

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ April 2013



Looking at **RETIREMENT** *Where does it stand?*



**Plan Your Summer Coursework!
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**APPLY NOW!
Tuition Reimbursement Returns This Summer!**

Upcoming Assignments

April 18 NSEA-Retired Spring Conference

■ **What:** This annual gathering of the NSEA-Retired affiliate will feature Nebraska native and Olympic gold medal bobsledder Curt Tomasevich, among other highlights.

■ **Details:** Held in Kearney, the event is outlined on Page 34.

April 19-20 NSEA Delegate Assembly

■ **What:** NSEA members have met annually since 1867 to set the Association path for the coming year. The 2013 meeting is in Kearney.

■ **Details:** It is not too late to be elected as a delegate. See Page 17 for details!

May 7 National Teacher Day!

■ **What:** On National Teacher Day, thousands of communities honor local educators and acknowledge the crucial role teachers play in making sure every student receives a quality education.

■ **Details:** Learn how you can encourage a local observance by clicking on the 'Grants & Opportunities' tab at:

www.nea.org

Building Leaders is an NSEA Priority

Leadership Institute Offers Members Chance to Hone Skills

“Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself.

“When you become a leader, success is about growing others.”

— Jack Welch,
Business executive, author

Association members can grow their own leadership skills through the 2013 edition of the NSEA Leadership Institute.

The Institute should be of particular interest to NSEA members who are pursuing or are interested in pursuing an Association leadership post at the local or state level in the near future.

The Institute is scheduled for Tuesday through Thursday, July 16-18, at NSEA Headquarters just west of the State Capitol in Lincoln. The Institute is open to all NSEA members in good standing; expenses are paid and there is no fee to attend.

“Any current and/or potential local leader should consider attending,” said Kristen Sedlacek, an NSEA UniServ director, and the Institute director. “The training is informal, fun and informational.”

Any K-12, Higher Education or Educational Support Professional member who is a local leader or has interest in seeking local leadership positions should consider attendance. The Institute will help to set a path toward leadership.

The Institute will develop a thorough knowledge of the Association, and will provide training on member rights, organizing, membership outreach, communications and other aspects of the Association and leadership principles. Participants will also develop a network with other emerging local association leaders from around the state.

Those interested should call NSEA’s Jan Anderson at 1-800-742-0047, or e-mail:

jan.anderson@nsea.org

Sedlacek noted that class size is limited, and anyone interested should contact Anderson soon.



On the Cover: Nebraska teachers are protective and vocal about their retirement plan. With discussions about changes to the retirement plan well underway in the Nebraska Legislature, you’ll learn much more when you turn to

Page 10



Nebraska State Education Association
605 S. 14th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508-2742 · www.nsea.org
(402) 475-7611 · (800) 742-0047

Volume 66, No. 8
ISSN Number: 1085-0783
USPS Number: 000-369

Great Public Schools For Every Child

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Official publication of the Nebraska State Education Association, Suite 200, 605 South 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send address changes to The Voice, NSEA, 605 S. 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-2742.

Published and mailed 6 times yearly according to this schedule: September, October, November, February, April and August. Published online only in December, January, March and May.

Payment of annual NSEA membership dues entitles Nebraska educators to receive The Voice. Total cost of producing 10 monthly issues of The Voice each year is about \$4.84 per member.

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The Charter 'Solution'



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“
Frequently
included in
charter school
legislation is a
waiver of staff
certification
requirements
and collective
bargaining
rights — factors
that lower
operational
costs, raise
profits and
compromise
quality.”

At some point in their career, every educator dreams about what the school system would look like in their perfect world.

During my 34 years at Wilber-Clatonia, whenever I encountered frustration with regulations, assessments, lack of time to teach or lack of funding, I enjoyed those fleeting moments of reverie myself.

My self-designed school system would most certainly include a safe and supportive learning environment, with quality teachers and principals given the autonomy to teach what they intuitively know is important for their students to learn.

Class sizes would be small enough to meet the individual needs of each student. Adequate funding would provide current textbooks and technology to allow for 21st century instruction. Local and community decision-making would drive choices about resources, priorities, time and staffing.

Reality, however, is hard on daydreams. I would return to the classroom the next day knowing that comprehensive school reform is a slow, marathon-like process — unless one buys into the quick-fix promises of the charter school movement. In fact, some might think my reveries were leaning to support of charter schools, with greater flexibility and autonomy than public schools on staffing policies, mandated curriculum, assessments and funding.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Quality Assured

A bill introduced in the Legislature this year would have allowed charter schools in Omaha. The Education Committee has rightfully killed the bill, but the threat remains constant, as Nebraska is one of 10 states without legislation allowing for charters. Why? “School choice” is the first argument charter supporters put forth, but Nebraska has one of the most liberal and flexible school choice laws in the country. Through open enrollment options, parents can send their child to *any* public school in Nebraska. There simply is no need for charters in that environment.

Second, Nebraska school districts provide an ever-expanding variety of programs. Focus schools, magnet schools, academy schools, and content-specific schools already exist in the public school realm. Lincoln’s Zoo School and Performing Arts School; the Core Knowledge School in Millard; and various magnet schools in Omaha; serve as examples.

NSEA believes in innovation in public education, as outlined in our Resolutions. The Association also believes that such “innovation” should not harm K-12 school programs. For instance, charter schools would divert public tax dollars from our

already-underfunded K-12 schools. Innovative schools must also contain appropriate procedures for regular, periodic assessment and evaluation. While charter supporters in other states would argue that those procedures stifle innovation, what those regulations do, in fact, is assure quality.

Factory Schools

Perhaps the crux of the issue, is this: charter schools often allow private investors to skim public tax dollars for personal profit, while ignoring needs of the children in those schools. Although funded with taxpayer dollars, charters in many states operate free from many laws and regulations that govern traditional public schools. Frequently included in charter school legislation is a waiver of staff certification requirements and collective bargaining rights — factors that lower operational costs, raise profits and ultimately compromise quality.

Since their inception in the early 1990’s, the growth of charter schools has exploded. According to Education Week magazine, there are now more than 6,000 publicly funded charter schools in the U.S., enrolling about 4 percent of all students. In the last five years, the number of charter schools has grown by almost 50 percent, while over the same period nearly 4,000 traditional public schools have closed.

This represents a huge transfer of resources and students from our public education system to the publicly funded, but privately managed, charter sector. It also marks a slow move from the kind, caring and quality driven public school, to the profit-driven factory school.

Our children are not factory-produced widgets.

The ‘Next Best Thing’

Research by Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) found that the academic achievement in charter schools is no better or worse than their traditional public school counterparts. Additionally, traditional public schools accept all children, including those with high special needs and those from high poverty homes. Nationally, teachers in charter schools are young and have little experience. The turnover rate for students, teachers and administrators in charter schools is much higher than regular public schools.

Rather than “the next best thing,” charter schools are a solution in search of a problem. If policymakers and the public want to be innovative, the best way to do so would be to focus on and fully fund those quality public schools we have, and to shore up those few that we all know can do better.

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¹ Interest accrues from date loan is funded.

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³ APR is Annual Percentage Rate. The Annual Percentage Rate is the advertised rate including relationship discounts and can vary based on creditworthiness, age of vehicle (2009 or newer) and terms of the loan. Financing up to 100% of the value of the auto is available. Minimum rate will not be less than 2.99% APR. Quoted auto rates are accurate as of 2/28/13 and subject to change prior to your acceptance of this offer. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Offer excludes all loans already financed at the Credit Union. New money only. Members without a checking account, direct deposit and automatic loan payment may receive a slightly higher rate (.50%). Offer expires 5/31/2013. Payment example: payments on a loan for a term of 60 months at 2.99% APR will be \$17.97 per \$1,000 borrowed.

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This Deal is Hard to Refuse!

First Nebraska, Old Mill, Join to Give NSEA Members a Car Buying Bargain!

First Nebraska Educators Credit Union has provided quality financial products and services to NSEA members for more than 50 years. Old Mill Toyota has provided fleet pricing to NSEA members since last fall.

Now, they have combined to offer NSEA members a package that will be hard to refuse.

Any NSEA member who purchases a new vehicle through Old Mill Toyota in Omaha or Husker Auto Group in Lincoln will receive pre-arranged, fleet pricing on that vehicle – the same prices available to corporations.

When First Nebraska finances the loan, NSEA members will receive one percent off their qualifying rate (as low as 2.99 percent). Also included: terms up to 72 months and a 24-hour loan approval turnaround.

“These two organizations have joined together to offer NSEA members the opportunity for considerable savings,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. “This is a wonderful bargain — another benefit for Association members.”

The fleet pricing plan covers all Toyota makes and models, as well as those in the GMC, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Mercedes Benz and BMW lines at Husker Auto Group. Fleet pricing is considerably less than the manufacturer’s suggested retail price.

The purchase of a Toyota also includes Toyota Care — all Toyota-recommended maintenance, including oil changes and

tire rotations, through two years or 25,000 miles. NSEA members also receive any incentives offered to the public at the time of purchase. If Toyota offers \$500 cash back or zero percent interest, members earn those benefits as well as fleet pricing. Military and recent graduate discounts will also apply.

Call or visit a First Nebraska branch to get pre-approved. If you are an NSEA member or public school employee in Nebraska, you are eligible to join the credit union. Call 1-800-882-0244 to speak with a loan officer and start the application process. Or, apply online at:

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First Nebraska Educators will put members in touch with Jason Fricke at Old Mill Toyota/Husker Auto Group to find the right vehicle. You’ll get low rates from First Nebraska, and the best price through Old Mill Toyota/Husker Auto Group.

Credit union membership is required. Discounted annual percentage rate applies to auto loans only, and is discounted from the FNECU standard qualifying APR. Loan amount must be a minimum of \$10,000 new money to qualify for the discount. Minimum rate will not be less than 2.99 percent APR. Standard credit qualifications and other restrictions may apply. To learn more about the discounts available, visit:

employerprice.com

“This is a wonderful bargain — another benefit for Association members.”
— **Nancy Fulton,**
NSEA President

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Let the Formula Work

Legislators Ready to Tinker – Again! – With State Aid Formula

Broad swings in state aid funding to individual Nebraska school districts have created significant uncertainty for school officials in recent years.

Rather than let the state aid formula work, legislators have tinkered with the formula or arbitrarily cut state aid each of the past 11 years. With a deadline for state aid certification approaching — and even with state revenues in a slow but steady upward climb — senators are again considering a retreat from the state aid need projected by the formula.

