

THE

VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ December 2014

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 $\sqrt{a} \cdot \sqrt{b}$
 $(a-b)$



2015 NEBRASKA
TEACHER OF THE YEAR

SHELBY AABERG

SCOTTSBLUFF HIGH SCHOOL

also in
this issue:

- Cheery News for BCBS Rates
- Retirement Plan on Upswing
- ESEA Waiver Request on Track

Upcoming Assignments

Legislature Convenes

Jan. 7

■ **What:** Nebraska has a new governor and 17 new state senators, so the opening of the 2015 session of the Nebraska Legislature should be exciting!

■ **Details:** NSEA will be vigilant in watching for legislation that will affect your school, your students and your working conditions. To keep up with legislative activity, sign up for NSEA's Legislative Update e-newsletter by e-mailing to :

cathy.schapmann@nsea.org

Is it Your Time?

Jan. 23

■ **What:** Elections to fill vacancies at the NSEA district and state level will be held in February. 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 Page 18.

Read Across is Near!

March 2

■ **What:** NEA's annual Read Across America is Monday, March 2. It isn't too early to think about ordering materials!

■ **Details:** Find all you need at: www.nea.org/grants/886.htm

Nebraska Schools OK

Federal Rankings Flawed, says Blomstedt

Test scores for Nebraska public school students improved this year with better than seven of every 10 students proficient in math and science and three of every four students meeting state reading standards.

The 2014 State of the Schools report released in November showed math scores improved from 63 percent in 2011 to 71 percent this year. Science scores climbed from 67 percent in 2012 to 72 percent. And, reading scores increased from 69 percent in 2010 to 77 percent. The years used for comparisons varied to provide comparable results.

"Nebraska students continue to improve their test scores and, this year, 53 percent or 132 of our school districts earned their all-time best scores when reading, math and science scores were combined," said Nebraska Education Commissioner Matt Blomstedt.

Parents and caregivers, however, are likely questioning how the federal government can consider many Nebraska schools in need of improvement when they are improving, he said.

"The federal school accountability system is flawed and misleading. The federal system mislabels

schools," he said.

"The Nebraska Department of Education does not agree with current federal policy, and I do not believe that all of our schools are low performing," Blomstedt said.

Under the federal law No Child Left Behind, 480 Nebraska schools and 52 districts have been designated in need of improvement because 100 percent of the students were not proficient as required. As a result, federal sanctions will be applied to 265 of those

schools and to 50 districts — sanctions requiring districts to set aside funds, offer school choice or tutoring or to restructure. Congress was scheduled to reauthorize the law in 2007 but that has not occurred, frustrating educators and policy makers in many states.

In the meantime, the Nebraska State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education have been working on a new state accountability system, A QuESTT.

The State Board of Education is expected to consider the first phase of A QuESTT in December.

The State of the Schools Report is available at:

<http://reportcard.education.ne.gov>

"The federal system mislabels schools."

— **Matt Blomstedt,**
Commissioner
of Education

Cover Story:

Scottsbluff's Shelby Aaberg is Nebraska's 2015 Teacher of the Year, and he credits many others for his success in the classroom. Lessons from his mother, grandfather and dozens of teachers have lifted him up. For all the details, turn to

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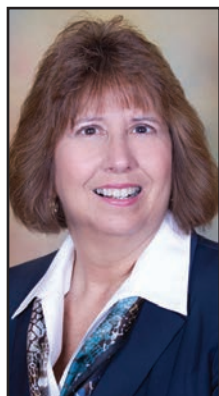
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It Looks Easy



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“
..teaching is
challenging and
demanding —
it is arguably
one of the most
difficult jobs in
the professional
world.”

During my 34 years in the teaching profession, I spent countless winter evenings in my third-grade classroom preparing lessons for the next day or next week. Just as many evenings were spent at home grading papers or doing other prep work.

Many out-of-classroom hours were spent on progress reports or report cards; providing extra help to students; contacting parents; attending district or other meetings; assessing and revising curriculum. Those hours do not even begin to count summers spent working on district committees, attending professional development conferences, or weeks spent prepping for a new school year.

Yes, teaching is challenging and demanding – it is arguably one of the most difficult jobs in the professional world.

Those of us in the profession understand the fact that teaching involves long hours – with no overtime – and extends right through our “summer vacation.” The job starts well before the students enter the classroom each day, and continues well past their afternoon departure.

Adding to the pressure: teachers are essentially performers and must be “on” at all times. Teachers have to be flexible and ready for everything and anything. A teacher never knows what may come their way on any given day.

Copy Machine Repair

Those in the profession know that teaching is only part of the job. Teaching involves aspects of the role of nurses, psychologists, security guards, social workers, parental counselors, secretaries, custodians and copy machine repairmen. Teaching takes hard work and constant training. People outside the profession believe anyone can become a good teacher, and often carry the misperception that the man on the street could walk into a classroom and do what a typical teacher does on a typical day.

Borrowing from a blog I follow, I offer six quick thoughts about what teaching is, and what it is not, in hopes it might correct some misperceptions:

- Teaching isn’t just “making it fun” for the students. Teaching isn’t just teaching the academic content. Teaching is understanding how the human brain processes information and preparing lessons with this understanding in mind.

- Teaching is simultaneously instilling in a child the belief that he/she can accomplish anything they want while admonishing them for producing shoddy work.

- Teaching is understanding both the psychology and the physiology behind the changes an adolescent mind goes through.

- Teaching is convincing a defiant teenager that the work he sees no value in does serve a greater purpose in preparing him for the rest of his life.

- Teaching is offering a sympathetic ear while maintaining a stern voice.

- Teaching is being both a role model and a mentor to someone who may have neither at home, and may not be looking for either.

‘Do You Remember Me?’

Teaching is not intuitive, it is not really tangible. Shooting a three-point goal in basketball isn’t easy – and is nearly impossible for me! – yet it is measurable by whether it drops through the basketball net. Winning a court case is not easy, but you can measure the decision of the court.

You cannot, however, measure a teacher’s inspiration through a child’s test score. You can perhaps measure a teacher’s success on a personal level 20 years down the road when a student arrives to thank you for having faith in them, for guiding them to become problem solvers and for encouraging them to follow their dream.

When a former student asks, “Do you remember me? I was in your third grade class and because you believed in me, pushed and prodded me to succeed, I have become what I am today” – on that day, there is no better reward or measure of your hard work and long hours.

The skill and art of teaching is sometimes difficult to quantify, and it does not always gain the respect it deserves. Yet educators are on the job every morning, often well into the evening, on weekends and, yes, over the summer months. They believe in the power of education.

The next time a parent, patron or policymaker walks into your classroom and watches you calmly preside over a room full of actively engaged students, I hope they realize it is not because the job is easy. It’s because you make it look easy.



Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)

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

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	LexingtonPage 15	Papillion-LaVistaPage 22	Westside.....Page 11, 15
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1.9 Percent Premium Hike Cheered by School Groups

EHA Premiums for 2015-16 Set; Increase is Well Below Inflation

Premium rates for the 2015-16 association year are now set, and the news is very good.

The rates for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health care plan used by nearly every school district in Nebraska will rise a meager 1.9 percent. That rate is well below the national rate of medical inflation and marks the 10th consecutive rate increase of less than 9 percent.

In five of the past six years, rate hikes have been 5 percent or less.

“Continued good stewardship of the plan by our members, by Blue Cross and Blue Shield, and by the Educators Health Alliance board that manages the plan has resulted in this good news for Nebraska educators and Nebraska school districts,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

The 1.9 percent increase is for all benefit options and is effective Sept. 1, 2015. The Board of Directors of the Educators Health Alliance OK’d the renewal rates in late October.

Favorable Claim Experience

The EHA has kept the increases well below national trends, said NSEA Associate Executive Director Neal Clayburn.

“Several factors contributed to the EHA’s ability to achieve a rate increase below medical inflation,” said Clayburn, who chairs the EHA board.

“The wise use of medical services and maintenance of healthy practices by our members has resulted in favorable claim experience,” he said. “Additional factors include the work of BCBSNE, the ongoing dependent eligibility verification process, the EHA wellness program and the collaboration of the three associations that govern the plan.”

A Cash-Saving App from NSEA!

To get great member deals wherever you go, download the NSEA ‘My Deals’ smartphone application from your app store.

The registration process requires an e-mail address and a “mobile password” — the number 8589- (include the hyphen) followed by your personal 10-digit NSEA identification number, which can be found above your name on the mailing label of *The Voice* or on the front of your NSEA membership card.

Download the app, and begin to save cash at retail outlets, hotels, restaurants and hundreds of other locations across the nation!



