

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • January 2024



PROTECT YOUR DATA

**Control Personal Info During
Data Privacy Week 2024**

Also inside:

**Vouchers:
How it started
vs. How it's going**

**Explore NSEA
Leadership Roles
Tailored for You!**

**The Legislative Process:
A Preview of
the Upcoming Session**



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Letter of intent date: March 15

Know your rights if asked to sign letter early

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

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

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

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

your personal situation changes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Would You Like to Write for The Voice?

Would you like to write an item for *The Voice*? Perhaps an opinion column or an article on what is working in your classroom? Submissions can be classroom-related, humorous, inspiring or otherwise teaching related. Submit your questions about the process, and your topics to us at:

thevoice@nsea.org

On the Cover: As educators, maintaining control over personal data at school is a matter of privacy. Technology Coordinator Burke Brown encourages educators to take control of their data privacy this new year. See the story and photos, pages 7-8.



When the 109th Nebraska Legislature convenes on Jan. 3, NSEA will be there to advocate for bills that will benefit Nebraska students and educators. Senators have spent the past few months preparing for the 60-day session and so has your professional association.

Anyone may suggest an idea for a new law, but a senator, a group of senators or a legislative committee must introduce the idea before the Legislature can formally consider it. Outlined below is the process a bill must undergo before it becomes a law.

Research & Drafting

First, senators and their staff research issues and explore legislative solutions. Bills can be introduced to establish new laws or modify (even repeal) existing ones. Extensive research occurs in the interim as committees delve into issues outlined in interim study resolutions.

A senator then collaborates with a bill drafter to convert their idea into the appropriate legal format for a bill.

Bill Introduction

Typically, bills are introduced during the first 10 days of a regular legislative session. To introduce a bill, a senator files it with the clerk of the Legislature. Bills introduced in Nebraska must contain only one subject. The clerk then reads the title of the bill into the record, assigns a bill number, prints copies and posts the bill on the Legislature's website.

Committees

Every bill must receive a public hearing before a legislative committee. Fiscal notes outlining the cost of the legislation are prepared before the committee hearings. Committees may decide to indefinitely postpone the measure, hold it for more discussion or advance it to the full Legislature.

General File

General file is the first time the full Legislature can debate and vote on bills. Bills on general file may be amended, indefinitely postponed, sent back to committee or advanced to the next stage. After a bill is advanced from general file, it undergoes the process of enrollment and review or "E&R."

Select File

Select file offers another opportunity for amendments and debate. Bills on select file may be amended, indefinitely postponed, sent back to committee or advanced. If advanced, the bill and its adopted amendments are sent to enrollment and review. Once all amendments are incorporated, the bill is then printed for final reading.

Final Reading

During final reading the clerk of the Legislature is required to read every bill aloud in its entirety. A three-fifths vote of the Legislature can waive this requirement. A bill may not be amended on final reading but may be returned to select file.

No bill can be passed on final reading until at least five legislative days after the bill is introduced and one legislative day after it is placed on final reading but may be returned to select file for amendment.

To the Governor

If the Legislature passes a bill on final reading, it goes to the governor. The governor has five days to consider the bill. If the governor signs a bill or declines to act, it becomes law. If the governor vetoes the bill, it returns to the Legislature. A three-fifths vote by lawmakers is needed to override a veto.

Nebraska Law

Bills approved by the governor become law three months after the Legislature adjourns. Bills may take effect earlier if they contain an emergency clause. Thirty-three votes are needed to pass an emergency clause.

Download the NSEA Capitol Update App!



- Receive alerts and calls-to-action during the legislative session.
- Stay up-to-date on events and education news from the Nebraska Legislature.





Public Dollars for Public Schools

Andrew Hillmer joined a handful of Omaha Education Association members last March as they lobbied senators to vote down LB753's tax scheme. Hillmer, a 7th grade science teacher at Buffett Middle School, said the experience left him thinking about a student in his class.

"I have a student who joined my class mid-year from a private school. I don't know exactly what happened at his private school, but he showed up in my class because he was unsuccessful in the private school setting," Hillmer said.

The student's parents explained their son's experience in the private school left him jaded.

"He's very smart but his parents said he just wanted to give up on school. It's been a slow process but I'm seeing him turn a corner," said Hillmer.

Public Schools Take ALL Kids

Buffett has consistently ranked at the top of district middle schools and serves a diverse student body.

"I think that for students like mine, one of the things they miss out on in private school is the kind of diversity they get in public school. I don't mean just one type of diversity—I mean cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and life experiences," he explained. "Most private schools are structured around limiting diversity by making

a homogeneous group that fits somebody's model of what they think is the "best" way."