NSEA's message to state policymakers has been clear: let the formula

“Each time policymakers take that pennywise approach, the window of opportunity closes a bit more for a generation of Nebraska kids.”

**Nancy Fulton,
NSEA President**

work; let the formula provide consistent, adequate funding to K-12 schools.

“Nebraska public schools receive fewer state dollars than do those in 46 states,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. “Too many times we’ve seen legislators adjust state aid from

what the formula says is needed, to what policymakers think the state can ‘afford.’

“Each time policymakers take that pennywise approach,” said Fulton, “the window of opportunity closes a bit more for a generation of Nebraska kids.”

5, 7 or 10 Percent?

The formula calls for an 2013-14 increase of about 10 percent over this year's \$852 million budget. Gov. Dave Heineman has called for 5 percent.

In fiscal 2010, the legislature set state aid for K-12 education at \$950 million. In the current fiscal year, state aid is \$852 million – an amount that falls \$278 million below K-12 needs, as dictated by the state aid formula.

NSEA has urged the Appropriations Committee to consider at least a 7 percent increase in aid each of the next two years. That 7 percent represents a \$912 million line item for FY2013



Taking action: Five NSEA members traveled to Lincoln to testify against LB561, which would ‘eliminate or substantially transform’ the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers in Kearney and Geneva. Speaking out about the good work performed at the Geneva center for girls, and the Kearney site for boys, were (front, from left) Lisa Irwin, a counselor at Kearney; and Pat Carpenter, a teacher at Geneva. In back, from left, are Kearneyites Kerry Thompson, a Title I teacher; Sue Bokenkamp, a family life teacher; and Nancy Lyon, a Title I teacher.

Kearney, Geneva Educators Speak Out for Youth Sites

When State Code Agency Teachers Association (SCATA) members learned that LB561 would close the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers in Kearney and Geneva, they refused to sit and watch.

Five SCATA members traveled to Lincoln in March to oppose the bill that would move the youth offenders into community-based programs.

SCATA President Sue Bokenkamp has spent 28 years teaching young men sent to West Kearney High. She said the teens have been through diversion programs, alternative schools, counseling and other options, without results.

In presenting the Judiciary Committee with a list of 17 community-based Nebraska programs that have closed in the past five years, she said Kearney offers a plan that removes teens from harmful hometown influences.

“When the youth from across Nebraska come to YRTC, they have the chance to get out of their environment and the opportunity to make changes necessary to be successful,” she said.

Nancy Lyon said the West Kearney High atmosphere allows the teen a chance to slow their lives down, allowing them to work on issues without destabilizing outside influences. Further, she said, closing Kearney and Geneva and reopening centers in Omaha or elsewhere is wasteful, she said.

“Taxpayers don’t need the extra burden of recreating these services when the YRTC truly does have them all,” she said.

An overflow crowd at the hearing opposed LB561. Committee Chair Sen. Brad Ashford said the sites would not be closed and the committee has now promised changes to LB561.

and \$975 million line item in FY2014. While still below the formula need level, 7 percent will go far in addressing the formula funding gap.

Action needed: Call or e-mail your state senator, and urge a vote for a 7 percent increase in state aid. To find and contact your senator, go to:

nsea.org

Elsewhere in the legislature:

Ag Land Valuations

NSEA opposes LB101, which would slowly reduce valuation of agricultural and horticultural land to 65 percent of actual value by 2018. NSEA Director of Research Larry Scherer told the Revenue Committee that LB101, and a related bill, LB145, would cost schools statewide \$90 million in lost revenue.

“That equates to more than 1,500 teaching jobs,” he said. “That equates to elimination of programs like art, music, industrial arts, vocational agriculture and physical education.”

As most rural districts do not qualify for equalization aid, state aid dollars will not make up that loss, he said.

Nebraska Opportunity Grants

Jay Sears, director of Instructional Advocacy, told the Appropriations Committee that NSEA supports additional funding for Nebraska Opportunity Grants as embodied in LB334.

“Nebraska ranks 33rd in the nation in state-funded, need-based financial aid per full-time student, and this additional general fund appropriation would narrow that gap,” said Sears. “Doing so would allow more of our students to stay in-state for higher education.”

Medicaid Expansion

NSEA President Nancy Fulton told the Health and Human Services Committee that a key to a successful classroom environment is healthy children and staff who can focus on learning.

“There are those who would like to pit health care against education. At the NSEA, we believe that healthy children, parents and staff are an essential component to our ability to provide students with a quality education,” she said.

Community College Funding

Sears told the Appropriations Committee that NSEA appreciates state support of community colleges.

“Without increases in general fund appropriations, Nebraska’s community college students will see diminished learning opportunities and less chance

Kolowski Security Bill Stuck in Committee

Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski’s school security bill, LB346, failed to advance out of the Legislature’s Revenue Committee in March on a 4-3 vote, with one present and not voting. Five votes were needed for advancement.

NSEA Director of Research Larry Scherer told the Revenue Committee that NSEA approves of LB346, which would allow school districts to levy up to one cent per hundred dollars assessed valuation for school security measures. The expenditure would not fall under the \$1.05 lid limit.

“Currently Natural Resource Districts may levy up to one cent for ground water management activities and community colleges may levy additional amounts over the levy cap for the retirement of bonds,” said Scherer. “While not minimizing these activities, we believe that the safety and lives of those in our public schools is of at least equal importance.”

Kolowski, a long-time Millard West High School principal, drew up the bill with local control in mind. LB346 allowed each district to determine what security measures worked best in that district.

Revenue Committee Chair Sen. Galen Hadley, Kearney; North Platte Sen. Tom Hansen, Omaha Sen. Burke Harr and Cedar Rapids Sen. Kate Sullivan voted ‘aye.’

Voting ‘nay’ were Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher, Fremont Sen. Charlie Janssen, and Omaha Sen. Beau McCoy. Omaha Sen. Pete Pirsch was present but did not vote.

Action Needed!

LB346 is stalled in committee. Please contact State Sens. Pirsch, McCoy, Schumacher and Janssen and urge them to vote ‘Yes’ to advance LB346 to the full Legislature. Call 1-402-471-2311 and ask to speak to one of those senators, or e-mail them by visiting:

nsea.org



Kolowski

of being able to compete for these high skill jobs, less chance of contributing to the success of Nebraska’s economic development,” said Sears.

Roads Funding

Jason Hayes told the Revenue Committee that NSEA “strongly supports” LB531’s repeal of statutory language that earmarks a quarter-cent of sales tax for road construction. When the earmark takes effect, it will siphon \$65 million a year from the state general fund, taking

dollars from education, health care, juvenile services and other needs.

Hayes, NSEA’s director of Public Policy and Legislative Research, asked where \$65 million might be better spent.

“It would build about 15 miles of urban two-lane road – or about 21 miles of a rural, two-lane highway,” said Hayes. “Or, it could open doors to opportunity for 6,842 children next year. It could help prevent the overcrowding of our children’s classrooms with the hiring of 1,300 new teachers.”

Join us at the 2nd annual Nebraska Department of Education's Symposium on Special Education and Beginning Teaching



The Cornhusker, A Marriott Hotel
Lincoln, NE
July 29, 2013 8:30 - 3:30
NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- ◆ Jennifer Abrams, author of *Having Hard Conversations*
- ◆ Alyson Mike, Director of Online Professional Development, New Teacher Center

Select a Session Topics:

- ⇒ Behavior & classroom management
- ⇒ Inclusive practices
- ⇒ Individualized Education Plans
- ⇒ Behavior Assessment & Improvement Plan
- ⇒ Paraprofessional practices
- ⇒ Taking care of yourself

Pre-register:

- ◆ www.education.ne.gov/cspd/Conference.html
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- ◆ No registration fee

Symposium Purposes:

- ⇒ Support educators serving students with disabilities in K-12 inclusionary settings
- ⇒ Recruit participants for e-Mentoring for Student Success (eMSS) online mentoring program
- ⇒ Provide awareness of available resources and best practices
- ⇒ Facilitate networking



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Source: unk.edu/about/fastfacts/At-A-Glance. Based on graduates earning at least one degree from UNK. In 2010-11 there were 24,889 F.T.E. teachers in the state according to education.ne.gov

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From Dog Food to Dignity



Change Ahead for Retirement; Educators Advised to Watch Closely

Not long after he joined the staff in 1971, legendary NSEA lobbyist Herb Schimek recalls taking a call from an elderly educator who had retired after more than 40 years teaching Nebraska children.

She wondered aloud to Schimek why, after contributing to the state's teacher retirement plan for so many years, her retirement benefits were little more than \$70 per month. Through her tears, she told Schimek she had resorted to supplementing her diet with dog food in order to stretch her monthly budget.

"She was crying, and hell, I was crying. It was horrible," said Schimek.

Sadly, that was not the only such call Schimek received during his first years on NSEA staff. He recalls that Helen Krause, the first Nebraskan to serve on the Executive Committee of the National Education Association, retired after many years teaching Latin at Lincoln Northeast High School. Her monthly pension was something less than \$100 a month.

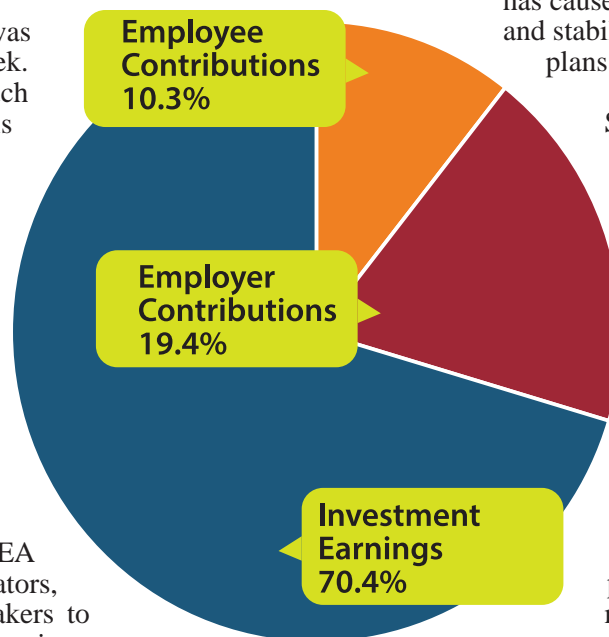
"It was ridiculous. These were fantastic people who had dedicated their lives to teaching," he said.

In the ensuing 40 years, NSEA worked diligently with state senators, governors and other key policymakers to foster improvements in the teacher retirement system. Today, the average monthly retirement benefit is more than \$1,760 – not enough to make an educator wealthy. But with Social Se-

curity it provides enough to live on and enough to remind young teachers that a career in the profession will mean retirement with dignity, not dog food.

