

THE

# VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ January 2015



## TIME *to* TEACH

*Ashland-Greenwood Educators Work  
Toward More Time to Collaborate  
More Time to Teach*

## Upcoming Assignments

Let the Debate Begin!

Jan. 7

■ **What:** With one-third of the Legislative body brand new, this could be a wild ride in the Nebraska Legislature, which convenes on this date.

■ **Details:** Among NSEA's top Legislative Agenda items: finding time for teachers to collaborate; time for teachers to teach; and time for students to learn. Find out more beginning on page 7.

Time is Running Short! Are You Running?

Jan. 23

■ **What:** NSEA has openings on district boards and on the statewide NSEA Board of Directors. The deadline to file for the nearly 40 openings across the state is Friday, Jan. 23.

■ **What:** Filing is easy. Check the openings and other details on the NSEA website at [nsea.org](http://nsea.org).

Read Across Approaches!

March 2

■ **What:** Read Across America, founded by NEA, is Monday, March 2. Are your classroom plans ready for the celebration?

■ **Details:** Find all the help and all the materials you need at: [www.nea.org/grants/886.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/886.htm)

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## Cover Story:

Educators know that there is never enough time to teach — or to collaborate with colleagues. Ashland-Greenwood educators, however, are making an effort to find more time to collaborate, and NSEA has made 'time to teach' a legislative priority in the 2015 session of the Nebraska Legislature. For all the details, turn to

# Page 7



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### Great Public Schools For Every Child

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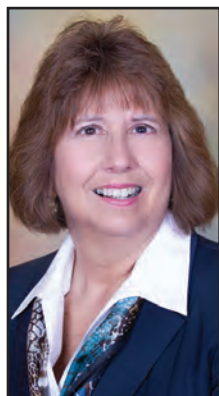
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# The Fitness Connection



**NSEA President  
Nancy Fulton**

“

*As Maya Angelou said, a smart choice is to advocate for oneself — and an even smarter choice comes when we band together and work toward a common goal.*

”

I love and admire Maya Angelou’s outlook on life. One of her quotations is relevant to NSEA, our professional association. Angelou wrote, “I learned a long time ago the wisest thing I can do is be on my own side, be an advocate for myself and others like me.”

I am sitting down to write this in late December — a normal time of year to reflect back over the past 12 months.

The first thing that comes to mind is how fast those months have zipped past. It would be pretty easy to compile a Top 10 list of NSEA work with and for its members, the events that were held and the successes we shared. For instance, we’ve seen great organizing activities in our local associations. I talked to many members who were active in the elections, working to get pro-public education candidates and initiatives passed on the local and state level. More than \$29,000 was contributed to the NSEA Children’s Fund over the past year, and every penny will go to help students in need in your classrooms.

It is also common at this time of year to peek forward to the coming year. For instance, another busy — perhaps even contentious — legislative session is forthcoming. Collective bargaining sessions will continue in most districts; and the barrage of testing that takes place every spring is closer than we’d like to think. Before we know it, graduation ceremonies will be in full swing and summer professional development will be under way.

### Getting in ‘Shape’

Occasionally, my husband and I discuss joining a fitness club. Membership in a fitness club would be beneficial to both of us, yet neither of us has gone so far as to sign up. We both recognize the problem: we would pay the membership dues, but chances are great that we might never actually utilize the gym or fully realize the benefits of our membership.

Just like with that fitness club membership, there is much value in active NSEA mem-

bership. As with a fitness club membership, NSEA members can get so much more out of their Association membership if they pledge to become active, and then follow through on that pledge.

Let’s take the analogy a step further. In looking for a fitness club, you typically want to find a gym that fits your needs, that will get you in the best “shape” possible. You want membership in a club that works with you, when it’s convenient for you. And you want a well-equipped fitness club that keeps up-to-date on the latest trends and warns you and assists you when there are threats to your health and well-being.

That’s exactly what your NSEA membership does — and it does so more efficiently with your involvement.

### The Buddy System

Using a fitness club is always easier (so I’ve heard!) with a workout buddy. The buddy makes you accountable, gets you to the gym on a regular basis, and helps you through the workout. You, as a member, are one of the nearly 28,000 “buddies” who will help our NSEA board — your board! — be accountable to our Association.

That is vital as the NSEA Board of Directors will open a lengthy conversation in January to look at where your Association needs to be, what it should look like in three to five years, what goals and long term plans should be set on the table.

As Maya Angelou said, a smart choice is to advocate for oneself — and an even smarter choice comes when we band together and work toward a common goal. We have so much more strength in our numbers.

Just like that fitness club, NSEA employs well-experienced, skilled staff to work with you to keep you and your local association in the best “shape” possible.

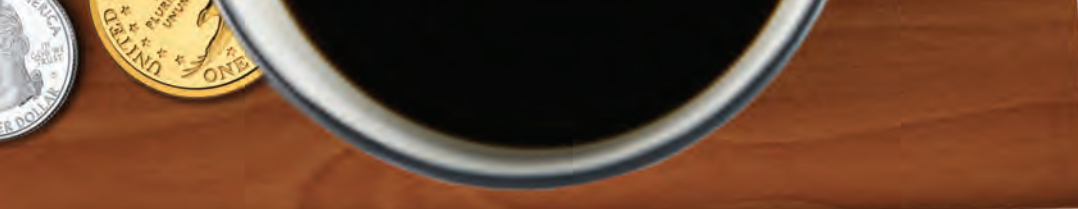
Please consider becoming active in your NSEA “fitness” experience, and let’s ring in the New Year together!



## Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)

NSEA locals from around the state appear or are mentioned in this issue. Look for:

Ainsworth.....Page 9	Dorchester.....Page 9	Leyton.....Page 9	Peru State College.....Page 24
Arlington.....Page 22	Dundy County/Stratton.....Page 9	Lincoln.....Page 20, 22, 23	Scottsbluff.....Page 9
Ashland-Greenwood.....Page 9	Elkhorn.....Page 23	McCool Junction.....Page 9	South Sioux City.....Page 9
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	Hartington.....Page 12	Omaha.....Page 23	Wayne State College.....Page 24
	Hitchcock County.....Page 9	Paxton.....Page 9	Westside.....Page 12
	Lakeview.....Page 9	Perkins County.....Page 9	Wisner-Pilger.....Page 9



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# Teachers Lag in Career Salary Race

## Educators Take Longer to Get to Profession's Top Salaries

### Lifetime Earnings Suffer; Study Urges Restructured Pay Plans

A study of teacher salaries finds teachers' lifetime earnings vary greatly from district to district, due to a largely unstudied factor: the time it takes to climb the salary ladder.

The report, *Smart Money: What Teachers Make, How Long it Takes and What it Buys Them*, finds that the salary information that usually gets the most attention — starting or ending salaries — doesn't tell the whole story. While it takes an average of 24 years for teachers in 113 mostly large school districts to reach a common salary of \$75,000, some districts, like Boston Public Schools, take as few as 7 years. Other districts, like Wichita, take more than 30 years.

The study, by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), however, recommends that teachers and districts look past starting and ending salaries to examine lifetime earnings.

For example, the Rochester, NY, school district posts relatively high starting and ending salaries (\$42,917 and \$120,582, respectively). Over a 30-year career, Rochester teachers accrue \$1.92 million in lifetime earnings. Conversely, Milwaukee, WI, teachers start at \$41,070 but accrue \$2.04 million over their careers because it only takes 15 years to get to their lower max salary of \$78,143.

An *Omaha World-Herald* analysis compared salaries in Des Moines and Omaha, the only Nebraska and Iowa districts among the 113 studied by NCTQ. The *Herald* found that Des Moines teachers rank 19th for lifetime earnings at \$1.97 million over 30 years, and reach the average adjusted maximum

pay in 14 years. **Omaha teachers rank 39th for lifetime pay, at \$1.84 million, and reach top pay at 21 years.**

NCTQ reported that, on average, it takes teachers in the 113 districts 24 years to hit maximum pay — much longer than in other professions.

