

THE

# VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ March 2014

## LOAN FORGIVENESS MUSIC TO OUR EARS

LB842 STRIKES A CHORD WITH  
MUSIC TEACHER SKYLER REISING

MENTORS AND  
SOUNDING BOARDS

CORRECTING  
INEQUALITY

## Upcoming Assignments

### Daylight Savings Time Begins March 9

■ **What:** The annual time switch that brightens the evening hours. Don't forget to 'spring forward' on this day!

■ **Details:** Instituted year-round by President Roosevelt to save energy during World War II, DST was then practiced sporadically until Congress established the Uniform Time Act of 1966.

### NSEA Elections March 19

■ **What:** Every NSEA member in good standing is eligible to vote. Online balloting opens on March 19 at 12:01 a.m. Voting ends at midnight on April 2.

■ **Details:** You will be alerted to the voting procedure via e-mail or postcard.

### Delegate Assembly April 11-12

■ **What:** Every NSEA member is eligible to serve as a delegate at NSEA's 153rd Delegate Assembly.

■ **Details:** Held at the Younes Convention Center in Kearney, this is your chance to have a voice in your Association. Talk to your local association building rep or president about attending! See page 11 for more details.

# Expanding Democracy Goal of UNO Conference

## Brennan Institute Sponsors National Names at 'General Welfare' Confab

Interested in expanding the boundaries of democracy? Learning more about equality?

Several national speakers will headline the Promoting the General Welfare Conference at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Now in year 15, the conference is sponsored by UNO's William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies. It is limited to 120 participants.

The morning plenary will feature Ana Avendano, assistant to the president and director of Immigration and Community Action at the AFL-CIO. She will address "The AFL-CIO and Immigration Today: Helping Level the Playing Field for All Wage Earners."

Three 75-minute workshops will repeat three times after the initial session:

■ **Best Practices for Building Voice in Small and Medium Labor Councils:** Monica Bielski Boris, assistant profes-

sor, School of Labor and Employment Relations in the Labor Education Program at the University of Illinois.

■ **Common Sense Economics:** David Reynolds, member of the AFL-CIO Common Sense Economics Curriculum Development Team.

■ **The Ethics of Equality: What Do You Believe and Why Do You Believe It?:** Charlie Micallef, former Director of Retirees for the International Association of Machinists.

The closing will feature Stewart Acuff, organizing director for the national union of Hospital and Healthcare Employees 1199. He will address "Working Together to Expand the General Welfare."

The conference is Saturday, April 5, at UNO's Community Engagement Center. Cost until March 28 is \$25 for students and

\$35 for general admission; after that date, the cost is \$35 for students and \$45 for general admission. Six hours of CEUs available for social workers.

For details, go to the website at:

[www.unomaha.edu/wbils/](http://www.unomaha.edu/wbils/)

## About the Brennan Institute

Housed at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies was founded in 1980. The Institute's statewide mission is "to foster creative and critical thinking among labor leaders, potential leaders, and interested members by providing relevant information and training in the skills needed in today's changing economy and workplace."

Learn more at:

[www.unomaha.edu/wbils/](http://www.unomaha.edu/wbils/)

## Cover Story:

Music teacher Skyler Reising didn't need his guitar for accompaniment at the state capitol as he offered effective testimony urging expansion of a tuition reimbursement program for educators. For details, turn to

## Page 12



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### Great Public Schools For Every Child

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Cited for excellence each year by the State Education Editors, including these 2013 awards: Best Magazine, Best News Story, Best Feature Story, Best Photography and Best Editorial Design.



# Mr. Lincoln Would Be Proud

*“Upon the subject of education...I can only say I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in.”*

— Abraham Lincoln, 1832



**NSEA President  
Nancy Fulton**

“

**We have  
said it before:  
Policies enacted  
by elected  
officials affect  
everything  
you do in your  
classroom.**

”

President Lincoln would be proud of our members. We are engaged!

Through letters, emails, phone calls and personal testimony, NSEA members have been informing state senators about issues that are important to our students, teachers and public schools.

For instance, **Lincoln** music teacher **Skyler Reising** (see the cover) urged members of the Education Committee to increase funding for a tuition reimbursement program for teachers. Reising’s appearance broke up the familiar parade of lobbyist faces that senators see at hearings — he even had senators laughing and joking at one point. But his serious remarks about the high cost of advanced degrees (Reising told senators he axed his cable TV service to save money), and the value of those advanced degrees, caught the ear of senators.

*“Our students will benefit from teachers who have a higher degree of subject matter mastery, we will be able to better fill those shortage area positions, and our state will have highly-educated teachers who will continue to teach in Nebraska schools. LB842 makes good sense for our students and teachers.”*

Letters and e-mails to state senators are effective as well. **Norfolk** kindergarten teacher **Christine Walker** emailed members of the Education Committee in support of LB842:

*“I’m halfway through my master’s program and have learned countless new strategies and technologies to use in my classroom. These classes have helped me to grow as a teacher and the new resources I have now make each day in the classroom more effective. My students are better at using technology, participate in more critical thinking and problem solving activities, and have more chances to collaborate in the classroom.”*

### **‘Someone a Little Less Educated’**

One legislative proposal would remove the

teacher education allowance – which rewards and encourages school districts to employ educators with advanced degrees – from the state aid formula.

**Westside** teacher **Alan Bone** urged senators to keep the allowance:

*“For districts less committed to encouraging postgraduate study, the teacher education allowance is the only incentive to put highly educated teachers in every classroom. Removing that incentive sends a clear message to parents in those districts—that the legislature doesn’t care whether their children have access to teachers with advanced degrees. I don’t know about you, but I have yet to meet a parent who said, ‘You know, my child has a good teacher, but we were hoping for someone a little less educated.’”*

### **No ‘Do-Over’ for Kids**

Finally, NSEA testified in support of LB1026 to create an Education Trust Fund. The fund would be available to smooth the dramatic swings that too often occurs in state aid to schools dollars from year to year. NSEA told senators the drastic cuts made to state aid in the “down” years do have an impact.

*“An 8-year-old student is at that age for one year – and if that year happens to be during tough economic times for the state, and if class size balloons or a special reading program has to be eliminated due to budget cuts, there’s no ‘do-over’ for that 8-year-old. Creating the Trust Fund helps ensure that 8-year-olds’ learning doesn’t suffer due to a state budget shortfall.”*

We have said it often: Policies enacted by elected officials affect everything you do in your classroom. Your continued effort to monitor and engage in the process enables us to meet our mission to provide students with the best opportunity to succeed.



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

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

Alliance ..... Page 11	Grand Island ..... Page 23	Norfolk..... Page 17	University of Nebraska-Omaha... Page 9
Arapahoe ..... Page 23	Guide Rock ..... Page 23	Omaha ..... Page 9, 17, 23	University of Nebraska-Lincoln... Page 9
Arlington ..... Page 23	Lexington ..... Page 9, 11	Papillion-LaVista ..... Page 16	Valentine ..... Page 24
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Fremont..... Page 16	Lincoln Page 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 22, 23, 24	Scottsbluff ..... Page 23	Wayne State College..... Page 9
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	Midland University ..... Page 9	Taylor..... Page 22	
	Millard..... Page 23	Tekamah-Herman ..... Page 9	

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<sup>3</sup>APR=Annual Percentage Rate. All loans subject to approval. Rates, terms and conditions subject to change and vary based on creditworthiness, qualifications and collateral conditions. Rate will not be less than 2.59% APR for vehicle year 2013 or newer. Rate will not be less than 3.49% APR for vehicle year 2010-2012. Quoted auto loan rates are accurate as of 01/20/2014 and subject to change. Payment Example: For a \$25,000 loan, 60 months, APR of 2.59%, rate of 2.49% with first payment in 90 days, payment of \$446.65 per month. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Offer excludes all loans already financed at the Credit Union. New money only. Must have FNECU checking account with direct deposit and automatic loan payment. Members without a checking account, direct deposit and automatic loan payment may receive a slightly higher rate (.50%). Offer expires 03/31/2014.



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## 'Pension Peril' a One-Sided Report

If you have seen episodes of the PBS series "Pension Peril," reconsider the "facts."

Under the guise of objective reporting, the series promoted cuts to public employee pensions when it aired on PBS outlets.