Private schools can choose to accept or reject any student, and many have long waiting lists and only admit the students they want. Private schools can discriminate based on a myriad of factors—unlike public schools which accept all students.

Inside Omaha Public Schools, diversity is just the daily experience that students are having with their peers.

"My students come from many backgrounds and interacting



Hillmer

with one another prepares them to be mature, functioning adults in society. They are learning to become people who can work with anybody and who can find a way to connect and collaborate with whomever they happen to have as neighbors or as coworkers or as community members in the future," Hillmer said. "If we're trying to develop as a society, if we're trying to increase all of our opportunities, then students need those diverse experiences, even if they're just passive experiences at Buffett middle school."

Public Dollars for Public Schools

Under LB753's tax scheme, public funds would be diverted to private and parochial schools, including those that discriminate against children and their families. In other states, vouchers have proven to be enormously expensive and ineffective. NSEA members have continued the fight to keep public dollars from being siphoned away from public schools. Their work to gather thousands of signatures for the Support Our Schools Nebraska (SOSNE) referendum petition has ensured that Nebraskans will get to vote on the issue of diverting public tax dollars to pay for private schools.

Nebraska is currently the only state with a school privatization referendum on the ballot in 2024. Lawmakers will return to the Capitol for the 60-day session on Jan. 3, 2024. Watch for updates in *The Voice*.

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FOLLOW THE VOUCHER GRIFT:

TAX DOLLARS ARE PAYING FOR WHAT?!



The millions of tax dollars diverted to private schools under LB753 will drain funding from local public schools and other critical public services.

The Legislature's Fiscal Office noted that aid distributed to public schools through the state funding formula could **decrease by \$11.8M**. LB753's tax scheme is nothing more than a grift that allows corporations and the uber-rich to divert up to \$100,000 in tax dollars while estates and trusts could divert up to \$1 million in tax dollars to private K-12 tuition.

In other states, similar inequitable voucher schemes have ballooned in their costs and taxpayers are footing the bill. **In Arizona, taxpayers have picked up the tab for Legos, ski trips, ninja training and lessons in how to drive a BMW.** Florida taxpayers have paid for Disney tickets, video game consoles, and big screen TVs for voucher families.



STATE VOUCHERS: A STORY IN TWO ACTS

HOW IT STARTED:



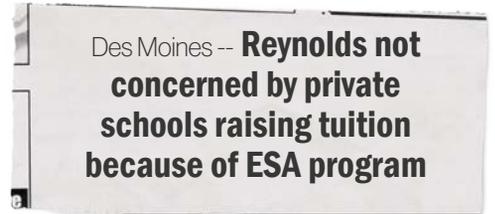
IOWA:

BREAKING NEWS

DES MOINES -- **Gov. Reynolds signs Students First Act into law**

Jan. 24, 2023 - Iowa Capital Dispatch

HOW IT'S GOING:



May 11, 2023 - Iowa Capital Dispatch



FLORIDA:

TALLAHASSEE -- **Florida Begins Voucher Plan for Education**

Aug. 17, 1999 - The New York Times, Section A, Page 15

Florida allows taxpayer-funded 'school choice' vouchers to pay for kayaks, Disney tickets

Sept. 1, 2023 - WFTV 9, Cox Media Group Television



ARIZONA:

Arizona Now Has A Universal School Voucher Program. Who Really Benefits From It?

Nov. 15, 2022 - Forbes

Universal ESA vouchers: Arizona's \$1 billion failed experiment

Aug. 16, 2023 - AZ MIRROR, CC Creative Commons



- Chelle Gillian, UNK Graduate Alumna

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“Sometimes people think that online programs aren’t as good as being in person, and obviously there’s great benefits to being in the classroom. But I have to say, the online master’s was amazing. It was rigorous, relevant, I felt so prepared to be a great teacher, and I learned so much from the online biology master’s program.”

- Chelle Gillian, UNK Graduate Alumna

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District OR-1 Education Association leader Burke Brown is a technology coordinator and advocate for broadband access and technology related funding for students and educators in rural Nebraska.

PROTECT YOUR DATA: Manage Personal Data and Privacy During Data Privacy Week

As part of Burke Brown’s job as the Technology Coordinator for School District OR-1 in Palmyra, there are a handful of times a year he must go phishing within his district.

“I know this won’t make me any friends among our members but it’s a legal requirement as part of the district’s insurance. We have to mimic these phishing attempts to keep employees on alert for the real thing,” he explained.