The study noted that for many people “compensation heavily influences the decision not only to enter the profession but also whether to stay in it.” The summary advised prospective teachers to accept a new job “with eyes wide open. Knowing where salaries start and end isn't enough; they must also understand the path they will take from starting salary to the top of the scale.”

Omaha Education Association President Chris Proulx told the *World-Herald* that higher salaries at the start of a teacher's career might reduce long-term pension costs and would assist as they raise a family in mid-life.

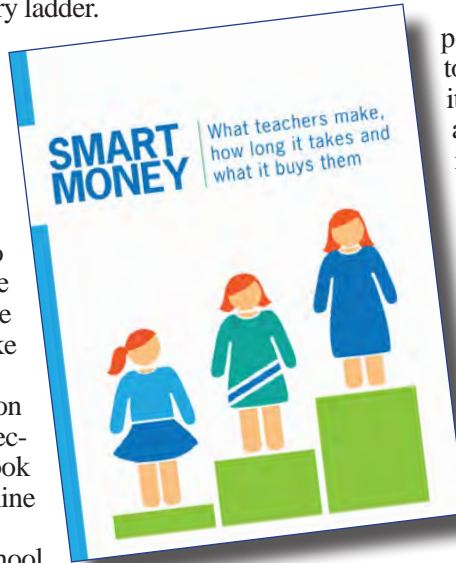
“I think maximizing a person's lifetime earning potential and getting them a higher salary earlier in life would be the right way to go,” he said.

The report recommended, among other things, that “built-in step increases may feel like a plus, but schedules that reach peak salaries earlier allow teachers to earn a professional salary early in their career and consequently more compensation overall.”

The report urges school district leaders, teachers and policy makers to invest in designing salary structures to shape teaching into the sustainable career it deserves to be.

The NCTQ is a “non-partisan research and policy organization committed to restructuring the teaching profession, led by a vision that every child deserves effective teachers.” For the report, go to:

[www.nctq.org/dmsStage/Smart\\_Money](http://www.nctq.org/dmsStage/Smart_Money)



## What's On Your Wish List? Ask DonorsChoose

Most teachers have wish lists — project ideas, field trips or classroom goals that will never be realized due to funding limitations.

DonorsChoose can make those wishes come true.

DonorsChoose is an online charity that, along with NEA Foundation and other partners, makes it easy for anyone to help students in need. Public school teachers from across America post classroom project requests on the DonorsChoose website, and members of the public can contribute to a cause that catches their interest.

When a project reaches its funding goal, DonorsChoose will ship the required materials to the school. In return, donors get photos of the project taking place, a letter from the teacher, and insight into how each dollar



was spent. Donors of more than \$50 will also receive thank-you notes from students.

Here are some details about the workings of DonorsChoose:

- Contributions of as little as \$1 are accepted, with the same level of choice, transparency, and feedback that is traditionally reserved for someone who gives millions.

- If a partially funded project expires, donors get their donations returned as account credits, which they can use to choose a new project to support; have DonorsChoose select a new project for them; or send the teacher they supported a DonorsChoose.org

gift card. About 70 percent of projects are fully funded.

DonorsChoose vets every project request, purchases the materials and ships them to the school, provides photos of the project taking place, and supplies a cost report showing how every dollar was spent. The program serves K-12 public schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

As a 501(c)3, donations are tax-deductible.

Projects can remain on the DonorsChoose website for up to four months, but teachers can set earlier deadlines if they choose.

The website is free for teachers to use. To learn more, check out the website at:

[donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org)

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# Nickels (Finally) Gets Election Certificate

## Court Orders Governor to Show Cause; Court Challenge Possible

Three days after it was statutorily due – and long after three other just-elected members received their Certificates of Election from the Nebraska Secretary of State’s office – Maureen Nickels finally received formal notification that she was elected to the State Board of Education.



**Nickels**

Obtaining the certificate was more difficult than the campaign. It took two sometimes tense meetings of the Board of State Canvassers and a court order from a Lancaster County District Court judge to put the certificate in her hands.

Her quest for office may not be over.

At two December meetings of the Board of State Canvassers, Gov. Dave Heineman and State Treasurer Don Stenberg both held the position that the state constitution disqualifies Nickels from serving on the State Board of Education because she works for NSEA.

Nickels retired from teaching at Grand Island in May 2000, and has worked as an organizational specialist at NSEA since.

At the second Canvassing Board meeting, Heineman repeatedly said that he interprets the state constitution to ban anyone involved in education from serving on the state board. Along with Stenberg, Heineman pushed Secretary of State John Gale to deny Nickels a Certificate of Election, or barring that, to make certain Gale filed a legal challenge “by 4 p.m. on January 8” – presumably shortly after Nickels would be sworn into office.

### Retired from Teaching

In a letter to Gale following the Canvassing Board’s first meeting, attorney Scott Norby said Nickels “has not been ‘actively engaged in the educational profession’ for almost 15 years.” Her duties as an employee of the NSEA do not involve those of a teacher, administrator or board member of any educational entity involved, directly or indirectly, in the delivery of instructional services.”

Norby said the constitutional proscription that “The members of the State Board of Education shall not be actively engaged in the educational profession...” does not disqualify a person employed by an organization that advocates for public education.”

Norby quoted a 2002 Nebraska attorney general’s opinion – issued, ironically, by then-Attorney General Don Stenberg – on another state board case. Stenberg’s

opinion said constitutional and statutory provisions that impose qualifications for office “should receive a liberal construction in favor of the right of voters to exercise freedom of choice in the selection of officers.”

### Past Due

Heineman raised the eligibility issue at the initial meeting of the Board of Canvassers. At the second meeting, Heineman and Stenberg pressured Gale to deny Nickels an election certificate.

“I’m worried about who is going to actively pursue this to resolution,” said Heineman, who leaves office on Jan. 8.

Gale maintained that the issue would not “become ripe” until after Nickels is sworn into office. The point would be moot, he noted, if Nickels were to resign or retire from her NSEA position.

Gale also noted that the duty of the canvassing board, which includes the governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, state auditor and attorney general, is to certify election results.

“The Canvassing Board is not certified to deal with the qualifications of candidates,” he said.

The board voted 4-0-1 to certify Nickels’ votes, and directed Gale to determine whether Nickels’ position with NSEA barred her from serving. Gale abstained.

A week later – and more than 40 days past the election – Nickels had not yet received a Certification of Election. Statute calls for election certificates to be issued within 40 days of the General Election.

On Dec. 17, Norby filed a complaint with the Lancaster County District Court, asking Gale be compelled to issue the certificate. Later that day, the court ordered Gale do so, or explain why a certificate should not be issued. Within 30 minutes of the court’s order, Gale’s office issued the certificate — backdated to Dec. 3.

Nickels’ fight may not be over. Gale assured the board he would pursue the issue after Nickels is sworn into office.

“I will use all of the power and discretion I have to bring this to resolution before Ms. Nickels is seated,” Gale told the board. “If not, I will seek court action.”

Nickels, a former Grand Island teacher, ran unopposed. She drew 36,000 votes in the Primary and nearly 49,000 votes in the General Election.

A Heineman-backed candidate filed for election to District 6, but later was found to live outside the district.

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**Time is Tight:** At Ashland-Greenwood Public Schools, Curriculum Director Jill Finke and sixth grade teacher Kristi Bundy know that more time spent collaborating with colleagues will produce better outcomes for students.

# More Teaching, More Learning

## Time to Teach, Time to Collaborate on Agenda As NSEA Prepares for 2015 Legislative Session

Aside from expertise and knowledge, the most valuable asset in a teacher’s toolbox may be something that is in limited supply: time to teach.



**‘15 Nebraska Legislature**

Quantifying the value of “time to teach” takes a simple formula, according to NSEA’s Jay Sears: “The more time a teacher spends teaching, the more the student learns.”

That simple, logical approach to quality learning would seem to make perfect sense. Yet when one considers how increasingly cluttered the school day has become – from standardized tests to mandated twice-a-year tornado drills – well, teachers understand how hard it is to squeeze in extended periods of quality teaching and learning with students.