A History of Rate Increases

A history of rate increases for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield plan, managed by the EHA Board of Directors, shows rate increases have been at or below the national average:

2006-07:.....	8.84%
2007-08:.....	7.80%
2008-09:.....	4.80%
2009-10:.....	7.70%
2010-11:.....	4.56%
2011-12:.....	0.00%
2012-13:.....	2.99%
2013-14:.....	6.40%
2014-15:.....	2.30%
2015-16.....	1.90%

The Educator’s Health Alliance Board of Directors governs the plan. Board members represent the NSEA, the Nebraska Association of School Boards and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. Because NSEA founded the Blue Cross plan nearly 50 years ago, NSEA holds six of the 12 seats on the board.

Beth Kernes Krause is the EHA vice chair and an Auburn Public Schools Board of Education member. She said 2015-16 plan will remain unchanged from the 2014-15 plan.

“This includes all medical and dental plans as well as active employee and early retiree categories. There will be no changes made to the EHA available plan deductibles, coinsurance, or copays for the 2015-16 plan year,” she said.

Jack Moles attributed the small increase in rates to a number of issues. Moles is the EHA board secretary and superintendent of schools for the Johnson County Public Schools.

“In addition to good management of the plan, utilization substantially affects rates. Our members are making smart health care choices and that is reflected in continued favorable experience with regard to utilization,” said Moles.

The EHA plan’s insurance coverage with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska includes more than 70,000 education employees, early retirees and their dependents in more than 400 school groups.

For more details about the EHA rates and plan, go to the website at:

www.eha.org

Share, Learn at GPS Network

The GPS Network is a free, open-to-everyone online professional learning community created and maintained by the National Education Association to connect educators, parents, and stakeholders in public education who want to collaborate, share, and learn.



Using a discussion-group format, it provides searchable data and resources that allow users to know what is important and to share what works for great public schools to support student success. Anyone can become a member, anyone can start or join a discussion group, and anyone can share resources and post questions, ideas, and experiences with other site members.

Get involved with the other great minds in education at:

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Trend is ‘Up’ for Retirement Plan

All Factors Indicate Sound Financial Shape

Two years ago, a consultant estimated that the state would have to kick in more than \$300 million over five years to keep Nebraska’s teacher retirement plan funded.

At the time, the plan was 77 percent funded in the aftermath of the Great Recession. That was the low-water mark in a decade or more, and was down from a 90 percent funded ratio in 2008.

Flash forward to July 31, 2014 – the end of the last fiscal year. The retirement plan has had “movement in the right direction,” according to a representative from Cavanaugh Macdonald Consulting, LLC.

That might be a bit of an understatement. All signals from the Cavanaugh Macdonald annual report on the status of the retirement plan indicate excellent health. The firm updated the Legislature’s Retirement Committee on the plan used by all Nebraska school districts other than Omaha, which organized a retirement plan several years before the rest of the state did so.

All three segments of the state-managed retirement plan – school employees, judges and state patrol staff – rebounded in 2013-



14. Although Cavanaugh Macdonald’s Pat Beckham cautioned against putting too much stock in a plan’s funded ratio, the school plan moved from a 77 percent funded ratio to 83 percent in the past year – the highest mark in five years. Plans for judges (88 percent to 93 percent) and state patrol (76 percent to 81 percent) also rebounded.

No ‘Magic’ Number

During Cavanaugh Macdonald’s report on Nov. 19, Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist asked about the validity of using the 80 percent funding ratio mark as a benchmark for plan health.

While a higher funded ratio is generally a sign of good health, it isn’t a magic number, said Beckman.

“People like to gravitate to a number that says a plan is good or bad,” she said. “The funded ratio tells you where you are, but doesn’t tell what the trend line is going forward.”

The “trend” lines indicate the school is in sound financial shape. Consider that:

- The market value of school plan assets grew from \$8.01 billion in 2013 to \$9.45 billion in 2014. That is an almost 30 percent increase over the 2012 value of \$7.25 billion – a steep upward trend line.

- The school plan enjoyed an 18 percent estimated rate of return for the year ended July 31, well above the 8 percent assumed rate of return carried by the plan.

With an 8 percent assumed rate of return, the consultant’s report estimated that the school plan would reach fully funded status around 2025, and would continue to improve in health for the remainder of the forecast model’s projection.

Some view the 8 percent annual rate of return as overly optimistic and potentially unsustainable. A year ago, talk centered on lowering the rate to 7.5 or 7.75 percent. A reduction in that rate would lower the retirement fund’s recovery projections, and lengthen the projected time for full recovery. A decision to alter the rate is in the hands of the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System Board of Directors. Bellevue teacher Jan Elliott, a member of the NSEA Board of Directors, sits on the NPERS board.

Other gleanings from the report:

- The school plan has 82,015 members, with 40,462 active members contributing.

- There are 20,551 retirees and beneficiaries drawing benefits.

- There are nearly 15,000 non-vested, inactive members in the plan – those school employees who left the school plan before they reached the 5-year point of vesting.

- Payments to retirees grew from \$425 million in 2013 to \$462 million in 2014.

NSEA Seeks More Funds for Tuition Reimbursement Asks Education Committee to Add to Funding from Lottery Dollars

NSEA has made good on a promise to state senators to continue Association support of Nebraska’s tuition reimbursement program.

In testimony before the Legislature’s Education Committee on Nov. 19, Jay Sears told senators “NSEA is here to give full support” to continuation of the \$1.2 million-a-year program that provides tuition reimbursement for qualifying educators to use for undergraduate and post-graduate work.

“In fact, an increase in the funding to \$5 million dollars each year would further solidify the commitment Nebraska has to attracting and retaining quality educators, and the commitment we have to our students,” said Sears, NSEA’s director of Instructional Advocacy.

Nebraska has no other state incentive to attract and retain teachers, he said.

LB497, passed by the Legislature in 2013, required the Education Committee to take testimony on potential uses of lottery

proceeds used for education. The Nebraska Lottery designates 44.5 percent of annual proceeds to education.

The tuition reimbursement program, more formally known as the Excellence in Teaching Act, has two components: the Attracting Excellence in Teaching Program, aimed at undergraduates seeking to become teachers; and the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program for classroom teachers working to improve skills and knowledge.

Dollars Well Spent

Although budget concerns forced the suspension of the programs during the Great Recession, the Attracting Excellence program has awarded more than \$2.5 million to 736 undergraduate recipients – about \$3,400 for each recipient – since 2006. The Enhancing Excellence program has awarded more than \$2.26 million to 923 graduate recipients – or about \$2,450 to each – in the same period. Those figures do not include the 2014-15 funding.

Sears said the programs are well worth the dollars spent.

“Both provide young Nebraskans the incentive to enter the education profession and to continue their educational development through course work that leads to much needed endorsements in shortage subjects,” said Sears.

Sears said recent data show a steady decrease in the number of students entering the teaching profession. A recent Title II reports to the U.S. Department of Education shows a 19.62 percent reduction in the number of students enrolled in teacher education programs in Nebraska from 2011-12 to 2012-13.

“As the costs of going to college increases, and salaries for educators fail to keep pace with other four year degree professions, there could be a shortage of quality teachers entering the pipeline here in Nebraska,” said Sears. “The funding provides the incentive to attract and retain quality Nebraska educators.”



First Meeting: In the hour before his formal recognition as Nebraska's 2015 Teacher of the Year, Scottsbluff High School math teacher Shelby Aaberg, right, met with past Nebraska Teachers of the Year at NSEA Headquarters. From left are Michael Fryda, Westside High School, 2010; Kristi Bundy, Ashland-Greenwood, 2014; Patsy Koch Johns, Lincoln High, 2006; and John Heineman, Lincoln High, 2000.

Shoulders of Giants

2015 Teacher of the Year Credits Success to Long Line of Mentors

Shelby Aaberg says the germination of his teaching career traces to a sick day during his third grade year.

As a student who rarely missed a day in the classroom, Aaberg found himself frustrated when his mother determined he was not well enough to go to school. Yet even on that day at home, he learned a life lesson from Mrs. Moody, his third grade teacher at Chadron's East Ward Elementary, who walked into the Aaberg home at the end of the day and delivered books for him to read for the next day.

"That level of caring,

that thoughtfulness, helped me realize the impact a teacher can have on a young person," said Aaberg.

Failure as an Opportunity

Shelby Aaberg relishes challenges, and does not fear failure:

"We often hear the adage 'do your best every day.' But, if one does his or her best every day, it would not be a best; it would be the average.

"Teaching is the most important human endeavor, and it is a human performance endeavor. If we want our students' best efforts daily, we as teachers must be prepared to give our students our best effort every day.