Burke is a past NSEA leader and has previously represented District OR-1 as local president. He is currently the chief negotiator for District OR-1 and represented his local association as a delegate to the 2023 Delegate Assembly.

“The best way to protect yourself is to trust no one,” he said.

The sentiment is great online safety guidance and terrible interpersonal relationship advice.

Phishing for Data

Burke explains the point of his phishing expeditions is not to trick district employees into sharing their

personal information but to train members to recognize suspicious emails, to practice secure online habits and to help protect the district—and employees—from potential fraud.

AI and Online Security

The days of struggling princes and princesses from overseas needing financial assistance are long gone. Urgent requests for gift cards are so last year. Instead, something much more sophisticated is lurking in the shadows: artificial intelligence or AI.

In his last district-wide phishing test, Burke used AI to formulate his message.

“I opened ChatGPT on my computer and typed in a few keywords. I asked the program to formulate a message from our administration requiring employees to pay fees out of our paychecks,” Burke

said. “It spit out a one-page, really well-written email that looked like something that could have really come from administration.”

The fee changes were a ruse and not anything the district was considering but the message was sophisticated because the advanced technology used in ChatGPT has combed through human-generated text which allows it to learn the patterns, styles, and structures of language.

“Social engineering is going to go to a whole new level and it’s just kind of scary,” Burke said. “Technology in AI is moving at such an unmanageable pace. I’m worried the companies that public schools rely on to keep our data safe are falling behind.”

Burke said his AI-generated message was tricky enough for at least one

“Technology in AI is moving at such an unmanageable pace. I’m worried the companies public schools rely on to keep our data safe are falling behind.”
— Burke Brown
District OR-1
Education Assoc.

district employee to bite.

“I had one teacher click because he was so grumpy about the fake fees and because it was so well-written, he didn’t check to look closely at the email address it came from.”

Data Privacy Week

Data privacy as it intersects with AI is an evolving field and can easily overwhelm even the most technology-savvy people in education. Burke says there are some practical and easy steps that can empower educators to take control of their own data and online privacy. A new year is a great time to reassess one’s own digital environment and implement some changes. In 2021, the National Cybersecurity Alliance (NCA) expanded Data Privacy Day into Data Privacy Week which begins on Jan. 21 and concludes on Jan. 24. More than just raising awareness of data privacy, Burke sees the week as an opportunity to make a few key changes.

“If there are just a few things to consider during Data Privacy Week, I would say educators should update their software enabled two-factor authentication with texting and, when possible, change any vulnerable passwords to include 14 characters. It’s important to review what you’re sharing online and limit app tracking where you can,” Burke said.

Separation of Work, Life and the Classroom

The increasing commonness of Google tech in the classrooms coupled with using the same tech in their personal lives makes it challenging for educators to separate their work life from their personal life. Burke emphasizes the separation of the two is increasingly important for employment protection.

“NSEA has always advocated that members have a personal email away from their work email. The same principles should apply to digital devices as well,” Burke said. “Avoid signing into work accounts from your personal cell phone and computer. Try to keep from signing into your personal accounts on your work computer. Teachers can unknowingly share an incredible amount of personal information with the district when the



Data Privacy Week Checkup

- 1. Regularly Update Software:** Keep your devices and software up to date. Software updates often include security patches that help protect against vulnerabilities that could be exploited by cybercriminals.
- 2. Use Strong Passwords:** Create strong, unique passwords for your accounts and update them regularly. Consider using a password manager to generate and store complex passwords securely.
- 3. Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA):** Whenever possible, enable 2FA for an additional layer of security. This helps prevent unauthorized access to your accounts even if your password is compromised.
- 4. Review Privacy Settings:** Regularly review and update privacy settings on your devices, apps, and online accounts. Many platforms provide controls that allow you to choose what information is shared and with whom.
- 5. Limit Data Sharing:** Be cautious about what personal information you share online. Only provide necessary details and consider the potential consequences before sharing sensitive information on social media or other platforms.

two are intermingled.”

NSEA Advocacy Director Jason Wiese agrees keeping the two separate is good practice but there may be instances when an administrator might ask to see your personal cell phone for any number of reasons. Wiese says for those instances it’s best to check with your local association before granting full access to your personal devices.

“Providing full access to personal devices may give a school district access to information unrelated to the specific information they’re looking to review. Even in instances you believe the administration has good intentions

behind seeing your phone, there may be concerns about the overreach and the potential for the collection of irrelevant data,” Wiese explains. “In these situations, it’s always best to check with your organizational specialist.”

