

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ♦ January 2014

“WE CAN
HELP ONE
ANOTHER,
COLLABORATE,
AND IMPROVE
THE WHOLE
SYSTEM.”

Education Commissioner Matt Blomstedt

- Also inside:
- Teachscape visits Nebraska
 - Leadership positions open
 - Time is near for BCBS scholarship apps

Upcoming Assignments

Legislature Open for Business Jan. 8

■ **What:** The future every teacher's classroom will be discussed as state senators convene to talk about school funding, school security and other education issues.

■ **Details:** Turn to Page 6 for a session preview and details about how to keep up-to-date on legislative issues.

Nominate a Co-Worker!

Jan. 31

■ **What:** There is still plenty of time to nominate a deserving co-worker for one of NSEA's awards, to be presented at the 153rd Delegate Assembly in April. Do you have a colleague worthy of nomination?

■ **Details:** Find out how to nominate a co-worker on Page 9.

Read Across America

March 3

■ **What:** Dr. Seuss has been an American favorite for more than 60 years. Read Across America is a celebration of reading and everything Seuss!

■ **Details:** Plan your school's Read Across celebration by starting at the official website at: readacrossamerica.org

'Thanks for the money so I could get nice outfits. That was kind of you to do. I got some shirts, pants and a coat.'

'Thanks a lot. That helps my mom.'

Children's Fund: Created to Help Kids

Members Can Request Funding to Aid Kids

Scribbled in a child's block letters, the selfless note above is the kind that regularly lands in the NSEA mailbox, thanks to the good work of the NSEA Children's Fund.

Kids across Nebraska have received new coats, clothes, underwear, shoes, eyeglasses, and more, when those items are needed.

Clearly, such testimonials show that the NSEA Children's Fund makes a difference.

Every NSEA member knows of children in heartbreaking situations: children who wear thin jackets to school in frigid weather because they have nothing else; students who

get decent meals only when school is in session; students who can't see the front of the classroom for lack of proper eyeglasses.

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

Contributions to the Children's Fund come from teachers and businesses and fundraisers across the state. It's important to note that every penny goes to children. NSEA picks up *all* administrative expenses.

There is no red tape, no form for teachers to fill out. Simply contact the NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 and ask for Sally Bodtke. Or e-mail her at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Help the Fund



Would you or your local association like to give to the NSEA Children's Fund? Send tax deductible gifts to the NSEA Children's Fund, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742.

For an example of what your local might do, turn to Page 24!

Cover Story:

Nebraska has a new Commissioner of Education. Matt Blomstedt was selected from a field of four finalists and is now on the job. Learn about his goals, ideas and what he thinks about helping teachers, starting on

Page 6



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Great Public Schools For Every Child

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Confessions of a List Maker



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“
Nelson
Mandela said
‘Education
is the most
powerful
weapon which
you can use
to change the
world.’

”

I make lists.

If you could walk into my office at this very moment, you would find lists scattered across my desk, reminder notes on my desk phone.

You might see a grocery list, a list of movies I hope to see, books I plan to read, or home improvement projects I would like to complete.

More importantly, I have work ‘to do’ lists, such as ideas for the April Delegate Assembly, discussion topics for the NSEA Board of Directors, or policy changes that I believe would benefit NSEA.

Lists keep me organized. I feel a sense of accomplishment as I cross an item off each list.

My list-making prowess came into play recently after I heard a speaker discuss third grade reading proficiency goals. As a former third grade teacher, I was especially interested, and came away with two thoughts. First, we cannot continue to underinvest on our children. Second, education is not a spectator sport. We all have a responsibility to help children succeed.

After the talk, I did what comes naturally. I made a list. Here is my Top Ten Items Policymakers Should Know When Discussing Education:

1) Not every child comes to school ready to learn. Poverty and English Language Learner issues affect student learning. These students, and the schools with high populations of these students, will always struggle, no matter the resources. Yet watch closely, and you’ll not see teachers abandon these students.

2) Not every child will read at grade level at the end of third grade. An extension of No. 1, this reinforces the value of early childhood education. The earlier we reach these children, the better their chances.

3) Teaching is evolving. Educating students is light years beyond what it was when we were children. In fact, teaching has changed drastically in the past five years. Some changes are technology driven. Others have evolved through differentiation of learning with new instructional strategies, or different measures of student performance at classroom, district and state levels.

4) You cannot ignore this fact: class size does matter. Research has repeatedly verified the premise that low teacher/student ratio improves student learning. Accept it as fact.

5) Visiting a working classroom is an eye-opener. Don’t just stop at the front office for a photo opportunity. Most teachers would welcome the chance to show you what they do, the challenges they face.

6) Discover the rigor! During your visit to the local middle school, high school or college classroom, sit alongside the students and take an exam. Good luck.

7) Schools are big business. It takes big money to run this important enterprise of educating our children. Maintaining and improving our public schools is critical, and we must invest a significant portion of our tax dollars in that effort. Remember to distribute that money in an equitable and adequate fashion!

8) All schools are local. Education reform is an eternally hot topic on the national scene, but policy decisions should represent constituent goals and needs, not those of a national, self-serving profiteer.

9) Forego ‘Big and Bold.’ Broad policy changes grab headlines, but tinkering at the edges will get desired results. Exhibit A: The modest recommendations of the Legislature’s Tax Modernization Committee, which demonstrated an understanding that Nebraska needs a tax system that protects middle class and low income families, yet maintains a stable revenue source for our state.

10) Beware the ripples. Decisions in the arenas of community services, health care, early childhood education and adult learning may seem targeted, but the effects of those decisions ripple through schools and families and will affect student achievement.

Feel free to share this list with your policymakers, whether they be local or state representatives.

Meanwhile, my list-making exploits will continue. I leave you with this from a list of my favorite quotations. The late Nelson Mandela said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”



Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)

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

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Broken Bow Page 23 | Doane College Page 22 | Millard Page 18 | South Sioux City Page 12 |
| Chadron Page 18 | Franklin Page 23 | Mitchell Page 18 | St. Paul Page 23 |
| Chase County Page 23 | Grand Island Page 23 | Nebraska City Page 18, 23 | Walthill Page 18 |
| Creighton University Page 18 | Hartington Page 24 | Norris Page 5 | Wayne State College Page 23 |
| Crete Page 18 | Hershey Page 23 | North Bend Page 5 | Western Nebraska CC Page 23 |
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| | Lincoln Page 5, 12, 18, 23 | Peru State College Page 22 | York Page 18 |
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Beware of ‘Managed’ Teacher Leadership

What gives rise to those panels of teachers advocating for change – sometimes for change that goes against common, classroom sense? Where do those panels come from? Who volunteers for those panels?

Education Week blogger and former Michigan Teacher of the Year Nancy Flanagan said in a recent blog they have partaken in “managed” teacher leadership – an item that she said is “all the rage these days.”

Flanagan said it works like this:

“Get a group of teachers together, preferably young and malleable practitioners. Seek grant funding (Gates is a good bet) and a fundable topic du jour (Common Core, teacher evaluation, teacher preparation, etc.). Give teachers a small stipend (commensurate with their tiny salaries), and suggest that they’re “edupreneurs.” Feed them a one-sided series of reports and research. Then ask them what they think. Edit those thoughts. Voila.

“The resulting book or report will fund any number of conferences, press interviews and subsequent grants. And you can say that the content came ‘from teachers.’ It’s not genuine teacher leadership, however. It’s massaging teachers’ voices to meet a specific (and usually well-funded) goal.”

But the “managed” approach doesn’t always work. Sometimes the teacher refuses to be managed. Learn more at:

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teacher_in_a_strange_land/2013/06/managing_teacher_professionalism.html?intc=es

Consistent to Bed, Smarts in the Head

A new study has linked a consistent bedtime for young children to improved performance on a variety of intellectual tests.

The Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health reported the study of more than 11,000 children in the United Kingdom. The study followed the children when they were 3, 5 and 7, and included surveys and home visits. Researchers then had the children take standardized tests in math, reading and spatial abilities at age 7, while controlling for socioeconomic status and other factors.

In general, a consistent bedtime resulted in better performance in all subject areas, especially for 7-year-old girls, regardless of socioeconomic background. In both boys and girls, irregular bedtimes were tied to lower test scores at age 3, but not at age 5.



Ready for the camera: North Bend science teacher and NSEA member Bob Feurer was Nebraska Teacher of the Year in 2011. Here, he chats with a member of the Teachscope film crew prior to taping in his classroom.

