After that, the rate adjusts annually or semi-annually depending on the product and based on a market index, but it can't go above a predetermined adjustment cap.

Because of the lower initial rate, some borrowers may be eligible for a larger loan amount with an ARM than with a fixed-rate mortgage.

Loan Terms

The "term" of a loan is the period of time you'll spend repaying it. The most common loan term is 30 years, but other options are also available. There are 20-, 15- and 10-year mortgages for those who want to repay their loans faster.

Whether you're better off with a longer-term loan or a shorter-term loan depends on a number of factors, most notably your monthly income and your long-term financial goals. Comparing two fixed-rate loans with different terms:

- The longer-term loan will offer

lower monthly payments. This may be a good option if you're on a tight budget or would prefer to direct your monthly cash flow toward other investments or expenses.

- The shorter-term loan will mean higher monthly payments, but you'll be repaying the loan faster and potentially reducing loan interest.

Other Considerations

Besides the interest rate and the loan term, other important features of a mortgage loan include:

- Whether the loan amount is above or below what is known as the "conforming loan limit" set by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Mortgages larger than this amount are termed "jumbo loans" and require higher rates than similar conforming loans.

- Whether the loan can be insured or guaranteed by a government agency, such as the FHA or VA.

FHA loans are backed by the Federal Housing Administration, and are designed to assist low-to-moderate income homebuyers by providing low down payment requirements and flexible quali-

fying guidelines.

- VA loans are backed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (formerly the Veterans Administration), and are available to qualified veterans and active-duty military personnel and their spouses. They provide many of the same features as FHA loans.

- Whether the loan has flexible qualifying guidelines, which may be able to accommodate borrowers with credit challenges, excessive debt, or previous bankruptcy, foreclosure or tax delinquency.

To learn more about your home buying options, call the NEA Home Financing Program at 1-866-327-6385 and speak with a Home Mortgage Consultant.

Remember, the benefits of the NEA Home Financing Program are extended to parents and adult children of NEA members.



Open in April: NEA Board Seat

At NSEA's annual Delegate Assembly in April, delegates will elect a representative from NSEA to serve on the NEA Board of Directors. The elected candidate will serve a three year term.

Any NSEA member in good standing is eligible to file for this position. To have a candidate's name placed on the ballot, the candidate must be nominated from the floor during the Assembly's opening session on Friday evening, April 19, 2013.

Any candidate who wishes to seek election, and who wishes to have campaign material included in a mailing to all delegates in advance of Delegate Assembly, must submit that information to NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen not less than 45 days prior to April 19. The actual deadline is 11:59 p.m. CST on Tuesday, March 5, 2013.

The 2013 Delegate Assembly will be held at the Younes Convention Center in Kearney.

Questions? Contact NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

Apply Now for Belz, Lynch, Krause

Good teachers never stop learning. NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz/Lynch/Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2013 application deadline is Saturday, Feb. 2.

The Belz/Lynch/Krause dollars 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 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: need; how the project will address the need to relate to professional growth goals; project description; timeline; a budget statement; and method of evaluating the project's success. Applications must be postmarked by Saturday, Feb. 2. Recipients will be notified in March.

A letter describing and evaluating the project shall be submitted to the NSEA Scholarship and Grants Committee within three months of project completion.



Belz

Lynch

Krause

The grants are named for John Lynch, NSEA's executive director from 1959 to 1974; Paul Belz, executive director from 1974-84; and Helen Krause, a former NSEA president, and the first Nebraskan to serve on NEA's Executive Committee.

For details, or for an application form, visit the NSEA website. The form will be posted through Feb. 2 at:

www.nsea.org

More details are available from Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or via e-mail at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

GET YOUR
FREE
GUIDE TO NEST EGG
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There are 23 ways to protect your nest egg.

And 23 ways to tarnish it, too. There are 23 forks in the road to your financial future. And 23 chances to make a costly mistake.

Get a FREE guide to all 23 of these crossroads. It reveals the right choice in some tough situations, and some surprising dilemmas you face every day. It's available only to NEA members—as a gift from the NEA Members Insurance Trust®.