Local associations and NSEA work to ensure that educators’ rights are protected. Advocating for privacy rights is a crucial part of promoting workplace safety, equal treatment, and job security. NSEA is ready and able to help members. Members can reach their NSEA Organizational Specialist at 1-800-742-0047 or 402-475-7611.



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- 

FILE FOR OFFICE
Jan. 1 - Feb. 4, members file for state and district offices to be elected during Feb. 16 - March 10 voting.
- 

VOTING
 Voting for district officers, NSEA Board, RA At-Large & Cluster Delegates will take place **Feb. 16 - March 10**.
- 

DA CLUSTER DELEGATES
 Filing for NSEA Delegate Assembly Cluster Delegates runs **Feb. 20 - March 3**.
- 

NSEA PRESIDENT, EMAC AND HIGHER ED
 Elected at Delegate Assembly. Candidates' campaign materials for delegates are due by **March 5**.
- 

VOTING
 Locals with fewer than 26 members will vote for NSEA Delegate Assembly Cluster delegates **March 10 -19**.
- 

LOCAL NSEA DELEGATES
 Locals of 26+ members will elect delegates by secret ballot and report verified delegates by **March 15**.
- 

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

ASPIRING EDUCATORS
 Aspiring Educators members will vote for their NSEA Delegate Assembly delegates at the AE Delegate Assembly on **March 22-23**.
- 

NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY
April 19 - 20
 Election of NSEA President, EMAC and Higher Ed, plus Bylaws and 2024-25 Association dues.
- 

REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY
 National Education Association Representative Assembly **July 3 - 7, 2024**

ALL NSEA MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR DISTRICT OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY AT-LARGE DELEGATES. VOTING WILL BE FEB. 16- MARCH 10.

ALL MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR THEIR LOCAL ASSOCIATION DELEGATES TO NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY. CLUSTERED LOCALS WILL VOTE MARCH 10 - 19. LOCALS WITH MORE THAN 26 MEMBERS, TALK TO YOUR LOCAL PRESIDENT FOR YOUR LOCAL ELECTION TIMELINE.

NSEA ELECTIONS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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

NSEA President, EMAC and Higher Ed (3-year terms)

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

District Officers: 3-year terms

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 4
Elected during statewide online elections
 Each of NSEA's six governance districts includes a set of officers and executive committee members. Officers are elected by members in that district. The term of office is determined by the Bylaws in each district. Members will fill these vacancies:

- **Capitol District:** Treasurer, Secretary and one seat on the executive committee.
- **Elkhorn District:** Vice president and two seats on the executive committee.
- **Metro District:** President and three seats on the executive committee (subdistrict seats 2, 5 and 8).
- **Panhandle District:** Vice president and two seats on the executive committee (areas 2 and 5).
- **Sandhills District:** Vice president and one seat on the executive committee.
- **Tri-Valley District:** President and two seats on the executive committee (one each from the West and East subdistricts).

NSEA Board of Directors, 3-year terms

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 4
Elected during statewide online elections

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

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

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

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

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 4

Elected during statewide online elections

The 2024 NEA RA will be held July 3-7, 2024, in Philadelphia, PA.

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

Cluster delegates fund their own RA costs. The exact number of openings will be set after the membership count for 2023-24 is finalized in mid-January, but there are approximately:

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

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

Members of Aspiring Educators will elect delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly at the AE Delegate Assembly on Saturday, March 23. They also will elect region representatives, secretary, president elect and an underclass representative. Watch for the Aspiring Educators newsletter for details on how to attend.

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

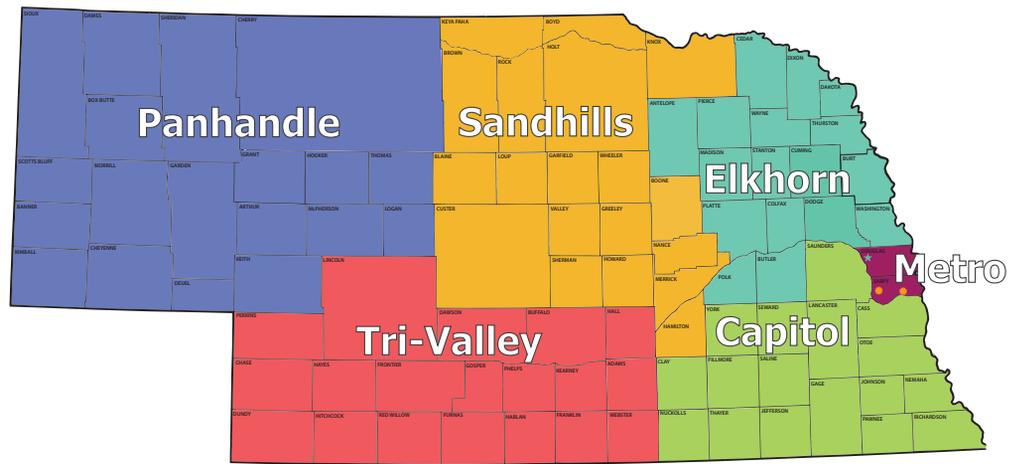
NEA RA At-Large Statewide Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 4