Sears also places a high price on another factor of quality teaching that takes time: collaboration between teaching professionals.

“We can’t just go into the classroom, shut the door and start teaching anymore,” said Sears, NSEA’s director of instructional

advocacy.

“Teaching in a single classroom takes the skill of every

teacher in a building,” he said.

### Teacher Collaboration

As the opening of the 2015 session of the Nebraska Unicameral nears, two planks in NSEA’s ambitious Legislative Agenda deal with aspects of time.

The Association will ask state senators to spend \$3 million to fund a performance based teacher and administrator evaluation program piloted by 17 Nebraska school districts over the past two years. The funding will pay for a Department of Education program coordinator and provide grants to school districts that add time to the school year for teacher collaboration.

A second proposal would redirect \$10 million in state aid to provide additional student days. That program would solicit inter-

### 17 Districts Piloting Evaluations

Seventeen Nebraska school districts have participated in the Department of Education teacher and administrator evaluation model pilot program over the past two school years. In addition to Ashland-Greenwood, those districts are:

- Ainsworth
- Bellevue
- Central City
- Dorchester
- Dundy Cou./Stratton
- Falls City
- Hitchcock County
- Lakeview
- Leyton
- McCool Junction
- Nebraska City
- Paxton
- Perkins County
- Scottsbluff
- South Sioux City
- Wisner-Pilger



**'15 Nebraska Legislature**

ested school districts to pilot a program to establish and study what a lengthened school year might look like, cost and accomplish. Funding would be outside the state aid formula, available to all school districts.

Finally, a \$15 million request to reduce class size across the state is on the agenda. In a series of focus groups with NSEA members last year, burgeoning class size was a clear concern.

“These proposals all have at their core the idea of enhancing student achievement,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

Each of the three proposals would utilize funds previously allocated through the state aid formula in the teacher education and the instructional aid facets of the formula. Policymakers have discontinued those state aid budget lines, but NSEA hopes to recapture those state aid dollars with these innovations.

### **Not An Island**

Sears frequently applauds participation of the Ashland-Greenwood Education Association and that district’s administration in the Nebraska Department of Education’s ongoing, 17-district (see box on page 9) pilot project to develop an evaluation model for educators and administrators.

Out of that program has come an effort at Ashland-Greenwood to find more time for educators to collaborate. A visit with personnel at Ashland-Greenwood Middle School finds what most teachers – but few outside the profession – understand: collaboration among teachers is vital.

Curriculum Director Jill Finkey echoes Sears’ “whole building” thoughts on collaboration.

“It is essential. You cannot operate as an island,” she said. “You need the expertise of your colleagues, especially for the benefit of those kids who struggle.”

As a prelude to participation in the NDOE’s evaluation pilot, Ashland-Greenwood educators sought extra time to collaborate two years ago, and the local board of education agreed. In seven of nine months this year, students get

# NSEA’s 2015 Legislative Agenda

## **STRONG ECONOMY \* STRONG SCHOOLS \* STRONG FAMILIES**

Because the focus in our classrooms should be teaching and learning; because the best investment we can make for the future is a strong combination of teaching and learning; and because teaching and learning serve as foundational blocks for strong schools, a strong economy and strong families, NSEA’s 2015 Legislative goals focus on issues that support teaching and learning.

NSEA’s legislative goals for 2015 include increasing the state’s investment in P-16 public education and ensuring any changes made to the state tax structure do not reduce funding used to support strong schools, a strong economy and strong Nebraska families. It is essential that the state has the resources necessary to return to the wise tradition of investing in excellent public schools, world-class colleges and universities, and infrastructure that boosts our economy and creates a high quality of life.

Thus, NSEA will work to:

- Provide state and local funding that supports quality public education for every student;
- Promote and protect public education programs that benefit Nebraska students, teachers, higher education faculty and education support professionals.
- Encourage state programs giving educators more time to teach and students more time to learn curriculum;
- Provide increased public funding for mental health services and resources in schools;
- Support programs for reducing class sizes;
- Ensure the protection of collective bargaining rights;
- Ensure public school students and staff have respectful, safe and secure learning and working environments; and,
- Maintain prudent management and funding of the state school employees’ retirement plan.

NSEA believes that any changes to the state’s tax system must be revenue neutral or provide for additional funding for education. Education funding cuts first and foremost hurt students, but also harm staff, schools, colleges and our economy. Stability and predictability in state and local funding for schools is crucial. It is in the best interest of all Nebraskans to keep schools fully staffed. Maintaining a broad, deep and challenging curriculum and appropriate class size will help raise student achievement and ensure our state’s educational and economic competitiveness.

an early out on a Wednesday afternoon, giving educators 2.5 hours for staff development and collaboration.

Of the seven sessions, Finkey said “it’s not enough time. We fill the agenda.”

The district also has common plan time for grade level teams in grades K-8 – time Finkey said teachers spend in collaboration, data analysis, sharing of resources and improving instruction.

“The common plan time is critical,” she said.

Sixth grade teacher Kristi Bundy agreed.

“I think it has made a difference for our teachers,” said Bundy, who serves on the evaluation pilot program’s state-wide design team, and was Nebraska’s 2014 Teacher of the Year.

“If our teachers improve, our kids improve,” said Bundy.

### **Scores Improve**

Ashland-Greenwood has made other changes, as well. “Flipped Friday” has replaced an after-school staff meeting with a video or an excerpt that middle/

high school teachers can connect with and comment on through a Google community site.

Further collaboration comes through monthly Professional Learning Community meetings, which include several instructional presentations by staff and administration, with staff self-selecting at least two presentations to attend. The district films each presentation and adds it to a library of district-specific professional development resources. Finkey said, in the past, some of these videos have had more than 100 views.

“That tells us they are viewing them on their own time, sometimes more than once,” said Finkey.

Ashland-Greenwood’s experience in the pilot program – including the lessons on collaboration – will be helpful in building the final evaluation and collaboration model put forth by the NDOE later this year.

Bundy said participating in the pilot has been hard work, but good work, with positive results.

“Looking at scores, we can really show that we’ve improved, district



'15 Nebraska Legislature

wide,” she said.

Such improvement just takes time.

Here is a look at the remainder of NSEA’s proposals for the 2015 session of the Nebraska Legislature. In each case, NSEA will seek to find a state senator to sponsor these legislative proposals:

### Tuition Funds

NSEA proposes to expand the existing Tuition Reimbursement program offered through the NDOE.

NSEA’s plan would double from about \$1.2 million to \$2.5 million annually the amount of money taken from lottery proceeds to fund the reimbursement program. The program would be used for educators receiving endorsements in specified fields of expertise such as early childhood, mental health and career academy focus areas. NSEA also supports Department of Education legislation to update loan forgiveness amounts.

### Mentoring Program

This \$2 million program would provide grant funds to local systems to support mentoring programs for individuals entering the teaching profession. A mentor will be defined as a permanent certificated teacher who has demonstrated the competencies necessary for successful teaching and who initially assists certified persons toward mastery of those competencies.

### Master Teachers

The master teacher program would build a group of recognized teachers of high achievement in the teaching profession. Master Teacher Status is defined as a title granted to any applicant who submits an application to the Department of Education for recognition, from an approved credentialing organization, based on successful completion of the assessment process.

### Mental Health Resources

Also getting strong reaction from members during the 2014 NSEA focus groups was the need for mental health resources in K-12 school buildings. This legislation would provide additional funding to help school districts

# For-Profit Schools – and Fraud: Are They Destined for Nebraska?

A report by the Center for Popular Democracy estimates as much as \$54 million in suspected fraud in New York state charter – better known as for-profit – schools in 2014 alone.

The November report comes on the heels of an October finding by the CPD of more than \$30 million in charter school fraud in Pennsylvania since 1997. A third CPD report, released in May, found \$100 million in charter school fraud in another 15 states.

That’s \$184 million in lost funding, originally destined for public schools.

Now, some Nebraska policymakers want to bring the lightly regulated, for-profit risk of charter schools to Nebraska.