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But your nest egg may need better coverage. As an NEA member, you can add it at a preferred rate. Get a free quote when you get your guide and see how affordable "preferred" can be.

There are two easy ways to get your FREE guide:

CALL 1-855-NEA-LIFE (1-855-632-5433) • OR VISIT neamb.com/nestegg

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Measuring Up

I have visited the world's largest ball of twine, the world's deepest well, the most crooked street, the world's largest concrete black duck, the world's largest popcorn ball, and the world's largest bottle of catsup. What intrigues me is the way we determine how something "measures up."

I didn't taste the 5,000 pound popcorn ball in Sac City, Iowa, or try to sample catsup from the 170 ft. tall Brooks Catsup tower in Collinsville, Illinois. Yes, I understand. These are tourist attractions. Still, I think what should be measured in catsup is the quality of the product, not the size of the bottle. It is much the way I feel about schools, student learning, and the quality of education. Everyone knows that the measurements of these items really matter. So, why is it so hard to get it right?

We know that we do not measure quality by weighing popcorn balls or measuring the height of catsup bottles. We should not settle for similar mistakes in measuring educational quality. Insight, creativity, and problem-solving are the critical skills that have allowed America's students to excel in real-world competition. These skills are difficult to measure, but, like every measurement that counts, they should not be ignored. The danger is that skills that are not "on the test," may be lost forever in a narrowing curriculum.

To Humiliate Schools?

Part of the historical strength of American public school education has been the individual nature of student success. Different students excel in different subjects. But the current misplaced focus on using only a few, "core" subjects to measure success is rapidly narrowing a rich curriculum and punishing and demoralizing a generation of students who do not achieve "core" subject proficiency. Proficiency in music, graphic art, foreign language, speech, dance, and skills in social intelligence are not on tests that matter. The result is that these, and many other subjects, are simply no longer

important to a system that is headed towards a lock-step approach to producing competitive results that can determine, by law, the very existence of a school. The federal law is named No Child Left Behind. Given the weight of punitive action for failure to achieve universal student proficiency, it should be called No School Left Standing.

Not every state ranks schools or school districts by student achievement. Nebraska does. It is a kind of sports-analogous ranking that identifies winners and losers. What is the purpose in doing this? To humiliate schools for having a 4th grade that, by chance, has a lower academic potential than another school has that year? To embarrass students of a particular school for socio-economic factors that research shows are clearly linked to under-performance?

Student achievement can either be measured against a set standard or by comparing the growth in learning of each student from one year to the next. To measure the quality of either teaching or learning, we need to measure the right things. And that is more than a simple score on a subject test.

Focus on Growth

Let's use common sense. When we want to measure the quality of popcorn balls, we do not weigh them. When we want quality catsup, we do not measure the size of the bottle.

We should measure educational quality in how well we help individual students develop. Not every student begins at the same place...and what we can no longer say out loud is that not every student will achieve a level of proficiency. If we want individual educational growth in every child, we should focus on growth, not standardized achievement. Educators, policy-makers, and community members all need to question a national focus that is turning schools into testing and data collection centers. Measurements matter. It's time to measure the damage that the current approach to testing is doing to our students' education.



How would you measure quality? Craig R. Christiansen, NSEA Executive Director, with the world's largest catsup bottle.

Get Online, Stay Informed

You only need one link to access all kinds of information about the Nebraska State Education Association-Retired. That link is nsea.org/retired. There, you'll find that NSEA-Retired is the only association that guarantees continuation of your NEA member benefits and NSEA services! Check the website frequently for information on upcoming conferences; times and locations of Medicare and EHA seminars; Lobby Day registration; and other details.

Be sure the NSEA has your current home email so you can receive information electronically, as soon as it becomes available. Update your information at:

www.nsea.org/contact-us

In the comment box, simply ask that your email address be added to the NSEA database. Put "Retired" in the School District box, and hit submit. NSEA will **not** share email addresses with outside sources.

Call for Nominations

In February, NSEA-Retired will elect a secretary and treasurer, as well as district directors for Metro District No. 1, Panhandle District and Tri Valley District. Also on the ballot: delegates to NSEA Delegate Assembly and NEA Representative Assembly.