New York City public television station WNET produced the series, and it aired on the PBS NewsHour program. Each episode promoted pension benefit cuts to solve public budget problems.

At about the time public pension advocates, including several NEA affiliates, began to weigh in with local PBS stations, journalist David Sirota reported the series was covertly funded with \$3.5 million from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, founded by former Enron trader, hedge fund manager and billionaire John Arnold.

Arnold is a contributor to pension reform groups, where he urges reduction of public employee benefits, as well as investment of public pension funds in riskier plans, such as hedge funds.

NEA contends that the Arnold agenda is to eliminate NEA members' secure defined benefit pension plans by pushing plans with inadequate benefits and higher costs.

The revelation shocked PBS supporters who believe it wrong to take cash from anti-pension activists to promote their agenda.

Fortunately, this episode ends happily. On Valentine's Day, WNET and PBS said the \$3.5 million Arnold grant would be returned and the series pulled from the air.

## Spanking: Legal in Kansas Schools?

A Kansas lawmaker has introduced legislation that would allow parents, teachers and childcare providers to spank kids hard enough to leave marks.

State Rep. Gail Finney, Wichita, said the bill would legalize up to 10 swats, including smacks that could cause bruising. The bill would also let parents grant permission to others to spank their children.

Also allowed under the bill: reasonable physical force to restrain a child during spanking.

Corporal punishment is banned in Nebraska and about 30 other states

In late February, the bill died in committee.



**A second term!** Bellevue Education Association member Janis Elliott has been appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Legislature to a second five-year term on the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Board of Directors.

# Bellevue's Elliott OK'd for Second PERB Term

Will Serve Five Years on Board  
That Administers Your Retirement Plan

Bellevue teacher and NSEA member Janis Elliott has been confirmed by the Nebraska Legislature to a second term on the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Board (PERB) of Directors.

The governor appointed Elliott to a second term last year, and senators approved the appointment on Feb. 19.

Elliott teaches physics at Bellevue West High School and serves on the NSEA Board of Directors. She has been an elected delegate to both the NSEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly.

She is one of eight members on the PERB board, and one of six who are participants in the retirement system plan. The board also administers the retirement plans for state employees,

judges and the State Patrol.

"Jan has been an excellent representative who constantly watches out for the best interests of teachers," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "She has immersed herself in retirement issues and is a strong and well-informed voice on issues before the board."

Elliott is a leader on the NSEA's Retirement Committee, and has been appointed to the Legislative Committee of the National Committee on Teacher Retirement.

"I know that I serve all of the plans and the taxpayers as a trustee," she told senators at her confirmation hearing. "I will continue to strive to learn and therefore lead with fiscally prudent and fiduciarily sound decisions."

# NEA Members

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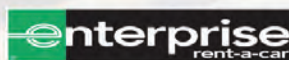
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# Inequality for All?

## Reich: Investment in Education 'A Public Good'

In 1999, 29.7 percent of Nebraska households were labeled as 'low income' by the U.S. Census Bureau. By 2012, that number had grown to 33.9 percent.

In 2000, 10 percent of Nebraska children were living in poverty, according to the Census Bureau. By 2012, that number had nearly doubled, to 17.9 percent.

Those numbers illustrate the "hollowing out of the middle class" as more Nebraska – and American – families slip out of the middle class and into poverty.

The causes of the shrinking of the middle class were explored in "Inequality for All," a documentary film about income inequality and the vital role the middle class plays in the American economy. The film featured the work of noted economist Robert Reich, who served in the cabinet for presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

NSEA was one of a dozen organizations to sponsor a late January showing of the film in Lincoln, featuring a visit, via Skype, with Reich. NSEA also sponsored a showing in Omaha on Feb. 6.

### Growth at the Top

Reich told the audience that about 95 percent of the growth in wages since the recovery from the recession have gone to the top 1 percent of wage earners.

"But," said Reich, "even those top wage earners would do better if the income were spread more evenly."

He suggested three steps to begin to balance the inequality in wealth:

- Raise the minimum wage – he noted that 80 percent of Americans feel the wage needs to be raised.
- Limit the size of banks.
- Limit big, corporate money in politics.

He said Americans are beginning to understand the problems caused by income inequality, and will eventually solve the problem.

"We've done it (solved big problems) before. I think we will do it again. The question is, when will we reach the tipping point? I think we are very near that point," he said.



**Live, from his office! Former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich spoke to Nebraskans via Skype prior to the Lincoln screening of his movie, Inequality for All. Reich called the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling "disgraceful" and "shameful."**

One of the causes of the widening income gap is big money in politics, which favors corporations.

He called the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling that declared corporations "people" for the purpose of campaign contributions a "disgraceful, shameful decision." Much of the money in politics today, he said, is coming from a handful of billionaires.

Unions, on the other hand, said Reich, "fit very well in the center of what has happened."

He said that America began enjoying wide-spread prosperity in the 1950s when one-third of American workers were unionized.

"The growth of unions in the 1950s mirrored the growth of the middle class," he said. "With the decline of unions starting in the 1980s marked the start of the decline of the middle class."

Investment in education – from early

childhood to higher education – is worth the cost. Yet cuts to public funding have raised the cost, he said, citing California as an example. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was no tuition to California's public universities.

By the late 1970s, the cost was \$700 a year. Today it is more than \$15,000 annually.

"Higher education is not a private investment. It is a public good," he said. "Reversing our investment in higher education is shooting ourselves in the foot."

Reich urged the audience to ask candidates two questions:

- What, exactly, are you going to do about jobs and the economy?
- How will you get big money out of politics? What exactly are you going to do?

The documentary is now available on Netflix and from other sources.

*"The growth of unions in the 1950s mirrored the growth of America's middle class. With the decline of unions starting in the 1980s marked the decline of the middle class."*

**— Robert Reich,  
Economist, former  
U.S. Secretary of Labor**

# 'Stand Strong' For Colleagues

## NSEA's 153rd Meeting Scheduled for Kearney

By the time members receive this edition of *The Voice*, the association's 153rd Delegate Assembly will be just five weeks away. Held every year since 1867 – twice in some years – Delegate Assembly is the tried and true podium that gives members a voice.

More than 300 members, elected to represent colleagues as delegates, will gather to set policy and elect leaders.

The 2014 event is Friday and Saturday, April 11-12 in Kearney at the Younes Convention Center.

Delegates will elect a president, vice president and a representative to the National Education Association Board of Directors. Depending on results of those elections, there could also be a second opening on the NEA Board of Directors.

The NSEA Board of Directors has implemented a revised Minority Improvement Plan that urges minority members to seek election to leadership positions within the Association.

Delegates will debate and vote on new Bylaws proposals and updates to the association's Resolutions, which are NSEA's guiding principles.

Delegates will also learn about reaching out to the Millennial Generation, courtesy of nationally known expert Jeff Kallay. His appearance is fully funded through a training grant provided by the Nebraska Department of Labor.

### Bylaws, Resolutions

New Business Items, Bylaws Amendments, proposed Resolutions, or proposals to change the Standing and Procedural Rules have strict deadlines:

- A New Business Item calls for action. For example, "The NSEA shall ask the Legislature for an increase in teacher salaries." Due date: Friday, March 28.

- A Bylaws Amendment alters NSEA governing documents. For example, a Bylaws change might alter the duties of the president. Due date: midnight Wednesday, March 12.

- A Resolution is a belief statement. For example, "NSEA believes all students should have a safe learning environment." Due date: Friday, March 28.

- A Standing or Procedural Rule governs the Delegate Assembly function. Current rules call for proposed

## Delegate Assembly: Worth Your Time

The time you invest in your association is always time well spent, especially when your work benefits your colleagues statewide. The best way to do that: sign up as a delegate to the NSEA's 153rd Delegate Assembly, set for Friday and Saturday, April 11-12, in Kearney.

**Who:** Any NSEA member in good standing may apply for election as a delegate. Talk to your building rep or local president if you would like to serve. Or call your NSEA field staff member at 1-800-742-0047.

**What:** DA is where member voices are heard in a democratically-run forum. Delegates set Association goals and dues, and update Bylaws and Standing Resolutions (NSEA's guiding principles).