In each of the past two years, the Legislature failed to take action on charter school bills. Former Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh, term-limited out of office with the new Legislature, introduced the earlier charter school legislation, and is now actively lobbying for passage of charter legislation.

A bill to allow charters to operate in Nebraska will almost surely be introduced in the session of the Nebraska Legislature that convenes on Jan. 7 – even though charters offer very little that Nebraska public schools don’t already provide.

Proponents tout charter schools as offering school choice to parents. NSEA and others contend that charters pull public money from public schools; are virtually unregulated; and perform no better than public schools.

Further, that “choice” is needed in Nebraska is a false argument. There are few barriers to keep a student from transferring from one school to another, or one Nebraska school district to another.

“Charter schools are not the panacea, they are not the silver bullet that education ‘reformers’ portray them to be,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. “Based on the reports by the CPD, charter schools might generously be called a ‘very bad idea.’”

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia called the CPD findings “truly disturbing.”

She said that “While some charter school officials spend tens of thousands of public dollars on staff trips to the Bahamas from funds diverted from traditional public schools, New York state’s 90,000 charter school students may not be getting the resources they need and may be missing out on the great education these corporate charter school companies promised.”

NSEA will encourage senators to be deliberate in their consideration of any charter school legislation introduced in 2015.

and Educational Service Units increase mental health resources for students.

### Education Trust Fund

NSEA seeks establishment of an education trust fund, separate from the

## Lawsuit: Charters Foster Segregation

A complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Education argues that Delaware’s charter school law discriminates against students of color and students with disabilities, and significantly contributes to re-segregation.

Specifically, the complaint claims that passage of Delaware’s charter school act is in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and has allowed “state-sanctioned preferential treatment for families who are able to navigate the special requirements of charter school admissions,” said Kathleen MacRae, executive director of the ACLU of Delaware.

McRae cited high examination scores; essays written by parents to explain why a school is a good choice for their child; annual activities fees; mandatory parent involvement, sometimes in fundraising; and mandatory, high-cost uniform purchases. Such barriers prevent low-income families of color from having the same access to high quality charter schools that middle and upper class families have.

The complaint also asks the DOE to “recognize “that any system of selection that has the effect of almost completely excluding children with disabilities” from charter schools is deeply disturbing and must constitute illegal discrimination, said Dan Atkins, of the Disabilities Law Program of Community Legal Aid Society.



**Small local, big gift:** NSEA President Nancy Fulton, third from right, collected a generous \$1,600 donation to the Children's Fund from the Harlington Education Association. Much of the cash came from a 'penny war' competition between children in the elementary and secondary schools.



**Westside Gift:** Westside Education Association Secretary Jaime Kammandel gave NSEA President Nancy Fulton a check for \$1,168 for the Children's Fund. The money was donated by educators, students and parents through a variety of fall fundraisers.



**Jeans Day Cash:** Bellevue Education Association Board Member Brad Wellmann delivered \$6,679 in proceeds from a BEA Jeans Day event to NSEA Associate Staffer Sally Bodtke and Comptroller Sheri Jablonski. Since 2010, BEA members and non-members have raised \$31,886 for the Children's Fund. Members, non-members, ESPs and administrators in every building participated in BEA's Jeans Day event this year.

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**FRESH CLOTHES.**

## NSEA's Children's Fund Makes a World of Difference

NSEA members help students learn every day. They also help students be ready to learn every day, through generous giving to the Children's Fund.

Founded in 1994, the Children's Fund has one goal: to provide children with all they need to be successful at school. That might mean a new coat for a coatless child; dental work for a child in pain; eyeglasses for a child who cannot see.

The Children's Fund relies purely on donations from members, from local associations and from outside donors who understand the need and see the Children's Fund as a just cause.

NSEA members use the fund to help children when they see a need. NSEA members are also the biggest contributors to the fund – see the photos at left – and the fund is always in need. Consider the wonderful results from the gifts to the fund, as expressed in this letter from an NSEA member:



*"...I hope you are able to hear my excitement and relief that one of our students has been provided with hygiene products, necessary underclothing, clothes that actually fit, and a pair of snow boots for his walk to school.*

*"I told him this gift was from ALL the teachers, even teachers who he's never had but that care deeply for his safety and education. I hope I never forget the look on his face. I don't think I've ever seen anyone more surprised.*

*"Thank you for setting up this fund to make it so easily accessible. It's made a difference in this child's life. I am so proud to be a part of NSEA, an organization that cares for students AND teachers."*

Teachers often use their own cash to help these children, knowing they can't help every child. For that reason, NSEA created the Children's Fund, and continues to work to raise money.

In the past two years alone, the Children's Fund has provided nearly \$100,000 in relief.

To donate — or to receive funds to help a child — there is no red tape, no form for teachers to fill out. Simply contact the NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 and ask for Sally Bodtke. Or e-mail her at:

**[sally.bodtke@nsea.org](mailto:sally.bodtke@nsea.org)**

# You're On the Front Lines

## That's Why NSEA Membership Benefits You, and Your Students

NSEA's For all it's Worth series continues with the delivery of quick and easy details about Association membership, its benefits and value.

Every month, the For all it's Worth series provides easy-to-access information about your NSEA membership. Throughout the school year, you will receive monthly membership editions via email, highlighting three key areas: Membership Benefits, Working Conditions and Action & Advocacy.

### **Benefiting You. Benefiting Students.**

As an education professional, you're on the front lines of student learning. You work to ensure it's at the center of your school, classroom and curriculum. While the student learning process relies on a number of factors, evaluations and assessments play a major role in growth and development – and not just for students.

With your membership, your association has your back

when it comes to teacher evaluations. And from start to finish, your association guarantees evaluation expectations are fair and clear and the process is transparent.

As a member, you receive invaluable access to professional evaluation support and resources:

■ **Protection:** Association staff, leaders and attorneys, ready to assist educational personnel with preparing for and responding to evaluations and other work-related concerns.

■ **Professional development:** Access to training, resources, tools, and support to sharpen teaching practices to improve student learning.

■ **Feedback:** Comprehensive, collaborative and meaningful responses to help education professionals strengthen their knowledge, skills and classroom practices.

Join in the conversation and take advantage of the benefits. It's time to experience your membership For all it's Worth.

Watch for news and updates from the

For all it's Worth series in your email in-box, on Facebook and online at:

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# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: YOU CAN DO IT!

**Ask Teachers About the Single Biggest Challenge They Face Each Day, and Chances are They'll Say 'Classroom Management.'**

**Probe Further to Discover What They Really Mean: Discipline.**

**By Bryan Weatherford**

Classroom management is a process that begins prior to the school year, based on these key principles of behavior:

- Misbehavior is a symptom of something else.
- Behavior is impacted by communication.
- Behavior serves a purpose.
- Behavior occurs in patterns.
- Behavior can be influenced.
- Influencing behavior can cause behavior to change.

Understanding misbehavior: Typically, children act out for one of four reasons: to satisfy a sensation, escape a situation or task, get attention, or gain something tangible. Understanding what motivates a student is critical to addressing the misbehavior, because you do not want to reinforce the misbehavior.

Here's an example: You ask students to take out their journals and write. One student doesn't like to write, so he takes his journal and throws it across the classroom. You respond by sending him to the office.

Let's break down this behavior through a process of ABC-R. A is the antecedent that triggered the misbehavior. B is the misbehavior.

C is the consequence (what you did). R is the reinforcement your student got for his misbehavior.

So, in the classroom:

- A = telling students to take out their journals and write.
- B = student throwing his journal across the room.

*"Every profession engages in some sort of practice or rehearsal: attorneys prep witnesses; surgeons practice surgeries; scientists create simulations and models. Teaching is no different. Practice is part of preparation."*

C = sending student to the office.

R = student not having to write (which is what he wanted).

You reinforced the student's misbehavior; he didn't want to write, and when you sent him to the office, he didn't have to.

Why doesn't the student like to write? That is the real issue.

## Effective Classroom Management

The good news is 80 percent of the misbehavior in your classroom is caused by 20 percent of the students, and effective classroom management will minimize even that.