Teachscope Visits Nebraska, Films Teachers of the Year

Videos will be Used in Training Program

During the first week of December, a crew from the nationally known company Teachscope was in Nebraska to film effective teachers at work.

The film crew surely will have good material with which to work, considering the company’s partnership with the National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) lined up several former Nebraska Teachers of the Year.

The visits to the elite classrooms in Nebraska and other states involve filming State Teachers of the Year (STOYs) as teaching exemplars, for use in training of scorers within the Teachscope system for schools that use the Danielson observation framework.

Seven Nebraska Teachers of the Year participated, including 2013’s **Angela Mosier, Westside District 66**; 2007’s **Maddie Fennell**, and 2012’s **Luisa Palomo Hare**, both of **Omaha**; 2008’s **Mary Schlieder, Norris**; 2000’s **John Heineman, Lincoln**; and 2011’s **Bob Feurer, North Bend**. All are NSEA members.

Training and Assessment

“Through visiting classrooms, Teachscope will build content for Teachscope Focus, an Observation Training and Assessment System. Teachscope Focus aims to assist districts in preparing observers and teachers through video-based learning, scoring practice, observer assessments, and observer calibration,” said Katherine Bassett, NNSTOY executive director.

Feurer said having Teachscope join the them in their classroom is a particularly exciting opportunity for the teachers and their students.

“I was just tickled they asked Nebraska TOYs to participate. I looked at it as an honor and the high regard others have for Nebraska teachers in general,” he said.

According to its website, Teachscope was founded in 1999 and works to bridge the gap between educational research and everyday teaching practice by helping teachers learn and apply research-based teaching practices.

Founded in 1984, the National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) is a non-profit serving as a professional home to State Teachers of the Year (STOYs). The videos filmed by Teachscope will be available by late January or early February on the NNSTOY website at:

www.nnstoy.org

The videos will also be available on the website for Teachscope customers once the lessons are integrated into the Teachscope system.

“ I don't want to leave my kids with the burden of having to take care of me. ”
Emma Alston | NEA member



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Education stakeholders: Just days after the State Board of Education tabbed Dr. Matt Blomstedt as the next Commissioner of Education, he met briefly with NSEA President Nancy Fulton at NSEA Headquarters. Blomstedt believes all Nebraska education stakeholders should work together for the common good.

Seeking a Common Focus

Nebraska's New Commissioner Has a Passion for Education, Unity

Recalls 'Remarkable' Education at Palisade, Decries 'Fear-Based' Accountability

Dr. Matt Blomstedt may have broken the long tradition of school administrators serving as the state's top educator, but he's no neophyte when it comes to education issues. His history in education policy and finance issues is both deep and wide.

He also has a driving passion for education and for a "unified leadership approach" that he believes can bring the varied interests of the state's education community into common focus.

"We're not in an environment where we can afford to attack one another in the education setting," he said. "We have to spend that energy figuring out how we can help one another, collaborate, and improve the whole system."

The State Board of Education hired Blomstedt, 41, in December to serve as the state's next Commissioner of Education. He follows Roger

Breed, who retired in June.

The source of his passion for education comes from growing up as the second oldest of 10 in a family that stressed the importance of education. A wonderful cadre of teachers who taught at his hometown, Palisade, during his formative years, was also influential.

Just days after Blomstedt was hired, he visited with NSEA about his new title. Here are excerpts from that interview.

You're not a teacher by trade?

"I was a political science – almost an English – major. Three hours short. I took a lot of history. I looked at becoming a teacher; that was certainly one of my considerations.

"I looked at law school, but I pulled back and ended up in community and regional planning. I got a master's degree and focused on rural development, economic development and public policy."

Everything you've done prepared you for this?

"I didn't even know there was such a thing as community planning. I was looking at what had happened at Palisade with my dad, when

Blomstedt: NSEA's Choice

NSEA played a role in the selection of Dr. Matt Blomstedt as Nebraska's new commissioner of education.

In August, NSEA shared with the State Board of Education a long list of teacher-driven qualifications for commissioner.

Once the State Board narrowed the field to four finalists, NSEA had representatives present during a daylong session of interviews with the finalists. Following the interviews, Blomstedt was the clear front-runner.

A letter to State Board members from NSEA President Nancy Fulton urged serious consideration of Blomstedt for the post.

"NSEA has worked with Dr. Blomstedt on a myriad of education issues over the years and have found him to be focused on what is good for students, as well as for teachers, administrators, school boards and school districts.

"Thus, it is with confidence and enthusiasm that NSEA recommends to the State Board, Dr. Matt Blomstedt to serve as Nebraska's Commissioner of Education."

About Dr. Matt Blomstedt

Nebraska's new Commissioner of Education has a well-rounded resume.

Dr. Matt Blomstedt most recently served as executive director of the Nebraska Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council, a post he has held since the Legislature created the council in 2008.

He is a visiting lecturer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Education where his work helps to guide and prepare the next generation of education leaders.

Earlier, Blomstedt served as the first executive director of the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA). He is a past research analyst for the Legislature's Education Committee, and was a gubernatorial appointee to the Nebraska School Finance Review Committee in 2001, serving as the school finance expert.

He lives in Central City with his wife and five children.

he was on the school board and the district went through reorganization. I also looked at rural development, and wondered how we're going to support and sustain services in places like Palisade. I ended up being a 'systems and structures' kind of guy, and having an interest in those arenas.

"Law was always the thing that seemed to bring those things together for me. Instead of law, I ended up going on a different path and continued to work on things that I thought were important in education policy."

What is your first order of business?

"I want to try to establish the policy relationships needed to be effective for this coming legislative session.

"Doing that will actually make us effective in the other partnerships we need to establish, from P-16, to the governor and higher education.

"Because of the turnover in the legislature, we really have to establish a couple of key components that position us, if the (state) board is so inclined, to pursue a waiver for ESEA flexibility for the future. We need to demonstrate that we are unified as a state and that our accountability approach is in order."

How did you develop your passion for education?

"Mom and dad were married when they were young. But she went back and got a teaching degree. So I kind of felt like I went to college when I was probably in fourth fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth grade. I had eighth grade graduation, and my mom's college graduation was at the same time. Some of my passion comes from that experience.

"My dad has a high school degree and worked as a lineman for public power, but really focused all of us kids, all of my siblings, on really having a good education. They valued that in a substantial way in our household.

"I had a remarkable experience at Palisade when I was growing up. We had a group of teachers that was very close-knit. From elementary all the way through high school graduation, we had pretty much the same set of teachers that seemed to exude that same passion for education.

"I think we all look back and realize that was a remarkable time for us to go through school in Palisade."

What is your connection with teachers?

"If you study management theory, you start by asking 'where is the work really taking place?' Everyone above that level is really part of a support system for the educational process.

"When I think about what the whole system has to look like, ultimately, it has to have a system of supports that are going to give the teacher the best opportunity to succeed.

"I love to talk to teachers and ask them 'what are you experiencing?' because that informs me about whether I'm thinking about an issue properly or not."

Do teachers have adequate voice in policy decisions?

"I think sometimes we have 'included' the voices of teachers

when we've said 'well, we've had them there. They were there.'

"If we're really listening, we're asking 'What's going on in your school? What types of support do you need? What type of professional development do you need?' That will start to inform not just policy, but practices and support systems designed to help teachers.

"I want them to be critical of the system, and have an opportunity to voice opinions, relative to the system of education as it affects them and their classroom. There is an exper-

tise that only they have."

Most teachers would say 'too much testing.'

"My own kids tell me that, too.

"Obviously, we have expectations of meeting state standards that just weigh on teachers.

"I really would like to get away from what I call 'fear-based' accountability systems. That doesn't mean that I think we don't need to have assessment. It's just how quickly can we get in and how quickly can we get out of that environment?"

"We are focused on assessment because there is a desire to use data driven decision-making. So formative assessment in the classroom that has always taken place, how can we do this better? What technologies exist that we might be able to use so it doesn't feel like assessment all the time?"

Your resume says you have a vision for and confidence in a Nebraska-based approach to school improvement and accountability.

"There was an article given to me, I think by Roger Breed, that said a student walks into a drug store and the student has a device like this (holds out a smart phone). That store then knows more about that student than we do in school. They use and think about data very differently.

"We have to think about what data is important at a state-wide level. What data is important at the ESU level? What data is important at the school district level? What data is important at the classroom level? Those things need to nest together.