**Where:** Younes Convention Center, Kearney.

**Other Details:** Each local association is entitled to representation, based on one delegate per 50 members, or greater fraction thereof. Thus, any local with 26 members is eligible to select one or more delegates, based on membership. Smaller locals band together in 'clusters' to select delegates.

**Cost:** NSEA covers half a Friday night shared hotel room for each delegate, a Saturday box lunch, and mileage.

# STAND STRONG TOGETHER

NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2014 | KEARNEY

changes to be submitted 30 days in advance to be considered and approved by majority vote at the first session. Due date: Wednesday, March 12.

Associations and/or individual delegates may submit New Business Items or Resolutions during the first or second Delegate Assembly business session.

Standing and Procedural Rule changes may be submitted during the first session. Those who submit items for debate during the first or second session must bring 500 copies for distribution.

Forms for submitting these business items can be found on the homepage at:

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



**GreenSchools** ENERGIZE. INVESTIGATE. INNOVATE.

## FREE Workshop

Workshop will provide hands-on activities and field trips to help teachers implement the GreenSchools program with students. Guest speakers include professionals from Nebraska Forest Service, Keep Nebraska Beautiful, NE Department of Education, NE Department of Environmental Quality, and NPPD.

**When:** March 24-25, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
**Where:** NPPD Norfolk Operations Center  
1200 S Chestnut Street, Norfolk  
Meals will be provided. Lodging may be available.

**Registration deadline is one week prior to workshop.**

Sponsored by  
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To register, visit [esu8.org](http://esu8.org). Contact Jennifer Swerczek, NPPD Energy Education Specialist, at [jlswerc@nppd.com](mailto:jlswerc@nppd.com) with workshop questions.



# Mentors & Sounding Boards

## Intergenerational Mentoring Aids Pre-Service Teachers

Ten more Nebraska teachers-to-be will have an edge when they begin their careers.

They were matched with retired teachers and NSEA members during a two-day retreat in early February at the NSEA's Lincoln Headquarters. The retired educators will serve as mentors, cheerleaders and sounding boards to the young teachers during the last two years of their college careers and into the start of their professional careers.

The Intergenerational Mentoring Project has earned national praise.

"This is the 11th year we've matched pre-service teachers with retired members, and we have mentor-mentee connections from those first years that are still alive and vibrant," said NSEA Organizational Specialist Maureen Nickels. "I wish we had the manpower to provide this service for every student coming into the profession.

The relationship between mentor and student is non-judgmental, non-evaluative. The mentor can help the student get through tough day-to-day moments and challenging situations



**A quick diversion:** University of Nebraska at Lincoln student Melissa Smith mugs for the camera during a session on interpreting salary schedules at the NSEA Intergenerational Mentoring Project. At the table with Smith were, from left, retired Tekamah-Herman teacher Art Tanderup, and UNL student Amber Savidge.

that face every student teacher and every first-year teacher. Through telephone, e-mail, and face-to-face meetings, the student knows he or she has an experienced mentor to ask for an idea for a lesson, a hint for handling discipline, or a shoulder to lean on.

If you would like to join the Project, call Nickels at 1-800-742-0047.

**Careful study:** At right, under the watchful eye of retired Omaha teacher Judi Crick, University of Nebraska at Omaha student Rachel Sorensen studies a typical teacher contract.



**Get acquainted:** From left, UNL's Amber Savidge, Midland University's Katherine Lederer, and Wayne State's Laura Brockelsby ponder their get-acquainted remarks.



**Checking the questions:** Retired Lexington teacher Lisa Fricke reviews posted questions as she recounts her career in a get-acquainted session.

# Retirements Cause Field Staff Shuffle

## Elwood, Scates Retire; Roach, Peterson Hired

The retirement of two long-time NSEA employees has resulted in a shuffle of duties and assignments.

Organizational Specialists Tom Scates and Lynne Elwood retired this year. Judy Roach and Mandy Peterson left the classroom for the openings created by their departure.

Elwood taught at Macy and then Millard, where she was a building rep, chaired the Millard Education Association's Legislative

Committee and was a member of the MEA Board. As MEA president, she helped rebuild a district teacher evaluation program and pilot an intensive assistance team for teachers. She joined the NSEA staff in 1999.

Scates taught at Winfield, KS, before becoming a UniServ director in Omaha. In 1996, he became executive director of the Omaha Education Association, and held that post until retiring in 2007. He returned to NSEA in 2011, and retired in February.

At OEA, he led efforts to defeat a zero percent budget lid and helped pass a \$250 million bond election.

Marlene Wehrbein, formerly the organizational specialist for the Metro South Unit, will replace Scates at OEA. Roach will take the organizational specialist reins in Wehrbein's former Unit, Metro South.

Peterson will serve as the organizational specialist for the Metro West Unit.

### PPC Appointee

Peterson left Lincoln High School, where her main course load was international baccalaureate and advanced



**Peterson**



**Roach**



**Wehrbein**



**Elwood**



**Scates**

placement psychology. She has also been an elementary counselor, and has taught at each level, pre-K through college.

She was a faculty rep with the Lincoln Education Association and served on the LEA Board. In 2013, the governor named her to the Nebraska Professional Practices Commission, which holds hearings and makes recommendations on educators' certificates after investigations confirm a violation of professional standards.

She has her National Board

Certification in counseling, has served on the Lincoln Public Schools Crisis Response Team, and served on the LPS Appraisal Committee as a member and a trainer of trainers.

Peterson received a bachelor's degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and a master's degree in clinical counseling at Doane College.

She is adept at child and adult counseling and psychology and is skilled in mediation and conflict resolution. She enjoys reading, politics, cooking and needle crafts.

### Past District Vice President

Roach taught at Plainview and

Norfolk, and for the past 18 years has been a counselor at Louisville. She earned an associate degree from Mid-Plains Community College, a bachelor's degree at Kearney State College and a master's degree at Wayne State.

Roach has been local association president, building rep, lead negotiator, and at one point guided her local to the Commission of Industrial Relations. She has served on the executive committees of NSEA's Metro District and Capital District – and served as Capital District vice president for one year. She served on NSEA's Government Relations Committee and twice chaired a Legislative Interview Committee.

She is a member of the United Methodist Church, is vice president of her homeowner's association, and is interested in the arts, particularly theater. She favors spending time with family, especially her five grandchildren.

## New Assignments

Three NSEA Organizational Specialists are new to their units. They are:

### Marlene Wehrbein, OEA

Omaha Education Association

### Judy Roach, Metro South Unit

Bellevue Education Association  
Papillion-LaVista Education Association  
Omaha Administrators Education Assn.  
Southeast Community College Ed. Assn.  
Southeast Community College Prof. Assn.

### Mandy Peterson, Metro West Unit

Millard Education Association  
Westside Education Association  
Metro Community College Ed. Assn.



## Re-Elect John Heineman NEA Board of Directors



## The Standards Challenge

These NSEA members met in Lincoln on a cold and snowy Saturday to research the alignment of state standards, instructional practices and assessment through a comprehensive delivery system. Their challenge: to determine how best to promote this alignment through education stakeholders. The team will report to the NSEA Board of Directors in April.

In front, from left, are Ann Allyn, Lincoln; and Pat McLaughlin, Alliance. Back row, from left, are Tracy Naylor, Lexington; Susan Stake, Waverly; Angela Mosier, Westside; William West and Linda Freye, Lincoln.

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*Rick Smith*  
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*Lisa Dieker*  
(lisadieker.com)



Lisa Dieker, University of Central Florida, has conducted extensive research in preparing teachers for the classroom, co-teaching, inclusion and using technology.

# 'Tiny Stitches, Big Life'

## Quilter's Life Aids Fourth Grade History

Grace Snyder's lively eyes gaze out of her 1903 wedding photo. There's an astonishing hat atop her head and a tiny, cat-got-the-cream smile on her lips. She perches just behind her cowboy husband, her hands resting near his left shoulder.

Born in 1882, reared in a sod house on a Custer County homestead and married to a Sandhills rancher, she recounted her pioneer life in the 1963 book "No Time on My Hands."

She became nationally known for her quilting. Two of her quilts were designated as among the 100 best 20th century quilts by Quilters Newsletter Magazine in 1999. She was named to the National Quilters Hall of Fame in 1980.

Now Snyder is the focal point of a new history curriculum developed jointly by NET Learning Services, the International Quilt Study Center and Museum at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Nebraska State Historical Society.