Here are some tips:

### 1 Create community in your classroom:

Successful students are engaged in their learning because they feel connected to the people in the classroom. Take time to get to know your students and give them the opportunity to get to know you within the boundaries you set. Simple things such as greeting them at the door, making eye contact, or calling them by name provide affirmation, and this creates that sense of connectedness.

It also models appropriate behavior for your classroom.

**2 Establish rules and procedures:** These need to be taught. When you teach your students the rules (and consequences) and practice the procedures, it reduces their uncertainty and makes it easier for them to focus on their learning. Doing this at the beginning of the year allows you to spend

more time teaching content and less time teaching procedures later in the school year.

Some key points about rules:

■ Keep them positive so they establish the expectation for behavior. “Walk down the hallway” tells students what the expectation is, whereas “No running in the hallway” just tells them they can’t run in the hallway, which means they can skip, somersault, etc.

■ Limit the number of rules to five, as too many rules confuse you and the students.

■ Teach them what the rules mean.

■ Discuss the consequences for breaking the rules (and make sure you follow through).

**3 Utilize reinforcers:** Students have to make the transition from tangible to intangible reinforcers. Tangible reinforcers help shape student behavior and learning, moving them closer to the desired outcome. But students take responsibility for their own learning when they are intrinsically motivated — when they have the skill set to do the task, and they have episodic success doing it.

When they’re not successful, it opens the door for misbehavior. Assess their

skill sets and provide opportunities for them to experience success.

**4 Control transitions:** Every transition opens a door for misbehavior. Effective transitions are well-planned and explained PRIOR to taking place so that students know what, where, when, and how to do it. There are also smaller transitions — a student going to sharpen a pencil or leaving the room to take medicine — that can shift the focus from you to that student. Structure your classroom so that if a student has to move around, they can do so without disrupting the others.

**5 Polish and practice your techniques:** Think about how you interact with students when they misbehave. What does your voice sound like? Is it excited or calm? Is it high-pitched or controlled? Take time to reflect on your response to misbehavior and practice how you respond.

Every profession engages in some sort of practice or rehearsal: attorneys prep witnesses; surgeons practice surgeries; scientists create simulations and models. Teaching is no different. Practice is part of preparation.

**6 Engage parents:** Always keep parents informed about what their

children are doing in school, especially misbehavior. Often, the behavior you see at school happens at home.

Engaging the parents will help to resolve any behavioral issues at school and at home and allow the parents to reinforce desired behavior at home. It also makes the parents your strongest allies!

**7 Deal with difficult behavior:** Behavior is situational, so there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. Still, there are some common themes.

When dealing with difficult behavior, you want to minimize it while maintaining the student’s self-esteem, keeping the focus on the lesson. It sounds difficult, but when you handle misbehavior quietly, calmly, and privately, you achieve your objective.

Classroom management is a planned process that starts before you begin your school year and results in a classroom that has momentum and flow. Momentum is the energy that causes students to engage in their own learning; your class then achieves a flow in which you and they are in the “zone” of learning. And this is not a bad place to be!

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# RA '15 Destination: Orlando!

## NEA's Annual Meeting Headed South; Are You Willing to Serve?

Imagine this: Nearly 9,000 educators packed into a convention hall, all focused on issues that affect public schools and student achievement.

That happens every summer at NEA's annual meeting, known as Representative Assembly. About 100 Nebraska delegates will attend in Orlando June 30 through July 7, and if you're interested in serving, this would be a great year to do so!

All active NSEA members are eligible to serve. In addition, there are provisions for student members and retirees to serve.

NSEA's larger local associations — those with 76 members or more — will hold internal elections to select RA delegates. If you belong to an association of 76 members or more, and are interested in serving as a delegate, contact your local association president, or talk to your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

In all other cases, those who wish to be considered must qualify through one of the categories listed below and file their intent to seek election as a delegate via the NSEA website at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

All members seeking to file through the NSEA website will need their NSEA membership ID number. That individualized number can be found on each member's NSEA Access membership card; above the member's name on *The Voice* mailing label; or above the member's name in the e-mail that delivered the digital issue of *The Voice*.

When filing, delegate candidates have the option of completing a 50-word statement that can be reviewed by voters.

Except for NSEA-Retired, the deadline for filing is Friday, Jan. 23. The member's filing details will be posted to the NSEA website within 24 hours. If you do not see your name on the website list of candidates by Monday, Jan. 26, contact NSEA immediately.

Questions? Reach NSEA's Patty Schroer at:

[patty.schroer@nsea.org](mailto:patty.schroer@nsea.org)

Here are the categories:

### District At-Large RA Cluster Delegates

For the purpose of electing delegates, local associations with fewer than 76 members are grouped in clusters in each of NSEA's six governance districts. For instance, all local associa-

tions in Elkhorn District with fewer than 76 members will pool and vote on a common set of candidates for delegate to RA.

There are approximately 10 openings for Cluster Delegates from the Capitol, Elkhorn and Tri-Valley districts; eight from Metro District; seven from the Sandhills District; three from the Panhandle District. Cluster delegates fund their own Representative Assembly costs.

Members interested in serving as a Cluster Delegate must complete the online filing by the Friday, Jan. 23, deadline.

### At-Large Delegates

Any active NSEA member is eligible to place his or her name on the statewide, At-Large Delegate ballot by filing through the NSEA website. Those elected as statewide delegates will be reimbursed for transportation, lodging and meal expenses. Depending on several factors, four to five of these delegate slots will be available to At-Large candidates.

### NSEA-Retired Delegates

Members of Nebraska's retired affiliate (NSEA-Retired) elect their NEA representatives to the RA by statewide balloting. Members will receive mail-in ballots in March.

Up to three delegates will be elected at large; one delegate will be elected by the combined retired membership of Capitol, Elkhorn, Panhandle, Sandhills and Tri-Valley Districts; and one delegate will be elected by the retired membership of the Metro District. An individual filing as a district delegate may also file as an at-large delegate.

Members of NSEA-Retired wishing to file must complete the form that will appear under the NSEA-Retired tab on the NSEA website by Friday, Feb. 6. That form will be available in January. Also required: a biography of no more than 50 words.

### SEAN Delegates

Members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) elect their RA representatives by statewide balloting. SEAN members wishing to file as delegates must complete an online filing process by Saturday, Feb. 28. Watch *The Voice* and the SEAN newsletter for details.

**Questions? Call your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.**



**RA 2014: Brenna Wragge, above, a student member from the University of Nebraska Omaha, holds a message for the 90-member Nebraska delegation at the 2014 RA in Denver. Below, then-Grand Island delegate Jill Kimbrough speaks to Nebraska delegates during the state's caucus as Lincoln's Deb Rasmussen waits for a turn at the microphone. Kimbrough now teaches at Millard.**



## Assessment Results Fuel Improvement

### Test Results Provide Instructional Roadmaps

By Dr. Matt Blomstedt,  
Nebraska Commissioner  
of Education

Welcome back from the December break. I hope you and your students are reenergized and ready for the second half of the school year. Here at the Nebraska Department of Education the focus has turned — in part — to the administration of tests.

State Assessment Director Valorie Foy and her team spent time this fall meeting with teachers and administrators across the state to prepare for the administration of writing tests. This year those workshops focused on fourth grade writing. NDE also collaborates with the Educational Service Unit staff to provide training on the writing rubric and the process for evaluating student writing.

Now that this phase of the work has been completed, the focus turns most immediately to administering writing tests statewide to about 65,000 students between January 19 and February 6. Then the administration of reading, mathematics and science tests to about 155,000 students begins.

#### Result of Work Worthwhile

As most of you know, this is not an easy process. It's complicated and requires a high level of organization both at the state, district, building and classroom levels. Thank you for all of your work to make this possible.

The result is worth the work. Test

### Need to Update Contact Details?

Have you moved? Have you changed your name by marriage? If so, you can update your NSEA membership online.