"Although my students may or may not use some of the mathematics concepts I teach in their daily lives, they will use the problem solving and critical thinking skills they learn in my classroom throughout their lives. Failure is not the end but an opportunity.

"My students' character will be defined throughout their lives by how they respond to failure. Persistence in the face of failure is the path to success."

Today, riding on the shoulders of giants, Aaberg is on the teaching end of the lessons. He has learned his craft so well that a panel of peers has named him Nebraska's 2015 Teacher of the Year.

State officials recognized Aaberg in October during a ceremony at his Scottsbluff High School mathematics classroom. He takes over the Nebraska Department of Education's Teacher of the Year title held for the past 12 months by 2014 Teacher

of the Year Kristi Bundy of Ashland-Greenwood.

One of four finalists, Aaberg's high-quality work, and the breadth and depth of his skill and knowledge, impressed the selection committee that determined Nebraska's 44th Teacher of the Year.

Also recognized as finalists (see page 11) were Jim Fielder, a science teacher at Hastings Senior High School; Christopher Maly, an English teacher at Lincoln High School; and Sarah Schau, a business teacher at Westside High School in Omaha. All are members of their professional teaching organization: the NSEA.

Grandfather and Mother

Aaberg freely credits others for his success. Among them are his grandfather, a 39-year history teacher and firm believer in social justice and citizen participation. A childhood ritual was to watch "Jeopardy!" each night with his grandfather over a bowl of chili or spaghetti. Aaberg's grandfather coached him through how to answer questions and how to make well-informed guesses based on context and prior knowledge.

"Through his feedback and coaching, I learned how to ask questions to lead students to formulate their own understanding," said Aaberg. "I became a teacher to emulate Mrs. Moody's thoughtfulness and caring and my grandfather's vast content knowledge and robust thinking strategies."

His mother, however, earns the most credit for his career path.

When Aaberg was three, his father died. His mother moved Aaberg and his brother from California to Nebraska to live with family. His mother had dropped out of college to marry, and finding work was difficult. At Gering, while she worked on a nursing degree, her sons spent many long evenings at the hospital library as she studied and typed papers.

They spent one Halloween evening at the library instead of trick-or-treating. Aaberg and his brother were not happy.

"My brother and I did not take it well," said Aaberg. "After our selfish behavior escalated, my mother grabbed me by the shoulders and said 'You don't understand, son. I must do this. Education is our way out. It is the way we can overcome our circumstances.'"

He learned much from his mother.

"I became a teacher to serve others, to support learners from all backgrounds, and to give all my students the chance to achieve more than even they imagined possible," he said.

"Education is the currency of our



Shelby Aaberg

Education

- Bachelor's Degree, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2004.
- Master's degree, mathematics education, University of Nebraska-Omaha, 2009.
- Doctorate, curriculum & instruction, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, in progress.

Certification

- Grades 7-12 mathematics.
- Grades K-12 ESL.
- PK-12 Assessment Leadership.
- National Board Certified in Early Adolescent Mathematics, 2013.

Memberships

- Second Vice President, Nebraska Association of Math Teachers.
- Member, Nebraska Coaches Association.
- Building Representative, Scottsbluff Education Association.

Awards

- Finalist, Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, 2011, 2013.
- NSEA Rookie of the Year, 2006

collective future."

One-in-a-Million

Aaberg shares a one-in-a-million connection to teaching excellence: graduating with him in the Gering High Class of 2000 was Luisa Palomo, Nebraska's 2012 Teacher of the Year. In the year after graduation, they worked together as teachers at Gering's Migrant School, where Aaberg taught math to seven- and eight-year-old migrant students.

That experience, he said, gave him a different view of the world and led him to earn ESL certification.

His success also derives, said Aaberg, from "the skill and vision of my mentors."

He cites Gering High School teachers Mike Smith, Randy Johnson, Mary Winn and Judy Douglas – all NSEA members – as terrific teachers. Credit also goes to Margaret Wirth, his pre-calculus teacher in Greenville, NC, and to John Graff, who mentored Aaberg during his first year of teaching at Omaha's Westside High School.

"I feel like I am living up to the high expectations and support adults and mentors in my life have shown me," said Aaberg. "I strive to empower my students as my teachers and mentors empowered me."

In his Teacher of the Year application, Aaberg noted that development of his professional capacity is essential to his own growth, and to the growth of his students. To that end, he frequently observes and interacts with other teachers across the state, often at his own expense. Among those he has shadowed are well-respected math teachers Leona Penner, Michael Fryda, Angela Mosier, David Hartman, Brent Larson, Greg Sand and Connie Colton.

"I enjoy teaching most when I can learn from other effective teachers and utilize their skills to serve my own students," he said.

Tenacity, Passion

Indeed, Aaberg stands on the shoulders of others. A new generation has already clambered aboard his. Emily Guck was in Aaberg's Westside classroom and today teaches English and drama in Philadelphia.

"He was one of the most exceptional educators I encountered in my high school experience, and his dedication, tenacity and passion have continued to inspire me throughout my own development as a teacher," Guck wrote in recommending Aaberg as Teacher of the Year.

On the shoulders of giants...

"Education is the currency of our collective future."

— Shelby Aaberg
2015 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

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ART 803-01	Art Education Research Methods	EDAD 842P-01	Administration of Special Education	SPAN 808P-02	Comparative Grammar
ART 807P-01	Art Methods for Young Children	EDAD 848	Curriculum Planning (2 sections)	SPAN 870P-01	Seminar in Spanish/Latin American Studies: The Inconstant Border
ART 844-01	History, Theories & Philosophies of Art Education	EDAD 853-01	School Business Management	SPCH 851P-01	Leadership Communication
ART 845-02	Multicultural Art in the Elementary & Secondary Curriculum	EDAD 854-01	Introduction to Educational Administration	TE 800	Educational Research (2 sections)
ART 846-01	Seminar in Art Education	EDAD 859-01	Legal Basis of Education	TE 803	Philosophy of Education (2 sections)
ART 850C-02	Painting	EDAD 869-01	The Principalship	TE 804-02	Curriculum Development in Multicultural Education
ART 855-01	Art Education in American Culture	EDAD 870-01	The Principal as Instructional Leader	TE 805P-01	Overview of Assistive Technology
ART 895-01	Art Education Research Paper	EDAD 890-01	Intro to Educational Research	TE 808P-01	Human Relations
BIOL 802	Organic Evolution (2 sections)	EDAD 898-01	Endorsement Internship	TE 826-01	Content Methods & Strategies for Teaching English as a Second Language
BIOL 804-01	Evolution of Epidemics	EDAD 899P-01	ST: Athletic Director	TE 831P-01	Professional Skills & Knowledge I
BIOL 811-01	Scientific Illustration	EDAD 940-01	Administrative Theory	TE 832-01	Professional Skills & Knowledge II
BIOL 820-02	Introduction to Graduate Study	EDAD 944-01	Seminar in Educational Administration	TE 833-01	Context of Education
BIOL 824-01	Principles of Ecology	EDAD 957-01	Public School Finance	TE 834P-01	Transitional Student Teaching I
BIOL 827-01	Biological Statistics	ENG 899-01	ST: Teaching Writing in Secondary School	TE 835P-01	Transitional Student Teaching II
BIOL 830P-01	ST: Cell Structure & Function	FORL 870P-01	TESOL	TE 836P-01	Post-Baccalaureate Student Teaching
BIOL 830P-02	ST: Invertebrate Behavior	FSID 886P-01	Families In Crisis	TE 845-01	Contemporary Theory & Practice in Reading
BIOL 830P-03	ST: Flowering Plants: Systematics & Evolution	HIST 801	America Interpreted (3 sections)	TE 846-01	Diagnosis/Correction of Reading Difficulties
BIOL 830P-04	ST: Desert Biology	HIST 803	Historical Methods (2 sections)	TE 852-01	Issues & Trends in Early Childhood Education
BIOL 831A-01	Biological Research: Hypothesis & Justification	HIST 848-01	ST: Great Depression	TE 853C-01	Improvement of Instruction in Elementary School Language Arts
BIOL 831B-01	Biological Research: Methodology	HIST 848-02	ST: Public History	TE 854-01	Reading in the Content Areas
BIOL 831C-01	Biological Research: Annotated Bibliography	HIST 848-03	ST: U.S. in Cold War Era	TE 866-01	Motivating the 21st Century Learner
BIOL 831D-01	Biological Research: Data Collection	HIST 848-04	ST: Gilded Age	TE 869-01	Introduction to School Library Program
BIOL 831E-01	Biological Research: Statistical Analysis	HIST 848-05	ST: Progressive Era	TE 870-01	Developing Web-Based Portfolios
BIOL 831F-01	Biological Research: Manuscript	HIST 848-06	ST: Digital History	TE 871-01	Collection Development & Management
BIOL 834-01	Conservation Biology	HIST 848-07	ST: American West	TE 874-01	Production of Instructional Resources
BIOL 839-01	Human Physiological Systems	HIST 849-01	ST: Wars of Religion	TE 880-01	Management of Educational Technology
BIOL 841-01	Virology	HIST 849-02	ST: Colonial India	TE 881-01	Distance Education
BIOL 844-01	Molecular Biotechnology	HIST 849-03	ST: Comparative Communism	TE 886P	Technology Tools for Teachers (2 sections)
BIOL 863-01	Biological Perspectives	HIST 849-04	ST: 19th Century European History	TESE 821P-01	Nature & Needs of Exceptionalities
BIOL 866-01	Functional Morphology	MKT 837P-02	Sales Management	TESE 825-01	Curriculum Design & Development for Gifted/Talented Education
BIOL 881	Current Issues in Biology (3 sections)	MUS 802P-01	Music History & Theory Review	TESE 862-01	Formal & Informal Assessment in Special Education
BIOL 886-01	Sexual Selection	MUS 820P-01	String Pedagogy	TESE 863-01	Research Based Instructional Strategies for Students with Disabilities
CHEM 820-01	Inorganic Chemistry for High School Teachers	MUS 897-01	Graduate Capstone Project	TESE 867-01	Functional Behavior Assessment & Behavior Intervention Planning
CSIT 828P-01	Data Communication & Distributed Processing	MUS 899P-01	ST: Choral Literature	TESE 875P-01	Preparing Adolescents for the Post-Secondary World
CSIT 850P-01	E-Commerce Information Systems	PE 841P-01	Physical Education for Elementary Schools	TESE 879P-01	Teaching Social Skills to Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
CSIT 858P-01	Computer Security	PE 854-01	Leisure Behavior	VOED 899-01	Special Problems/Topics in Vocational Education
CSP 804P-01	Counseling & Mental Disorders	PE 872-01	Physical Education for Students with Developmental Disabilities		
CSP 875-01	Career & Lifestyle Development	SFED 310-01	Driving Task Analysis		
CSP 960-01	Globalization of School Psychology	SFED 430-01	Developing Driver Education Classroom Skills		
CSP 991-01	Scholarly Study	SFED 431-01	Developing Driver Education Vehicle Skills		
		SFED 431-02	Developing Driver Education Vehicle Skills Lab		