"We have to build a system that interacts with the goals of the state; the goals of the district; the goals of individual students. That's not an easy thing to do without technology."

Your work is already under way?

"Yes, and I'm proud of the capacities across the state. I'm proud of the folks in the department. These have not been easy times over the last several years, whether it has been economic uncertainty or uncertainty about the accountability system.

"One thing I've been thinking about, and it goes a little bit contrary to my position on how we analyze data and how we rank schools. I do think I want us ranked as a state. I think that way I can unify the state, as an education system. I can compare ourselves to others states and say 'are we the best,' or at least 'can we be the model other states want to keep up with?'"

"We can only pull that off together. I don't see any reason not to seek that out."

Stand Strong at Kearney

Jeff Kallay to Headline 2014 Delegate Assembly, But That's Just One Reason Why You Should Attend!

A little known fact about Jeff Kallay: in junior high, he was a member of a roller skating speed team.

Perhaps that's where Kallay developed his enthusiasm and ability to work an audience quickly and effectively.

Kallay also bills himself as a "proud card-carrying member of Generation X who has grown to love and understand Millennials."

Bringing different generations together for a common purpose, such as Association membership, will be a focus of Kallay's keynote during the Saturday morning session of NSEA's 2014 Delegate Assembly in Kearney.

Kallay is co-founder and CEO for Render Experiences, an Atlanta-based company that works with colleges and universities to develop and enhance campus visit experiences for prospective students. He is a nationally respected authority on the emerging "experience economy" and the all important campus visit experience.

He helps colleges and organizations understand generational differences and how to best connect with each unique peer group. He's presented to various national and affiliate organizations within both the NEA and AFT.

'It Means All of Us'

Kallay's address will be appropriate, given the theme for the 2014 Delegate Assembly.

"Stand Strong Together" represents the Association ideals.

"When we 'stand strong together' it doesn't mean just a few of us, it means all of us, young, old and in between," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "There is strength and power in numbers.

"Such unity allows us to be effective as we work for improved working



conditions, which we all know are the conditions in which our students learn."

Elections

Kallay won't be the only attraction at Delegate Assembly.

The 300 delegates will also elect a president, vice president and a representative to the NEA Board of Directors; recognize a slate of outstanding educators and contributors to education (see sidebar); and give the Association guidance on a number of issues for the coming year.

There will also likely be changes made to the Association Bylaws and Resolutions.

Over the years, members at NSEA's Delegate Assembly have taken action that moved teachers into the state retirement system; approved continuing contract language as an accepted practice; took the first steps toward a statewide health insurance plan that was the precursor to the Educators Health Alliance, which today serves teachers and their families statewide.

You Can Serve as a Delegate

The Association's 153rd Delegate Assembly will be held at Kearney on Friday evening and Saturday, April 11-12, 2014.

You, as a dues-paying member of NSEA, are eligible to seek selection to Delegate Assembly. There are 450 delegate slots, and it is easy to seek delegate status.

If you are interested in attending Delegate Assembly, contact your local association president. NSEA will pay mileage, as well as cost for a shared hotel room. Delegate Assembly 2014 is at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney.

Questions? Contact your NSEA field staff member at 1-800-742-0047.

Recognize Their Talent!

Every school building in the state houses public school employees doing work worthy of recognition.

Any NSEA member may nominate an individual or group for these awards. All mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Jan. 31, 2014, and sent to: NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may be submitted online, with any required supporting material scanned and e-mailed or mailed to the NSEA.

Honorees will be notified in March and announced at Delegate Assembly in Kearney on April 11-12, 2014.

Online forms for the awards, as well as more details, may be found under the 'Delegate Assembly' link at: www.nsea.org

Honorees for the first three awards will receive \$250. The Award for Teaching Excellence honoree will compete for the NEA Teaching Excellence Award and a \$25,000 prize.

NSEA members are eligible for:

■ NSEA Rookie of the Year.

For a teacher who sparkled in his or her first year of teaching during the 2012-13 school year.

■ **Award for Teaching Excellence.** To a classroom teacher who has excelled over a long period of time.

■ **Education Support Professional of the Year.** Awarded to an ESP who has excelled in his or her job.

■ **The Great Plains Milestone Award:** Cites an individual/group that has promoted human & civil rights.

■ **Community Service:** For an NSEA member(s) and/or local associations for volunteer work.

■ **Local Public Relations:** Cites a local association for excellent internal communication and promotion of education in the community.

These awards are also presented:

■ **Friend of Education:** NSEA's highest award honors an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education.

■ **Media:** Recognizes a newspaper, television or radio station for outstanding work in covering education issues and promoting community involvement in education.

Westside Educators Earn \$2,000 NEA Grant

NEA Foundation Funds 'Success through Service' Project

Two more NSEA members have been awarded a grant from the NEA Foundation.

Westside District 66 High School counselor Cynthia Serfass, along with retired para-educator Pam McGeary, received a \$2,000 Student Achievement Grant from the NEA Foundation. The award was announced in mid-December.

The grant will allow for introduction of a service-learning project for at-risk students at Westside. Students will vote on several options for local service opportunities and volunteer throughout the academic year. They will also be tasked with reflecting on their volunteer experiences and how their work affected their community.

"With these grants, we are supporting educator-driven solutions that contribute to improved student performance in public schools," said Harriet Sanford, president and CEO of the NEA Foundation. "Our funding enables educators to engage in a wide variety of innovative approaches to the benefit of students across the country."

Nationwide, the NEA Foundation announced 40 grants for a combined \$155,000. The grants support educators in their efforts to improve teaching and learning. The NEA Foundation awards two levels of funding, \$2,000 or \$5,000, for two primary categories of grants to public education professionals: Student Achievement Grants for initiatives to improve academic achievement, and Learning and Leadership Grants for high-quality professional development activities.

A team of 20 educators, many of whom are former grantees, reviewed and evaluated all applications. Funded grants were selected for the quality of the proposed ideas and their potential for enhancing student achievement. The latest grants were awarded to educators in 25 different states.

The NEA Foundation has invested more than \$7.1 million in grants to support the work of almost 4,500 educators from every state in the country to help students succeed. Each year, the Foundation awards approximately 150 Student Achievement and Learning & Leadership Grants.

To learn about these educators' projects, visit the Foundation's Grantee Archive, where you can search for grantees and projects by most recent, grade level, subject, state, or keyword. Visit the Featured Grantees page to watch videos and read short profiles about NEA Foundation grantees and their successful grant work.

The NEA Foundation awards its grants to educators three times a year. The next deadline is Feb. 1, 2014. Application forms and a video with step-by-step instructions on how to apply can be found in the Grants to Educators section of the Foundation website at:

neafoundation.org

You, Too, Can Earn a Grant!

Deadlines for applications for both the NEA Foundation Student Achievement and Learning & Leadership Grants are Feb. 1, June 1 and Oct. 1. For details, go to:
neafoundation.org



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Tax Reform, State Aid Top Legislative List

Short Session, Long List of Issues to Tackle

Campaign strategist James Carville is famous for his mantra “It’s the economy, stupid!” Throughout the 1992 Presidential Election, Carville insisted the only real issue was the economy – and his candidate won the election.

At public hearings across the state these past six months, the mantra was “It’s the property tax, stupid!”

Individual after individual told the Legislature’s Tax Modernization Committee that they want property tax relief. While the Governor is pushing for cuts to upper bracket income tax rates, the estimated 1,000 or more Nebraskans who attended the public hearings sent a different message: “not so fast – we want to address the property tax problem.”

The committee, chaired by Kearney State Sen. Galen Hadley, has heeded that message and decided to take a methodical approach to changes in the state’s tax system. It also hopes to keep any changes to the system revenue neutral.

Hadley believes that fair and measured changes to the property tax system, while a priority, should not be made in haste.

In the Rotunda

The tax issue alone would make any session of the Legislature interesting to watch. Add that the coming session is just 60 days in length; that three members of the body are running for governor; that two members of the body are running for state auditor; that the expansion of Medicare will undoubtedly return to the docket; and the 2013 session will be interesting to say the least.

Considering that school districts de-

rive the majority of funding from property taxes, the 2014 session could have a major effect on public schools, and your classroom. That’s why NSEA is in the capitol rotunda every day of the session.

School Security Addressed

Among the items NSEA will watch closely during the 2014 session:

- The Education Committee will look at phasing out the teacher education factor in the state aid formula, which encourages districts to hire and retain educators with advanced degrees. That factor adds about \$30 million to the state aid total. The formula also includes an instructional time allowance that adds about \$20 million to the formula. NSEA will oppose the immediate elimination of those factors.