"I always kept that first telephone call in mind as I worked on retirement," said Schimek. "These people worked like dogs and got nothing."

State & Local Pension Contributions by Source



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009. State and Local Government Employee-Retirement Systems. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Five Year 'Smoothing'

Even with nearly 30,000 active public school employees contributing to the plan today, the market downturn during the Great Recession has caused anxiety about the long-term health and stability of the two teacher retirement plans in Nebraska.

One plan, the 104-year-old Omaha School Employees Retirement System (OSERS), serves Omaha Public School employees. The other, managed by the Nebraska Public Employee Retirement Systems (NPERS), handles all other public school employees in the state (see sidebar on Page 12).

The NPERS plan uses a five-year "smoothing" to calculate the system's overall long-term strength and viability. The smoothing cushions wide market swings from year to year – for better or worse – with the results of the previous four years of market performance.

Thus, even with a bull market the past three-plus years, effects of the Great Recession linger. The July 31, 2012, actuarial report on the NPERS plan noted that the rate of

Members Value Rule of 85, COLAs

In February, NSEA surveyed a sampling of members on retirement issues. The results were clear: whether they plan to use it or not, members put a high value on the Rule of 85 — the rule that allows an educator to retire and begin drawing benefits after age 55, if years of service and age equal or surpass 85.

Further, members see the Rule of 85 as a way to attract bright, young talent into the profession, and to allow teachers who are ready to retire from the classroom the opportunity to do so. Finally, members have good understanding of the retirement system and don't want policymakers tinkering

with it unless that tinkering shores up the system.

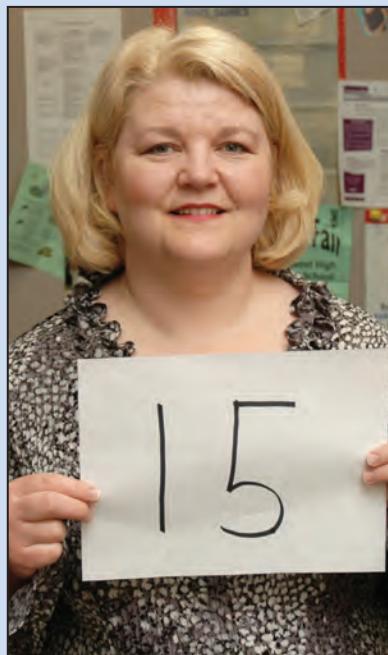
But wait! Members also place high value on the cost of living adjustments for retirees that can range up to 2.5 percent annually, depending on inflation.

NSEA culled three remarks from among several thousand responses to the survey. Christina Kubicek, Lincoln; Tracy Carlson, Omaha; and Lisa Eichinger, York; teach in different disciplines and cities, and have varied years of experience. Below are their remarks when asked whether they place more value on the Rule of 85 or annual cost of living increases to the retirement plan.



Christina Kubicek,
Special Ed
Goodrich M.S., Lincoln

"It's hard to decide which is most valued, COLA or the rule of 85, given the state of the economy and the uncertainty of the economy. Teachers already have a tough time making ends meet with insurance benefits for more than a single person, as well as having to purchase a lot of supplies out of pocket for projects that keep students engaged in the curriculum. If the state financing of education and the teachers' pay/benefits continue to dwindle, ensuring that students receive what they deserve is going to continue to get more difficult to carry out."



Tracy Carlson,
Pre-Kindergarten
Skinner Magnet, Omaha

"Actually very difficult to pick which was more important! I believe both to be very important! As we all age, I find it difficult to imagine myself being able to continue in this job! It is a very physically and intellectually challenging job! I worry about my colleagues in their 60s doing this job, as students think nothing of striking one of us, getting very hurt! This should be something that NEA and the NSEA should keep in mind as they change things."



Lisa Eichinger, English
York Middle School, York

"I fear we will lose even more people from the teaching field if you go to Rule of 90, but selfishly, since I am near the Rule of 85, I voted for the COLA. I have two kids who are new teachers, and I believe it is hard enough to get people who want to teach so I really fear messing with either of these. We need good teachers and you have to make the profession attractive in some way. Being able to retire younger is one of the few real perks we have. My vote...don't mess with either one."

Years of service: These three Nebraska professionals — with the varied years of service to the profession as depicted in their photographs — offered definite thoughts about the state retirement plan for teachers. From left are Christina Kubicek, Lincoln; Tracy Carlson, Omaha; and Lisa Eichinger, York.

return on the market value of assets for fiscal year 2011-12 was 1 percent, 7 percent less than the 8 percent rate that is assumed in order to keep the retirement plan solvent. Losses from 2008, 2009 and 2012 ended with a combined 2 percent gain, also well under the 8 percent mark.

As a result, the actuary reported that the NPERS plan still has \$113 million in net losses yet-to-be-recognized over the next four years, including \$356 million for 2009 losses alone.

Even with those numbers, the NPERS plan retains a

funded ratio (available dollars compared to long-term obligations) of 78 percent. In June 2012, its most recent ranking, the Pew Charitable Foundation report on state pensions gave Nebraska's plan a 'solid performer' ranking.

Market Declines

Even with the market rebounding dramatically in recent months, legislators are rightly concerned for the long-term health of both the OSERS and NPERS plans.

Jason Hayes, NSEA's director of Public Policy and Legislative Research, told the Retirement Committee that market declines during the recession created an additional funding need from the state of \$48 million in 2013 and \$60 million in 2014. By 2018, the state would need to kick in another \$138 million.

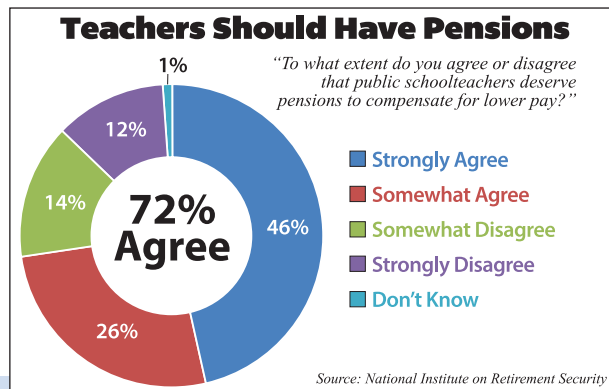
Educators, to their credit, have not ignored the problem. Six years ago, teachers contributed 7.28 percent of monthly salary to their retirement plan. Teachers took the lead, and through NSEA-instigated legislation, slowly raised that contribution rate to 9.78 percent. By statute, school districts contribute 101 percent of that rate on behalf of employees.

"Our teachers and members of the plan have sacrificed repeatedly to keep the plan sound and solvent," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "I don't think we can ask anything more of them. Now it is time for the state to step forward."

Indeed, part of Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist's proposal to secure teacher retirement well into the future would increase the state contribution to the plan from 1 percent of pay each year to 2 percent.

Practical, Solvent

To start, Nordquist's



Retirement Plan Facts

In 1909, the Nebraska Legislature created the Omaha School Employees' Retirement System (OSERS) for employees of the Omaha Public Schools. In 1945, the Legislature created a retirement plan for teachers across the rest of the state; that plan is now administered by the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System (NPERS). The OSERS and NPERS plans remain separate to this day.

While changes proposed by the Legislature during the current session would affect both the Omaha and Nebraska plans, there are differences to the plans (see main story).

A Board of Trustees oversees the OSERS plan. The Public Employees Retirement Board manages administration of the NPERS plan, while the Nebraska Investment Council oversees the assets.

OSERS currently provides cost of living adjustments (COLA) of up to 1.5 percent each year, while the NPERS plan provides an annual COLA of up to 2.5 percent. The OSERS plan also offers a medical COLA after 10 years of retirement that adds \$10 for each year of retirement, up to a max of \$250.

Participants in the NPERS plan contribute 9.78 percent of their monthly pay into the plan, with their school district matching that amount at 101 percent. Members of the OSERS plan contribute 9.30 percent, with OPS matching 101 percent of that amount.

To calculate benefits for both retirement systems:

- The final average retirement benefit is determined for the final 36-month period prior to retirement.

- The basic benefit is 2 percent for each year of service (\$3.50 for each year of service is added for the OSERS plan).

- For example, assume a member of the Nebraska plan retires at 65 after 30 years of service and a final average pay of \$3,000 a month. The monthly benefit will equal 2 percent times 30 years times \$3,000, or \$1,800 per month, payable for the life of the retired member. If the member had retired from Omaha, the monthly retirement would total \$1,905, when increased to include the additional \$3.50 service annuity.

Other plan details:

Avg. Monthly Benefit:

Nebraska system: \$1,760
Omaha system: \$2,005

Active Plan Members:

Nebraska system: 39,886
Omaha system: 7,315

Pension Recipients:

Nebraska system: 17,814
Omaha system: 3,843

Assets:

Nebraska: \$7.2 billion
Omaha: \$1.1 billion

Funded Ratio*:

Nebraska: 78 percent
Omaha: 73 percent

Websites:

Nebraska: npers.ne.gov
Omaha: osers.org

*Each plan uses different actuarial assumptions, which makes comparisons of funded ratios difficult.

LB553 would eliminate the sunset of higher contribution rates by plan participants. Instead of falling to something less than the current 9.78 percent for the NPERS plan, rates would remain at that level.

Other changes proposed by Nordquist would affect only new members of the plan. Among changes proposed:

- Future first-time enrollees in both the OSERS and NPERS plans would see cost-of-living increases capped at 1 percent. The current annual cost-of-living increases are capped at 1.5 percent for OSERS plan members and at 2.5 percent for NPERS members. Again, the COLA would not change for current plan enrollees.

- The plan would also base new enrollee retirement benefits on an average of the highest five, rather than highest three, years' salary, causing a slight reduction in benefits at retirement.

Nordquist's plan would save the state \$30 million this year and another \$43 million in 2014.

NSEA supports LB553 and LB554, which propose the alterations to the NPERS and OSERS plans, as the most practical way to maintain solvency of the plan.

Fulton stressed that the proposed changes would not affect current plan members. Nor would the changes affect the Rule of 85 for current or new plan members.

With the Legislature likely to vote on these changes in the next six weeks, Nebraska educators would be wise to watch the progress of retirement legislation closely. Such vigilance is the key to ensuring Nebraska teacher retirement does not return to the days of dog food.

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Kearney convention: The last time NSEA delegates met in Kearney was 1970, when the event was held at spacious Cushing Coliseum on the campus of what was then known as Kearney State College. This photo shows busy delegates from District IV — now the Sandhills District — during one of the Assembly sessions.