"Tiny Stitches, Big Life" is an online multimedia project using Snyder's quilts and life experiences to bring pioneer history to life for Nebraska elementary students. It is the first module of a larger project, "Stories of Nebraska Quilters," with plans to develop more material about Nebraskans remembered by their quilts. The project supplements Nebraska's fourth-grade curriculum, which requires students to learn about state history.

A website details the chapters of Snyder's life, using her quilts to illustrate major themes. The plans meet the latest state standards requiring students to learn to analyze primary and secondary information sources while they study history. Learn more at:

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

# Loan Forgiveness & More

## Senators Have Thirsty Ear for Teacher Testimony on Education Issues

It has never been easy to push a bill to passage in the Nebraska Legislature.

In any given session of the Nebraska Legislature, state senators introduce hundreds of bills. Few make it out of committee, fewer still advance past the first of three rounds of debate. Only a fraction of bills ever earn a signature from the governor.

Certainly, among bills dealing with education, those that have the benefit of a teacher's testimony at the hearing stage have a better chance at advancement than most.

For instance, when **Lincoln** elementary school music teacher **Skyler Reising** spoke to the Legislature's Education Committee about the need to expand the tuition reimbursement program for teachers, he had their attention.

Reising told senators that after earning a bachelor's degree at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in 2009, he set out to do what his parents taught him was important: to continue to improve himself. He enrolled in a 48-hour course for a master's degree in counseling from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and now drives back and forth during the evening to attend class.

He told senators that his one concern was how to pay for his graduate work. Thanks to recession-era belt-tightening, the Enhancing Excellence in Education Program was suspended when Reising began. Fortunately, the loan forgiveness program was reinstated in his second year of study.

"I don't know of a teacher who doesn't want to be the best teacher they can be – but it takes constant work and ongoing study," Reising told senators. "It's not cheap and – believe me – the teachers I know are not getting rich teaching."

In fact, Reising said his family returned the cable TV box to the cable company in order to cut costs.

"The only thing I really miss are live sports – but that's what friends and sports bars are for," he said.

That drew a round of laughter from senators, but also drove home a memorable point: teachers make sacrifices to enhance their skills knowledge – and that benefits students.

### Anecdotes Remembered

Educators are reliable, believable and articulate. They can

tell stories about their classrooms that resonate with lawmakers. They have anecdotes that lawmakers will remember when it finally comes time to say 'yea' or 'nay.'

Several NSEA members have testified before the Legislature already this year. NSEA staff and President Nancy Fulton have also testified numerous times. Here is a look at the latest before the legislature, with snippets of testimony on some bills.

### Tuition Reimbursement

NSEA encouraged introduction of LB842, which would add an additional \$200,000 in lottery proceeds for teacher loan forgiveness. NSEA supports LB842, which remains in committee.

### School Funding

LB967 includes recommendations by the Education Committee on state aid funding, and includes a plan to pull the teacher education allowance from the state aid funding program. The bill would also reduce the instructional time allowance by one-half in 2015-16, and eliminate it in 2016-17.

NSEA contends that the two allowances should remain until the state's education system is reviewed through the "visioning process" contained in LB1103.

**Westside Education Association President Alan Bone** told the Education Committee that the teacher education allowance plays a vital role in placing well-educated teachers in classrooms around the state. School districts that recognize the value of employing teachers with these credentials should be rewarded for doing so, not penalized with repeal of the current allowance, he said. The allowance also provides an incentive to districts to value advanced education and training as one way to

improve student achievement.

### Charter Schools

LB972 (see sidebar) would authorize the creation of charter schools. These schools would have a greater degree of autonomy than schools currently operating under the authority of the school boards. However, there are currently very few restrictions on student transfers in Nebraska, and parents already have a great deal of choice in terms of school selection. NSEA is also concerned that these "public" charter schools are a first step to



**Ready to Shake it Up:** Lincoln music teacher **Skyler Reising's** anecdotes about teaching excellence and teacher sacrifice resonated with state senators.

allow “private, for-profit” charter schools in the state. NSEA opposes LB972, which is in committee.

### **Visioning Process for Education**

LB1103 provides for a strategic planning process for pre-school to post-secondary (P-16) education in Nebraska. The Legislature’s Education Committee would conduct a strategic planning process to create a vision that would include aspirational goals, visionary objectives, meaningful priorities, and practical strategies to address the potential of all students.

NSEA President Nancy Fulton told the Education Committee that the association supports LB1103, now on General File.

“Our members understand firsthand what a quality education means for the vitality of our state, and for the children who receive that education,” said Fulton. “We are ready, willing, and able to work to develop a statewide vision for education that will enhance the pursuit of the good life in Nebraska.”

### **School Security**

LB872 would establish a School Security Officer with the Department of Education. The officer would collect school security plans; recommend school security standards to be set by the department; conduct a security assessment in the public schools; identify security deficiencies; and provide other security-related guidance. NSEA supports LB872, which is on General File.

### **Priority Schools**

Sen. Greg Adams’ LB438 would require the State Board of Education, based on existing school and district performance scores, to designate no more than five priority schools in the state. A priority school would



**A Voice at the Capitol: Westside Education Association President Alan Bone, right, testified before the Legislature’s Appropriations Committee in February, urging senators to preserve the teacher education allowance factor in the state aid formula. Also testifying were NSEA’s Larry Scherer, left, and Jason Hayes, center.**

of progress.

Compliance with a progress plan would be required for a district to maintain accreditation. NSEA backs LB438, now on Select File.

### **Reading and Retention**

LB952, offered by Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh, would allow a school to retain a student in grade level for reading deficiency. NSEA Director of Instructional Advocacy Jay Sears told the Education Committee that not all students come to school ready to learn, given any number of circumstances.

“The supports for students who are not reading at grade level are grounded in what is recognized as sound scientific research based practice,” said Sears. “NSEA is opposed to the state mandating ‘retention in grade’ for any student that is not achieving at grade level. However, NSEA strongly supports programs grounded in researched-based practice that are designed to meet individual students’ needs.”

NSEA opposes LB952.

### **Allied School Systems**

LB682 would require all school districts with less than 650 students to join at least

be in the lowest performance category at the time of the designation. Each school would remain a priority school until removed by the State Board of Education.

The Commissioner of Education would appoint an intervention team for school’s with priority designation. That team would assist the district with diagnosing issues that negatively affect student achievement, designing and implementing strategies to address such issues, and developing measurable indicators

# **Deja Vu on Charters!**

## **NSEA: Partnership in Omaha is Answer**

Charter schools, hailed by some as a “silver bullet” cure to America’s alleged education crisis are, in fact, a path to privatization.

Multiple valid studies show that charters perform no better than public schools. What they do, however, is rob tax dollars and funnel them to private, or not-for-profit – or sometimes even for-profit – schools. Nebraska is one of the few states where charters are barred. But Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh’s LB972 proposes five charter schools in Omaha, giving the charter scheme a foot in the door.

When LB972 came to the Education Committee, Jay Sears, NSEA’s director of instructional advocacy, testified in opposition. He had testified against a similar bill a year earlier, almost to the day.

“It’s déjà vu all over again,” said Sears.

Sears noted the Omaha Public Schools and the Omaha Education Association are sharing a five-year, \$1.5 million NEA Foundation grant, with additional funds from the Sherwood Foundation.

The grant funds a collaborative effort to improve instructional practices, increase academic achievement, and develop collaborative partnerships with the families and communities in neighborhood schools.

Sears said that in the OPS buildings using the grant, initial data suggests that student achievement, as measured by NeSA, is improving. One year of data is not a trend, but educators are encouraged that they are improving instructional practices and student achievement.

“It shows that teachers, principals, community, and family can close achievement gaps without charter schools or independent schools,” he said, urging patience.

“I ask you to give the new Omaha Public Schools Board of Education and new superintendent the opportunity to show what they can do in support of increased student achievement for all students in OPS,” said Sears.

three other school districts governed by this act to create an alliance with no less than 1300 students. Every school alliance would then agree to a uniform bell and calendar schedule.

NSEA opposes LB682, which is on General File.

### Para-educator Survey

LB789 would task the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Project Para and the Department of Education to survey public schools regarding the use and distribution of para-educators and to develop guidelines for the training and professional development, use, supervision and evaluation of para-educators.