- State aid to schools will be well-debated. Nebraska schools rank 49th nationally in the proportion of funding from state dollars (30 percent). Meanwhile, the state ranks fourth nationally in the proportion of funding from property taxes (45 percent). Those numbers make the Tax Modernization Committee’s plans to research property tax relief all the more urgent. NSEA will watch that debate closely.

- School security will again be on the docket. Sen. Rick Kolowski introduced a bill last year to provide funding to help school districts address security issues. His bill remains in committee, and NSEA will again support passage.

NSEA members are encouraged to contact their state senators to make the case for fully funding state aid to education, and for supporting all aspects of NSEA’s 2014 Legislative Agenda (at left).

Keep Tabs on the Legislature

It’s so very easy to be in the know! Here’s how:

- **Read *The Voice*:** NSEA’s monthly magazine keeps members on top of the latest legislative happenings.

- **E-Updates:** Add your name to NSEA’s e-mail list to receive regular legislative updates. You can also become one of NSEA’s cyberlobbyists by completing the form at:

www.nsea.org/cyberlobbyist

- **NSEA text message alerts:** To sign up for the text messaging service, provide the requested information at this website:

www.nsea.org/text

- **On the Web:** Follow the progress of bills on the Nebraska Legislature’s site at:

www.leg.ne.gov

NSEA’s 2014 Legislative Agenda

**STRONG SCHOOLS
STRONG COMMUNITIES
STRONG ECONOMY**

NSEA’s legislative goals for the 2014 session of the Nebraska Legislature include increasing the state’s investment in P-16 public education and ensuring any changes made to the state tax structure do not reduce funding used to support strong schools, strong communities and a strong economy. It is essential that the state has the resources necessary to continue the wise tradition of investing in safe communities, excellent public schools, world-class colleges and universities and other infrastructure that boosts our economy and creates a high quality of life.

NSEA will work to:

- Provide state and local funding that supports quality public education for every student with the focus of stabilizing state aid;

- Promote and protect public education programs that benefit Nebraska students, teachers, higher education faculty and education support professionals.

- Ensure public school students and staff have respectful, safe and secure learning and working environments;

- Ensure the protection of collective bargaining rights; and

- Maintain prudent management and funding of the state school employees’ retirement plan.

NSEA believes that any

changes to the state’s tax system must be revenue neutral or provide for additional funding for education.

Education funding cuts hurt students, staff, schools, colleges and our economy. Stability and predictability in state and local funding for schools is crucial. It is in the best interest of all Nebraskans to keep schools fully staffed.

Maintaining a broad and deep curriculum and appropriate class size will help raise student achievement and ensure our state’s educational and economic competitive-ness.



Ground level: NSEA President Nancy Fulton was invited to take part in book delivery, and had a chance to read to students, too.



The details: Everett Elementary's Julie Colby, right, explains Harvest of Books to students as LEA President and NEA Board of Directors member Jenni Absalon, left, watches.

LEA's Harvest of Books Delivers Again

Program has Delivered Nearly 200,000 Books to Kids Since Inception

More than 7,000 first and second grade students in Lincoln and Waverly went home with new books in November thanks to the latest edition of the Lincoln Education Association's Harvest of Books program.

LEA members and staff organize the program, and with donations from the public, discounts from local retailers, collect books and cash for the program. Members of the LEA-Retired help to count and sort the donations before the books are delivered to 58 public and parochial schools in the two communities.

"Surprisingly, many Lincoln children have never owned a new book of their own," said LEA President Jenni Absalon.

That's unfortunate, because, as Absalon said, literacy is one of the best predictors of a child's future success.

"A child without access to books won't have the chance to become an engaged and capable reader," she said. "This is the reality for children who are growing up in poverty; books are scarce. In some of the lowest-income neighborhoods in the country there is only one book available for every 300 children."

Absalon gave special thanks to retired LEA member Jan Olmstead, who stepped in to help coordinate the Harvest of Books program this year.

To be exact, this year's program resulted in books to 3,437 first graders and 3,570 second graders – 7,007 books in all. Since the program began in 1997, Harvest of Books has placed more than 180,000 books into the hands of first and second graders, a value of well over \$900,000.

Sioux City Paras Assist Special Olympics Gold

Mattison, Wood Help Team to First Place Finish in South Korea

Two Education Support Professionals and members of the South Sioux City Education Association go the extra mile for kids.

In fact, earlier this year, they went thousands of extra miles.

Taylor Mattison and Jeff Wood both work as paraeducators for the South Sioux City Public Schools. Both served as partners on the Sioux City Unified Floor Hockey Team that won a gold medal at the Special Olympics Winter World Games in South Korea this past year.

Floor hockey is much like ice hockey, except that it is played indoors without ice, and, in the Special Olympics version, players use sticks to move the puck. The floor hockey puck is larger than the ice hockey version, and has a hole in the middle, allowing players to fling the puck toward the goal.

Half the team members are athletes with intellectual dis-

abilities. The other half are partners who volunteer to play with the team and coach the players. Five players are on the court at one time, with two forwards playing offense, two playing defense, and one goalie. Rules allow only two partners on the floor at once.

The South Sioux City team beat a team from Sweden to win the gold medal. Earlier wins came over Uganda and China.

A graduate of the University of South Dakota, Wood is a paraeducator in the special education room at South Sioux City Middle School. A long-time Special Olympics coach, he was inducted into the Special Olympics Nebraska

Coaches Hall of Fame in 2010.

Mattison is a paraprofessional for the Year 13 Transition Department with the South Sioux City Public Schools. He is taking classes through Wayne State College at Northeast Community College, and hopes to become an elementary school teacher.



Mattison



Wood

Medicaid Expansion Saves State Dollars

Kids, School Employees Helped; Plan Will Let Senators Review Costs

Teachers know that a child who is sick and lacks access to adequate health care either comes to school sick, or doesn't come to school at all. In either case, illness compromises that child's ability to learn.

Now, life-long educator and Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski has written to education stakeholders in Nebraska seeking support for a second effort to have the Legislature approve LB577, which would expand Medicaid in Nebraska.

Although opponents allege that Medicaid expansion will cost the state – and result in cuts to education – Kolowski calls that a “false choice.” He says savings in other social programs will offset the state's cost of Medicaid expansion.

“I, and many of my colleagues, firmly believe that we can prioritize investments in the health of our citizenry and the education of our children at the same time,” wrote Kolowski.

NSEA supports Medicaid expansion because it would help school children, and, notably, an estimated 2,185 school employees without insurance (see box).

Also proposed in Kolowski's letter is an opportunity for the legislature to re-assess the decision to participate in the program should federal funding fall below the promised 90 percent cost of expansion. Kolowski said that should ease the minds of those who believe the state cannot afford the cost.

The federal government has pledged to pay 100 percent of the costs of expansion for the first three years, and 90 percent thereafter. Some officials believe the state's 10 percent share is too costly, or that the federal share will fall below 90 percent.

The fiscal note on LB577, however, indicates the state's cost through fiscal year 2019-20 at \$57 million. The fiscal note projects savings to state social programs during that time at \$84 million.

'False Choice'

Legislation to expand Medicaid faced stiff opposition from the governor and a small band of senators in 2013. A majority of 49 senators supported LB577, but support did not rise to the 33 votes needed to overcome a filibuster. LB57 supporters have said some opponents have encouraged continued work on the bill's passage.

The Facts: Medicaid Expansion

- An estimated 2,185 K-12 school employees in Nebraska would be eligible for health insurance under expansion.
- Medicaid expansion would cost the state about \$57 million over the next seven years.
- Savings, however, in existing state safety net programs would total as much as \$84 million.
- Medicaid expansion would bring more than \$580 million into the state's economy in this biennium.
- The State of Kentucky approved Medicaid expansion, and independent estimates believe expansion will create nearly 17,000 jobs in that state alone.

Kolowski outlined his proposals in a letter distributed in late December.

“Working in education, we have seen firsthand how a child's ability to learn is impaired when the child regularly brings unmet health needs to the classroom,” wrote Kolowski.

Kolowski also said too many low-income, working parents fall into a coverage gap created when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Medicaid expansion is an option for states. Those within that gap earn too much for the current Medicaid program, but too little to receive federal subsidies under

the Affordable Care Act. Expansion of Medicaid in Nebraska would cover much of that gap.