Elected during statewide online elections

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

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



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

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

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

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 4

Elected during mail-in ballots in March

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

Retired Board of Directors

- **Capitol District** (3-year term)
- **Metro District** (3-year term)

Delegate Assembly

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

Representative Assembly

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

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

Deadline to File: Sunday, March 3

Elected during online election by cluster locals per district, March 10-19

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

The exact number of openings will be set after the membership count for 2023-24 is finalized in mid-January. There are approximately:

- **Capitol District:** 7 openings
- **Elkhorn District:** 9 openings
- **Metro District:** 1 opening
- **Panhandle District:** 7 openings
- **Sandhills District:** 7 openings
- **Tri-Valley District:** 11 openings

NSEA Delegate Assembly Local Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Set by each Local Association

Secret ballot elections held at the local association level, with delegate names reported to NSEA by March 15

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

Nebraska Teacher of the Year & Excellence in Teaching



NSEA President Jenni Benson congratulates members Scott Phillips, Shelly Mowinkel and Amy Page. The Nebraska Department of Education honored all three during the Nebraska Teacher of the Year and Excellence in Teaching Awards Reception.

In November, the Nebraska Department of Education, alongside educational leaders, celebrated the achievements of three NSEA members at the Nebraska Teacher of the Year and Excellence in Teaching Awards Reception. Scott Phillips, a member of the Aurora Education Association, received the prestigious title of the 2024 Nebraska Teacher of the Year. Additionally, Shelly Mowinkel from Milford High School and Amy Page from Forest Station Elementary School in Omaha were recognized as finalists and honored with the Award of Excellence.

Shelly Mowinkel, a member of the Milford Education Association, has taught business and technology to Nebraska students for more than two decades. Currently serving as an instructor at Milford JR/SR High School since 2006, she previously taught at Centennial Public Schools and began her teaching career at Heartland Public Schools. Throughout her extensive career, Mowinkel has consistently demonstrated excellence in education, earning recognition through various accolades.

Mowinkel earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Wayne State College and furthered her academic pursuits by earning a Master of Secondary Education from the University of Nebraska Lincoln. In her application, she emphasized the significance of each student crafting their own narrative.

According to Mowinkel, "Our greatest gift is the ability to communicate and connect through storytelling. Each person's story reflects their individuality, shaped by triumphs, struggles, and unique perspectives. We honor our experiences and create

opportunities for understanding, growth, and empathy. I want my narrative to inspire others to share moments that will create a ripple effect of positivity and joy."

Amy Page, a member of the Omaha Education Association, currently teaches Kindergarten at Forest Station Elementary School in Omaha. She previously taught Kindergarten at Martin Luther King Elementary and Wakanda Elementary before joining Forest Station's staff in 2022.