Log on to the NSEA website and click on the 'Member Info' button on the left side of the screen. Then click on the 'For Members' link and look for the 'Member Update' icon in the center of the next screen, and follow directions. Keep your issue of *The Voice* near, as the mailing label includes your 10-digit membership number, used to access your details. The NSEA website is at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

results are more than scores. The results in the four tested academic content areas provide roadmaps for district and building decision making on how to improve instruction to help students achieve at higher levels. Although it is a lot of work, we know that measuring progress is an important part of investing in a support system for teachers and students.



Blomstedt

The writing tests are analytically graded to give teachers detailed information on how individual students scored on the four domains: ideas/content; voice/word choice; organization; and, sentence fluency/conventions. The tests are based on a comprehensive writing rubric that informs classroom instruction. That information, coupled with the individual student reports, helps guide district decisions on ways to

improve instruction.

#### One Piece of Information

Between March 23 and May 1, students in grades 3-8 and at the 11th grade statewide will be tested in reading, math and science. Each district will learn the top three standards for student performance district wide and the three standards where students performed at the lowest levels. Those results will again help teachers and administrators look at their areas of strength and identify where students need to improve.




Test results are only one important piece of information that leads the way to improved instruction and higher student achievement. We know this assessment system will contribute to a next generation accountability system that focuses on every student across the state.

As we embark on this journey together, I want to thank each of you for analyzing test data to improve instruction, for helping every student every day reach his or her full potential and for setting them on a path toward a successful future. That is our ultimate accountability and our ultimate goal.

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AB300115

# Are You A Reluctant Leader?

## Or is Someone You Know Worthy of Leadership Consideration?

By Walt Grassl

Do you know someone who is very comfortable doing a job that has no leadership dimension, even though you just know they will thrive as a leader? Many of them have a condition that is sometimes referred to as Altitude Sickness. This is not the medical condition, which occurs when you are at high altitudes and cannot get enough oxygen. This Altitude Sickness refers to the fear of success, the fear of reaching great heights.

Jesika leads a department of engineers at a design and manufacturing company. Two years ago, she realized that her organization was growing too large for its current structure. To keep a workable supervisor to employee ratio, she needed to split the biggest section into two. This left her with a supervisor position to fill. She preferred to fill the position from within the existing organization, to provide career growth paths for her existing employees. She sat back in her chair and thought about which of her employees might be candidates for the new position.

The water-cooler favorite was Donald, who, for years, has been lobbying for a move into management. But, Donald was not well liked by his coworkers. He was not good at working together with his team. On more than one occasion, he mentioned that if he were supervisor, people would do what he said. When rumors of an organization change started circulating, the thought of Donald being in a supervisory role was negatively impacting morale.

No other employees had expressed interest in moving into supervision. Jesika remembered that when she first became a supervisor, she did not want the job. She reluctantly took the job after her boss convinced her that often, reluctant leaders are the best leaders. They lead from a desire to serve, not a desire for power.

The following are five signs you can use to identify reluctant leaders:

### Peers seek their counsel

Most organizations have two kinds of leaders: People with leader in their title and people who are sought out for advice by their peers.

When looking for reluctant leaders, observe your teams. Who do the team members respect? Who do they go to be-

fore bringing problems to the attention to management?

### They are focused on team success, and not individual glory

Some employees are too busy focusing on their tasks to help others with theirs. Others realize that if one employee is stuck, it hurts the team, and they are willing to either help the other employee or direct them to someone who can. The latter are potential leaders.

Some employees take as much individual credit for the work of the team as they can. Other employees are selfless and focus on the achievements of the group. The latter are potential leaders.

And, when things go wrong as they sometimes do, some employees are never at fault and are quick to blame others. Other employees focus on fixing the problem and correcting the root cause. The latter are potential leaders.

### They are passionate about the work

Which employees have a passion for the work? They should take pride in a job well done and see their work as a reflection of their character. They sometimes stay late when in the middle of a key project, not to impress the boss but because they are caught up in the moment and lose track of time. That passion and dedication inspires others. If they constantly have their eye on the clock and don't feel that the quality of their work reflects the quality of their character, they are not leaders.

### They exercise good judgment

One of the key characteristics of a great leader is judgment. A sign of good judgment is when an employee seeks help. When they are stuck, do they immediately get help? Do they spend a little time and effort on the problem, but when they see it will impact the schedule, then reach out for help? Or do they never ask for help and then when the task is due, blame the late delivery on the problem they couldn't solve? The first and last examples are not yet ready for leadership.

### They are life-long learners

An employee who is a life-long learner is potentially a good leader. They realize that they don't know it all. They

## Are You Going?

For each of the past 30 or so summers, NSEA has hosted Leadership Institute, a four-day program for members who are new to an Association leadership post, or who might be contemplating a leadership position.



Consider these comments from members who evaluated the 2014 edition of Leadership Institute:

*“I wish it was longer. It was information overload in a great way.”*

*“I am leaving with a new outlook. I have many new ideas on how to be a better building rep.”*

The 2015 edition of Leadership Institute will take place at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln June 8-11. Expenses are paid for NSEA members. Contact your NSEA organizational specialist for details, and watch *The Voice* for more information.

are more likely to listen and fairly evaluate the input of others, in particular, their subordinates. This promotes innovation and encourages employees to speak up if they feel something is heading in the wrong direction, leading to happier teams and better quality decisions.

Employees who feel that they do not have anything new to learn and don't fairly assess contrary inputs are at risk for stagnation and ignoring the warning signs of trouble.

### Altitude Sickness?

In thinking of all the people in her department, Matt stood out. Matt was quiet, very technically competent and respected by his peers. On more than one occasion, Matt said he was happy doing design work and had no desire to become part of management. Jesika ran Matt through the criteria for reluctant leaders and he met them all; she felt he was just suffering from a touch of altitude sickness.

Jesika met with Matt and had a heart-to-heart discussion. She gave him specific examples of how he had all the characteristics of a reluctant leader. She also shared that she also had suffered from altitude sickness. She understood his reluctance. She asked him to take a day and consider accepting this challenge.

Matt slept on it, and the next day agreed to become a supervisor. Jesika promised to mentor him and provide him with the training and resources he needed to be successful. Fast forward to today: Matt is a well-respected leader and has not let the power go to his head.

Sometimes, the best leaders are the reluctant leaders. When assessing your teams, look for the quiet, unambitious employees who demonstrate the qualities of reluctant leaders and help cure them of their altitude sickness.

### About the Author

Walt Grassl is a speaker, author of "Stand Up and Speak Up," and host of the Internet radio show, "Stand Up and Speak Up." Walt's accomplishments include success in Toastmasters International speech contests and performing stand-up comedy at the Hollywood Improv and the Flamingo in Las Vegas. For more information on bringing Walt Grassl to your next event, please visit [WaltGrassl.com](http://WaltGrassl.com).



**Celebrating Reading:** Less than two months and the annual NEA Read Across America celebration will be here! In Lincoln last year, Denise Ebeler, left, and retired Lincoln teacher Pat Etherton, right, were in full Dr. Seuss regalia as they read to Ebeler's students at Prescott Elementary School.

# It's Time for Seuss!

## Read Across America Observance is March 2

The 18th observance of NEA's Read Across America — celebrating reading on the birthday of Dr. Seuss! — will be here soon. Is your classroom gearing up to celebrate?

NEA's Read Across America is a reading motivation program that asks every child in every community to celebrate the love of reading. The program also supports NEA members, parents, caregivers, and children with the resources and activities they need to keep reading fun throughout the year.

The date for this year's event is Monday, March 2.

In many places, the Seussian event opens a full week of reading events and activities! In order to help your event be a grand success, the team at NEA has put together a package of items and ideas online to help you celebrate. For instance:

■ **Get the latest info:** Go to the website to find a wide variety of information, including how to create a reading event, activity ideas, downloadable information for parents, as well as the pledge to participate this year! Items and materials are updated frequently, so please check back often.

■ **Celebration day items:** The NEA Read Across America website provides the Read Across America song, oath and poem, as well as NEA's Declaration of Reading Independence.

■ **Find the poster!** Download and print the 2014 Read Across America Day Poster from the NEA Read Across America website.