NSEA member **Gerald Hopp**, a para-educator who has worked for the past five years with special education students in **Falls City**, testified in favor of LB789, which NSEA supports. It remains in committee.

“Paras can benefit professionally by taking coursework to improve effectiveness in their current job or, if they choose, to acquire the education, skills and training to be qualified as a certificated teacher,” said Hopp. “How to deliver and receive such professional development can come from this survey.”

### Medicaid Expansion

Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell has introduced LB887 which would expand Medicaid to cover an additional 55,000 Nebraskans who are stuck in a coverage gap and cannot afford health insurance on their own. Not only would the bill provide health care coverage to thousands of children who might otherwise miss school days, or attend school in less than optimum health, proponents say the bill would generate an estimated \$700 million in economic activity in Nebraska each year, and create up to 10,000 jobs.

NSEA’s Fulton noted the association’s support of LB887

“I see on a daily basis how a child’s ability to learn is impaired when the child regularly brings unmet health needs to the classroom and, alternatively, how healthy students thrive in a classroom setting,” she said.

“It is the position of the NSEA that this legislation will lead to healthier classrooms and a healthier school system as a whole,” she said.

In addition, the bill will help an estimated 1,000 elementary and secondary school employees in Nebraska who fall into the coverage gap.

“There are no better investments than the education and health of our citizens,” said Fulton.

### Education Trust Fund

Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz offered LB1025 and LB1026, which work in concert to establish an Education Trust Fund. The impetus of this bill came from NSEA’s 2013 Delegate Assembly.



**The Legislative Facts:** Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley gave NSEA-Retired members the latest details of legislative progress during a lobby day in February. Hadley said schools — many of them up against the levy limit — along with counties and other entities would lose a combined \$65 million in revenue if ag land valuation is reduced from 75 percent to 65 percent, as is proposed.

LB1025 would establish the fund, which will hold Internet sales tax revenues, to be used to smooth wild swings in state aid to schools. LB1026 would kick-start the fund with a portion of the state’s current record-setting cash reserve.

Establishment of the trust fund would send a clear message that Nebraskans value education and recognize the importance of consistency when it comes to state-wide funding for education, especially during an economic downturn when the state and school districts are facing periods of declining revenues.

NSEA supports both LB1025 and LB1026.

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- **Richard Lombardo**, Austin Community College
- **Carol Rempp**, Nebraska Department of Education
- **Scott Ryan**, Three Lakes High School, Albany, Oregon
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# Questions About Your Retirement?

## NSEA Organizational Specialists Can Help You Get Started

Are you considering retiring this year? Next year?

Regardless of your target date, you'll have questions about the process, from district policies to the handling of your state-managed retirement plan. NSEA members often ask those questions of their organizational specialist.



*"My circumstances at school this year have changed so I am seriously thinking of retiring in May. I will be 60 in April and will have 30 years in system.*

*"First question: By what date do I have to notify the Service Unit of retiring?"*

*"Second question: Can you send me information on health insurance options should I retire. My husband is a farmer who has depended on my health insurance through my work. Would becoming a lifetime member of NSEA-Retired help me to procure health insurance until we are Medicare eligible?"*

NSEA's 18 organizational specialists know the details of your contract, are familiar with the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems office, which handles your retirement dollars, and understand the retirement process.

NSEA's field staff are also up-to-date on pending legislation

and can respond to questions like this one, which refers to a story that appeared in The Voice:

*"Thank you for the article regarding our retirement. I believe it is so important to know which senators are for or against us. I appreciate all that you are doing. I was wondering if you could tell us what the changes in our retirement are that made our plan solvent?"*

Often, the question is simple and straightforward.

*"Several years ago I attended a day-long retirement seminar. Are these seminars still taking place?"*

The answer, of course, is yes. And the NSEA organizational specialist assigned to your school district can answer your question and point you to the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems office for information about those seminars.

Clearly, your membership gives you the NSEA Edge.

NSEA field staff are located from Omaha to Scottsbluff. In case urgent assistance is needed, contact NSEA Headquarters at 1-800-742-0047, where a field staff member is always on duty. In Omaha, call 402-731-0800. In Lincoln, call 402-489-7500.

Or, use the 'Contact Us' link on the NSEA website at:

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

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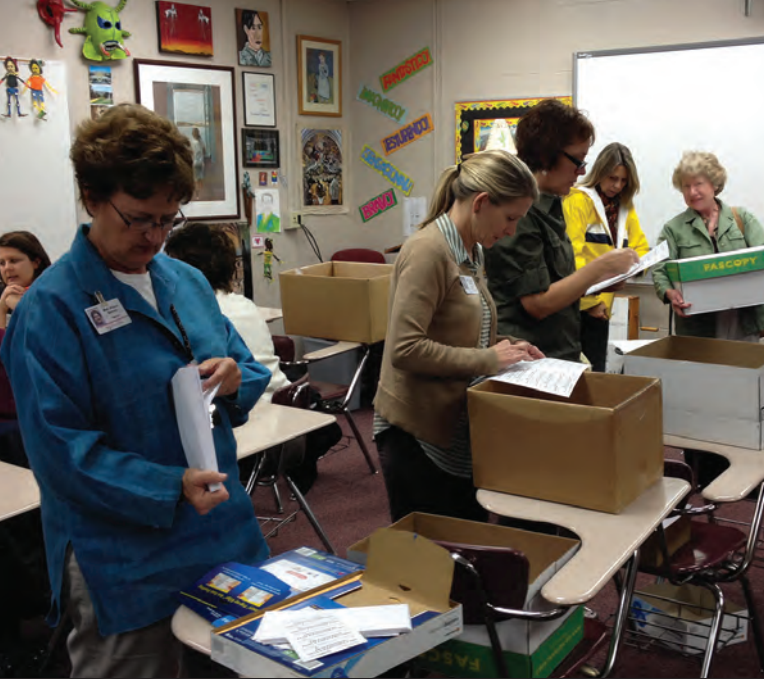
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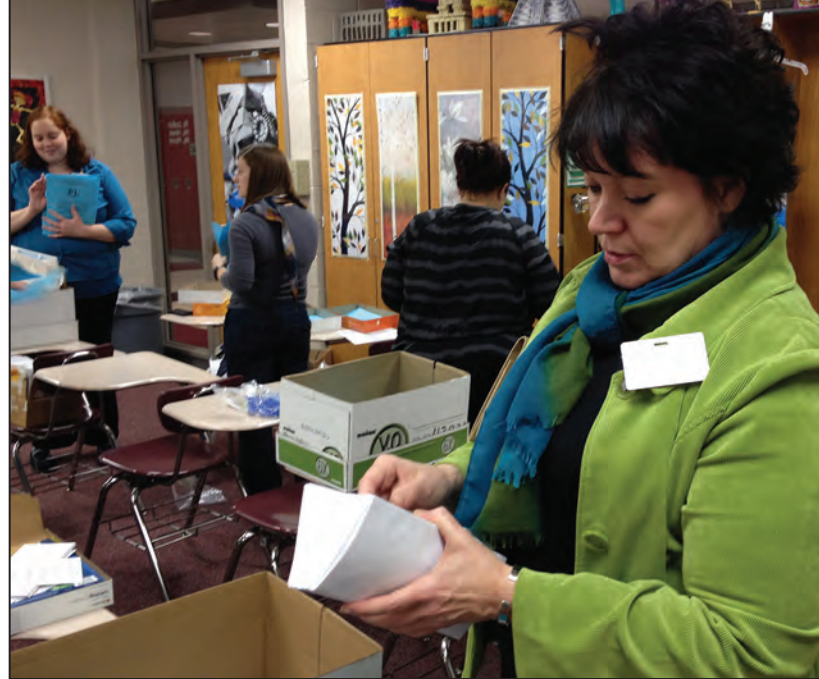


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**Assembly line:** Alison Barnes, foreground, leads the way in putting the Papillion-LaVista Education Association's American Education Week project in order. The project raised more than \$6,600 for the NSEA Children's Fund.



**Getting organized:** Papillion-LaVista Education Association member Ellen Buglewicz, foreground, counts envelopes as Maria Wilson, at left, and Lindsay Wilson work on another part of the project.