Delegate Assembly Action Set

Annual Confab to Feature Election, Debate, Recognition and More

There are more than 27,000 members of NSEA, each with a vested interest in the success of the Association.

Members reside in every corner, every county, every city and every village in the state.

As each one of those members has a strong interest in the Association's work and success, it is important for members to reassess and realign the work and direction of the Association every spring at NSEA's Delegate Assembly.

Every year since 1867, delegates elected from across the state have done just that. This year's event — the 152nd Delegate Assembly in the Association's 146-year history — will be another one for the books.

The 2013 event marks the first time since 1970 that Delegate Assembly has been held someplace other than Omaha or Lincoln. Ironically, that 1970 meeting was also in Kearney.

The agenda includes election of a Nebraska educator to the NEA Board of Directors; a keynote by nationally recognized education leader Dr. John Draper; action on two proposed changes to the Association's Bylaws (see page 20); and updating of Association Resolutions. Delegates will also set dues for the 2013-14 Association year.

Delegates will hear reports from



Draper

NSEA President Nancy Fulton, Wilber-Clatonia, and NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen.

A highlight will be a rally for the NSEA Children's Fund, sponsored by Old Mill Toyota and Husker Auto (see page 5), on Saturday. Recipients of several NSEA awards, including the Friend of Education, will be honored Saturday morning.

"We're going to go non-stop Friday night and Saturday," said Fulton. "We'd like delegates to get here, take care of business and head home safely."

Jailor and Music Man

Over the past 30 years he has been a middle and high school teacher, assistant principal, principal, executive director of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools, and CEO of the Educational Research Service in Washington, D.C. He is now president of Cambridge Strategic Services, which helps school districts develop extraordinary learning communities.

He is a dynamic and entertaining speaker who has keynoted education gatherings across the nation.

Open Seat on NEA Board

Delegates will also elect a representative from NSEA to serve a three-year term on the NEA Board of Directors.

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.

Candidate nominations and speeches will take place on Friday night, with voting Saturday morning.

On These Pages

The 2013 Delegate Assembly schedule, as well as proposed changes to the NSEA Bylaws and the proposed dues for the 2013-14 Association year.

Become a Delegate

It is not too late to serve as a delegate; there are delegate slots open in many locals. Contact your local association president, or your NSEA UniServ director (1-800-742-0047) for details.

Online

All NSEA committee reports and proposed Delegate Assembly Standing Rules have been posted to the NSEA website. Find them at:

www.nsea.org

Order of Business: Delegate Assembly 2013

Diamond Ballroom, Younes Convention Center, Kearney
President Nancy Fulton, Wilber-Clatonia, Presiding
Registration: Younes Conference Center Pre-Function area, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Friday, April 19, 2013 ♦ 7:30 p.m.

Call to Order
Pledge of Allegiance
National Anthem
First Report of Credentials Committee
Adoption of Standing/Procedural Rules
Adoption of Order of Business
Nominations for NEA Director
NEA Director Candidate Remarks
Report of the Bylaws Committee
Debate on Proposed Bylaws Amendments
First Report of Resolutions Committee
Submission of Additional New Resolutions and/or Amendments to Continuing Resolutions
Report of the Auditing Committee
Dues Proposal for 2013-14
Report of Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen
Submission of Additional New Business Items
Announcements and Recess

These activities will take place immediately following the Assembly recess:

- ♦ NEA and NSEA Resolutions Hearing, Ruby 5.
- ♦ NSEA Budget Hearing, Ruby 4.

Horace Mann Reception: Crystal Ballroom 3-4

Saturday, April 20, 2013 ♦ 8:30 a.m.

Voting will take place from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Final Report of Credentials Committee
Submission of Additional New Business Items (By 10 a.m.)
Submission of Additional New Resolutions and/or Amendments to Continuing Resolutions (By 10 a.m.)
Keynote Address: Dr. John Draper
Presentation of NSEA Friend of Education and Awards Program
Elections Committee Report (when available)
Action on New Business Items
Committee Reports to the Assembly
President's Address to the Delegates and Members: Nancy Fulton, Wilber-Clatonia
Strong Schools, Strong Communities, Strong Economy Rally:
Sponsored by Old Mill Toyota & Husker Auto for the benefit of NSEA's Children's Fund
Final Report of Resolutions Committee
Action on Resolutions
Action on the Dues Proposal for 2013-14
Adjournment

Parliamentarian: Dr. Jon Ericson

Friday evening break service provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska.
Saturday Morning Break Service Provided by First Nebraska Educators & Employees Groups Credit Union.
Award Plaques Provided in Part by NSEA-Retired.

2013-14 NSEA Dues Recommendation

Dues for Certificated Staff

The NSEA Board of Directors has recommended the following annual fee structure for Association membership by certificated staff. Delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly on April 20-21 will consider and act on this proposal. For the 2013-14 Association year, the NSEA Board of Directors recommends the dues for these certificated classes of NSEA membership be as follows:

Active: \$380 **Half-time Active:** \$190 **Active Substitute:** \$190 **Non-Active Sub:** \$95

The total NSEA dues and assessments for 2012-13 were \$376. The total NSEA dues and assessments for the current year and the proposal for next year are summarized below:

	2012-13	2013-14	Changes (%)
General Fund Dues.....	\$355	\$358	\$3 (1%)
Ballot Contingency Fund.....	\$6	\$7	\$1 (16.7%)
State PAC.....	\$15	\$15	0 (0%)
Total	\$376	\$380	\$4 (1.06%)

The Ballot Contingency Fund is used when proposed ballot initiatives or referenda affect public education. The NSEA Political Action Fund (PAC) supports member-recommended pro-education candidates.

With the expiration of the special assessment, the proposed dues and fund assessments reflect an increase of \$3 to fund the NSEA budget for 2013-14.

All amounts listed are for state dues only. NEA dues for 2013-14 have been proposed at no more than \$182, a \$2 increase.

As noted, the 2013-14 dues amount for full-time, active members of NSEA includes a voluntary contribution of \$15 to NSEA's Political Action Fund and \$7.50 for half-time active members and active substitute members. This contribution is refundable upon receipt of a written, individually-composed request. A reminder of the opportunity to seek a refund is published in the January issue of the NSEA Voice. Address refund requests to NSEA PAC Refund, in care of NSEA President, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508. Requests must be postmarked no later than Feb. 15 each year.

Dues for Educational Support Professionals

Delegates to the 2001 Delegate Assembly approved a separate dues structure for Educational Support Professionals (ESP). That action created four levels of dues for ESP members, and the NSEA Board of Directors modified the ESP dues structure to a six-tiered structure. The ESP dues structure is motivated by an effort to establish equity between the wide range of ESP salaries, while taking into consideration the fact that beginning teachers or teachers in lower-paid school districts are still paying full NSEA dues. In this model, the ESP member's total base salary, regardless of the hours or number of days worked, establishes the state dues for that member. The percentages are based on the lowest starting teacher salary in the state, which was \$28,250 in 2012-13.

ESP Dues Tier	NSEA Dues
Active ESP (salary of \$28,250 or more)	\$380.00 (100 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$22,600 to \$28,249)	\$342.00 (90 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$16,950 to \$22,599)	\$266.00 (70 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$11,300 to \$16,949).....	\$190.00 (50 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$5,650 to \$11,299).....	\$114.00 (30 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$5,649 or less)	\$38.00 (10 percent of teacher dues)

2013-14 Dues Comparison

Membership dues for the Nebraska State Education Association rank in the middle of adjacent states.

State	11-12	12-13	Proposed	NSEA Dues History		
				Budget Year	NSEA Dues	Percent Increase
Wyoming.....	\$508	\$475	\$490	2013-14	\$380	1.06
Iowa	\$466	\$481	\$489	2012-13	\$376	1.08
Missouri	\$351	\$371	\$381	2011-12	\$372	4.20
South Dakota	\$360	\$370	\$381	2010-11	\$357	2.00
Colorado	\$376	\$376	\$NA	2009-10	\$350	2.30
Nebraska	\$372	\$376	\$380	2008-09	\$342	4.26
Kansas.....	\$366	\$369	\$374	2007-08	\$328	6.49
AVERAGE	\$399.86	\$402.57	\$415.83	2006-07	\$308	4.05
				2005-06	\$296	4.96
				2004-05	\$282	5.22

Proposed NSEA Bylaws Revisions

These proposed changes to NSEA's Bylaws will be considered during the annual meeting of the Delegate Assembly at the Younes Convention Center in Kearney on April 19-20.

Proposed Bylaws Amendment 1

■ Article I: Membership

Section 2. There shall be eight (8) classes of membership in the Association: Active Professional; Active Educational Support Professional; Substitute; Reserve; Special Services; Student; Retired; and Staff.

(f) Retired membership shall be open to any member who has reached the age of ~~fifty (50)~~ forty-five (45) years or more, or is eligible to receive benefits under a school employee retirement system, and has held Active, Substitute, Reserve, or Staff membership in the Association or comparable membership in a corresponding membership category in another state affiliate in the year in which employment ended, and who is not eligible for Active membership. Retired members are eligible to be voting delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly and may hold appointive positions in the Association.

Rationale: NSEA has several membership categories, but currently only active members of NSEA are eligible to join NSEA-Retired. NSEA staff members who never taught are not eligible for membership in NSEA-Retired under the current Bylaws, since they hold staff membership, not Active membership. In addition, substitute and reserve members of NSEA are currently denied access to the retired organization because they are not Active members. Many substitute members were active NSEA members during part of their career, but the current language denies them membership in the retired organization because they were not Active members in the year in which they retired. NSEA-Retired would like to be able to include members of NSEA who do not hold Active membership, but are either substitute, reserve or staff members of NSEA, as members of the retired organization.

NEA allows retired membership for any individual age 45 or older, so the change in age eligibility in this Bylaw would bring the NSEA Bylaws into agreement with the NEA Bylaws.

Submitted by the NSEA-Retired, Roger Rea, president.

Proposed Bylaws Amendment 2

■ Article III: Board of Directors

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall consist of the President; the Vice President; the National Education Association Directors for Nebraska, the Chair of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC); and representatives of each District Association. The Board shall be apportioned on the basis of one person-one vote. Each District Association shall be entitled to at least one member on the Board of Directors. Each District Association member of the Board must represent the same number of constituents (with variation not to exceed plus or minus 10 percent). The representation ratio

of Board members to constituents shall be determined by the NSEA Board of Directors.