■ **Invite the media:** Why not let the world know about your celebration — and the importance of literacy? The NEA Read Across America website has a series of tips, ideas and sample news releases and letters to the editor you can use to get your project noticed by local newspaper, radio stations and television station reporters.

For more details, visit the website at:

[nea.org/readacross](http://nea.org/readacross)

## Save With Dave!

Managing finances takes time, but done right, and with the programs offered through NEA Member Benefits, members can quickly get on sound and stable financial footing.

There is no better time to start the quest for firm financial footing than at the start of a New Year.

Following are some of the NEAMB plans that can help you meet your financial goals.



Glenn

Whether buying or refinancing, the **NEA Home Financing Program** makes it easy to get competitive rates.

Offered via Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, members receive a \$500 gift card when they refinance or close a loan. Members' children and parents are also eligible to participate.

The program offers a free refinancing break-even analysis and assistance, and provides a choice of mortgage options and terms to match the individual needs of the homebuyer.

Nearly every detail, up to closing, is handled through a toll-free number.

The **NEA Smart Option Student Loan** by Sallie Mae is an ideal solution to help pay for college expenses from degree-granting institutions.

There are no origination fees and no prepayment penalty, and participants can defer payments until after graduation or take an in-school payment plan.

Those who make monthly payments on time while in school can get a 2 percent Smart Reward. Members may borrow up to 100 percent of school certified education costs (minimum \$1,000).

The **NEA Personal Loan** is an easy way to pay credit cards and other loans.

The plan offers competitive rates and no balance transfer fees. Loans range from \$5,000 to \$25,000, with terms up to 72 months. There are no application or prepayment fees.

To learn more about each of these plans, check under the 'Finance' tab on the NEA Member Benefits website at:

[neamb.com](http://neamb.com)

David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative

# The Right Way to Help Adult Children

## Set Limits, Be Generous with Advice, but Selective with Financial Assistance

By Janet Bodnar

I recently participated in an NPR-sponsored event in Lexington, Ky., called "Family Matters: Your Financial Lifetime," as a member of a panel charged with offering financial advice to a live audience. The first person up to the microphone described her problem, an all-too-common situation. Her 24-year-old son was still at home, and she hadn't been able to dislodge him. He'd dabbled in school but hadn't finished a program. He'd dabbled at jobs but hadn't found the "right" one. In short, he was entirely content to stay exactly where he was.

"You need to motivate him," said one panel member. "I've tried," the woman replied. "Try harder," I chimed in.

A few days later, I was recounting this story to a friend I'll call Julie, who proceeded to tell me about her own adult son. He had drawn up a detailed budget with the goal of saving to buy a house. So far, so good — except that he then told his parents how much he wanted them to send him every month to build his savings.

My friend was nonplussed — and upset. She said that she and her husband had never been on the same page about handling money with their kids, and he had always been more willing to buy them "the best of everything." So now her son had no qualms about asking for more. It's not surprising that parents are willing to help their adult kids. In a 2013 study by the Pew Research Center, 29 percent of parents reported that an adult child had moved back home in the preceding few years, and 48 percent said they had provided financial support to an adult child in the previous year. Among readers of the magazine, 41 percent said they had helped their kids financially.

The trick, of course, is to extend a

helping hand without discouraging your child's motivation to move on. I suggest the following guidelines:

■ **Set limits.** In the case of the mom in Lexington, she hadn't established limits for her son's stay at home, so he was content to drift along. She needs to shake things up by imposing a deadline: He has six months (or even less) to find a job, any job, and get out of the house. As one recent college grad told me the other day, "You can't recognize the good jobs until you've had the bad ones." And while he's at home, he should at least pitch in to do chores, run errands and prepare occasional meals.

■ **Be selective about offering financial help.** In the second case, my friend Julie hit the nail on the head when she admitted she and her husband had been too generous. It's okay to cover some of your child's expenses (at least temporarily), but you shouldn't pay for all of

them. You might, for example, cover your kid's cell-phone bill or health insurance until he's on his own. But don't co-sign for a credit card — or let him use yours.

■ **Don't do anything that jeopardizes your financial security by dipping into your retirement savings.** In a survey by Ameriprise Financial, 23 percent of respondents cited "supporting grown children or grandchildren" as a retirement derailer — a life event that disrupted their plans for retirement. Make gifts infrequent and unexpected, and your kids will appreciate them instead of taking them for granted.

■ **Be generous with advice.** Chances are, your kids will come to you to ask about their finances — everything from how to repay their student loans to how to save for retirement and set up an investment plan. Be flattered by their faith in you. And if their questions have you stumped, we're here to help.

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**Kiplinger**

## NSEA-Retired Nears 30!

### Phenomenal Growth in Membership Highlights First Three Decades

Almost 30 years ago, 10 dedicated Nebraska educators signed on the dotted line to charter the NSEA-Retired affiliate of NSEA. The date was Sept. 14, 1985, and the mission was clear: to advance quality education in Nebraska, and to protect retirement benefits for all retired school employees.

In the last 30 years, membership in NSEA-Retired has grown to more than 5,400 retirees. More than 400 pre-retired lifetime subscribers have pre-paid their dues in anticipation of having full membership benefits in the NEA-Retired and NSEA-Retired, upon retirement without any additional payment of annual retired dues.

The NSEA-Retired affiliate has come a long way in 30 years.

### Beware of Medicare Imposters!

There are three easy steps to follow in moving to Medicare at age 65.

- Sign up for Medicare 1-3 months before you turn 65.
- Enroll in NSEA Retired BlueSenior Classic Medicare Supplement Program.
- You should also sign up for Medicare Part D, the prescription drug coverage.

More details on these three steps can be found at:

[www.nsea.org/nsea.retired](http://www.nsea.org/nsea.retired)

As you approach age 65, you will receive many mailings from insurance companies promoting their Medicare products. Be wary! Blue Cross calls its general Medicare supplement "BlueSenior Classic." If you do not see the name NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic on the materials, and if you do not have the option to select dental coverage, it is not the supplement that NSEA-Retired endorses.

You may enroll in NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic as long as you are enrolled in EHA when you turn 65. If you are not covered by EHA insurance when you turn 65, and you are a member of NSEA-Retired, you can enroll in NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic by calling Blue Cross at 402-458-4810 or 800-562-6394 to request information and enrollment forms be sent to you, about 60 days before your other insurance coverage will end. Be sure to identify yourself as a member of NSEA-Retired to ensure that the proper forms are sent.

### NSEA-Retired Elections Nominations Coming

Nominations for NSEA-Retired elections will be accepted starting in January. Open positions this year include:

- Metro District Director for the NSEA-Retired Board.
- Delegates to NSEA Delegate Assembly in April.
- Delegates to NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando.

Visit the website in late January for the nomination details and forms, or learn more on page 16. The website is at:

<http://www.nsea.org/nsea-retired>

### Consider Lifetime Membership

Becoming a lifetime member of NSEA-Retired has many benefits, including being kept informed of important retirement issues, along with various trends in education. Membership allows for access to continued Member Benefit Programs.

To avoid being billed annually for dues, consider joining as a



**Rapt Attention:** NSEA-Retired Lobby Day 2013 caught the close attention of Sheri Paden, Lincoln; Guy Roggenkamp, Grand Island; and Dennis Warner, Arlington.

### Seeking More Lobby Day Success!

NSEA-Retired members will gather in Lincoln on Tuesday, Feb. 3, to address legislative concerns. Of particular interest to retirees is the taxation of Social Security benefits.

Encouraged by NSEA-Retired, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB987 last year, which reduced the tax burden on Social Security recipients. NSEA-Retired members will also visit with senators about bills that NSEA has identified as priority bills for education interests on Lobby Day.

Lobby Day will start with an issue awareness training to familiarize members with bills that are up for consideration. First-time attendees will have an orientation at 8:30 a.m. All activities take place at NSEA headquarters, 605 S. 14th Street, Lincoln.