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Jim Fielder



Christopher Maly



Sarah Schau

TOY Finalists: Physics, MLK and Business School!

Mom, Dad and Responsibility

**Jim Fielder, 9-12 Science
Hastings Senior High School**

Jim Fielder easily cites a dozen teachers who influenced his decision to enter the teaching profession. His parents, too, played a role in that decision.

“Mom and Dad wanted us to be able to do what we wanted in life and taught us to be respectful of our teachers and responsible in our work,” said Fielder, a Hastings native. “I’ve made these viewpoints part of my own teaching philosophy, and I try to pass these concepts on to my students.”

In that regard, Fielder hopes to be a positive role model for his students. “My words and actions are the greatest contribution I can make to my students’ lives,” he wrote in his application.

Hard work and effort on his part will pay off in the end, for his students, said Fielder.

“If I don’t model it for my students, they won’t put much stock in what I say,” he wrote. “Physics is a challenging class for many, but I always tell my students that I have never had anyone fail who gave his or her best effort. Challenges are sometimes hard to overcome, but difficult tasks also offer opportunities for student growth and ultimate success.”

MLK Biography Led to ‘Fearless Exploration’

**Christopher Maly, 9-12 English
Lincoln High School**

Christopher Maly authored “This Unsafe Star: The Emmett Till Story,” a play about the 1955 beating death of the 14-year-old black Chicagoan who allegedly whistled at a white woman during a visit to Mississippi.

When Maly had a difficult time choosing a biography to read for a third grade assignment, his teacher handed him a biography of Martin Luther King Jr., and said “read this.” That shaped his “fearless exploration” teaching philosophy.

“This has funneled into what I perceive to be my greatest contribution as an educator: the ability to walk into any classroom with the inherent enthusiasm and passion that these are my students and my life experiences will serve them well,” wrote Maly. “No matter what their narratives or experiences have been, their ability to succeed in my classroom is never questioned.”

His proudest teaching moment came when his third grade teacher, Dr. Marilyn Johnson-Farr, asked Maly to co-teach her Doane College education methods class on Martin Luther King’s birthday.

“She asked me to teach her students, many of whom were preparing to student

teach, about the power of the words ‘read this’ and how it helped shape my teaching.”

Westside’s Schau ‘Too Smart to Teach’

**Sarah Schau, 9-12 Business
Westside High School**

Sarah Schau was told in high school – by a teacher! – that she was too smart to enter the teaching profession.

So Schau went to business school, worked in the transportation logistics industry and continued to dream about working as a teacher.

“It was during a lunch break that I realized I was working without passion,” wrote Schau. “I wanted to make a difference, I wanted to love my job. Two years later I was a high school business teacher.”

It was from the same teacher that Schau says she learned of the impact teachers can and do have on students.

“Simply put, what I have learned throughout the past 12 years in the profession is this: I went to school to become a teacher of business, yet I have become a teacher of individuals.

“In a thank-you card a student named Morgan said ‘thank you, Mrs. Schau, for teaching me how to be perfectly imperfect.’ From a business standpoint, that is the biggest return on my investment.”

Painted & Scrubbed

Minden's Middle School Gets Facelift Through SEAN's Outreach to Teach

Nearly 100 members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska turned out on a November weekend to spruce up the C.L. Jones Middle School at Minden as part of the organization's annual Outreach to Teach.

The project was a part of SEAN's annual fall conference.

Students from a dozen Nebraska colleges and universities spent the day painting, scrubbing, washing and otherwise freshening up the building and grounds at the school. Brittany Snider, president of the SEAN Chapter at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, coordinated the event.

"This project is always a lot of fun for SEAN members. We also hope it enhances the learning that goes on in these schools," said Snider.

Students also gave the gymnasium a deep cleaning. That included sweeping and scrubbing of concrete bleachers and walls, and painting of metal railings.

Minden Public School Superintendent Melissa Wheelock praised the event in an interview with KHAS television.

"I think definitely that what these students are doing develops a spark, a spark to do things for our community and students and also just the notion that it takes a whole village to raise a child," said Wheelock.

Members of the Minden Education Association provided snacks and beverages for the students during the day.

THE FALL CONFERENCE opened with dinner at the Great Platte River Road Archway in Kearney and a keynote by NSEA member Allison Aldrich, a health and physical education teacher for the Grand Island Public Schools. Aldrich lost a leg to cancer at age seven, and is now a three-time world medalist in sitting volleyball competition. Aldrich played for and won a bronze medal in world competition in Athens at age 16. Compassionate teachers helped her reach that world stage.

"My teachers could have looked at me as disabled, but they looked for my potential," she said.

Outreach to Teach is patterned after a project hosted by the National Education Association at NEA's annual meeting site every summer. SEAN membership includes about 1,500 college students who are education majors at 17 institutions of higher education across the state.



Steady hand: Wayne State College's Kristyn Huelskamp touches up fresh paint on a windowsill at C.L. Jones Middle School in Minden.



Making News: Outreach to Teach Coordinator Brittany Snider is framed by a television camera as she gives an interview. Snider is president of the University of Nebraska at Kearney SEAN Chapter.



The Hardware: Grand Island teacher and NSEA member Allison Aldrich, center, shows the sitting volleyball medals she has won in world competition to University of Nebraska at Kearney students Ashley Hansel, left, and Jill Mallam.



Reflective: University of Nebraska-Omaha's Rebecca Burkhardt works on a window at Minden's C.L. Jones Middle School.



Next step: Angelica Villalobos and Shantell Ferris ponder their next move as they scrub gymnasium steps at C.L. Jones Middle School in Minden. Villalobos is a student at Northeast Community College; Ferris attends UNO.



Learning to Drive: Lexi Arlt embarks cautiously with the rug scrubber as Josi Bradfield handles extension cord duties. Both are students at Wayne State College.

Dust Removal: Among those dusting trophy cases at Minden were, from left, Jacey Crawford, Lexy Delvaux, Mattie Klinkman, Raissa Walker and Emily Kassmeier. Walker attends Peru State; the rest are University of Nebraska at Kearney students.



Contract, Salary Schedule Question? Call NSEA

Your NSEA Edge: Association's 18 Organizational Specialists

NSEA's staff of organizational specialists have a combined 170-plus years of experience in dealing with employment contract, salary schedules and benefit issues.