“Unfortunately, some state leaders continue to present a false choice between supporting health coverage for low-income working families and funding our state's education system,” wrote Kolowski.

High School Principal

Kolowski noted that the state now pays millions for the health care of uninsured Nebraskans through a multitude of safety net programs. For example, the state spends \$25 million each year on a program to subsidize coverage for people with pre-existing conditions. An ACA provision that ensures coverage regardless of pre-existing conditions eliminates the need for that program.

The state spends another \$75 million each year, said Kolowski, on a behavioral health safety net system. While the program will still exist, giving low-income citizens access to insurance costs will markedly reduce the need.

Kolowski retired as a high school principal at Millard. It is a priority of his to implement policy that supports families, builds stronger communities and better schools.

“To build a better future for our children, there are no better investments than the education and health of our citizens,” he wrote.



RE-ELECT

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NSEA PRESIDENT

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nfulton@hotmail.com

You Can Serve Your Association

Governance Positions Open in All Six NSEA Districts, on NSEA Board

Your Association thrives on top-notch leadership. You have the skills to provide that leadership.

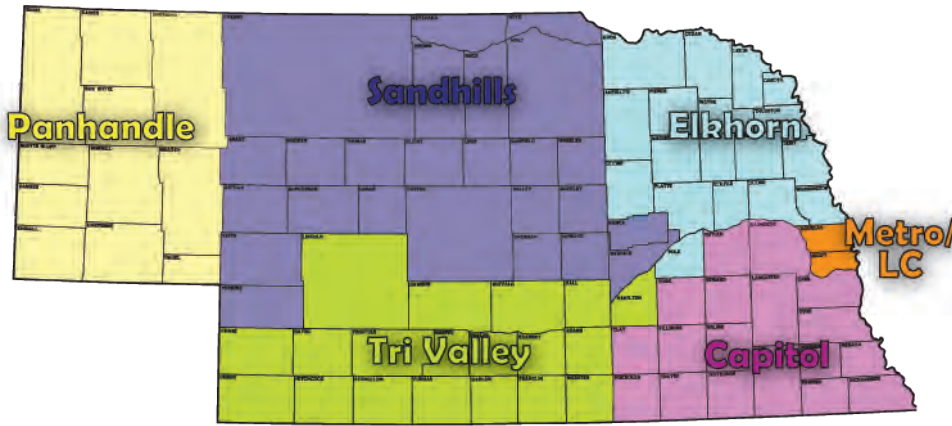
Beginning on March 19, NSEA will hold elections for nearly three dozen district offices, along with several openings on NSEA's Board of Directors. Those elected will assume leadership roles in determining the future of the Association.

The filing deadline for those offices is Saturday, Feb. 15. Voting will take place from Wednesday, March 19, through midnight on Wednesday, April 2.

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."

To file: Simply go to the NSEA website and click on the '2014 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 will be posted to the NSEA website within 24 hours of being filed.

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.

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.

In all cases, the deadline for filing for office is Saturday, Feb. 15. The NSEA website is at

www.nsea.org

The Vacancies

SANDHILLS DISTRICT

Vacancies: District treasurer and secretary.

TRI-VALLEY DISTRICT

Vacancies: District vice president; two seats on the NSEA Board of Directors; three executive committee seats – two from the West sub-district, and one from the Central sub-district.

ELKHORN DISTRICT

Vacancies: District treasurer and secretary; one seat on the NSEA Board of Directors; and two seats on the district executive committee.

CAPITOL DISTRICT

Vacancies: District treasurer and secretary; one seat on the NSEA Board of Directors; and one seat on the district executive committee.

METRO DISTRICT

Vacancies: District treasurer and secretary; two seats on the NSEA Board of Directors; and five seats on the executive committee (all even-numbered sub-districts).

PANHANDLE DISTRICT

Vacancies: District president and secretary; four seats on the district executive committee positions.

Needed: Valid E-mail Address

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

The two-week voting period opens at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, March 19. Prior to that date, members with valid e-mail addresses on file with NSEA will receive an e-mail detailing the voting process and including each member's 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 post card or an e-mail from NSEA by March 19, call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

You may also update your e-mail address with NSEA by completing the form online, found at:

www.nsea.org/contact-us



Higher Ed Academy Voting to Take Place Soon; File by Feb. 15

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 vice president, treasurer, faculty rep, academic professional rep and educational support professional rep.

To file for one of those offices by the Feb. 15 deadline, go to the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

Board Updates Minority Plan

Steps Taken to Further Encourage Minority Participation in NSEA Activities

The NSEA Board of Directors has approved a plan designed to increase minority participation in Association activities.

The action, taken at the board's November meeting, is to encourage minority Association members to attend NSEA functions and governance events; to seek leadership positions within the Association; and to attend the NSEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly as elected delegates.

NSEA has had a Minority Involvement Plan for two decades, but the Association has struggled to meet NEA Bylaw language that sets a goal of matching the state's minority population percentage within NSEA's Representative Assembly delegation.

At the July 2013 Representative Assembly, 14 percent of NSEA's RA delegation were of minority status, which fell just short of the 18 percent mark of minorities in the state population, according to the 2010 Census. NSEA's 14 percent turnout was remarkable, considering that just 3.4 percent of Association members self-identify as minority members.

"We've done well in pushing for minority representation at RA and in other areas, but we can always do better," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "That's the goal of this plan."

That said, the plan is viewed as a way to encourage voluntary compliance with NEA Bylaws, and "shall not be construed to be a quota." Among other items, the plan:

- Recognizes the 2013 reorganization of NSEA's standing Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) to reflect the Association's on-going commitment to achieve the purposes of the committee. The purpose is "to promote respect and understanding of minority and ethnic groups and their involvement in all Association activities."

- Provides for leadership training for minority members of the Association. In addition to general leadership training, leadership training of minorities will be conducted by EMAC and the NEA through the NEA's Minority Leadership Training program and the NEA Joint Conference on Concerns of Minorities and Women.

The responsibility of implementing the plan rests with governance – the Association's elected officials – at all levels, as well as with the NSEA executive director and such staff as the executive director shall assign to those duties. It will be the duty of the EMAC to submit annual recommendations for updating and improving the plan, and to report progress of the Association in meeting the plan goals.

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Applications are due by April 15.



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Denver, Here We Come!

NEA's 2014 Representative Assembly is Close at Hand, Close in Proximity

For more than 100 years, the National Education Association has held an annual meeting.

The Representative Assembly, as it has come to be known, met in Des Moines (1921) and even in Topeka (1886). It will likely never again be any nearer in proximity to Nebraska than it will when delegates gather in Denver in July 2014.

If you're interested in becoming a delegate, this would be a great year to do so! It is time to start planning for this event.

NSEA members will elect about 100 delegates to serve among the nearly 8,000 NEA members who attend RA. All active NSEA members are eligible to serve. In addition, there are provisions for student members and retirees to serve.

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

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

www.nsea.org

All members seeking to file as a candidate will need their NSEA membership ID number in order to file. That individualized number can be found on each member's NSEA Access membership card; above the member's name on *The Voice* mailing label; or above the member's name in the e-mail that delivered the digital issue of *The Voice*. In all cases, nominations will be posted to the NSEA website within 24 hours of being filed. If you do not see your name on the website list of candidates by March 6, contact NSEA immediately.

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

Except for NSEA-Retired, the deadline for filing is Saturday, Feb. 15. Questions? Contact NSEA's Patty Schroer at:

patty.schroer@nsea.org

Here are the categories:

At-Large Delegates

Any active NSEA member is eligible to place his or her name on the statewide, At-Large Delegate ballot by filing through the NSEA website. Those elected as statewide delegates will be reimbursed for transportation, lodging and meal expenses. De-

pending on several factors, four to five of these delegate slots will be available to At-Large candidates.

After certification of election results, elected candidates will receive details about the 2014 RA.

District At-Large RA Cluster Delegates

For the purpose of electing delegates, local associations with fewer than 76 members are grouped in clusters in each of NSEA's six governance districts (see district map on opposite page). In other words, for instance, all local associations in Elkhorn District with fewer than 76 members will pool and vote on a common set of candidates for delegate to RA.

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

Members interested in serving as a Cluster Delegate must complete the online filing by the Saturday, Feb. 15, deadline.

SEAN Delegates

Members of Nebraska's student association (SEAN) elect their NEA representatives to the RA by statewide balloting. SEAN members wishing to file as delegates must complete the online filing process by the Saturday, Feb. 15, deadline.