Nominations for these positions will be accepted, by application, through Jan. 10 at the website at:

www.nsea.org/retired

More details will be available in the this space in the January issue of *The Voice*, available online around Jan. 1.

NSEA Retired Details

NSEA-Retired is the **ONLY** retired association that guarantees continuation of your NEA Member Benefits and NSEA-Retired services. It is:

- A statewide association of educators.
- A strong advocate on retirement issues.
- Committed to protecting current pension and Social Security benefits.
- Continually advocating for quality public education.

Members conduct business at an annual conference. Each spring membership elects officers and delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly.



Interactive explanation: Actor Darrel Draper portrayed Nebraska pioneer Peter Sarpy at the NSEA-Retired Fall Conference in November. Helping illustrate an explanation of the Louisiana Purchase were, from left, Sharon Bohling, McCook; Art Tanderup, Neligh; and Ron Glasser, Clarks.

Fur Trader Highlights Fall Conference

He was a spotlight after the Nebraska NSEA-Retired Fall Conference held in October at Schuyler.

Draper kept the audience actively engaged in telling the story of Peter Sarpy and the early days of European settlement in Nebraska. Sarpy was a fur trader, pioneer and the namesake for Nebraska's Sarpy County. Draper, a fifth generation Nebraskan, retired Navy officer and graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, used his talents as a storyteller and actor to educate and entertain. He has performed for national and state government agencies, museums, schools, youth groups, festivals, and is a popular banquet and luncheon speaker.

Draper specializes in costumed portrayals of historical figures that played major roles in the events that shaped our state and nation. Having personally retraced thousands of miles of the Lewis and Clark Trail by canoe and on foot, Draper is considered an expert on the history of the expedition. He is also the most requested performer on the Nebraska Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau. He can be reached at:

PeterSarpy@aol.com

As an NSEA-Retired member, you are able to continue your NEA Member Benefit programs, support your colleagues, public education and children.

Who can join? Active NSEA members may join as Pre-Retired Lifetime members while still teaching. Retired educators may join as Lifetime members or Annual members if they are at least 50 and were an NSEA member in the Association the year they retired. Sign up at:

nsea.org/JOIN

There are many reasons for members. For instance, NSEA-Retired and NEA-Retired lobbyists monitor and act on

legislation that affects retired educators.

You'll have the opportunity to attend an annual statewide conference featuring workshops and speakers of interest to retirees. Other benefits include significant financial services available only if you are an NSEA-Retired member. NSEA-Retired also works to improve your retirement benefits and provide affordable health care protection.

Perhaps most important, NSEA-Retired works with the Educator's Health Alliance, advocating for improvements in the BC/BS retiree health plan.

— **Renae Kelly, Editor**
renaekelly@gmail.com

Black, Jensen Cited at NEA Rep Assembly

Black Also Receives AFCON Award

Recognized at the annual NEA Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C., this summer were NSEA-Retired members Tom Black and John Jensen.

All NEA Political Action Committee chairs were on stage at the NEA Representative Assembly to highlight the importance of the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. NEA Vice President Lily Eskelsen recognized the record-setting fundraising efforts of NEA-Retired members by giving a special pin she received from President Obama to retired Omaha teacher and NEA-Retired Vice President John Jensen. Eskelsen's recognition of Jensen was significant and unexpected.

Black, the now-retired editor of the NSEA-Retired Corner, received the 2012 Spotlight Journalism Award at the NEA Retired meeting just prior to Representative Assembly. The award recognized work during the 2011-12 association year. Black has received the Spotlight Award nine times since 2000.

Black received the Academic Freedom Award, the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska's (AFCON) highest honor. The award honors an individual, group, or institution demonstrating exceptional courage and service in the promotion and defense of academic freedom.

Black taught American history, sociology, and economics at West Point for 34 years. He served on the Nebraska State Education Board of Directors for 20 years and was on the NEA Board of Directors for five years. He has served as editor of the AFCON newsletter, *The Sentinel*, for 15 years. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of West Point-Bancroft TeamMates and the Cuming County Diversion (substance-abuse) program. He also chairs the four-county Healthy Communities Initiative Board to reduce misuse and abuse of alcohol and other drugs among our youth.