Section 2. The District Presidents, the President of NSEA-Retired, the President of the Higher Education Academy an Education Support Professional representative, and the President of the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN), ~~and the Chair of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC)~~; shall be invited to attend all meetings of the Board of Directors each year as ex-officio members without the right to vote. In the absence of any Board member the District President may assume the seat of an absent director from the same district with voting privileges. NSEA members who are elected at the National Education Association level to be members of the NEA Board of Directors shall be invited to attend meetings of the NSEA Board as ex-officio members without the right to vote. NEA-budgeted funds must be utilized for expenses.

Rationale: There are critical issues in education for Ethnic Minority Educators and Ethnic Minority students, which need to be continually addressed and improved in Nebraska. This amendment would directly address and substantiate NSEA's Minority Involvement Plan. Furthermore, this amendment will continue to support efforts to meet the requirements of the Minority Involvement Plan as well as NEA's Bylaw 3-1-g.

The NSEA Board of Directors is strongest when a diverse and wide range of perspectives is included through the governance process. A voting board with a composition that reflects Nebraska's changing demographics will be more effective, more representative of its members, and more likely to make decisions which respond to the needs of all of its members, therefore ultimately benefiting the Nebraska State Education Association. According to Cultural Relevancy Pedagogist Gloria Ladson-Billings "Directly or indirectly, minority teachers serve as mentors, role models, disciplinarians, advocates, cultural translators, and surrogate parents for minority students." By promoting minority leadership, the NSEA can gain substantial participation of Ethnic Minority Educators while also meeting the needs of our minority students.

Submitted by the NSEA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) and the Omaha Education Association Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee.

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ART 850C-01	Painting	MUS 894P-01	Workshop in Instrumental Art	TE 854-01	Reading in the Content Areas
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EDAD 991-01	Field Study	TE 816A	Practicum: Education (2 sections)		
EDAD 992-01	The Executive Administrator	TE 816B-01	Practicum: Reading		
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FORL 800-01	Curriculum Development & Research	TE 845-01	Contemporary Theory & Practice in Reading		
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Tuition Reimbursement Returns!

Department of Education Will Open Application Process April 1

When Nebraska Department of Education officials opened the application process for the state's tuition reimbursement program for teachers four years ago, they were astounded by the response.

"It blew us away," said Sharon Katt at the time.

"Never in our wildest dreams did we expect to go through so much money so quickly," said Katt, administrator for adult program services for the NDE.

Applications for the program that kicked off in the summer of 2009 quickly drained the \$800,000 the Legislature set aside from lottery proceeds. The NDE accepted the first 268 applicants, but had to turn away scores more after money ran out for the first-come, first-served program. Many more potential applicants likely were unaware of the funding opportunity.

Then, during two lean budget years, the Legislature reallocated program funding elsewhere.

But tuition reimbursement for teachers will — most likely — return this summer, with \$600,000 funding for active teachers in post-graduate programs, and \$400,000 for pre-service teachers seeking teaching certificates.

"We anticipate that full funding will be available; however, the actual funding commitment will not be secure until the legislature has adjourned early in June," said NDE's Karen Buller.

Five Consecutive Years

The reimbursement regulations, in what is officially dubbed the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program (EETP), require active teachers to be certificated and currently teaching in a Nebraska school system; and enrolled in an approved graduate program that results in a degree.

Applicants may request funds for approved classes that start between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2014.

Applicants will start the process to request funds through a link on the Nebraska Department of Education website. That link (see below) is available now; the application will not be on that site until April 1.

EETP allows eligible students to apply, annually, for a loan of \$175 per credit hour, up to a maximum of \$3,000. Students can apply for, and receive, EETP loans annually for up to five consecutive years.

In addition, after a plan participant completes a graduate degree and teaches in Nebraska for two years, \$3,000 in loan balance is forgiven for each additional year

You May Be Eligible for a Forgivable Loan!

To be eligible for an Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program forgivable loan, you must:

- Be employed as a certificated teacher in an approved or accredited school in Nebraska;
- Be enrolled in an approved graduate program at an eligible institution;
- Complete a degree (major) in:
 1. A shortage area;
 2. Curriculum and Instruction;
 3. A subject area in which a teaching endorsement is already held; or
 4. A graduate degree that will result in an additional endorsement which your school administrator believes will be beneficial to the students of the school;
- Be a resident Nebraska student.

taught in Nebraska. The plan forgives \$6,000 in loan balance each year for those who teach in a very sparse school district or in a 40 percent or higher poverty school building.

For pre-service teachers seeking a teaching certificate, the reimbursement application process will begin in August or September. The application will be completed through the student's college or university.

Three-Fold Argument

NSEA lobbied for years for an effective tuition reimbursement plan. The three-fold NSEA argument said tuition reimbursement would encourage teachers to seek advanced degrees, improving their skills, knowledge base, and helping them to become better teachers; would soften the blow of costly post-grad

coursework for teachers, particularly those early in their careers and low on the salary schedule; and would help to improve the state's 45th-in-the-nation average salary ranking for teachers.

In April 2009, senators approved LB547 and put \$1 million in lottery monies into tuition reimbursement each year. LB547 split the funds 60-40 between teachers working on post-graduate degrees, and on students seeking a bachelor's degree in education. The bill passed 49-0, with an emergency clause.

Katt said applications came pouring in, sometimes 30 to 40 each day. She estimated that unfunded applications during that first year totaled about \$300,000 in reimbursement requests.

For details, and the application, go to the website at: education.ne.gov/EducatorPrep/SecondPages/EETP.html



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Local Teachers Love Lexington!

Receipt Campaign Nets Win for Local Businesses, Community

Employees of the Lexington Public Schools love doing business with Lexington merchants, and an effort by members of the Lexington Education Association provided dollar and cents proof of that love!

The initial project of the “Love Lexington” campaign – a three-week receipt drive to encourage local buying – led school employees to submit \$163,989.39 in receipts from local purchases to drive organizers.

From Feb. 7 through Feb. 28, Lexington Public Schools staff were encouraged to save each receipt from a local purchase, put their name on it, and submit it to the Love Lexington committee. Three receipts were randomly drawn and the staff members whose names appeared on the receipts were each given a \$100 prize in Chamber Bucks. The winners were Yeny Diaz of the Early Learning Academy, Terry Sullivan of Pershing Elementary School, and Maria Aguirre of Lexington Middle School.

“We undertook this effort to highlight the vital link between a strong local economy and strong public schools,” said Tracy Naylor, co-chair of Love Lexington. “This is just the beginning of our effort to emphasize and strengthen the relationship between business and education for the betterment of all.”

“While the dollar total from the receipts collected is impressive, it represents only a small fraction of the positive economic impact Lexington schools and school employees have on our community,” said Suzanne Wendorff, Love Lexington co-chair. “This was only a three-week snapshot. Throughout the other 49 weeks of the year, our schools and school employees contribute millions of dollars to the local economy.

“Our schools and community businesses have a mutual interest in supporting one another,” Wendorff said. “Strong schools help build a strong community and a strong local economy.”

The receipt drive is just the beginning of the Love Lexington effort, according to Naylor.

“Our aim is to broaden the participation of community stakeholders in this project, including local business owners. We are seeking to build a strong, effective partnership that will benefit our community,” said Naylor.

Current members of the “Love Lexington” committee are teachers Keith Allen, Lori Burr, Cherri Crittenden Sandy Doss, Andrea Frank, Tammy Kenton, Katie Maloley, Amber Nichols, Ashley Pano, Amy Peplitsch and Donna Stewart.

For details on conducting a similar project in your community, contact Naylor or Wendorff at:

tracy.naylor@esu10.org
suzanne.wendorff@esu10.org

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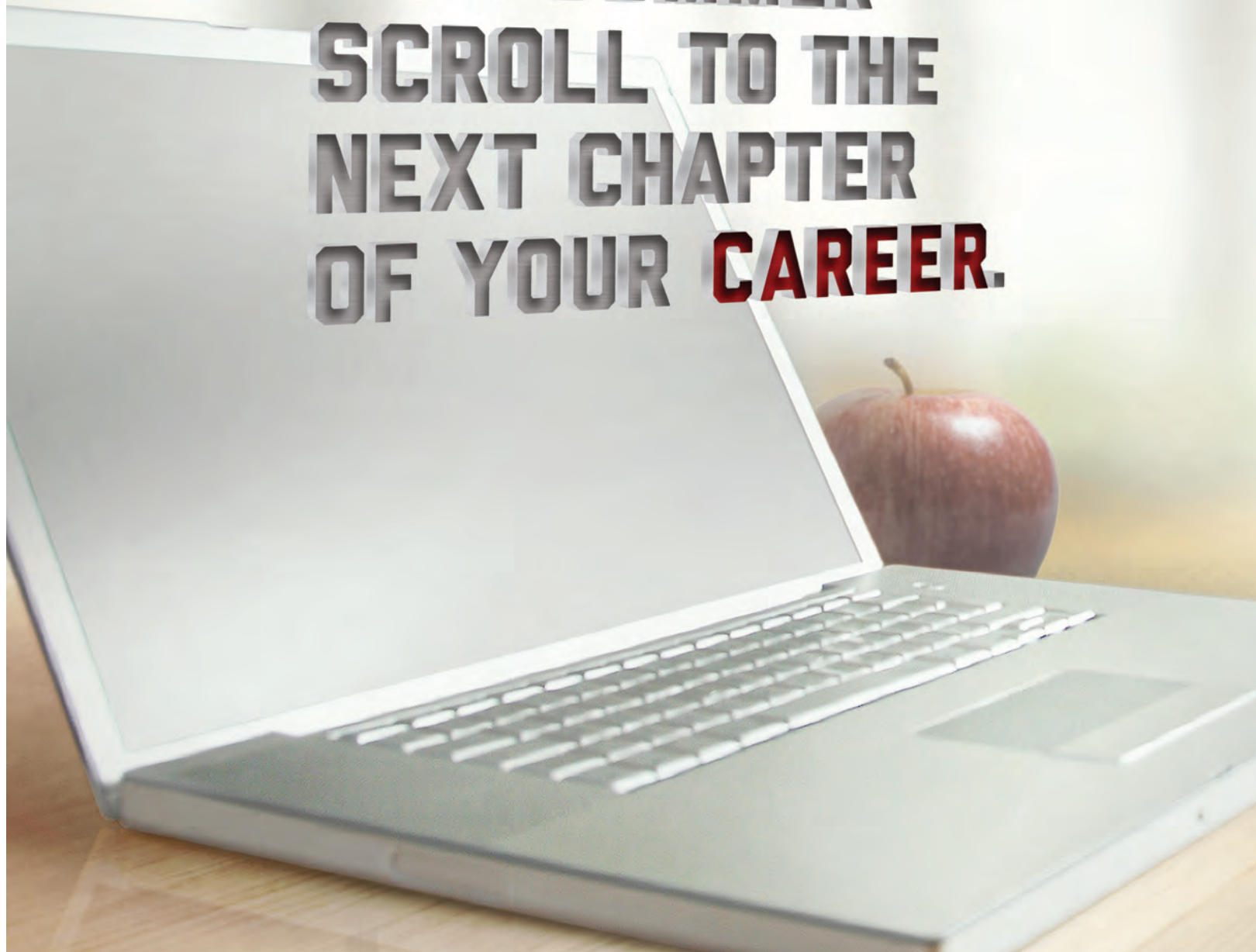


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New Reps Elected to Board, District Posts

NSEA members have elected or re-elected nearly four dozen of their fellow members to represent them at the state level on the NSEA Board of Directors, or at the district level on one of NSEA's six district governance boards.