If you have a question about your contract, or a concern about your placement on your school district's salary schedule, where do you turn for the very best, expert advice? You certainly won't get an answer from some fly-by-night, store-front "association" that is all too willing to sell you a cheap annual membership.

You turn to NSEA. Consider these questions, among those posed to NSEA staff over the past year or so by members using the NSEA website:



"I have a legal question about my contract that I do not feel comfortable asking anyone in my district about. Whom can I contact for this question and some advice?"

"I have signed my contract for next year, however, there is a chance that I may be offered a job in a school district I may like to accept. I read over my contract, I cannot find anything that specifically states whether I could do this or not. Thank you for your time!"

"If an administrator wants me to give up my plan period to

take care of a behavior student the rest of the year, can he do that? Am I legally supposed to have a plan time?"

"I have questions regarding advanced college credit hours and how a district determines what can be allowed when determining pay scale placement. I have been told that unless my upper level administration hours are in my area of employment, they wouldn't be allowed. With those hours labeled EDU, wouldn't they be considered advanced credit hours?"

Clearly, each circumstance is different, the facts behind each of those questions vary. The one constant is the broad experience of NSEA's field staff. They stand ready to answer your questions, ready to assist so that such questions create minimal disruption in your job as an educator.

The dues you pay to NSEA and to NEA support the field staff program, and those field staff members, in turn, support your classroom work by supplying answers and support when you may be in need of both.

Questions? Call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047, or email your question to NSEA through the 'Contact Us!' link on the NSEA website at:

nsea.org

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EMAC Seeks 'Self-E' from Ethnic Members

Minority Committee Seeks to Bolster Membership

Self-identification – **noun** – the feeling that you share and understand the problems or experiences of someone else.

There is a high number of NSEA members who have not identified their ethnic minority status.

NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) is asking them to update their ethnic status with NSEA, or identify themselves ethnically – or self-e, said EMAC Chair Edward Ventura Jr.

According to NSEA data, there are 1,601 members with an unidentified ethnicity, representing 5.56 percent of NSEA's membership. By comparison, there are 725 self-identified ethnic minorities within NSEA's membership, representing 3.49 percent of the total membership. Meanwhile, the 2010 U.S. Census states that Nebraska's ethnic minorities represent 18 percent of the state's population.

"We are certain there are members who have not yet self-identified as part of an ethnic minority," said Ventura. "With more members of EMAC, we can do so much more."

A goal of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) is to increase their membership by getting "unidentified" NSEA members to self-identify on the membership rolls. The Nebraska State Education Association values diversity and has a strong commitment to diversity, ethnic minority representation, and leadership at all levels of the organization.

How can you update your ethnicity status? Contact your Organizational Specialist or call the NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 to update your records.

NSEA-EMAC Chair Edward T. Ventura Jr., Omaha, and Vice Chair Jose Hernandez, Norfolk, traveled to Washington, D.C., to collaborate with other states in a careful review of the critical aspects of NEA Bylaw 3-1(g) efforts for our Association. NSEA Executive Director Craig Christiansen



At Kearney: EMAC met in Kearney in November with, back row from left: Chair Ed Ventura, Omaha; Vice Chair Jose Hernandez, Norfolk; Manuel Andazola, Lexington; Micheal Macias, Scottsbluff; Haishi Cao, Kearney; and NSEA staff liaison Carol Hicks. In front, from left, are: Sharon Rhodes, Lincoln; April Morris, Ernestine Ortiz-Ventura and Tracy Hartman-Bradley, all of Omaha.

also attended.

The NEA policy Bylaw 3-1(g) has been a part of the Association's governing documents for 40 years and is the Association's most effective and comprehensive measure for encouraging racial/ethnic diversity in leadership at all levels of the organization.

From the discussion in Washington, the EMAC, along with the NSEA Board of Directors are adding the following to the 2014-15 NSEA Minority

Involvement Plan:

- Explore attracting high school students into the teaching profession, then support them with state-provided scholarships.

- Publicizing to NSEA member minorities the leadership opportunities provided within the NSEA. Also planned: workshops on how to run a campaign and get elected to NSEA governance vacancies.

- Have staff collect data on minority candidates who have won, been nominated or currently holding an elected NSEA position at all levels.

Submitted by Edward T. Ventura Jr., EMAC Chair.



Members Take Leadership Roles in National Spotlight

Nebraskans Volunteer for Roles with NEA

Several NSEA members have been appointed to serve on committees or other boards for the National Education Association.

Nebraska's two members of the NEA Board of Directors, **John Heineman of Lincoln**, and **Deb Gnuse of Grand Island**, have been named to committees for that board. Heineman will serve on the Professional Practices and Studies Committee, and Gnuse will serve on the

President Release Time Committee.

Others serving include:

- **Bobby Miller, Omaha**, and **Alan Bone, Westside**, who will serve on the NEA Resolutions Committee.

- **John Jensen, Omaha**, who continues his term as vice president of the NEA-Retired Board of Directors.

- **Katrina Lynne Jacobberger, Omaha**, who will serve as the new NEA Peace and Justice coordinator for NEA's 11-state Western Region.

- **Omaha's Edward Ventura Jr.**, the new American Indian/Alaska Native director for the NEA Western Region.

- **Omaha's Tracy Bradley-Hartman**, named as secretary for the NEA American Indian/Alaska Native caucus.

- **Susan Loney, Omaha**, the new Asian Pacific Islander director for the NEA Western Region.

- **Laura Krenk Chytka, Omaha**, will work with the NEA Career Technology Education Caucus communication outreach.

- **Stacie Nicole Stevens, Omaha**, who volunteered and worked with NEA's Caucus of Educators of Exceptional Children.

BCBSNE Extends In-Network Benefits for Members at Five CHI Hospitals

Kearney, Grand Island, Schuyler, Nebraska City, Plainview Affected

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) has announced that its health care plan members will be able to get in-network benefits at five CHI Health hospitals that are currently out of network, providing plan members with enhanced options for health care in their communities.

All but three Nebraska school districts use BCBSNE through the plan managed by the Educator's Health Alliance.

Effective Jan. 1, BCBSNE members will pay in-network deductible, copay and coinsurance at these five facilities: Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney; Saint Francis Medical Center in Grand Island; St. Mary's Community Hospital in Nebraska City; CHI Health Schuyler; and CHI Health Plainview.

In addition, BCBSNE will pay the same amount for covered medical services at those facilities as it did prior to the September 1 network termination.

"We hope this eases the transition for our members," said BCBSNE senior vice president Lee Handke. "We made the decision to fix the problem on behalf of our members in those communities."

BCBSNE made the move to help BCBSNE members who would have to pay out-of-network costs if they had used the five CHI facilities — which are the only full-service hospitals in those communities.

Several Proposals

CHI Health left the BCBSNE network on Sept. 1 when the contract between the two health care firms expired. CHI costs are 10 percent to 30 percent higher for physician and hospital services in Omaha, and negotiations to resolve contract differences have stalled. CHI Health included all its facilities across Nebraska under one contract, which locked out members outside of Omaha from getting care at in-network rates.

More than once BCBSNE proposed signing a separate agreement with CHI hospitals outside of Omaha, but CHI refused.

"We were hopeful of reaching an agreement with Denver-based CHI long before now — especially in our efforts to take members in these five communities out of the middle of an Omaha problem," Handke said. "That wasn't happening, so we took it upon ourselves to do something about it."

Because the five facilities are still out of network, BCBSNE will send payment for medical services directly to the member, who will be responsible for paying the provider. CHI Health can still bill members for the difference between what BCBSNE pays and what the provider charges — although CHI officials have stated publicly they will not bill members for the difference.

CHI hospitals and providers in Omaha and Lincoln will remain out of network until CHI and BCBSNE resolve contract differences in those communities.

Plan members can call a special hotline at 1-844-286-0855 or get more information at:

www.nebraskablue.com/update

More details on the BCBSNE plan are also available at the Educators Health Alliance website at:

www.eha.com

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Timeline Set for ESEA Waiver Request

Education Vision, Student Support, is Foundation for Request

By Dr. Matt Blomstedt,
Nebraska Commissioner of Education

Nebraska is well positioned to submit an application for a waiver under No Child Left Behind, and the work has begun to meet a timeline set by the State Board of Education.

I know Nebraska teachers and administrators are eager to learn what the waiver will include and how that will affect our education system, but the elements in what will likely be a 200- to 300-page application have not been finalized and won't likely be available until later, perhaps spring.

These waiver requests are not only lengthy but also detailed policy statements that, in our case, will reflect Nebraska's vision for its own education system.