The tentative agenda:

- **8:15 a.m.:** Registration and coffee.
- **8:30 a.m.:** First-time lobbyist training (third floor).
- **9 a.m.:** Issue awareness training.
- **10:15 a.m.:** Observe Unicameral, visit with senators.
- **Noon:** Lunch at NSEA; Sen. Galen Hadley, guest speaker.
- **1:30 p.m.:** Celebration of NSEA-Retired's founding.

There is no fee for members to attend. Guests are asked to pay \$10 to cover the program costs.

Register for Lobby Day on the website at [www.nsea.org/retired](http://www.nsea.org/retired), or call Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047. Registration deadline is Friday, Jan. 30. Attendees are asked to park on the east side of the Trinity Lutheran Church parking lot at 12th and H streets. Do not park in reserved spaces.

Lifetime member. Active NSEA members may join as Pre-Retired Lifetime members, while still teaching. Retired educators may join as Lifetime (or annual) members if they are at least 50 years old, and were an Active member in the Association the year they retired. Current Lifetime dues for NEA-Retired/NSEA-Retired are \$450 (local retired dues amounts vary and can increase that amount by \$100).

There will likely be an increase in the Lifetime dues in 2016 or 2017, as we were informed last summer. Current active NSEA members, as well as annual members for NSEA-Retired, can beat that increase by going to our website, [www.nsea.org/retired](http://www.nsea.org/retired) and completing the membership application on-line.

Lifetime dues can be spread over five months (at \$90 per month) to make the payment more affordable.

— Renae Kelly, Editor  
[renaerkelly@gmail.com](mailto:renaerkelly@gmail.com)

# Recognize Good Work

You have Amazing Colleagues;  
Why Not Give Them a Bit of Limelight?

## Awards Presented at Delegate Assembly

Many of your colleagues do extraordinary work each day. Why not give them some recognition?

Any NSEA member may nominate a deserving individual or group for the awards, below, presented at NSEA's 2015 Delegate Assembly. Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Saturday, Jan. 31, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may be submitted online, with any supporting material mailed to NSEA. Online forms for the awards are found under the 'Delegate Assembly' link at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

Delegate Assembly will be at Lincoln's Embassy Suites. NSEA members are eligible for:

■ **NSEA Rookie of the Year:** To honor a first-year teacher who sparkled in the 2013-14 school year.

■ **Award for Teaching Excellence:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a long period.

■ **Education Support Profession-**

**al:** To honor an ESP who has excelled.

Finalists will be notified in March; winners announced at Delegate Assembly on April 24-25. Each receives a \$250 cash award. The Teaching Excellence winner competes for the NEA Teaching Excellence Award and \$25,000.

Though there are no cash awards, NSEA members are also eligible for:

■ **Great Plains Milestone Award:** Honors an individual/group for promoting human and civil rights.

■ **Community Service:** Honors individual NSEA members and/or local associations involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.

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

Also to be presented:

■ **Friend of Education:** NSEA's highest honor. Local associations are encouraged to nominate an individual or

group that has made a statewide contribution to education.

■ **Media:** Recognizes a media outlet for outstanding coverage of education and for promoting community involvement in education. An essay of no more than 200 words explaining the nominee's qualifications is required. Examples of dated material may be included.



**Top Rookie: Nebraska NEA Director John Heineman, Lincoln, left, presented Elkhorn's Kristen DeMuth with NSEA's 2014 Rookie of the Year Award.**

## In the News: Three Earn National Board Certification

To date, 112 Nebraska teachers have earned National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification. Those ranks include three newly certified members: **Maddie Fennell and Kathleen Hinman, Omaha;** and **Sherry West, Lincoln.**

All are NSEA members.

National Board Certification is the most respected professional certification available in education and is designed to develop, retain and recognize accomplished teachers and to generate ongoing improvement in schools nationwide.

Fennell earned certification as a Generalist/Middle Childhood educator; Hinman's certification is in Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood; and West's certification came in Mathematics/Adolescence and Young Adulthood.

For details on NBTS certification, go to:

[www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)

## Ora Lindau

Retired educator and teacher of teachers Ora Lindau died Nov. 29, 2014, in Kearney. He was 95.

A Hildreth native, he was on the U.S. baseball team that played before the Queen of England in 1938, and later served in the Navy's Seventh Fleet in World War II, working on a fueling ship through seven Pacific Theater battles.

He taught at Kansas and then at Kearney High before joining the Kearney State College faculty, where he taught woodworking, supervised curriculum development and course changes. He was a longtime member of the NSEA.

Lindau is survived by his Zelma, his wife of 71 years, as well as three sons.

# Time is Now to Request Refund of PAC Dollars

Annual Request for Refund is Due Feb. 15

NSEA's Political Action Committee (NSEA-PAC) is supported by voluntary donations collected with NSEA membership dues.

Support for election of recommended candidates is provided by an annual contribution of \$15 from each NSEA member.

Any NSEA member may request a refund of those contributions for the current membership year. As an alternative to refund, members may also direct that the \$15 contribution be directed to bond election and school ballot issues.

Refund requests must be in writing to NSEA President Nancy Fulton. Each letter must be individually composed,

and contain an original signature of the member. Photocopied, computer copies or e-mail messages will not be accepted. Each letter must indicate whether all or part of the contribution is to be refunded, or whether the entire contribution is designated for statewide ballot issues.

Requests for refunds must be postmarked for delivery to NSEA Headquarters no later than Feb. 15, 2015. No refunds will be returned until after that date.

Send your request to NSEA President Nancy Fulton, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Questions? Call the Association's toll-free number at 1-800-742-0047.

# Most Support Public Schools

## Poll Indicates Support for Schools, Teachers

Prior to the mid-term election, Harstad Strategic Research, Inc., conducted a poll on education and found that most Americans are supportive of their local public schools and teachers.

The survey tested a dozen statements asking whether voters agree or disagree. Basically two-thirds of Americans agree with the following sentiments, in remarkably non-partisan reactions:

- Neighborhood schools should be our top priority because they educate a huge majority of our kids;

- We need to get politicians and corporations out of the way, and let teachers do what they know best – teach our kids and prepare them for college/careers;

- Teachers should be held accountable by principals, supervisors and parents – not by standardized bubble tests;

- Taxpayer money should pay for children’s education – not for corporate profits, CEO bonuses, or advertising;

- Educators should be teaching critical thinking and problem-solving – not just teaching to the bubble test;

- Everyone has a favorite teacher who made a real difference in their lives – and we need to support and promote those kinds of classrooms.

The poll results were shared with candidates recommended by NEA.

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



**SEAN Officers:** The 2014-15 Executive Committee of the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) posed for a photograph at the organization’s Outreach to Teach event at Minden in November. From left are President Jacob Zeiss, Wayne State College; Underclass Representative Emily Wilmes, Wayne State College; Vice President L.A. Adams, Peru State College; Secretary Amanda Volkson, Peru State College; Southeast Region Representative Rae Carbaugh, Peru State College; Northeast Region Representative Hailey DeRocher-Schroeder, Wayne State College; and Metro Region Representative Brenna Wragge, University of Nebraska Omaha. Not pictured is Western Region Representative Brittany Snider, University of Nebraska Kearney.

## Speaking of Teaching

“I can’t think of an organization that cares more about education than NSEA.”

— Gov. Dave Heineman,  
*Lincoln Journal Star,*  
Dec. 4, 2014

## Background Music for Your Classroom

From Susan Wraspir, a sixth grade language arts, reading and social studies teacher at Olympic Middle School in Auburn, WA.

“There is research indicating that instrumental music truly helps students learn. However, anything with lyrics tends to pull us out of that receptive, creative, super cognition mode. I have found that movie soundtracks are a great way to use music in my classroom. My students love the soundtracks for Braveheart,



Lord of the Rings, and Star Wars - The Phantom Menace. I will play the soundtrack for The Little Mermaid or Lilo & Stich when we need an energy pick up. I would recommend anything by John Williams. When I have after school detention, I sometimes play a little hardball with these darlings! I’ll put on a CD of Strauss waltzes or even opera! I strongly recommend using music in your classroom, the power and emotions it evokes will truly benefit your students.”

Sign up for Works4Me at this link:  
[www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html](http://www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html)