The online election took place in February and March. Here is the list of those elected:

Capitol District

NSEA Board of Directors: Linda Freye, Lincoln; Jen Yoder, Lincoln.

District President: Susan Stake, Waverly.

District Vice President: Sarah Brown, Wilber-Clatonia.

District Secretary: Robin Ankrom, Falls City

District Executive Committee: Michael Cobelens, Waverly; Perry Showers, Lincoln.

Elkhorn District

NSEA Board of Directors: Doug Sheppard, Fremont.

District President: Tracia Blom, South Sioux City.

District Executive Committee: Tracia Blom, South Sioux City; Gwen Smith, Fremont; Broderick Steed, Umo'ho[®] Nation; Jason Wiese, Arlington.

Metro District

NSEA Board of Directors: Madaline Fennell, Omaha; Paul Schulte, Millard.

District President: Becky Torrens, Elkhorn.

District Vice President: Michael Fryda, West-side District 66.

District Executive Committee, Sub-district 1: Chris Proulx, Omaha.

District Executive Committee, Sub-

trict 3: Susan Kalina, Omaha.

District Executive Committee, Sub-district 5: Cama Charlet-Sayles, Millard.

District Executive Committee, Sub-district 9: Kathy Kassebaum, Ralston.

Panhandle District

NSEA Board of Directors: Pat McLaughlin, Alliance.

District Vice President: Roberta Rudden, Alliance.

District Treasurer: Daniel Spatzierath, Mitchell.

District Executive Committee, Sub-district 3: Matthew Chrisman, Mitchell

Sandhills District

District President: Bill Walters, O'Neill.

District Vice President: Joy Schott, Garfield County.

An amendment to the district Bylaws passed on a 42-4 vote.

Tri-Valley District

NSEA Board of Directors: Deb Gnuse, Grand Island.

District Treasurer: Verla Martin, Dundy County-Stratton.

District Secretary: Christie Copper, North Platte.

District Executive Committee (West): Dennis Batterman, Chase County.

District Executive Committee (East): Amber Jones, Grand Island; David Witt, Hastings.

District Executive Committee (Central): Melissa Boutwell, Lexington; Robin Vahle, Elm Creek.

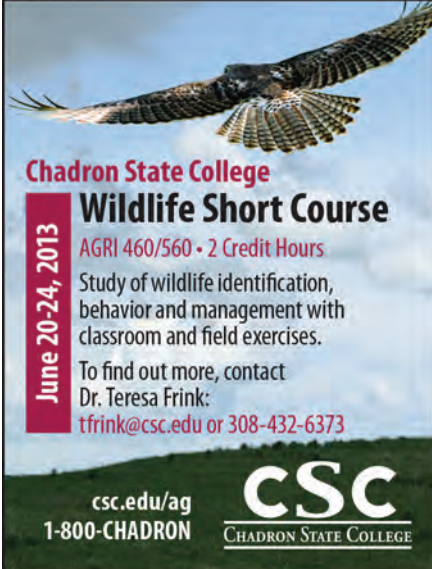
NEA Representative Assembly Cluster Delegates

Elected by their peers to serve as cluster

delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in Atlanta in July were: Nancy Fulton, Wilber-Clatonia; Broderick Steed, Umo'ho[®] Nation; George Weiland, Umo'ho[®] Nation; Carolyn Grice, Omaha Administrators; Carolyn Campbell, Bayard; Bill Walters, O'Neill; and Verla Martin, Dundy County-Stratton.

NEA Representative Assembly At-Large Delegates

Elected by their peers to serve as at-large delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in Atlanta in July were: Sarah Brown, Wilber-Clatonia; Jen Yoder, Lincoln; Doug Sheppard, Fremont; and Gloria Best, Lincoln.



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Lesson Plan Goal: Credit Card Knowledge

CompareCards.com, a credit card comparison site, has launched a lesson plan for middle school and high school teachers. The goal: to educate children between the ages of 11-18 about building credit and credit card ownership.

According to *Survey of the States: Economic and Personal Finance Education in our Nation's Schools*, only 22 states require a high school course in economics. Students in these states were more likely to save money and pay off credit cards in full each month, and less likely to be compulsive purchasers.

The Basics of Building Credit lesson plans are about an hour in length, come complete with a quiz to test the students' knowledge, include six exercises each, and a glossary of terms.

The lesson plans and units covering investments are available to all teachers in the form of a downloadable PDF at:

CompareCards.com



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GreenSchools is an environmental, service-learning program that inspires K-12 students to take personal responsibility for improving the environment at their school and home, and in their community.

Program consists of five student-led investigations:

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- 🏠 School Site
- 🌿 Environmental Quality
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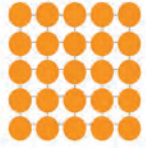
Tool kits may be checked out for student-led investigations

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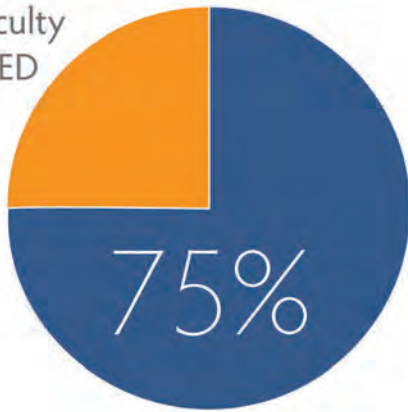
Contact Jennifer Swerczek, NPPD Energy Education Specialist, at (402) 336-2701, or visit nppd.com/energy-education/greenschools.



Average cohort class size:

25

Percent of full-time, Doctorate prepared faculty teaching MSED classes:



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*Tuition is subject to change.

Cohort schedule beginning in June 2013

19 months to complete and **your first class is free!***

Course	Title	Term Completed	Credit Hours
EDUC 512	Technology and Mediated Instruction	June 3 - July 26, 2013	3
EDUC 601	Study Design and Data Collection	June 3 - July 26, 2013	3
EDUC 605	Cognition and Learning	September 7 - October 4, 2013	3
EDUC 553	Using the Internet	October 5 - November 1, 2013	3
EDUC 540	The Master Teacher	November 2 - November 29, 2013	3
EDUC 600	Sociology of Education	January 11 - February 7, 2014	3
SPED 500	Inclusionary Practices	February 8 - March 7, 2014	3
EDUC 552	Introduction to Multimedia Authoring (or elective or Graduate Transfer Credit)	March 8 - April 4, 2014	3
EDUC 621	Curriculum Development	June 2 - July 25, 2014	3
EDUC 602	Statistical Methods and Data Analysis	June 2 - July 25, 2014	3
EDUC 569	Teachers as Collaborative Leaders (or elective or Graduate Transfer Credit)	September 6 - October 3, 2014	3
EDUC 623	Assessment of Instruction (8 week capstone)	October 4 - November 28, 2014	3

Graduate Education Courses (non-cohort track) Summer 2013

Average of 24 months to complete and your classes are entirely online!

EDUC 505	Diversity Issues in Education	June 3 - July 26	3
EDUC 510	Current Issues in Education	June 3 - July 26	3
EDUC 512	Technology and Mediated Instruction	June 3 - July 26	3
EDUC 533	Classroom Management and Leadership	June 3 - July 26	3
EDUC 542	Supervision of Student Teachers	June 3 - July 26	3
EDUC 553	Using the Internet	June 3 - July 26	3
EDUC 601	Study Design and Data Collection	June 3 - July 26	3
EDUC 602	Statistical Methods and Data Analysis	June 3 - July 26	3
INS 500	Diversity Issues in Education (3 weeks)	June 3 - June 21	1
SPED 574	Special Education Law and Practices	June 3 - July 26	3

*First course is free if the cohort meets the minimum enrollment requirement of 30 students.

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Boxley Scholarships covering full tuition, books and fees are available for students applying for the MSED online cohort that begins this summer. Applications are due by April 15.



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Are You the 2014 Teacher of the Year?

Each year, almost without fail, a newly crowned Nebraska Teacher of the Year takes to the podium and proclaims in humble tones “I am just a representative for the thousands of excellent teachers who work in Nebraska’s schools.”

Such a declaration is true – thousands of Nebraska educators are worthy of the Teacher of the Year title. Perhaps you or a colleague might be worthy and deserving? If so, now is the time to apply to become Nebraska’s next Teacher of the Year.

Candidates should be exceptionally dedicated; knowledgeable and skilled; active in their community; poised, articulate and energetic.

Those who apply should understand that the state’s top teacher earns far more than just a title: the winner also receives thousands of dollars in gifts. SMART Technologies provides the Teacher of the Year with a package of hardware and software.

The Nebraska Teacher of the Year Program has received financial support from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, SMART Technologies, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, the Nebraska State Education Association, the Nebraska Association of School Boards, Nebraska PTA, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), Dillard’s, The Sherwood Foundation, Union Bank & Trust Company, The Nebraska Academy of Sciences, Inc., and ConAgra Foods Foundation. These sponsors and other friends of the program provide stipends to the Awards of Excellence recipients and to the Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

The application is on the Department of Education website, and can be completed electronically. Application forms will be mailed to individuals who request them. The deadline to apply is Aug. 9. Finalists will be interviewed in October, and an awards luncheon and reception will be held at the NSEA headquarters in November.

For details, or for application materials, call Lora Sypal at the Nebraska Department of Education, 402-471-5059. The Department of Education website is at:

www.education.ne.gov/



Hats for the Cat!

NSEA President Nancy Fulton visited several schools in March to celebrate NEA’s Read Across America, which notes the birthday of Theodore Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss. One stop was at Clinton Elementary in Lincoln, where students celebrated by wearing a hat to honor the most recognized of Seuss characters, *The Cat in the Hat*.