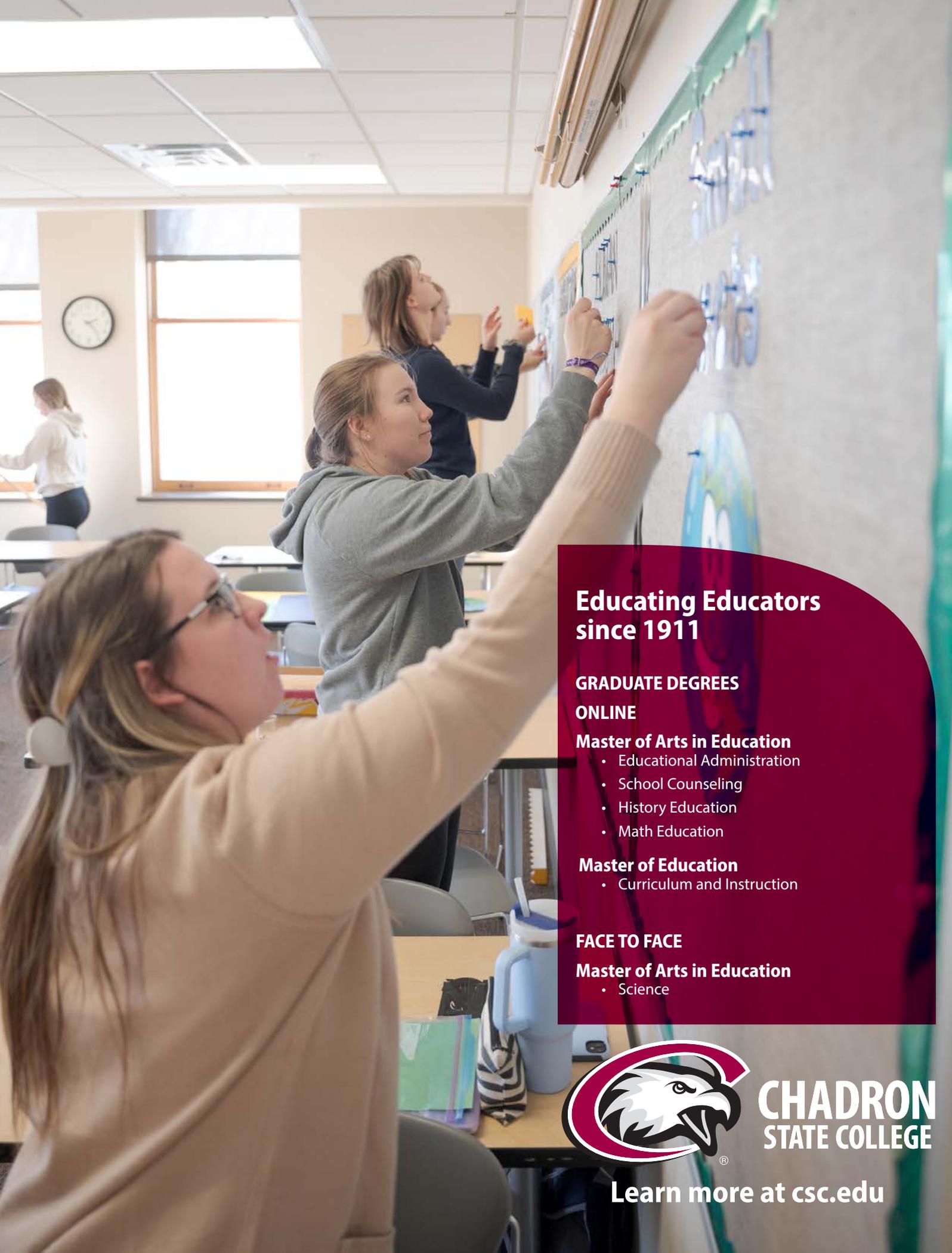
Page's dedication and contributions to education was recognized by the Omaha Public Schools last year through the "30 Ways to Say Yay" honor. Additionally, she actively participates in the district's Spanish Immersion program, demonstrating her commitment to learning the language to enhance communication with both students and their families.

Page holds a Bachelor's degree in Human Services from the University of Nebraska Omaha. She earned a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Phoenix and a Master of Arts in Reading from Grand Canyon University.

In her application, Amy articulated her two pillars of value: relationship building and advocacy. She expressed, "I believe that building a relationship with both students and parents is the foundation for creating a positive learning atmosphere within my classroom and my school. I strive to understand the needs of my students, their home lives, and their school lives."

A feature article about Phillips' selection as 2024 Nebraska Teacher of the Year was in the November issue of the Voice.





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IMPORTANT REMINDER

Request PAC Refund by Feb. 15, 2024

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

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

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

Requests must be postmarked no later than Feb. 15, 2024. In order to efficiently use dues dollars, requests for refunds received by the due date will be processed and mailed in a single batch after that date.

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

NSEA Aspiring EDUCATORS

FALL CONFERENCE AND CAREER FAIR



Aspiring Educators Fall Conference: 1. Members of the Aspiring Educator Executive Team with NSEA sponsors Kim Story and Andy Isaacson 2. AE fall conference attendee with a Westside Community Schools representative 3. AE Executive members Lisa Saxton and Nancy Rodriguez Sanchez 4. Millard School District at the AE sponsored career fair 5. NSEA Vice President Paul Schulte, 2024 TOY Scott Phillips, NSEA President Jenni Benson and 2022 TOY Lee Perez 5. AE members Jillian Buzzard and Kinsey Knorr presenting about their attendance at the Aspiring Educators Conference



AT THE MIC: Delegate Brittney Hodges-Bolkovac speaks to a motion at the April 2023 Delegate Assembly.