# The Ultimate Beneficiary: Children

## Papillion-LaVista, Fremont Raise Cash for Children's Fund

The Papillion-LaVista Education Association's annual American Education Week celebration was combined with a Children's Fund Campaign, and the results were phenomenal.

The event raised more than \$6,600 for the NSEA Children's Fund. Highlighting the week was the districtwide distribution of "spirit beads" provided by the school district's business partner, Oriental Trading Company.

In addition, the Fremont Education Association held a fundraiser recently that raised more than \$1,230 for the Children's Fund, said FEA Treasurer Elizabeth Turner.

PLEA Vice President Amy Himes said she "touched" members in her building each day of the American Education Week celebration.

"In my building, I put something red, white, and blue in staff mailboxes every day," said Himes. Among the items she distributed were toy airplanes on the Monday of American Education Week.

"At the start of the school year, our new superintendent, Andrew Rikli, used a fighter pilot theme for our kick-off meeting," she said. "His team showed

themselves in pilot gear and appeared to the music of 'Top Gun.' I played off that theme with the toy airplanes, and encouraged everyone to 'fly high' as professional educators."

On Tuesday, "spirit beads" were distributed. The rest of the week at Himes' building included American flags on Wednesday, which was also a district-wide "jeans" day; quotes about education on Thursday; and a "big thank-you" to all staff on Friday.


The project differed at other buildings, she said. The ultimate beneficiary,

however, was the Children's Fund.


Since 1994, donations to the Children's Fund have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to help children in need. In the past two years alone, the Children's Fund has provided nearly \$100,000 in aid. Contributions come from teachers, businesses and fundraisers. Every penny goes to help children.

For funding to help a student, there is no red tape, no form to fill out. Just call 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)



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# EMAC Team at Leader Training

Four NSEA members attended the 2014 NEA Minority Leadership Training program in Las Vegas recently.

More than 150 NEA members attended the event, which provides skills minority members need to be effective leaders in their schools, communities, and the association. NEA's designated minority groups are American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; Black; and Hispanic.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the conference and learned many different ways to reach members and students, and how to make a positive impact on their lives," said Ginger Rogers, chair of NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee and a teacher at Bellevue.

Jose Hernandez, an Hispanic rep on the EMAC, teaches at Norfolk.

"I went into teaching wanting to share my culture, be a role model and



**Learning about leadership:** These members of NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs affiliate attended the 2014 NEA Minority Leadership Training program recently. From left are EMAC Chair Ginger Rogers, Bellevue; Jose Hernandez, Norfolk; Sharon Bell, Lincoln; and Edward Ventura, Omaha.

make a difference," said Hernandez. "MLT reminded me of that. I walked out with a clear vision of how powerful we, as educators, are and what a great association we have to support us in our journey of leading our profession."

Omaha teacher Edward Ventura is vice chair of the NSEA EMAC.

"I enjoyed sessions on assertiveness and communication. Each session helped build my leadership skills to make sure I speak up and stand up for

the rights of our members," he said.

Also attending was Lincoln NSEA member Sharon Bell. She considered the training a great experience, especially learning about the association through a Foundations workshop that addressed the purpose and history of the association from a Black perspective, with focus on AFT joining with NEA.

All four also attended the NEA Leadership Summit-West, with other members of the Nebraska delegation.

# Rock the Classroom!

## Rock the Vote Offers Democracy Class

It's time to rock the classroom!

Rock the Vote's Democracy Class is a short, free, 45-minute civics lesson that teaches high school students the history of voting rights, the power of their participation in our democracy, and how the voting process works.

With celebrity-filled animation, a mock election, and classroom discussion, Democracy Class has taught nearly 250,000 people about what is at stake and prepared them to engage. More than 3,000 teachers across the U.S. have used Democracy Class since it launched in 2010.

That is not enough. For our democracy to thrive, every young person in America must get a civic education and a chance to register to vote as they turn 18! Spread the word. Download the free Democracy Class toolkit at:

[rtvote.com/i7T1cv](http://rtvote.com/i7T1cv)

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*"I like the fact that the items in the library are continuing to grow. Relevant, high quality videos without commercials are the hardest thing to find for my classes and I appreciate that the selection is growing. Thank you!"*  
**Judy Montgomery, Assistant Director, Curriculum**  
 University of Nebraska High School, Lincoln

*"The video clips have enhanced a number of learning experiences, providing students with opportunities not available in the classroom."*  
**Peggy Tilgner, Science Education Consultant**  
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[NET.pbslearningmedia.org](http://NET.pbslearningmedia.org)

## Nebraska Handwriting Contest Open for Entries

Beautiful handwriting is not a lost art – one only needs to see entries in the Nebraska Handwriting Contest to verify that fact.

It is time now for entries into the contest, administered by the University of Nebraska at Kearney, endorsed by the NSEA and the Nebraska Department of Education, with prizes sponsored by, The Sequel Bookstore in Kearney.

This is the 24th contest to promote legible handwriting as an effective means of communication. Any Nebraska resident is eligible, with prizes for ages 12 and under; ages 13-16; ages 17-49; and ages 50 and over. Participants may choose the paper and the writing instrument, as long as the paper measures 8.5 by 11 inches. The prescribed text can be found on the website at:

[coe.unk.edu/contest/RULES%202014.html](http://coe.unk.edu/contest/RULES%202014.html)

Entries are due by March 31.

## Civil War Program Offers Week of Learning

Applications are due soon for the weeklong Catherine B. Reynolds Civil War Washington Teacher Fellows Program. The weeklong institute takes place in Washington, D.C., July 13-19.

Join up to 25 teachers to learn about Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass and the city of Washington during the Civil War. The institute will include tours of Ford's Theatre, Lincoln's Cottage, the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, the U.S. Capitol and more.

The week will provide a trove of primary source material for classroom use, as well as new skills for place-based learning experiences.

A \$1,000 registration fee gets a round trip ticket and six nights at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel. A \$600 registration nets a roundtrip ticket and shared room. Applications are due April 4.

For details and the application form, look under the 'Education' tab at:

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

## Bring Recess Back, Says Wildlife Group

The National Wildlife Foundation reports that students at nearly 30

## Is Nepal in Your Summer Plans? Italy? China?

Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, runs summer professional development travel programs designed for teachers.

Educators have the option to earn graduate school credit and professional development credit. The trips are 8 to 24 days in length and are designed and discounted to be interesting and affordable. GEEO provides educational materials and the structure to help teachers bring their experiences into the classroom. The trips are open to all K-12 and university educators and administrators, as well as retired educators. Educators are permitted to bring along a non-educator guest.

The 2014 schedule includes travels to: India Spring Break, Morocco Spring Break, India/Nepal, Italy, Portugal/Spain, Amalfi Coast, Greece, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Thailand/Laos, Cambodia, China, Russia/Mongolia/China, Turkey, South Africa/Mozambique/Zimbabwe/Botswana, Morocco, Australia, New Zealand, Costa Rica, Peru, and The Galapagos Islands.

The registration deadline is June 1. Space is limited and many programs will be full before the deadline.

Details about each trip are at:

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

GEEO can be reached 7 days a week, toll free at 1-877-600-0105 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m., EST.

percent of elementary schools get far less recess time than did their parents a few years ago.

The NWF advocates for the return of daily recess to schools by working with policymakers to implement policies that ensure recess for elementary students. The NWF recommends such a policy:

- Require at least 20 minutes per day of recess.
- Be scheduled in addition to designated physical education and lunch periods.
- Be outdoors, except in extreme weather.

■ Be in a safe outdoor area with play equipment.

■ Provide a natural play area.

■ Not be withheld as punishment or cancelled to make up for missed instructional time.

An unintended consequence of the No Child Left Behind Act is more focus on test results and less on overall student well-being. But, says the NWF, today's children are less physically fit, less able to concentrate, and less able to relate to others than previous generations.

NWF has a variety of resources at:

[www.nwf.org/recess](http://www.nwf.org/recess)

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## Save With Dave!

NEAMB's retirement savings program is called NEA Valuebuilder. It provides an ideal opportunity for members to supplement retirement income and to better protect their financial future. Designed for members, Valuebuilder provides a diverse selection of investment options to meet your needs. The program works with a financial advisor or on a do-it-yourself basis.