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EHA will Address Lower Cost Options

The Educators Health Alliance (EHA) Board of Directors has directed the development of lower-cost health care plan proposals for consideration at the board's April 29 meeting.

The board will decide at that time which lower-cost plan to make available to Nebraska school districts participating in the EHA's Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health care plan.

These lower cost plans, or "bronze options," would provide lower benefits and would cost less than current plans. The offering would be in response to health reform developments of Shared Responsibility Requirements and Health Insurance Exchanges for Small Employers under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010.

The bronze plan will be in addition to the traditional EHA plan offerings and will not replace current plans.

Shared Responsibility

ACA regulations include employer Shared Responsibility Requirements sometimes referred to as "play or pay requirements" and "penalties." These requirements are quite detailed, but essentially require employers with more than 50 full-time-equivalent employees to offer coverage in accord with other ACA provisions, or, if they do not offer such coverage and certain ACA conditions are met, pay an amount to the IRS.

In response, EHA employers are considering appropriate actions to avoid or minimize such "play or pay" payments and penalties. These actions may include a low-cost health insurance benefit option offered to segments of employees that have not previously had health care benefits.

To meet the need of these employers, the EHA board will review and consider low-cost options in April. The board will provide the low-cost plan in time to meet ACA deadlines.

Small Employer Benefits

EHA employers considered by ACA as "small employers" (under 50 full-time equivalent employees), are not subject to shared responsibility requirements. As such, they are not required to offer coverage or face payments to the IRS. However, the EHA will develop new benefit plan(s) that will cover approximately 60 percent of expenses, as is the requirement for "bronze-level"

plan status. The current EHA plans have had benefits generally in the range of 70 to 85 percent of expenses.

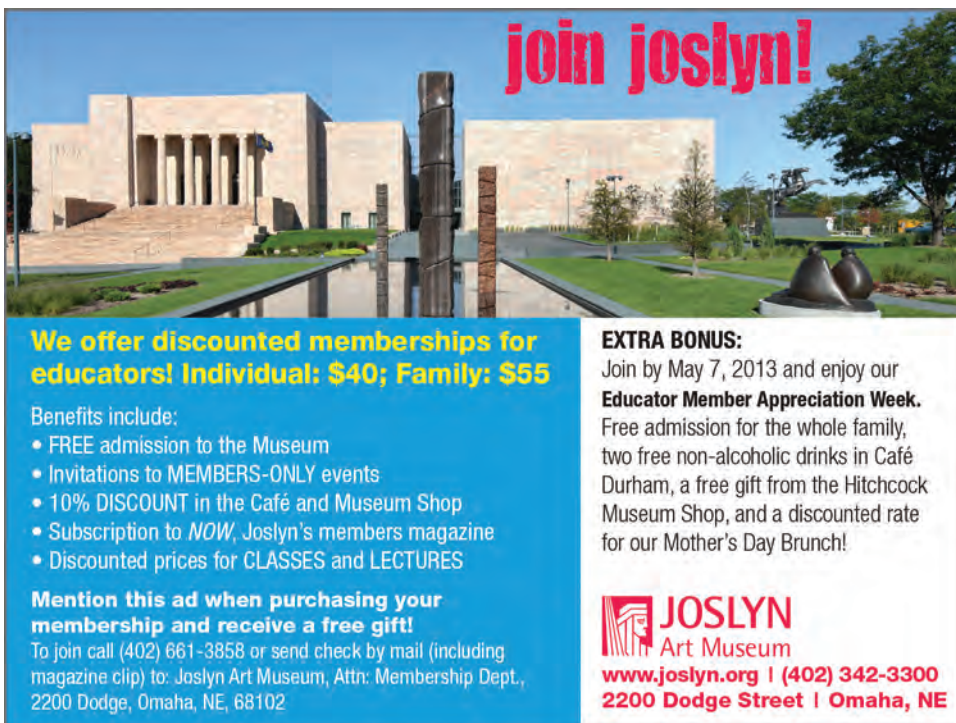
These plan(s) will be available in order to offer lower cost/lower benefit coverage similar to what will be available in the state insurance exchanges.

Yet to be determined is whether the

low cost option(s) for larger groups will be the same, or different, from those offered for the small groups.

More details will be released as available. If you have further questions, contact EHA Field Representative Gregory Long at 402-440-1358, or at:

greg@chaplan.org



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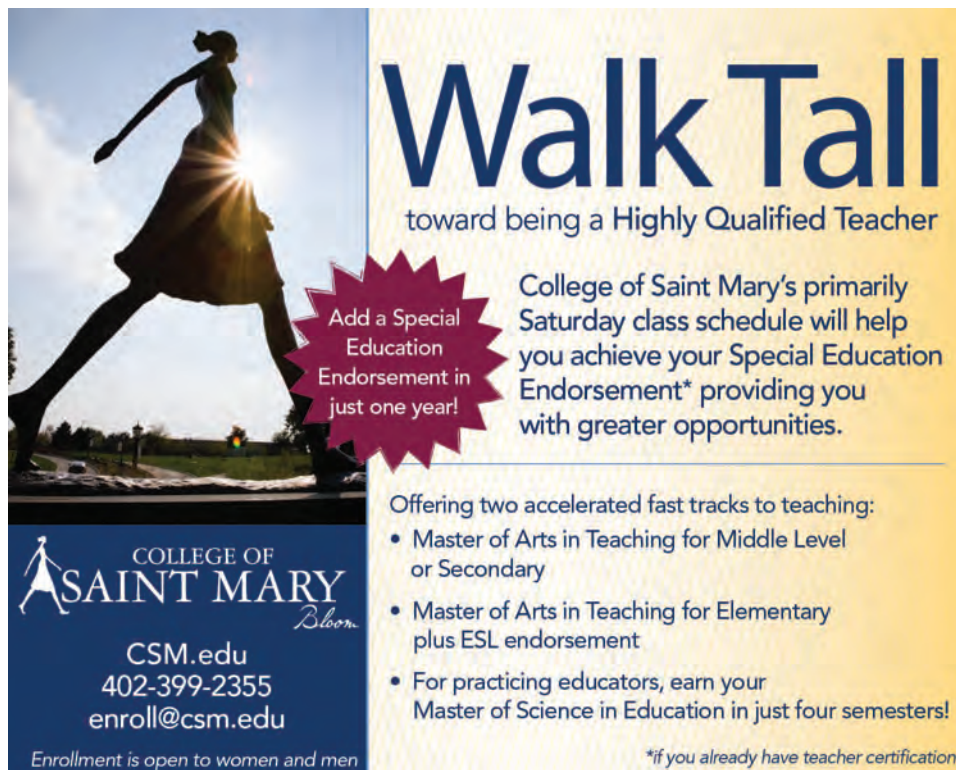
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The competitive scholarships are awarded three times each year, and the next deadline, for the summer term, is Saturday, May 25. All applications must be made through the NSEA website. Applicants will receive an e-mail confirming receipt of the application (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 online

application form on the NSEA website. NSEA will post the form on the website through the Saturday, May 25, deadline.

NSEA will notify scholarship winners in June. 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 and 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, 4,805 NSEA members have shared more than \$625,000 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



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But is it Art?

We can all remember the great teachers. They are almost always teachers that had great knowledge — and love — of the subjects they taught. They were able to transfer that excitement to us as students. They were also invariably the teachers that showed great skill in the art of teaching. Interestingly, many people do not point to the friendliest teacher, or the easiest or most lenient. On the contrary, many will tell with great fondness about a “hard” or exacting teacher who used creativity and coaching to get them to an achievement level they are still proud of.

Barbara Oldfield (although she always remained Mrs. Oldfield to me for the 40 years I knew her) taught with great knowledge, love of her subject, and skill in communicating the joy of discovery for her students. As a teacher of classical Latin, she had to be good. It was very easy on a beautiful spring day to look out of the window in her third-year Latin class and be tempted by thoughts other than translating the exact meaning of a 2,000-year-old line from Cicero or Julius Caesar. But she was a great teacher; she knew how to weave history, vocabulary, grammar, cultural understanding, and literature into an incredible learning experience. It was a skilled combination of craft and art.

Losing Freedom

Great teaching must be based on solid scholarship and rigorous content. It must also be an art. The content in teaching is dictated by the subject and an approved curriculum. The art in teaching is a reflection of the teacher’s individual gift for creativity and imagination and the practice of a unique skill in interpreting the subject. The loss for today’s teachers — and their students — is an over-emphasis on content that often excludes the aesthetic art of the teacher’s creativity. For many teachers today, the far-reaching effects of the frenetic chase for ever-higher test results has narrowed the curriculum, completely re-

moved the study of some important subjects or content topics, eliminated time for reflection and integration of the content material, and simply discounted individual exploration and discovery. The overall lesson we are teaching students by this artless approach is that if it isn’t on the test, it isn’t worth learning.

We have great teachers. What we are losing is the freedom for those teachers to practice the creative art of teaching and discovery — especially for concepts and topics that may not be “on the test.”



The Difference in the Art: NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen admires the art in the self-portrait of French Post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin.

A Careful Balance

Perhaps the extreme example of the ridiculous restrictions that a test-based curriculum puts on teachers is the use of scripted instruction. Put simply, it means that teachers are to use a script in teaching some material. There is no creativity, no time for exploration, not even the use of the teacher’s own words — the use of the script guarantees the loss of skill and art in personalizing both teaching and learning. Frankly,

if other professionals used this approach with their clients, the practitioners could lose their license. Would you want your lawyer or physician using a script instead of talking to you as an individual? Ironically, while we may talk about individualization and personalization of learning, some teachers today may lose their jobs for not using a prescribed script.

Teaching at its best is a careful balance of art and science. If we do not work to preserve the freedom of teachers to practice the art of teaching, we lose what makes teachers great. People do not remember their teachers as great because of effective science — teachers are recognized and remembered as great because of their art and creativity. Artful teaching makes a difference. There is no doubt that teaching is now becoming a product of standardization in methods, proficiency expectations,

and narrowed curricula. It is a national policy direction, but is it art?

“Teaching at its best is a careful balance of art and science. If we do not work to preserve the freedom of teachers to practice the art of teaching, we lose what makes teachers great.”

— **Craig R. Christiansen,**
Executive Director,
NSEA

Olympic Gold at Conference

Tomasevicz Headlines NSEA-R Spring Meeting

The 2013 NSEA-Retired Spring Conference will be a gold medal event!