NSEA-Retired Delegates

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

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

Members of NSEA-Retired wishing to file must complete the form on the NSEA website no later than Feb. 7, 2014. Also required: a biography of no more than 50 words.

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

Time is Now to Request Refund of PAC Dollars

Annual Request for Refund is Due Feb. 15

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

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

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

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

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

Requests for refunds must be postmarked for delivery to NSEA Headquarters no later than Feb. 15, 2014. No refunds will be returned until after that date.

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

Where Do You Turn? To the NSEA Edge

NSEA Field Staff Will Answer Your Questions



I'm a substitute teacher and was assaulted by a student. The student has been issued a citation and is scheduled to appear in court. I would like to speak to someone who could help me get prepared or tell me if I need to be prepared.

That's an event your education classes won't teach you how to handle! So it's a good thing NSEA members have the experience of the NSEA field staff and legal counsel to back them up.

If you want real expertise in the field of Nebraska education, trust the NSEA and the 18 field staff the Association has on the ground across the state. Their work provides the NSEA Edge – the benefit that no other professional organization offers.

For instance, in recent weeks, NSEA field staff have dealt with these questions, submitted by members through the NSEA website:

I want to enroll in the Medicare supplement plan that is offered to members. I am a current member, but I think you pro-rated my membership fee because I turn 65 in Nov. How do I pay the remainder of this year's membership fee?

I am a retired member and am currently waiting for my 180 days to be up to substitute regularly. I've heard that I can substitute at a private school without waiting for my 180 days to be up. Is this right or not? I don't want to create a problem with my benefits, so I'm asking you.

NSEA field staff are located across the state, from Omaha to Scottsbluff. In the case immediate, 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

Manpower: Teaching One of Hardest Jobs to Fill

The ManpowerGroup's eighth Talent Shortage Survey, released this past summer, listed teachers among the Top 10 hardest jobs to fill.

It was the third consecutive year, and fifth time in the survey's eight-year history, that teachers ranked in the Top 10.

Overall, 39 percent of U.S. employers are having difficulty finding staff with the right skills, down from 49 percent in 2012. U.S. employers report a slightly more pronounced talent shortage than their global peers, 35 percent of whom report difficulty finding the right people for

key roles. According to the survey, nearly half (49 percent) of U.S. employers recognize that talent shortages affect their ability to serve clients and customers.

"Year-after-year, we see little difference in the roles employers have trouble filling," said Jonas Prising, ManpowerGroup president.

U.S. employers report that skilled trades positions are the most difficult to fill, the fourth consecutive year this job has topped the list. The top 10

hardest jobs to fill, in order, are:

- Skilled trades
- Sales representatives
- Drivers
- IT staff
- Accounting, finance staff
- Engineers
- Technicians
- Management/executives
- Mechanics
- **Teachers**

Teachers also ranked 10th in 2012, and were at the eighth spot in 2011.



**Re-Elect
John Heineman
NEA Board of Directors**



**24th Annual Nebraska
Paraeducator
Conference**

Registration is open!!

Paraeducators and Teachers: Teaming for Student Success

2014

Holiday Inn - Kearney, NE - February 17, 2014

The Nebraska Paraeducator Conference brings together paraeducators from across the state to learn new ideas and strategies, to meet other paraeducators and share their own experiences and ideas. The registration fee is \$50.

For more information visit:

"<http://para.unl.edu/conference/conference2014.html>"

Paraeducator of the Year Nominations

An important part of the conference is to recognize outstanding paraeducators who are nominated by school districts throughout the state. The selected individual will be honored at the conference. To nominate an outstanding paraeducator, visit "<http://para.unl.edu/conference/nominate.html>"

Sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Education and Project PARA
University of Nebraska - College of Education and Human Sciences



A real spaceman! Members of the Nebraska delegation pose with Kennedy Space Center Director and four-time shuttle astronaut Bob Cabana.

NSEA Members ‘Out of This World’

Visit Kennedy Space Center Through NASA Space Grant

Eleven NSEA members and one Student Education Association of Nebraska pre-service teacher were among Nebraska educators at NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida in July to participate in an “Out of This World” workshop.

NASA’s Education staff trained them how to share the activities and lessons they will learn with other educators.

They were part of the first class of Nebraska Education Space Ambassadors (NESA). The NASA Nebraska Space Grant developed this new concept to help teachers feel more confident in earth and space science, as well as to help build student interest and boost achievement scores. Pre-service teachers are participating to encourage more qualified teachers to enter the science, technology, engineering, and math teaching fields.

As ambassadors, the teachers will conduct workshops and train other teachers across Nebraska throughout the year.

In addition to the classroom activities and curriculum, the educators were among the first to see the original Atlantis space shuttle orbiter in its new home at Kennedy Space Center, and conducted a simulated launch in the facilities at Kennedy.

The NASA Nebraska Space Grant sponsors the workshop,

including travel for the teachers. The grant, funded by a grant from NASA, has provided innovative aerospace education and research opportunities throughout Nebraska since 1991.

NSEA members at the Kennedy Space Center as part of the event included:

- Jon Amundsen, Scottsbluff Education Association.
- Tammy Blobaum, Nebraska City Education Association.
- Elizabeth Dunn, Nebraska City Education Association.
- Michael Edmundson, Millard Education Association.
- Deedra Grant, Chadron City Teachers Association.
- Teresa Greenleaf, Walthill Education Association.
- Gary Hoagland, Chadron City Teachers Association.
- Mark James, Lincoln Education Association.
- Derrick Nero, Omaha Education Association.
- Pam Petersen, York Education Association.
- Judith Stucky, Westside Education Association.
- Meredith Chambers, Creighton University Student Education Association.

For details, and to watch for future grant opportunities, visit:

ne.spacegrant.org/

Success in Crete!

Members of the Crete Education Association, pictured here, helped propel to victory a \$33 million bond issue for a new high school and other building improvements. The Sept. 13 vote passed by 19 votes out of nearly 2,500 ballots cast, illustrating the importance of every vote.



Save With Dave!

Many members look toward buying a house in the spring or summer, so it makes sense to start considering refinancing as the new year begins.

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

Offered through Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, the plan gives members a \$200 gift card when closing on a loan or refinance. Members' children and their parents are also eligible to participate in.

The program also offers free refinancing break-even analysis and assistance and a choice of mortgage options and terms to match individual needs. There is a 60-day interest rate lock option to protect against rising rates.

Best of all: everything up until closing can be handled through a toll-free number.

NEA Member Benefits has teamed with the National Foundation for Credit Counseling to help members in credit card and other debt crisis.

If you or someone you know has a problem with credit card debt, outstanding school loans, mortgage payments, car notes, daycare expenses, or other bills that cause stress, the first step towards a solution may be financial literacy and debt management education.

NEA Member Benefits and the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) have teamed up to provide members and their families comprehensive financial and debt management services including:

- One-on-one financial counseling.
- Financial education classes.
- Bankruptcy counseling, education.
- Housing counseling.
- Reverse mortgage counseling.

The certified financial counselors help members and their families develop customized solutions to financial problems. Services are free or at very affordable rates, either in person or by telephone. For details, check the NEA Member Benefits website at:

neamb.com
David Glenn is Nebraska's
NEA Member Benefits representative



Glenn

What's Your Liability on Debit, Credit Cards

Find Out What Protection You Get with Each Kind of Card

By Lisa Gerstner

Credit cards have the most-robust fraud protections. Legally, a credit card holder is responsible for no more than \$50 in unauthorized purchases, and you'll have no liability if you report a lost or stolen card before a thief can use it. That said, American Express, Discover, MasterCard and Visa take full responsibility for unauthorized purchases. Plus, under the Fair Credit Billing Act, if you have a billing problem with a merchant, a credit card issuer must investigate and resolve your complaint, and you can withhold payment until then.

Debit cards tied to checking accounts are subject to a different set of rules. Report a missing debit card before unauthorized charges take place and you won't lose any money. If you report loss or theft within two business days, you're liable for up to \$50. You could lose up to \$500 if you report the problem after two days but before 60 days have passed, and you may have unlimited liability thereafter. Even so, many banks will refund any fraudulent charges if you report the problem promptly and the bank has no reason to think you're falsely reporting fraud. Plus, Visa and MasterCard generally extend their zero-liability protections to signature transactions (as opposed to punching in your PIN) on debit cards with their logos.