Nebraska-Built Standards

Here is what I can tell you at this time. Nebraska plans to build its waiver application around our own state standards — Nebraska's College and Career Ready standards — rather than adopting the Common Core.

As you may know, all Nebraska postsecondary education institutions — the university system, state colleges, community colleges and private postsecondary education institutions — signed off on our recently revised English Language Arts standards, confirming that the academic content standards would prepare students for college and their careers. We have just begun to review and revise our state math standards. That revision process, as well as the one for



Blomstedt

science, will follow the same process to ensure they too are college and career ready.

A Strong Foundation

Over the past decade, Nebraska has worked to develop stronger standards, assessments and now a better state accountability system — Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow, A QuESTT. As a state, we also developed a model teacher/leader evaluation system and improved the state's data system.

Our waiver will be built on that strong foundation.

Not only are we in a good position to submit a waiver request at this point, but we also think it is important for Nebraska to share its vision for our state with the U.S. Department of Education and Congress to inform any federal effort to reauthorize ESEA. As you know, ESEA was to have been reauthorized in 2007, which would likely have avoided some of the situations our schools face today.

As we move forward in this process, there are some elements on which Nebraska will not negotiate — the tenets outlined in State Board policy on state accountability under A QuESTT.

A QuESTT information and those tenets are available at:

www.education.ne.gov/aquestt/

We are encouraged to pursue a waiver at this time because there appears to be an increasing willingness at the federal level to consider state plans designed by state and local policy makers and educators. Through this column and other communication tools, I will keep you informed as the decision making moves forward.

BCBS Scholarship Deadline is Feb. 14

Use Stipends for Spring Courses

One of the many benefits of NSEA membership is the availability of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska scholarships.

Three times each year, NSEA members are eligible to apply for a scholarship from Blue Cross and Blue Shield that will help make paying for graduate coursework a little easier.

The deadline for the next round of scholarships from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska Professional Development Fund is Saturday, Feb. 14.

Applicants for the scholarship will receive an e-mail confirming receipt of the application (if you do not receive an e-mail, call NSEA).

The funds are for advanced degrees, to seek additional teaching endorsements or to take courses for certification. Stipends may cover up to 50 percent of the cost of a single, three-hour college course. Applicants may seek scholarship dollars for no more than three hours of courses. Books and supplies are not covered.

To apply, complete the application form on the NSEA web-

site. The form will be on the website through Feb. 14.

NSEA will notify applicants of their scholarship status in March. The goal is to award stipends to the largest number of members from each of NSEA's six governance districts. To be eligible, NSEA members must be covered by either single or family Blue Cross/Blue Shield health care. Previous applicants, successful or not, may re-apply. Applicants may receive scholarships in only two of the three scholarship cycles during a school year.

Recipients must offer evidence of completion of work at an accredited post-secondary institution to receive funds. Courses must be for credit.

Since 1986, 5,134 NSEA members have shared more than \$677,500 in Blue Cross and Blue Shield scholarship dollars. The program does not affect Blue Cross and Blue Shield premiums.

Find the application at:

www.nsea.org/scholarships

Questions? Reach Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or via e-mail at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org



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Every month, the For all it's Worth series will provide 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.

Worthy Savings

As the holidays near, what better time to use your membership benefits than now?

As a valued association member, you receive exclusive access to a wealth of discounts and savings that benefit you and your family. Your Association membership also opens the door to priceless, member-only resources, such as personal legal services and professional resources.

Invest, insure and save with the benefits you deserve. Go

ahead, experience your membership For all it's Worth!

With your membership, you'll find:

- Shopping discounts that let you browse and save on hundreds of discounts from name-brand retailers, online stores and local merchants.

- Travel discounts that let you explore exclusive discounts on hotels, car rentals and vacation packages.

- Finance benefits that lead to a vault of savings, from home loans and credit cards to online savings accounts and retirement plans. NSEA has you covered.

- Insurance benefits that will save you cash through various insurance plans, including life insurance, home insurance, auto insurance and health discounts.

- Professional resources that offer classroom resources, student loans and professional development programs.

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:

nsea.org



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Save With Dave!

The joy of the holidays can turn to misery in the New Year if holiday spending gets out of control.

Wise and tempered use of credit cards with low rates and cash rewards can help you navigate the holiday waters with a good measure of success.

NEA Member Benefits has partnered with credit card companies to provide great service to NEA members and their families. Consider these credit card options in order to make the most of the holidays:

■ **The NEA Cash Rewards Card** provides automatic cash rewards that start with your first purchase. There is no need to enroll and cash rewards do not expire and are easy to redeem. You'll earn a \$100 cash rewards bonus if you make at least \$500 in purchases in the first 90 days.

Members receive a low introductory annual percentage rate offer and enjoy no annual fee. The card also offers 3 percent percent cash back on gasoline; 2 percent cash back on groceries; and 1 percent cash back on all other purchases.

■ **The NEA Accelerated Rewards American Express Card** offers a low introductory APR, and lets you earn 1.25 points for every \$1 in retail purchases, or 25 percent more than the standard NEA American Express Card.

Rewards redemption starts at 2,500 points, and your choice of rewards includes cash, gift cards, travel rewards and much more.

■ **The NEA Credit Card with Rewards** is an outstanding way to transfer higher-rate balances and stretch your budget. Card holders get a \$100 statement credit after qualifying transactions, and the card offers a choice of cash, gift cards or travel rewards. Card holders also earn 1 point for every \$1 spent, and points are unlimited with no travel blackout dates.

■ **The NEA RateSmart Card** offers cash-saving features and a low introductory rate, no annual fee and a \$0 liability guarantee.

To learn more, look under the 'Finance' tab on the NEA Member Benefits website at:

neamb.com

David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative



Glenn

Regarding Holiday Tips: Be Timely, Discrete

Express Gratitude to Those Who Help All Year Long

1 Make a cheat sheet. Begin with those who work most closely with you or your family. For many people you see regularly—a weekend babysitter, cleaning person, hairstylist, massage therapist or personal trainer, for example—the cost of one session or visit is a good benchmark. About a week's pay and perhaps a small gift from your child is appropriate for a nanny. The newspaper deliverer and trash and recycling collectors (if they are allowed to accept tips) should get about \$10 to \$30 each. If you live in a building with a doorman, tip him at least \$15. Pair your tip with a handwritten note that specifies what you appreciate about the person and her services, says Diane Gottsman, etiquette expert and founder of The Protocol School of Texas.

2 Exercise discretion. If someone has worked with you for several years or has provided outstanding service, you may bump up the amount. Likewise, you could cut it for someone you tip throughout the year or whose services haven't been outstanding. Where you live also makes a difference: Tips in big cities tend to be higher than in rural areas. "When in doubt, ask around," says Peggy Post, director of the Emily Post Institute. But if a neighbor tells you that she's tipping her handyman twice as much as you can afford, you don't have to match it.

3 Keep it timely. Try to tip before the holidays are over, says Gottsman. Tipping early in the season—say, near Thanksgiving—gives your recipients a chance to use the money for gifts or other expenses that come up at the end of the year. Delivering the tip in person is ideal, but for hard-to-catch people, such as your newspaper carrier, you may be able to track down an address where you can mail

a card and a check (some may leave you a pre-addressed envelope). You could also leave a note at your door asking when you might be able to see him.

4 Money isn't everything. If you want to give a more personal (or less expensive) gift, homemade crafts or food, chocolates, and wine are go-to options (but watch for dietary restrictions). Monogrammed handkerchiefs or notepads show that you put some time and thought into your gift. A latte drinker might love a gift card to her favorite coffee shop. If tips or gifts don't fit into your budget, write thank-you notes. Post suggests sending a letter to, say, your cleaning person's supervisor commending her work. "A gift or a tip is not an obligation," says Gottsman. "It's a gesture of kindness and cheer during the holidays."

5 Not everyone takes tips. Don't offer money to professionals such as accountants, lawyers and doctors, although a gift may be welcome. Postal carriers aren't allowed to take cash, checks or gift cards. You may, however, offer a gift worth less than \$20. Employers of workers such as nursing-home attendants and trash collectors may prohibit employees from accepting tips or gifts. Check the company's policy.

6 It's good to receive. Giving a year-end tip or gift is primarily a way to say thank-you. But being generous can benefit you, too. Your hairdresser would never intentionally botch your dye job if you skip a holiday tip, but she might be more inclined to squeeze you in at the last minute if you treat her well. "We work better when we know someone appreciates us," says Gottsman.

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Visit SmileMakers for Seuss Items!