A Busy Two Days Ahead at April Delegate Assembly

Delegate Assembly is NSEA's annual business meeting. Members from across the state, representing local associations large and small, urban and rural, are elected to attend and represent the NSEA's 26,000 members. These delegates manage the business and set the future course of the Association. Plans are underway for the 2024 Delegate Assembly – the 164th assembly in NSEA history. The Assembly will be held as an in-person gathering April 19-20 at Lincoln's Embassy Suites Hotel.

A keynote speaker, discussion of educational issues and consideration of updates to NSEA Bylaws and Resolutions are all part of the assembly action. Watch for details in upcoming editions of *The Voice*.

The event also features an awards presentation, recognizing the Early Career Educator of the Year, Educational Support Professional of the Year, Teaching Excellence Award recipient, and NSEA's 2024 Friend of Education, and more. See award details and deadlines in the right-hand column on this page.

Members must be elected by their local association in order to attend as a delegate to the assembly. To make your interest in serving as a delegate known, contact your local association president, your local association building or faculty representative or your NSEA organizational specialist.

NSEA's first such meeting was held as the Nebraska State Teachers Association in Brownville, NE on Oct. 16, 1867, just months after Nebraska gained statehood. NSEA is the state's oldest professional association and has held a Delegate Assembly almost every year since, and in some cases, twice a year.



NOMINATE COLLEAGUES FOR TOP HONORS

Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, Education Support Professional or deserving group. Members are eligible for:

- **Early Career Educator:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in their first five years of teaching.
- **Award for Teaching Excellence:** Honors a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a period of time.
- **Education Support Professional of the Year:** Honors an ESP who has excelled in their job. Finalists will be notified in March, with winners announced at the Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award.
- **Community Service:** Honors NSEA members or local associations involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.
- **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding internal communication.

Members can also nominate individuals or groups for these awards:

- **The Great Plains Milestone:** Honors an individual or group for promoting human and civil rights.
- **Administrator of Excellence:** Honors a public school administrator who strives every day to help students and staff be successful.
- **Friend of Education:** NSEA's highest honor is presented in recognition of an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education or to Nebraska educators.
- **Outstanding Media:** Honors a newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.

Nominations may be submitted online at www.nsea.org/DA, or mailed to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14 St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. All nomination materials must be received at the NSEA office no later than 5 p.m. on February 16, 2024.



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NEA Auto & Home Insurance Program FAQ

Why did NEA change insurance providers for the Auto & Home Insurance Program?

California Casualty, the NEA Auto & Home Insurance carrier since 2000, is embarking on a new business model, refocusing as a smaller regional insurer. As a result, it will be discontinuing its services in most states, with a few exceptions.

What is the new NEA Auto and Home Insurance Program?

It's an auto and home insurance program provided in cooperation with Travelers. Take advantage of many ways to save, including your NEA member discount. You could save an average of \$638 on auto insurance and \$380 on home insurance. Enjoy easy payment options including electronic funds transfer (EFT), 24/7 claim reporting, exceptional customer service, and more.

How do I determine what coverage is right for me?

Licensed insurance representatives can help you review your insurance needs so you can make an informed decision on the coverage that's right for you. They can help you get discounts and credits you deserve and offer ways to lower your premium. Simply call Travelers for a free, no-obligation quote at 1-866-605-6045.



Start Saving in Three Easy Steps!

1 Activate

Sign in to your NEA Member Benefits account and click the Explore Now button to activate your travel account. \$500 Travel Dollars will automatically be added to your account upon your first visit. These Travel Dollars are valid for one year and will replenish yearly.

2 Explore

Start shopping with Travel Dollars to lower your cost of hotels, resorts, cars, cruises, and tours.

3 Earn

Receive a bonus of \$100 in Travel Dollars for each air booking and additional Travel Dollars by subscribing to the [NEA Travel Newsletter](#) and NEA Member Shopper's Guide.



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Platte Valley Retired Education Association: 1. NSEA-Retired members Maureen Nickels, Lisa Cunningham, Yvette Enghaupt and Deb Gnuse. 2. NSEA-Retired member Maureen Nickels 3. NSEA-Retired member Rebecca Smith 4. Guy Roggenkamp, Lynda Fickes, Linda Dahlstrom, Mary Ann Gerdes, and Danita Stanton.

Celebrating the Platte Valley Retired Education Association

In December, NSEA-Retired members acknowledged the Platte Valley Retired Education Association (PVREA) for its exceptional service to its membership through meetings, programs, lobbying efforts, and professional development opportunities.

PVREA's dedication and commitment to supporting retired educators is highly commendable, with an immeasurable impact on the education community.