Jensen



Black

'Basket Ball Becoming Popular'

Founded in 1867, NSEA has had an official publication since 1872. Here is a look back at some of the news and conditions reported in predecessors to *The Voice*.



March 1901: The Alliance schools are waging a vigorous warfare against tardiness, and under the enthusiasm aroused by Superintendent Bartz, tardiness has been reduced from two hundred per month to fewer than thirty in an enrollment of over six hundred pupils.

April 1901: Basket ball is fast becoming a popular high school game.

March 1927: Superintendent J.M. Hungate of Louisville reports that the new addition to the school building has been completed and pupils, teachers and community are all feeling the wholesome effect of holding school in adequate quarters. A local Parent-Teacher Association has been organized and all the teachers have paid their NSEA dues for 1927.



A Perfect Duet!

Membership in the Nebraska Music Educators and NSEA makes beautiful music agrees Pender music teacher Matt Dregalla, visiting the NSEA booth at the annual fall conference of the Nebraska Music Educators. NSEA booth drawing winners were Lori Evans, Hershey; Chrysanne Bailey, Arnold; Angel Renninger, Sterling; Connie Jessen, Pierce; Brad Gaston, Bridgeport; Terry Rush, Lincoln; Tim Trausch, Wilcox-Hildreth; Christa Speed, Grand Island; Sheri Fraley, Lincoln; and Anna Keough, Palmer.

First-Year Member? Former SEAN Member?

You May Be Eligible For a Refund of Your SEAN Dues!

Are you a first-year teacher, fresh out of college?

If so, and if you were a member of the Student Education Association of Nebraska during your college years, you may be eligible for a rebate on your SEAN dues.

NSEA offers a one-time, \$10 rebate for every year you were a member of SEAN. And this year, NEA is offering an additional \$20 rebate for each year you were a member of SEAN. If, as a student, you were a member of SEAN all four years of college, the rebate of \$30 for each year could total \$120!

For a rebate form, contact your local association president, or download the form from the NSEA website at:

nsea.org/nsea-treasurers-packet

Speaking of Teaching

“There is a place in America to take a stand. It is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves a society toward a common destiny...it is in public education that the American Dream begins to take place.”

—Tom Brokaw,
*Television News Anchor,
Commentator*

From Sharon, a third-grade teacher in Lakenheath, United Kingdom:

“At the end of the day, my students sit in a U-shape on the carpet in the front of the room. We take a few moments to talk about “something good that happened today” and then “something I/we need to work on for tomorrow.” Children who want to share flash their fingers in the air and share away. Some of the comments are about themselves and some are

Mailed By: The Nebraska State Education Association
Suite 200, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742

Family of Teachers



A century of experience: The late Dorothy Fonder taught only a few years in the early 1940s, in a one-room schoolhouse in rural northeast South Dakota. Yet her teaching roots have been spread far and wide. She left teaching to raise a family and three of her seven children – and two grandchildren – followed her teaching footsteps.

From left are granddaughter Angela Guthrie, a K-12 visual art teacher at Ipswich, SD, Public School; granddaughter Alyson Guthrie, a graduate instructor at North Dakota State University; daughter Julie Guthrie, a teacher at Aberdeen, SD; son Craig Fonder, an English and math teacher at Wessington Springs, SD; Fonder; and Deb Fonder, a visual art instructor at Norfolk Senior High School. All six are graduates of Northern State University, Aberdeen.

If you have a Family of Teachers, snap a photo and send it to ‘Family of Teachers’ in care of NSEA, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508.

End-of-Day Review



about what happened in the classroom during the day. Many of the insightful comments mention an activity, literature shared, or a good deed done by a classmate. Some of the comments about things we need to work on are directed to the group or an individual. All of the sharing is valid and really builds a sense of community and value. It’s one of the favorite parts of our day.”

To subscribe to Works4Me, go to:
nea.org/tools/31965