Glenn

Learn more at:

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

### Got College Debt?

The NEA Smart Option Student Loan by Sallie Mae is an ideal way to help pay for college expenses not covered by scholarships or federal loans. For degree-granting institutions, members and their families receive a 0.25 percent interest rate reduction after making 12 consecutive on-time payments. The program has competitive rates — 2.25 to 9.37 percent APR — with no origination fees or prepayment penalty. NEA members can defer payments until after graduation or choose an in-school repayment option. Or, make monthly payments on time while in school and get a 2 percent reward with an Upromise account.

Members can borrow up to 100 percent of school certified education costs (minimum \$1,000). Learn more at:

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

### The NEA Academy

The NEA Academy offers high-quality, practical, online professional development and continuing education courses designed to meet your needs.

Programs offer self-paced study and instructor-led virtual classrooms. The Academy is a perfect fit for educators who seek a convenient means of gaining additional skills. Courses can help earn graduate credit, PDPs or CEUs.

The best deal: NEA members receive a 5 to 20 percent tuition discount, special access to NEA member-only scholarships, and some fees waived.

For details, check the website at:

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

*David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative*

# Tips for Choosing A Rewards Credit Card

Hoping to Earn a Decent Return on your Money?

What could be better than a credit card that rewards you for using it? Credit card rewards programs can offer lots of exciting perks, including cash back, gift cards, and travel. But every reward costs something, and you should make sure you understand the trade-offs to ensure you find the best card for you.

### How do rewards work?

Simply put, the more you spend with your rewards card, the more rewards you earn. The key is to find the best program for your needs. You may be tempted by that great rewards card your buddy just got, but make sure it's suited to your lifestyle and what you value. For example, if you don't drive much, a card that offers gas rewards as its main perk won't make sense. Look for a rewards plan that makes it easy to earn something you'll really enjoy.

### What can you get?

Many programs allow you to earn one or more points for every dollar you purchase. Some only let you earn points for certain items like gas or groceries, or for shopping at certain stores. There are also airline programs that let you earn miles for purchases. Some cards offer just a single type of reward, while others offer your choice of many different options. Reward types include:

■ **Cash back:** Some cash back cards allow you to deposit the cash you earn into your savings or investment account, or credit it to your statement. Others mail you a check.

■ **Merchant-specific:** These plans offer money back when you shop with certain merchants. Some also offer discounts on future purchases.

■ **Travel:** These plans offer rewards for using a particular airline, resort, hotel chain or even cruise line. Some cards give discounts on your choice of multiple airlines, as well as hotels, car rentals and restaurants.

■ **Gift cards:** With some cards, you

are likely to earn rewards points that can be redeemed for gift cards for retailers, restaurants and more.

### What else should I know?

Before you apply, ask yourself:

■ How do the rewards add up? Consider how many points you earn for a dollar, and how many you need to get a reward. Check to see how many points you can earn each year and whether points expire. It pays to shop around.

■ How easy is it to get a reward? Many cash reward plans reward you automatically, as soon as you've spent enough to qualify. With others, you can redeem your rewards online or by phone, whenever you choose to do so. It's a good idea to check out how user-friendly the company's website is before you apply.

■ Is there a catch? Rewards credit cards may charge an annual fee or have a higher interest rate than other cards. There may also be a fee to redeem your points or shipping fees to deliver merchandise rewards. A great program may be worth the extra cost, but make sure you know all the details up front.

■ What if I pay late? Late or missed payments can affect your ability to earn or redeem points or remove your reward balance completely. Some cards charge a fee to reinstate rewards when payment is late after a certain number of days.

Remember, with a rewards card, the more you buy, the more rewards you earn. But running up a big balance just for rewards may not be your best option. It's okay to use your card frequently, but make sure to spend only what you can afford to pay back. If you choose and use your card wisely, you may be in for a rewarding experience.

Searching for the right card? Learn about the NEA rewards credit card:

[www.neamb.com/finance/cash-rewards-credit-card-visa-bank-of-america.htm](http://www.neamb.com/finance/cash-rewards-credit-card-visa-bank-of-america.htm)





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# The Common Core: National Rigor or Rigidity?

In 1785, the Continental Congress adopted the Land Ordinance, which began the process of surveying and selling the land west of the 13 Colonies. The standard measurement that was adopted was “Gunter’s chain,” a metal chain that was 22 yards long. For nearly 200 years, much of the legal description of land west of the Appalachians continued to be recorded in units of “chains.” The extensive use of this measuring system (still used by the U.S. Public Land Survey System) has remained a major argument against the American adoption of the metric system. It is a great reminder that a national system of standards becomes extraordinarily difficult to change. It is a lesson when we consider national standards for our public schools.

For most of the history of public education in America, standards, testing and curriculum design has been a matter of local or state determination. There has been relatively little interstate or federal coordination. The strength of American public education was found in caring teachers and a local community strongly connected to its school. Local content and performance standards were relatively easy to improve.

One of the arguments put forward today for a “common core” of learning standards for the entire nation is that such standards ensure an equal chance for all students to have a rigorous curriculum. It sounds great. But lack of equal rigor in our local schools may not be our greatest problem; the looming national problem may be equal rigidity and inability to change a national system of educational standards. Have we learned nothing from the negative effects of the national No Child Left Behind law?

## A Legitimate Concern

There is a high level of support by both teachers and the public for the general notion of high standards for students. People believe in high standards as an important value in education policy. The reality of implementing the standards and the extent of its effects on the entire system is another

story. There is a significant gap between well-intentioned belief in the value of high standards and the extensive and often damaging impact of a hastily designed implementation. There is a critical difference between extensive impact and good results. We all want improvement — better results. The hope is that nationally uniform standards can deliver those results. But every policy decision is a balance between positive results and negative impact.

Those who argue for the concept of uniform standards point to the inequities that now exist in opportunities for students in different locales. It is a legitimate concern, but the cost of a nationally uniform system of content standards is the staggering impact of a system of interconnected, and often unintended, changes in the entire system.

## The Tipping Point

A national system of content standards naturally tends towards alignment with dozens of other aspects of schooling. Those who believe that changes in a nationally-adopted Common Core may be easily accomplished must also consider the resulting changes in its ultimate derivatives: a common curriculum, common tests, a common accountability system for teachers and

schools, common textbooks, materials, common “best practices” for teachers, individual classrooms, colleges of education, and common linkages between elementary, secondary and college standards. There are legitimate arguments on both sides of the question of the Common Core, but an important question in the adoption of any system is how easily significant improvements can be made.

Incented by federal grant programs, the influence of the 45 states that have now agreed to adopt the Common Core of content standards may have passed the “tipping point” in forcing this issue on every state. Nebraska can be proud of its local and state autonomy in determining its own course. For as long as we are able, resisting the national folly of an immutable educational uniformity will be this state’s gift to its children.



**What is the Standard for Content? NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen with some different standards.**

## Frightful Weather, Delightful Lobbying!

### Foul February Day Fails to Slow Retirees!

The weather outside may have been frightful, but the results of the NSEA-Retired annual Lobby Day was quite delightful!

More than two dozen members of NSEA-Retired braved a blast of lousy weather on Feb. 4 to learn about issues, brush up on lobbying skills, and then head to the halls of the Nebraska State Capitol to talk to state senators about issues important to retirees and educators.

Attendees were informed of the details of LB987, which would provide tax relief for some Social Security beneficiaries. The Coalition to Make Nebraska More Retiree Friendly supports some amendments extending the tax relief to more Nebraskans.

NSEA-Retired President Roger Rea, supporting making Nebraska friendlier to retired citizens, gave an informative presentation prior to attendees heading out to speak with specific senators. To find the information presented by Rea, look for the 'Tax Relief for Seniors!' link on the website at:

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

### Register to Attend the Spring Conference

The Spring Conference is near, and it promises to be another great event!

The 2014 conference is Thursday, April 10, at the Younes Convention Center, Kearney. Reserve the date and look for online registration soon!

A highlight will be John Carter of the State Historical Society and "Photographing the American Dream in Nebraska."

As always, the conference will feature a morning keynote on identity theft, several breakout sessions and an afternoon business meeting. Tentative breakout sessions will look at Zumba, Tai Chi, juicing, scrapbooking, sleep disorders, and a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska update.