Prepaid cards, in general, do not have federal consumer protection against unauthorized transactions, although payroll cards that employers use to

The Case for Multiple Cards

Check out these related links that provide more detail regarding your credit and debit cards:

- **The NEA Credit Card Program:**
www.neamb.com/finance/credit-cards.htm
- **What to Know When Shopping for a Credit Card:**
www.neamb.com/finance/shopping-for-new-credit-card-tips.htm
- **A Case for Having Multiple Credit Cards:**
www.neamb.com/finance/having-multiple-credit-cards.htm

disburse wages are subject to the debit card rules. Still, many prepaid card issuers will reimburse you for fraudulent activity as long as you report it quickly. Register your prepaid card to make sure you're eligible for fraud protection, and look for a card that lists at least a couple months' worth of your past transactions when you log into your account online. Regularly check your account for suspicious activity.

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Kiplinger

Test Drive NEA's Rental Car Program!

Check out these bargains for NEA members before you look elsewhere:

- **Alamo:** No daily mileage limits, no charge for second driver, and coupons to use for even more savings! Always use your member discount ID: 613575.

- **Enterprise:** Receive 5 percent off standard daily and weekly rates at participating sites. Free upgrade when you reserve an economy through standard size vehicle.

- **Hertz:** Save up to 20 percent by using CDP #50655 in your reservation. Enjoy an upgrade on your weekly or weekend rental of an economy through full-size vehicle.

- **National:** Enroll in the Emerald Club, skip the counter, choose your own car quickly and be on your way. Also: member discounts, coupons, unlimited mileage.

Find these deals and more on the NEA Member Benefits website at:

neamb.com

BCBS Stipends: Apply Now

Use Scholarship Program to Help Pay for Advanced Coursework

Do you feel the need to improve your skills or enhance your knowledge in your area of expertise?

How would you like to do so with the aid of a scholarship?

The time is now to apply for a scholarship through the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska Professional Development Fund.

The scholarships are awarded three times each year. The next deadline, for the spring term, is Saturday, Feb. 8. All applications must be made through the NSEA website. Applicants will receive an e-mail confirming receipt of the application (if you do not receive an e-mail, call NSEA).

Scholarships may be used to pursue an advanced degree, seek additional teaching endorsements or to take course work for certification requirements. Stipends may cover up to 50 percent of the cost of a single, three-hour college course. Each applicant may apply for scholarship dollars for no more than three hours of course work. Books and supplies are not covered.

To apply, NSEA members must complete the application form on the NSEA website. The form will be posted on the NSEA website through the Saturday, Feb. 8, deadline.

NSEA will notify scholarship applicants of the status of

their application 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. However, applicants may be scholarship recipients in only two of the three scholarship cycles during a school year.

Winners must provide evidence of completion of course work at an accredited post-secondary institution before they receive the scholarship funds. All courses must be taken for credit.

Since 1986, 4,948 NSEA members have shared more than \$647,500 in scholarship dollars, thanks to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska.

The scholarship program does not affect Blue Cross and Blue Shield premiums. To apply, go to the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

For details, contact Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or via e-mail at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org



Grants Available from Belz, Lynch, Krause Fund

Good teachers are always looking for ways to improve their skills.

NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz/Lynch/Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2014 application deadline for those funds is Saturday, Feb. 8.

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 submitted by Saturday, Feb. 8. Re-



Belz

Lynch

Krause

ipients 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 Executive Committee.

For details, or for the online application form, visit the NSEA website and look for the link on the home page. The form will be posted through Feb. 8. The website is at:

www.nsea.org

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

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Have Your Contact Details Changed? Update at NSEA.org

Have you moved? Have you changed your name by marriage? Are you planning to move?

If so, you can update your NSEA membership information online.

How? Log on to the NSEA website and click on the 'Member Info' button on the left side of the screen. Then click on the

'For Members' link and look for the 'Member Update' icon in the center of the next screen, and follow directions. Keep your issue of The Voice near, as the mailing label includes your membership number, used to access your information.

The NSEA website is at:

www.nsea.org

Space for Argument

Something is disappearing in our society. The loss cripples Congress, politicizes the news, eviscerates logic and intellectual content from much of editorial writing, and has become the default atmosphere of talk radio and TV commentary programs. Against this backdrop it may seem ironic to suggest that what is in danger of vanishing is public argument. We are overwhelmed by the volume of argument in public, but we are losing public argument — the ability and space for the expression of civil and respectful differences of perspective or opinion on public issues.

Civil argument is the stuff of a functioning democracy. It is the basis for constructive engagement by those who share common interests and beliefs in the basic principles of our democratic society...and different opinions about the real policy options. It is this public discussion and argument that shapes good policy and political decisions and it is disappearing. The danger is that we may be re-creating this same kind of dysfunction in our local public spaces.

Respectful Discussion

So, what is the solution?

We must work to preserve civil discussion in our own lives and workplaces. In the school setting, teachers, school administrators, and school board members can certainly attack, disparage, and criticize each other, but the reality is that the next day teachers will return to teach, administrators will manage the schools, and school board members will face new policy decisions — all working towards their fundamental belief in the mission and value of public education. Voicing tired assumptions that management is the enemy of the employees, employees are fundamentally self-interested shirkers, or that policymakers are uninformed amateurs is not only wearisome and pointless, it masks the common ground shared by all three roles that could be used to build productive relationships and improved policy.

The challenge is to find and build upon the foundation of common interests and to respect the differences in how those interests are viewed and understood. This does not mean a reduction in argument or discussion. It means a

shift to respectful discussion that is intended to result in a material improvement in public policy and decision-making.

As the Executive Director of the teachers' union, the Nebraska State Education Association, I work almost daily with my colleagues in public school management and governance. Many people may believe that the labor-management relationship is inherently contentious and conflictual. I disagree. We could certainly emulate the national situation in which there is a continuing loss of public space for civil discussion. We could also take rigid positional stands that prevent anything but a back-and-forth trade of ideological attacks against the other's position. Instead, my colleagues and I challenge ourselves to work to preserve the space for the kind of argument and inquisitive discussion that moves us to find a common ground for our fundamentally shared interests.



Space for Argument and Civility: NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen shaking hands with Executive Directors John Spatz, left, of the Nebraska Association of School Boards and Mike Dulaney, right, of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators.

The Shaking of Hands

When I meet with the Executive Directors of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska Association of School Boards, we always...always...begin our meetings by shaking hands. We are friends as well as professional colleagues. The handshake symbolically reminds us of that. Yes, we almost always engage in argument. We have different perspectives, different experiences, different roles, and represent different constituencies. But we also go to our respective offices each day and work towards the same fundamental goals and mission.

Our associations have not always had this kind of collegial connection. It takes work and intention to sustain a successful and productive relationship between the three associations. We do argue about the specifics of policy directions, but we never make personal attacks or make general, ideological arguments. And we end our arguments as friends with a handshake. I invite teachers, school administrators, and school board members in Nebraska to work to make this happen in every community. It is in our common...and best...interest.

Take Time for These Two Events!

There are two events ahead that should involve time and commitment from all members: election of officers and leaders for NSEA-Retired, and the NSEA-Retired annual Lobby Day at the Nebraska Legislature.

Consider investing in both, and your organization will be stronger as a result!

Call for Nominations

In March, NSEA-Retired members will elect officers and leaders for the 2014-15 Association year.

Offices with vacancies are for three year terms and include:

- President.
- Vice president.
- District Directors for the Capitol, Elkhorn and Sandhills districts. (3 year terms)

Members will also elect up to 17 delegates to attend the 153rd NSEA Delegate Assembly in Kearney, scheduled for April 11-12, 2014, and five delegates to NEA Representative Assembly in Denver July 1-6.

Nominations will be accepted, beginning in mid-January, through the NSEA-Retired website at:

www.nsea.org/retired

Active members of NSEA-Retired, who wish to be considered as candidates for any of the positions or offices listed above must complete the nomination form on the NSEA-Retired website no later than Friday, Feb. 7. Candidates seeking election to NEA Representative Assembly and officers for NSEA-Retired are also required to submit a biography of no more than 50 words as part of their nomination.

More details will be found in the January edition of NSEA-Retired newsletter, The Advocate. Please refer to Page 13 of this issue of The Voice for more details about the NEA annual meeting in Denver. Again, be sure to use the nomination link for election of NSEA-Retired members to the NEA Representative Assembly found on the NSEA Retired website.

Names of candidates who have filed for election will be posted on the NSEA-Retired website and updated each Friday until the filing deadline passes.