Indeed, a reigning Olympic champion and Nebraska native, Curt Tomasevicz, will serve as keynote speaker.

Tomasevicz was an Academic All Conference football player for the University of Nebraska before turning to bobsledding. He raced in the 2006 Olympic games in Torino, Italy, where his four-man team finished sixth. At Vancouver in 2010, Tomasevicz and his teammates won the Olympic gold medal, becoming the first American team in 62 years to win that event.

The Spring Conference is set for Thursday, April 18, at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney. The event opens at 8:30 a.m., and Tomasevicz, a Shelby native, will deliver the keynote at 9 a.m. Breakout sessions will be followed by lunch, with a business meeting and legislative update at 1:30 p.m.

After the business meeting, Cherie Beam Clarke will entertain as Nebraska pioneer Mariah Monahan with a presentation entitled *Grit 'n Gumption*. She tells stories depicting Nebraska life from 1860 to 1895. Attendees will hear about children becoming lost on the prairie, lack of women, living on cornmeal, need for music and more.

Breakout sessions will look at wills and estate planning; summer treats from the kitchen; Zumba; Tai Chi and yoga; genealogy and the 1940 Census; gluten free diets and cooking; chasing your dreams: bottling up vodka; and health insurance after retirement.

A dessert reception, wrap up, evaluation, and door prizes will end the day.

NSEA-Retired has arranged a special rate of \$99.95 for rooms. Contact the Hampton Inn, Kearney, 1-308-234-3400 to reserve a room. Be sure to ask for the NSEA-Retired conference rate.

The conference itself will be in the Younes Convention Center, connected by walkway to the Hampton Inn. Registration and agenda will be online at:

nsea.org/retired

Conference, not room, reservations may be made with Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

rebecca.smith@nsea.org



Matches Made!

The 10th edition of the NSEA-Retired Intergenerational Mentoring Project was another rousing success with a dozen soon-to-be educators paired with veteran teachers as mentors. Above, University of Nebraska-Kearney student Jill Kimbrough tells her story to Bob and Susan Stranghoener, Lincoln; Marge Mullin, Omaha; and Jan Barnason, Hastings. At right, Barnason meets her Peru State College mentees, Lisa Grabowski and Sam Carman.



Registration is free for members. Nonmembers and guests pay \$10.

Medicare for Those Nearing 65

On your 65th birthday you will need to enroll in Medicare, consider purchasing a Medicare Supplemental Policy, and a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. You can purchase a Medicare Supplement to pay for your deductible and co-payments. These steps should help:

- Sign up for Medicare 1-3 months before you hit 65. If you receive the automatic enrollment information (because you receive Social Security payments prior to age 65), you will automatically be enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B *unless* you notify Medicare that you do not want to enroll.

- If you do not get the automatic enrollment information, find details on the Medicare website or at 1-800-633-4227.

- If you have EHA retiree coverage, about 4-6 weeks before you turn 65 you will receive a mailing on NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic.

- If you are not covered by EHA at 65, and are a member of NSEA-Retired,

you can enroll in BlueSenior Classic by calling Blue Cross at 1-800-562-6394.

- You will be given the option to enroll in dental coverage upon enrollment in NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic. The dental coverage is the same as provided by EHA for PPO Dental Parts A, B, and C that you had as both an active employee and as a retiree prior to age 65. If you decline dental coverage, you will not be allowed to enroll later.

- NSEA-Retired recommends you sign up for the Medicare supplement when you receive enrollment details for NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic, in order to avoid coverage gaps.

- When you sign for Medicare and your Medicare supplement, you should also sign for Medicare Part D, prescription drug coverage. NSEA-Retired suggests members consult Medicare's website for a provider that covers the drugs you use.

Questions? Call Blue Cross at 1-800-562-6394, rather than the number on your Blue Cross card.

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renaekelly@gmail.com

Lincoln Northeast's Snyder Earns McAuliffe Honor

Inspired teaching has earned Lincoln Northeast High School reading teacher Kimberly Snyder the Christa McAuliffe Prize for Courage and Excellence in Education.

The College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln presents the annual award to a teacher who exemplifies the character of Christa McAuliffe, an educator who died in the 1986 Challenger disaster.



Snyder

Snyder said earning her master's degree in K-12 reading education from UNL in 2006 was the launch pad that propelled a good teacher to an inspired teacher.

"My master's program opened my world to the beauty of truly connecting with students," Snyder said. "I learned to look at my students as individuals and to capitalize on their strengths, not focus on their weaknesses."

Since 2006, Snyder has been a reading teacher at Northeast, where she motivates struggling readers to overcome challenges. She said the passion she found while working on her master's degree gave her the inspiration to share new teaching strategies with colleagues. Her staff development program has expanded throughout Lincoln Public Schools and the state.

Her 23-year teaching career has had stops at Bradshaw Junior-Senior High School, Mead Junior-Senior High School, Raymond Central Junior-Senior High School and Wahoo High School. She is also a consultant and staff developer for the Nebraska Department of Education.

The McAuliffe Prize selection committee also gave special recognition this year to Grand Island Public Schools teacher Jane Kipper, who has taught fourth grade at Howard Elementary since 1996.

The recipient receives a \$1,000 stipend and a plaque at a banquet held in his or her honor. The honoree's school receives a \$500 award to help support school activities.

Discovery Conference Looks at Abe Lincoln Impact on Sand Hills

Ainsworth will host the 13th Sand Hills Discovery Conference this summer with a theme worthy of investigation by all NSEA members: *Abraham Lincoln's Impact on the Sand Hills*.

The conference will be held in Ainsworth on July 12, with optional tours of the Sand Hills on both July 11 and 13. Topics will include Abraham Lincoln, the Morrill Act, the Homestead Act, the transcontinental railroad and development of the United States Department of Agriculture. College credit is available.

For details, go to the website at:

www.sandhillsdiscovery.org

Cather 'Virtual Tour' Updates Website

A new, content-rich multimedia virtual tour of historic sites around Red Cloud is now available for teachers, students and readers of Willa Cather's work. The website contains videos, audio clips, historic photographs, excerpts from Cather's writing and interviews with experts.

"As we move further into the digital age, resources like this one are critical for us. It helps us reach new audiences for Cather's work, and its format appeals to today's students who want to explore literature in new ways—through film, through audio, through primary documents, and on the web," said Education Director Tracy Tucker.

The website was created by the Willa Cather Foundation with the assistance of Joel Geyer, producer of AmericanMasters "*Willa Cather: The Road is All*," with the help of the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Big Read, American Masters series, NET Television, the Nebraska State Historical Society, Paul and Lynette Krieger, and the Sherwood Family. Learn more at:

www.virtualcather.org



He has Proof of Excellence!

NEA member Dar Bales has proof that he provides excellent service to educators and children in his school district. That proof came in the form of a certificate recognizing him as Nebraska's reigning Education Support Professional of the Year. The certificate was presented to Bales, technology coordinator for the Winnebago Public Schools, during the NEA Education Support Professional conference in Louisville, KY, last month.

Sandra Metz

Sandra Metz, 72, a former teacher of math and chemistry at Wayne High School, and later an associate professor of family and consumer sciences at Wayne State College, died on March 4 at Wakefield.

Early in her career she also taught math and home economics at Osmond and Fort Morgan, CO.

She retired in 2005.

Metz was active in the First Presbyterian Church, where she taught Sunday school, vacation Bible school and sang in the choir.

Valedictorian of the Ewing High class of 1958, she earned a bachelor's degree from Wayne State and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Three children and four grandchildren survive.

Real Raptors, Real Affordable

Free Workshop Teaches About Nebraska Raptors

Are you wild about raptors?

If so, you'll want to attend a free June 8 training for educators at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center at Gering.

Wild About Raptors is a hands-on workshop for teachers that looks at Nebraska raptors. Participants will explore and model activities highlighting raptor adaptations, food chains and webs; raptor life and ecology. They'll learn to identify Nebraska raptors; see raptors in the wild; and get up close with a raptor. Each participant will take home a raptor identification guide and owl pellet kits.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Raptor Recovery Nebraska, Inc., are sponsors. Participants will need a valid state park vehicle pass, available at the Nature Center. Registration, due May 24, includes a \$25 check to hold a training spot; the check will be returned on completion of the workshop. For details, call Jeanine Lackey at 308-382-6468, or Amanda Filipi at 308-436-3777, or e-mail:

jeanine_lackey@fws.gov
amanda.filipi@nebraska.gov

Speaking of Teaching

"It costs \$10,000 a year to keep a child in school; it costs \$30,000 a year to keep someone in prison. If we are unwilling to act on this issue in this upcoming legislative session, we will by default be choosing prisons over schools."

— Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber
in his 2013 State of the State Address

Real World Skills with Theater Activities

From Beth Y., a middle school theater teacher:

"I use theater to help my students develop teamwork and presentation skills, a truly age appropriate subject matter for my middle school students.

"In a 9-week curriculum (my class is part of an 'exploratory wheel' elective), my students work in three different groups to create skits that tell stories and advocate for positive behavior. I start out the syllabus by teaching basic pantomime skills, because I don't want the expense or hassle of props, scenery or costumes.

"The skit writing begins with each stu-

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

Family of Teachers



Seven teachers, three generations, 100-plus years: The Newcomb family knows teaching. Since patriarch Bob Newcomb began his career in 1952, and his wife Arlene followed a short time later, children and grandchildren have followed into the profession.

From left are son Doug Newcomb, in his 37th year at Dundy County-Stratton, where he teaches industrial arts; Scott Smalley, a grandson-in-law, who teaches industrial arts at the McCook Community College division of Mid-Plains Community College; Arlene Newcomb, who taught home economics at Bartley for five years; Bob Newcomb, who taught social studies for two years at Hampton, three years at Friend and taught and was principal at Bartley for 33 years; Trista Newcomb, daughter-in-law, who taught English for three years; son Craig, athletic director and business teacher in his 16th year at Bertrand; and son Larry, who taught industrial arts for four years.

If you have a family of teachers, snap a photo and send it to: Family of Teachers, c/o NSEA, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508.

dent individually creating a short story from a prompt I furnish. Then when the students are grouped, they select the best story to be the starting point for their skit and write the scripts together. The rubric for the skits get increasingly more challenging as the students become more comfortable standing up in front of the class. For their culminating presentations, we invite staff members and adult family members to be a special audience, adding the challenge of presenting to new people.

"Because most students would not have chosen to be in drama, I emphasize how the teamwork and presentation skills are truly life skills that will help them get ahead in other classes and life in general."



Sign up for Works4Me at this link:
www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html