The much-loved dessert reception, followed by a wrap up, evaluation and door prizes, will close out the day.

NSEA-Retired has arranged a special room rate with the Fairfield Inn, which is connected by a walkway to



**Ready and able to lobby:** Four members of NSEA-Retired strategize in the halls of the state capitol before meeting with senators. From left are Michael Wy-lie and De Tonack, Lincoln; Bob Christensen, Taylor; and Bill Hayes, Lincoln.

the convention center. Contact the Inn for reservations at 1-308-236-4200 to reserve a room, and be sure to ask for the NSEA-Retired \$99.95 rate.

Registration and an agenda will be online after March 10 at:

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

Questions? Call Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047, or email her at:

[rebecca.smith@nsea.org](mailto:rebecca.smith@nsea.org)

### Elections Ballots Due Soon!

Be sure to return your completed

ballot for the NSEA-Retired elections prior to March 11. NSEA-Retired members should have received ballots and a postage paid return envelope around Feb. 22. Ballots must be postmarked by March 11 in order to be considered in the final count. For the list of candidates, look for the 'Nominations for NSEA-Retired...' link on the NSEA-Retired website at:

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

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



## EXPERIENCE AND MORE VOTE TOM BLACK VICE PRESIDENT, NSEA-RETIRED

- MORE THAN 50 NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLIES.
- 33 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLIES.
- 30 YEARS ON THE ELKHORN DISTRICT BOARD.
- 20 YEARS ON THE NSEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.
- 16 YEARS ON THE NSEA-RETIRED BOARD.
- 5 YEARS ON THE NEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

I PREVIOUSLY SERVED FIVE YEARS AS NSEA-RETIRED PRESIDENT. PLEASE CONSIDER ALLOWING ME TO CONTINUE TO SERVE YOU, AND TO REPRESENT OUR PROFESSION.

# A 10-Year Certificate

## Eight NSEA Members Earn National Certification

Eight NSEA members are among more than 4,000 teachers nationwide who recently achieved certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), demonstrating the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully prepare students for 21st century careers.

They are among more than 100 Nebraska teachers to have received National certification.

Research has shown that the students of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) outperform their peers in other classrooms. Most recently, a 2012 study by Harvard University's Strategic Data Project found that students of NBCTs in the Los Angeles Unified School District made learning gains equivalent to an additional two months of instruction in math and one month in English Language Arts.

## The Newly Certified

The NSEA members who recently received certification for a 10-year period are:

**Shelby Aaberg, Scottsbluff**

Mathematics/Adolescence and Young Adulthood

**Danielle Buhrman, Grand Island**

Mathematics/Adolescence and Young Adulthood

**Alicia Davis, Lincoln**

Mathematics/Early Adolescence

**Angela Holdren, Omaha**  
Generalist/Early Childhood

**Jill Luschen, Omaha**

Mathematics/Early Adolescence

**Deborah Oshlo, Omaha**  
English as a New Language/Early and Middle Childhood

**Jaisa Poppleton, Millard**  
Career and Technical Education/  
Early Childhood

**Daniel Schaben, Arapahoe**

Mathematics/Adolescence and Young Adulthood

National certification is available in 25 areas, from Pre-K–12th grades. National Board Standards are written for teachers, by teachers, and accomplished teachers are represented at every level of the organization, from key staff roles to the NBPTS Board of Directors and the Certification Council, which guides policy and implementation of the certification.

The National Board mission is to advance student learning and achievement by establishing the definitive standards and systems for certifying accomplished educators, providing programs and advocating policies that support excellence in teaching and leading, and engaging National Board certified teachers and leaders in that process.

For more details, go to:

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

## Jeff Nannen

Jeff Nannen, 55, Omaha, was a teacher at Westside District 66. He passed away on Feb. 18.

Nannen was a standout high school and college high jumper and basketball player, and later played pro basketball in Europe. He was an elementary physical education teacher at Westside, and coached at Westside Middle School and High School.

A brother and his parents survive.

## Kenneth Bailey

Kenneth Bailey, 72, Guide Rock, died in January. He was a long-time member of NSEA and NSEA-R.

A 1966 Kearney State College graduate, he taught math and computer science at Wallace, Blue Hill, Elmwood and Benedict, where he coached the volleyball team and served on the Benedict village board.

His wife, Keron, and four children survive him.

## Deborah Adler

Deborah Adler, 59, Arlington, died at her home in December, ending a battle with cancer. She was a long-time member of NSEA.

A graduate of Midland Lutheran College, she earned a master's degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She taught at Chadron for several years and joined the Arlington Public Schools in 1997.

Her husband, Tim, and two children survive.

## Elizabeth Kaltenbach

Elizabeth Kaltenbach, 75, St. Paul, died in Omaha in December. She had been an NSEA member for more than 40 years.

She earned a master's degree from the University of Nebraska at Kearney and taught in several schools in the St. Paul area. She was the administrator at St. Libory schools for several years, and after retirement, continued to substitute. Survivors include a son and a daughter.

## In the News: Anselmo-Merna

It's estimated that tens of thousands of cattle were killed by a blizzard that dumped more than four feet of snow in northwest Nebraska and western South Dakota in October.

When **Anselmo-Merna Education Association's Cierra Anderson**, a social studies teacher, heard of the loss, she organized a school campaign that spread to the community. The \$6,000

goal was raised to \$12,000 and donations were split by six ranch families, and each also received a letter from students.

She told North Platte TV station KNOP: "That's what's going to mean something to them, that a little school in Nebraska would feel compelled enough and want to help them out."

# April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

## Nebraskan Tours State to Tell His Story

Mike Carnes was 9-years-old when the older brother of a friend sexually assaulted him.

Now, the author and award-winning writer and editor hopes to raise awareness about the crime of sexual assault involving minors. He has already spoken to students at school assemblies in northeast Nebraska, and hopes to reach a wider audience. He is touring the state during April, which is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, to tell his story.

“As a survivor of child sexual assault, I know what it’s like to have to live with that experience. I want to help others understand there is help out there,” said Carnes.

The author of *Call Me a Survivor*, he has made it a mission to tell his story and to encourage other survivors of sexual assault to look at themselves as survivors, not victims. He cites a Centers for Disease Control report that found that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be victims of such assault before age 18.

Carnes continues to research the topic and to advocate for tougher legislation. He has pushed the Nebraska Legislature to adopt LB143, which would require the Department of Education to provide a model for districts to use to educate staff and students about what to look for in regard to child sexual abuse. It would provide age appropriate education for students regarding safe and unsafe touch, and what to do if they are victims of sexual assault.

Carnes is available for 45-to-60 minute presentations during April. For details, or to book a date, contact him at 402-660-9682, or via e-mail at:

[mike@mikeycproductions.com](mailto:mike@mikeycproductions.com)

### Speaking of Teaching

“There’s no such thing as a wrong note as long as you’re singing it.”

— *Pete Seeger (1919-2014), Folk Singer, Songwriter, Activist*

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

## Family of Teachers



**The Beacoms!** Marlene Beacom has taught for 24 years — the past 17 years as a kindergarten teacher at Lyons-Decatur Northeast in Lyons, where she and retired railroader and husband Terry, reside. Four of their five children and a daughter-in-law all teach; son Cory became an accountant.

Marlene began her career teaching fifth through eighth grades at Abie.

From left are T.J. Beacom, a business and computer teacher and coach at Vermillion, SD, high school; Courtney Beacom, a Title I and Reading Recovery teacher at Red Cloud; Lindsay Wonnenberg, who teaches seventh and eighth grade English and current events at Valentine Middle School; Marlene Beacom; Kyle Beacom, a history teacher at Lincoln Southeast High School; and Megan Beacom, a first grade teacher at Holmes Elementary School in Lincoln.

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.

### Keep Those Kudos!

From Tom Hrbacek, a band director at Temecula Valley High School, Temecula, CA:

“Here’s a little tip from an ‘old’ educator.

Keep a file marked with your name to place all positive correspondence, thank you notes from parents and students, emails, evaluations, notes from administrators, school board members and community people, etc. It serves two purposes:

- When you have a bad day, just thumb through a few of the nice thank-yous and kudos, and you’ll remember why you’re a teacher; and,
- You never know when these materials will come in handy to support you in a difficult situation when a parent or administrator has a gripe against you.”

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