SmileMakers welcomes NEA members with a 20 percent discount and free shipping on orders of \$25 or more when using the promo code NEAMB. Now is a great time to order for the fall holiday season. Making plans for Read Across America? Just a reminder that SmileMakers is the official Seuss Store of the NEA. Check out thousands of classroom items at www.SmileMakers.com and be sure to use promo code NEAMB. Offer is good through Dec. 31.



Serve by Leading!

Governance Positions Open in Six Districts, NSEA Board

Educators are born to lead. Are you ready to take your turn at leadership of the state's oldest and largest professional organization?

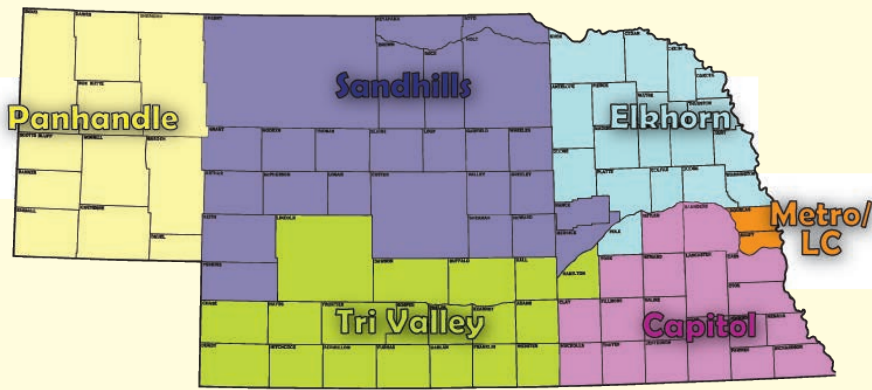
Beginning on February 16, NSEA members will vote for candidates to fill three dozen district offices and openings on the NSEA's Board of Directors. Those elected will assume leadership roles in determining the future of the Association.

The filing deadline for those offices is Friday, Jan. 23. All voting is online, and will begin at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 16, and end at midnight on Tuesday, March 3.

To file: Simply go to the NSEA website and click on the '2015 District Elections' link. Select your district, and then select the office you are interested in seeking. All persons seeking to file as a candidate will need their 10-digit NSEA membership identification number. Your number can be found on your NSEA Access membership card; or above your name on the mailing label of *The Voice*. Nominations appear on the NSEA website within 24 hours of filing.

As a step in the online filing process, all candidates will have an opportunity to provide a 50-word statement about their candidacy. Voters will be able to access that statement during balloting. It may be easiest for candidates to type the statement in a Word or other text document before beginning the process, and then paste the statement into the appropriate box during the filing process.

Note that NSEA's Minority Involvement Plan encourages minorities to seek Association office at all levels. The



plan says "It shall be the goal of the Association to seek minority representation on governing and appointive bodies at least equal to the percentage of minority membership for that appropriate level."

If you do not have access to the Internet, mail your name, address, local association name and a 50-word statement to: NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Be sure to state which office you are seeking.

After Feb. 1, members will receive notification on voting dates and protocol.

In all cases, the deadline for filing for office is Friday, Jan. 23. The NSEA website is at:

www.nsea.org

THE VACANCIES

A district-by-district (see map) look at leadership opportunities within NSEA:

TRI-VALLEY

- District president;
- District treasurer;
- District secretary;
- One seat on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- Four executive committee seats – two from the East sub-district, and two from the Central sub-district.

ELKHORN

- District president;
- District vice president;
- One seat on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- Four seats on the district executive committee.

CAPITOL

- District president;
- District vice president;
- One seat on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- One seat on the district executive committee.

METRO

- District president;
- District vice president;
- One seat on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- Five seats on the executive committee (all odd-numbered sub-districts).

PANHANDLE

- District vice president;
- District treasurer;
- Three seats on the district executive committee.

SANDHILLS DISTRICT

- District president;
- District vice president;
- One seat on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- Two executive committee seats.

Needed: Valid E-mail Address

Do you want to vote in the NSEA elections in 2015? All you need is your 10-digit NSEA identification number.

The voting period opens at 12:01 a.m. Monday, Feb. 16. Prior to that date, members with valid e-mail addresses on file at NSEA will receive an e-mail detailing the voting process and with their unique 10-digit identification number.

NSEA members without a valid e-mail address on file will receive a postcard explaining the voting process. If you do not receive either a postcard or an e-mail from NSEA by February 16, call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

Update your e-mail address by calling NSEA at 1-800-742-0047, or by filling the form at:

www.nsea.org/contact-us



Higher Ed Academy Voting Dates Set; File by Jan. 23

Members of the NSEA Higher Ed Academy will choose officers in voting that will be held in conjunction with other NSEA elections. However, because Higher Ed members are now integrated into NSEA's six districts, depending on workplace, they will receive two e-mails — one alerting them to NSEA elections and one for Higher Ed Academy elections.

Higher Ed Academy offices that are open for election include president, three-year term; vice president, two years; secretary, three years; faculty rep, two years; and academic professional rep and educational support professional rep, both one-year terms.

To file for one of those offices by the Jan. 23 deadline, go to the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

Knowing Our Letters

A survey of students this month at a college campus revealed that many did not know who won the American Civil War, but could correctly identify both the current and former wives of actor Brad Pitt. Should we really be concerned about such sensational reports? The answer is yes. When significantly more teenagers are reported to be able to name the Three Stooges than the three branches of our government, we should all worry. In the last two decades, studies by the National Geographic Society, the National Constitution Center, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, the National Association of Scholars — and many others — all point to important problems in the foundational knowledge of what author and professor Mark Bauerlein calls, in a 2008 book by the same name, *The Dumbest Generation*.

Our language reveals the relationship that exists between learning and reading. It was once common to call an educated person “well-read.” The word “read” is still a synonym for study or interpretation. The word we often use for knowledge and skill is “literate,” derived from the Latin word for letter.

The simple fact is that reading is critical to the acquisition of knowledge. The effects of a non-reading culture are obvious and dangerous. If a democratic society depends on an informed electorate, we may be living on borrowed time.

‘Pointless Babble’

Reading broadens our understanding of the human condition — of who we are and how our experience is the same or different from both friends and enemies. It helps us situate our history and our culture. And reading gives us practice in analyzing the claims of truth or fact. The great works of fiction are stories — lenses — that help us see and understand the world in critically different ways. Or course, reading does not have to be of 1,000 page literary tomes to be important.

On the other hand, it can’t be the stuff of 140 characters that defines much of the “pointless babble” of Twitter.

How do we encourage reading in a society that now questions the future of books and newspapers and can’t even spare the time to look at “page 2” of a web search?

The Story of Family

As I write this essay, I think of the sheaf of letters that my great-great grandfather wrote home from the battlefields of the Civil War. I know who won the Civil War. I am connected to that answer by these letters and the knowledge that my forebear died in that war. I know he left a widow and 7 children and because of his death almost exactly 150 years ago, my understanding is deeper about how the death of every soldier today affects a family forever. All families have a similar sheaf of letters. They are from the battlefield, the hospital, college, former lovers or former foes, from lonely children, or aging parents.

These letters are the literature — the story — of every family. One question is why they are usually hidden away in a cedar chest or in the back of a drawer. The more immediate question is why such letters are not being written today. Tweets, emails, texts, and Facebook posts are temporary and usually too shallow to be the kind of important lens on humanity that other writing — and reading — offers. A friend of

mine writes a letter to each of her children on their birthdays. These letters are “keepers,” not temporary deletes.

Our society is losing its interest in reading and, consequently, is less informed, less analytical, less insightful, and more easily distracted from important issues. Letters to friends and family are perfect ways to deeply explore real issues between people who care about each other. These letters will be read — and re-read. What will be the next letter that you will write?



Letters Still Powerful After 150 Years: NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen’s Great-Great Grandfather, Samuel Booher, in a photo Booher included in a letter sent home 3 months before his death in the Civil War.

Another Successful Fall Conference

Breakouts, Hastings History Highlight Annual Gathering

Members of NSEA-Retired enjoyed another information filled Fall Conference, held in Kearney on Oct. 28.

Several informational breakout sessions were presented mid-morning, as attendees chose two sessions to attend, based on their individual preferences. Sessions offered were: Creating Memory Books with Digital Photos; Teaching an On-Line Class; Sleep Disorders; Estate Planning; Nebraska's "Aging Network"; Art Tanderup's Experience hosting the Harvest of Hope Concert; EHA BC/BS Insurance Options (pre-65); and Medicare.

NSEA-recommended candidates for governor and the U.S. Senate addressed the members at lunch.