A pivotal aspect of PVREA's success lies in its capacity to unite retired educators through regular meetings and gatherings. These events serve as a platform for members to connect, share experiences, and cultivate lifelong friendships. By fostering a sense of community and camaraderie, PVREA ensures that retired educators do not feel isolated or detached after leaving the classroom. The significance of these connections cannot be overstated, providing a network of support and encouragement for individuals navigating the retirement journey.

PVREA's programs stand as further evidence of its commitment to serving its membership. Recognizing the wealth of knowledge and expertise possessed by retired educators, PVREA has developed programs that enable these individuals to continue making a meaningful impact in the field of education. This dedication to lifelong learning and professional development is genuinely inspiring.

Have an article idea for the NSEA-Retired Advocate or the NSEA Voice magazine? Send your idea to John Heineman at RingoJohn@aol.com



ELECTIONS AHEAD!

Consider running for one of the leadership roles in NSEA-Retired.

Candidate filing for the upcoming elections will be available online at nsea.org/retired by Jan. 5, 2024. Filing deadline is Feb. 5, 2024.

Open Seats

NSEA-Retired leadership opportunities for 2024-25:

METRO-1 DISTRICT DIRECTOR

- 3-year term
- Term begins Aug. 15, 2024

CAPITOL-2 DISTRICT DIRECTOR

- 3-year term
- Term begins Aug. 15, 2024



**Elect
Margie Nowak
to the
NSEA-Retired Board,
Capitol District**

Just One Kicks Off Jan. 1

Forward Together: To help us continue to advocate for all educators, NSEA asks each local to sign up at least ONE new member between January 1 and February 29, 2024.

To help continue to advocate for all educators, NSEA asks each local to sign up at least ONE new member between January 1 and February 29, 2024. New members who join in January and February will pay the remaining portion of the association year's dues. That's about \$1.50 a day for the remainder of the membership year. Every new member who joins, and the member who enrolled them, will be entered into prize drawings!

For Local Associations:

Every local that gains more than one member will receive \$50 to be used at the local level for a membership event of its choosing. Local leaders will be able to keep track of locals that have signed up at least one new member by checking the list online at www.nsea.org/Just-One.

Next Steps:

1. Make a plan for how you will reach out to all potential members. Engage in one-on-one conversations with potential members. This can be done by matching current members with a potential member they may know or assign building representatives to potential members. Explain the benefits of membership and share your reasons for joining.

2. Host a member recruitment event, invite potential members to a local meeting or membership event. If you'd like to schedule a local event, contact your NSEA Organizational Specialist ASAP for help in planning.

3. Record one-to-one conversations at: www.bit.ly/NSEAOne-to-One. Contact your NSEA Organizational

Specialist if you need assistance with this step.

4. As soon as you receive new member forms send them to NSEA by fax, or scan and email or by U.S. Mail. Enrollment date must be between Jan. 1, 2024 and Feb. 29, 2024.

5. Contact your Organizational Specialist if you have any questions.

KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY

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- Understand your blood pressure numbers
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Sign up and get started with a nurse today at Nebraskablue.com/EHAPOP



Health benefits for EHA are provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

Apply now for the 2024 Belz, Lynch, Krause Grants

Good teachers are always looking to improve their skill set, and the NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz, Lynch, Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2024 application deadline is Friday, March 1.

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

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

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

Applications must be submitted online by 11:59 p.m. CST on March 1, 2024. Recipients will be notified in March.

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

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

Further details and the application form can be found at www.nsea.org/BLK. For questions, contact Chris Garcia at 1-800-742-0047 or email Chris.Garcia@nsea.org.

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



Turn to the NSEA Children's Fund this winter



Nebraska winters can make even the most warmly dressed children shiver. Imagine walking to school in the biting cold of the early morning without a coat or warm mittens, or with shoes that are falling apart. Unfortunately, this is a reality for many children in Nebraska. Teachers frequently spend their own hard-earned dollars to help these children. But a teacher can't assist every child encountered during the school day, much less during the school year. That is why NSEA created the Children's Fund. Since 1994, donations to the Children's Fund have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to help children in need.

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

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

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

The generosity of Children's Fund donors has helped to pay for glasses, warm clothing, medical and dental needs of children; provide assistance to a family whose home and belongings were destroyed by fire; purchase a bus ticket for a child with no other means to get to school; and more.

There is never red tape or lengthy delay for members wanting to use the fund. A call to Karen Hunt at the NSEA (800-742-0047) is usually all that is needed. For more information, go to nsea.org/childrensfund.