These guidelines are set for campaigning:

■ Candidates shall be allowed to distribute campaign materials at meetings of NSEA-Retired. Distribution of materials must take place before the meeting begins or during the break for lunch. Materials may not be distributed while meetings are in session.

■ Each candidate for an NSEA-Retired Board position and each candidate for NEA Representative Assembly shall be allowed to submit a biography of up to 50 words. These biographies will be inserted into the ballot mailing, for the election, and also posted on the NSEA-Retired website.

Lobby Day is Feb. 4

NSEA-Retired will host its annual Lobby Day in Lincoln on Tuesday, Feb. 4.

There are important issues on the Legislature's agenda, so this is an important event. Registration information can be found at the NSEA retired website. We look forward to a great turnout of retired members for this very important legislative day. Several issues before the legislature may directly affect



Getting acquainted: The first step in the NSEA-Retired Intergenerational Mentoring Project is a get-to-know-you event. At the 2013 version, from left, are Doane College's Chelsea Henery; Peru State College's Julie Marshall; and retired Lincoln teacher Marcia Benner.

Consider NSEA-Retired's Intergenerational Mentoring!

Here's a project all NSEA-Retired members should consider: NSEA-Retired's nationally recognized Intergenerational Mentoring Project.

The project brings together NSEA-Retired members and members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska – college students – in their junior year in teacher education. The NSEA-Retired member acts as mentor to the student member from the junior year through the senior student teaching semester and into the first year as professional teachers.

The mentor/student relationship is non-judgmental and non-evaluative. The mentor can help the prospective teacher get through tough and challenging situations that every student teacher and first-year teacher faces. Through telephone, e-mail, and face-to-face conversations, 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.

Sessions will be held at NSEA headquarters, and begin at 12:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 7. The program concludes on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. Housing provided by NSEA. For details, call NSEA. To sign up, go to:

www.nsea.org/intergenerational-mentoring-program-mentor-application

public education retirees as well as current employees.

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renaekelly@gmail.com



Trade show talk: Lincoln Education Association's Matt Erb, left, visits with retired music instructor Roger Thaden during the trade show at the 2013 Nebraska Music Educators Association Conference in Lincoln in late November. Thaden, a retired Lincoln teacher, said he appreciated NSEA's services over the years.

The NSEA trade show booth also provided drawings for gift cards to Barnes & Noble. Winners were Betty VanDyke, St. Paul; Charnele Stewart, Mitchell; Dorothy Ladman, Lincoln; Agnes Strand, Imperial (Chase County); Greg Olsen, Nebraska City; Terry Speed, Grand Island; Angie Foss, Broken Bow; Jean Fidler, Maxwell; Amy Schneider, Grand Island; and Marcus Price, Franklin.

In the News:

Western Nebraska Community College, Kearney, Wayne State College

NSEA member **Rita Stinner**, music program director and choral activities director at **Western Nebraska Community College**, has broken barriers! Stinner received the 2013-14 National Federation of State High School Associations and Nebraska State Activities Association Outstanding Music Educator Award at the Nebraska Music Educators Association Fall Conference Clinic.

Stinner is the first collegiate instructor to receive the award in Nebraska. Nominees must exemplify the highest standards of ethical conduct, and carry the endorsement of their respective state high school activities association.

She was inducted into the Nebraska Music Educators Hall of Fame in 2007 and has also received the Governor's Award for Excellence in Arts Education.

NSEA member and **Kearney High School** social studies teacher **Kevin Witte** was surprised in November with

a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award, one of 40 such awards delivered across the nation in 2013.

He was honored for "thinking globally and acting locally" for the benefit of his students, and for making "geography and history classes come alive."

In 13 years teaching, Witte has traveled to Saudi Arabia, South Africa, China, Egypt, Italy and the Arctic Circle, not as a tourist, but as a selected fellow, presenter or participant in programs tackling educational topics. Witte has also developed a curriculum to create a well-received new course called International Wealth and Poverty.

Witte has earned master's degrees in history and education, and taught himself Latin during lunch breaks.

What good work has your local association completed recently? Let us know; send details to: al.koontz@nsea.org

Mike Erickson

Michael C. "Mike" Erickson, 66, of Grand Island died unexpectedly on Nov. 15.

Before retiring, he taught math at Grand Island Senior High School and coached boys and girls gymnastics.

Erickson earned degrees from Kansas State University, the University of Southern California and Fort Hays State. He worked three years in South Korea for the Peace Corps.

Erickson was an active member of NSEA, was a member of NEA and was inducted into the Peace Corps Hall of Fame.

Greg Miller

Long-time NSEA member Gregory Glen Miller, 56, Hershey, died on Nov. 24.

Miller graduated from Cambridge High School and Nebraska Wesleyan University, with a degree in education. He was the K-12 physical education teacher at Hershey and coached in all sports during his 30 years with the district. He also founded the Hershey Elementary Basketball program.

Memorials will go to a scholarship at Hershey High School in his name.

WSC's Bennett Earns NEA Appointment

Wayne State College Student Education Association of Nebraska member **Katie Bennett** has been appointed to the Committee on Member Services and Affiliate Relationships for the National Education Association Student Program.

The committee is responsible for advancing policies and activities to attract, represent and serve members. Its general objective is to propose policies and activities to guide the efforts of NEA and its affiliates to achieve complete integration of Association services to affiliates and members.

An elementary education major, Bennett is Underclass Representative on the board of the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) and is president of the Wayne State College SEAN affiliate.

Buffett Touts 'Elementary Foundation'

Oracle of Omaha Returns to Rose Hill, 'Thanks' His Teachers

"Hi, I'm Warren Buffett and I'm back here at Rose Hill, the school that gave me my start."

That was the opening line in a brief NSEA interview with Buffett, the billionaire known as the Oracle of Omaha, during his visit to Omaha's Rose Hill Elementary School during American Education Week.

Buffett was at the school to visit with the CBS show "This Morning" about financial issues and the importance of financial education for children.

Buffett told NSEA that his elementary school clearly laid the foundation for what came after.

"I would like to tell you that this school did more for me than any of the other schools I went to, including graduate school.

"Learning is a building process. You've got to have the building blocks firmly in place. Elementary school is where you get that job done.

"I want to thank the Omaha Public Schools and Rose Hill School and all the teachers I had for giving me a terrific foundation that helped me all of my life."

To see the Buffett interview and more, go to Facebook and search for facebook.com/NSEA.org.

Speaking of Teaching

"A lot of people feel the game is stacked against them, and losers in rigged games get angry. We are losing equal opportunity in America, our moral foundation stone."

— **Robert Reich**, former U.S. Labor Secretary, in the film *Inequality for All*. See the trailer for the film at inequalityforall.com



Passing the check: NSEA President Nancy Fulton was pleased to accept a check for the NSEA Children's Fund from the students and staff at Hartington after the Hartington Education Association organized a penny drive. Front, from left, are drive organizer Pam Anderson, Alicia Cornemann, Laura Noecker, Luanne Lange, Kelly Keiter, Fulton, Marilyn Rastede and Sue Anderson.

In the back row, from left, are Sharon Kalin, Brandi Alexander and Mandy Hochstein.

Pennies for Children

There is power in the penny.

That was the lesson learned by students at Hartington Public Schools during American Education Week. The lesson benefited the NSEA Children's Fund to the tune of \$1,600.



Members of the Hartington Education Association enlisted students in a penny collection drive to benefit the Children's Fund, and with elementary students and secondary students working to out-collect each other, the weeklong campaign far surpassed the \$500 goal.

Hartington staff was involved as well, and now every penny will benefit a child in need, somewhere in Nebraska.

NSEA President Nancy Fulton traveled to Hartington in December to accept the \$1,600 check and address a school assembly where campaign chair and HEA member Pam Anderson revealed the collection total.

"The students really enjoyed the campaign. They were bringing in jars of pennies at a time," Fulton said.

The NSEA Children's Fund, founded in 1994, is supported by donations. All proceeds benefit children in need, and donations are tax deductible.

Boost Yearbook Revenue

Gil Mueller, a journalism teacher at The American School of Bangkok in Thailand:

"To drum up sales for the yearbook, I send home completed pages, particularly those that have lots of students' names or that have high-interest pictures. I include these pages along with other items that are usually delivered to students and their parents, such as newsletters or PTO announcements. I offer a five percent discount to the first person who references one of these sample pages when ordering a complete yearbook. Sales have increased dramatically.

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