A short business meeting was held after lunch, followed by the Spotlight on Nebraska Presentation. Walter Miller shared detailed information about the U.S. Naval Ammu-



Good Company: Enjoying a visit during a reception the evening before the NSEA-Retired Fall Conference were, from left, Mike and Ruth Gearhart, Kearney; and Gene and Rose Wissensburg, Newman Grove.

nitions Depot, located in Hastings. Attendees were very interested in hearing all the facts Miller presented. A dessert reception followed the presentation. All enjoyed a piece of "30th Anniversary of NSEA-Retired Cake" and a scoop of ice cream before heading back home.

Medicare Seminar Details on NSEA-Retired Website

Materials from the recent Medicare seminars are now posted on the NSEA-Retired web page. The materials posted are the handouts used for both the EHA Early-Retiree seminars and the Medicare seminars held in October.

Included in the materials are the NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic Medicare supplement rates for 2015. Those rates begin Jan. 1, 2015, and are good through Dec. 31, 2015. This supplemental insurance plan had a zero percent increase in rates from last year. The general rate structure for NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic has remained virtually unchanged over the past eight years – a statement that cannot be made for insurance premiums in general.

Find the materials at the website at:
www.nsea.org/nsea-retired

Retirement Seminars Helpful

NSEA-Retired had another great year of seminars on retirement planning, at 18 sites across the state, with 649 participants.

The seminars have been held for the last 11 years, and almost one third of NSEA's active members have participated: a total of 229 seminars presented to 8,424 participants.



A winner: NSEA President Roger Rea, Omaha, right, presents the NEA Retired Spotlight Award to NSEA-Retired Corner Editor Renae Kelly, Papillion-LaVista, at Fall Conference. The award recognizes her work on *The Corner* and was presented during activities in conjunction with the NEA Representative Assembly in Denver.

To schedule a seminar, contact Roger Rea with your request. Please put "Retirement Seminar for [your local name]" in the subject line of your e-mail. Call him at (402) 330-6870 or e-mail him at:
rrea68154@yahoo.com

NSEA-Retired Elections

Nominations for NSEA-Retired elections will be accepted starting in

January. Openings include:

- Metro District Director for the NSEA-Retired Board of Directors.
- Delegates to NSEA Delegate Assembly in Lincoln April 24-25.
- Delegates to NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando this summer.

Nomination details and forms will be available in late January at:

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

2015 Dates for Your Calendar

■ **Lobby Day:** NSEA-Retired will hold its annual Lobby Day on Tuesday, Feb. 3 at the NSEA office. More details will be available in January at:

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

■ **Intergenerational Mentoring:** Coming in February or March. Watch the January Advocate for details.

■ **Spring Conference:** The NSEA-Retired spring conference is Thursday, April 23 at St. Benedict's Center near Schuyler. Details to come.

Not Enough Fours!

The November edition of *The Voice* reported Lincoln Education Association-Retired membership at 44. It should have read 444.

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renaekelly@gmail.com

Belz/Lynch/Krause Dollars Available to Locals

Good teachers are always looking for ways to improve their skill set.

NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz/Lynch/Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2015 application deadline for those funds is Saturday, Feb. 14.

The Belz/Lynch/Krause dollars are awarded for projects related to improving a local association; development of instructional materials; or for staff development for individuals of a local association. Eligible are any NSEA member; group of NSEA members; or any NSEA local association.

The application must include an abstract of the project, not to exceed four typed pages, including the following information: need; how the project will address the need to relate to professional growth goals; project description; timeline; a budget statement; and method of evaluating the project's success. Applications must be postmarked by Sat-



Belz



Lynch



Krause

urday, Feb. 14. Recipients will be notified in March.

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

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

ecutive Committee.

For details, or for an application form, visit the NSEA website and look for the link on the home page. The form will be posted through Feb. 14. The website is at:

www.nsea.org/scholarships

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

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Nominate a Colleague for Recognition

'15 Delegate Assembly Returns to Lincoln!

There is no doubt that you have colleagues worthy of recognition. Why not nominate them for recognition on a statewide basis?

Any NSEA member may nominate an individual or group for awards presented at the April 24-25, 2015, NSEA Delegate Assembly at Lincoln. All mailed nominations must be postmarked by Saturday, Jan. 31, 2015, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online, with any required supporting material mailed to the NSEA. Online forms are found under the 'Call for Nominations' link on the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

NSEA members are eligible for:

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

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

■ **Education Support Professional of the Year:** To honor an ESP who has excelled in his or her job.

Finalists will be notified in March; win-

ners announced at Delegate Assembly. 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 within their community or the state.

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

■ **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding communication within the association.

These awards will also be presented:

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

that has made a statewide contribution to education.

■ **Media:** Recognizes a media outlet for outstanding work in covering education issues and promoting community involvement in education. An essay of no more than 200 words explaining the nominee's qualifications must accompany each entry. Examples of dated material may be included.



Trophies: Former SEAN President Tommie Leaders and NSEA Metro District President Becky Torrens, Elkhorn, hold awards their groups won for attendance at the 2014 Delegate Assembly.

Dallas H. Jensen

Dallas H. Jensen, 69, of Plattsmouth, died Nov. 6 at Bellevue following a short battle with cancer.

Jensen was a past president of the Beatrice Education Association, a negotiator at Beatrice and a one-time member of the NSEA Government Relations Committee.

An Iowa native, Jensen taught in Iowa for more than 20 years before moving to Beatrice in 1990. He taught and coached at Beatrice High School until his 2007 retirement.

Jensen is survived by his wife, Pam; two children; and six grandchildren.

In the News: York Teacher Feted

With 33 third grade classes on his teaching resume, York Education Association member Ross Wolstenholm was surprised with the Golden Apple Award as the York Public Schools' Teacher of the Year for 2013-14.

"Words that describe this master teacher include generous and giving, cooperative and creative, respected and a team player," wrote three colleagues in their nomination of Wolstenholm.

A Bradshaw native, Wolstenholm and wife Patty raised four daughters in York. He is active in his church and the YEA.

Blue Ribbons to Four Schools

DOE Cites Schools at Randolph, Grand Island, Johnson-Brock and Papillion-LaVista

Four Nebraska schools were among 337 schools recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2014.

They were recognized for overall academic excellence or progress in closing achievement gaps among groups of students. These schools demonstrated that all students can achieve to high levels:

■ **Randolph Elementary, Randolph Public Schools.**

■ **Carriage Hill Elementary, Papillion-La Vista Public Schools.**

■ **Seedling Mile Elementary School, Grand Island Public Schools.**

■ **Johnson-Brock Elementary, Johnson-Brock Public Schools.**

The U. S. Department of Education honored 287 public and 50 private schools at a ceremony on Nov. 10-11 in Washington, D.C. The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students either achieve very high learning standards or are making notable improvements in closing the achievement gap.

Speaking of Teaching

“Education is the investment our generation makes in the future.”

— *Mitt Romney,*

Former Massachusetts Governor

Book Choices & Reading Stamina

From Laura Cluff.

“I have found that the best way to help my fourth-grade students improve reading stamina is to help them find books that they really want to read. Often I read books that I think might interest my students and then do a little book review in class. I tell students a little about the story and how much I loved the book; I might even read a passage to them. It is amazing how many of them are racing to find available copies from our classroom bookshelves or the library. When the kids get the taste of a good book, they want more. They love coming in and showing me what they got at the library, especially



when it's a book we've read an excerpt from in class.

“I think most kids don't want to read because they have been bored by what they have been required to read in the past. Let the kids select their own books (with little assistance of course) and give them time to read EVERY DAY. It doesn't take too long for them to be able to read for longer periods of time when they are excited about the book they have. When it comes time to read something a little more boring (like a test), they will have at least developed the ability to read for a longer period of time and will find it easier to stay on task.”

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

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

Luers: 'Amazing' Space Camp Applications Are Now Open

The Honeywell Space Academy “takes educators where no classroom can possibly go.”

Ashland-Greenwood elementary teacher Teresa Luers would agree. Luers participated in the June 2014 edition of the Academy at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Al.

Honeywell foots the bill for the five days of focused math and science learning aimed at middle school teachers. All airfare, lodging, meals and materials are covered.

Luers, who teaches at Ashland-Greenwood Elementary, called the event an amazing experience.

“I was able to participate in simulated space missions, zipline, experience 1/6 gravity, spin in an axis wheel, get a flight suit, and participate in many team building activities,” she said.

Luers said she met and worked with teachers from 43 states and 27 countries and found the academy a great way to re-energize your teaching skills. She encouraged other educators to apply.

Applications for the 2015 Academy are now online at:
educators.honeywell.com



In Uniform: Ashland-Greenwood Elementary teacher and NSEA member Teresa Luers, second from right, readies for the official photograph in full Honeywell Space Camp attire.