

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ February 2019

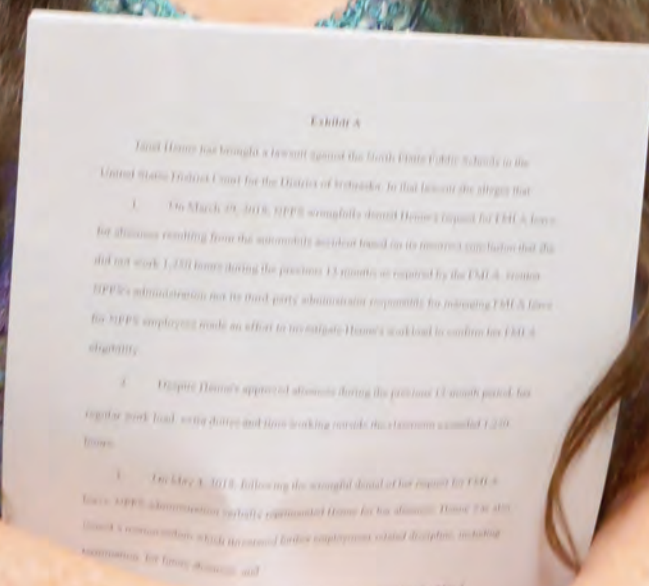
A dose of **GOOD ADVICE**

**NSEA Member Janet Henne Wins
Removal of Chilling Reprimand**

**'NSEA University'
Unveiled**

**State Board Filled
with Advocates**

**Big Projects, Hard
Work at the Capitol**





THE VOICE

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Are You a Policyholder or a Member?

The Difference is in the Details — and in the Service!

Educators who are not members of NSEA often say “I have liability insurance from another source.”

Those educators may pay for a liability policy from another organization, or they may even think their homeowner’s liability policy has them covered.

It is unlikely those “other” policies have the full and extensive protection offered by the NEA policy and membership in the NSEA. Do those policies have the benefit of 18 staff members on the ground, plus a strong and experienced member rights team, to deal with biased administrators, accusatory parents, and, as happens to teachers on a regular basis, law enforcement agencies?

Homeowner’s insurance may or may not cover workplace incidents. If the homeowner’s policy does provide workplace coverage, it is also possible that coverage for workplace incidents would be limited to liability related to physical damage.

The biggest cost related to a liability issue is the attorney. Under the NEA policy, in criminal proceedings that exonerate a member, legal fees are covered. That includes corporal punishment issues.

Finally, the other coverage likely does not offer the educator the security and benefit of meeting with an experienced NSEA specialist, on site, who will let the educator know what’s going to happen and how they will be protected. That is

the job of NSEA’s 18 organizational specialists stationed across the state.

Clearly, there is a difference between “policyholder” and “member.”

Every NSEA member receives coverage

under the Educator’s Employment Liability (EEL) Insurance policy purchased by the National Education Association.

In general, the EEL policy provides coverage for members arising out of their educational employment activities. Those activities are generally defined as duties performed pursuant to the express or implied terms of their employment or at the express request of the member’s supervisor acting within the supervisor’s school employment.

In addition to defending civil matters, the EEL insurance provides reimbursement for bail bonds in employment-related criminal matters

and reimbursement for personal property damages caused by an assault at school or while performing school duties.

Further, the EEL insurance provides reimbursement in criminal matters arising out of educational employment activities if the member is found not guilty.

The specific terms and coverage are set forth by the EEL insurance policy and are governed by the insurance company.

For more details, contact your NSEA organizational specialist. Reach your NSEA representative at 1-800-742-0047.

‘The assurance of knowing one has access to legal assistance from attorneys with decades of experience in the education field for job security purposes, certification issues, and other job related disputes is a benefit beyond comparison with what a homeowners insurance agent can offer.’

Have Your Contact Details Changed?

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

On the Cover: North Platte Education Association member Janet Henne was injured at work and was later in an automobile accident. When her leave request to recover was denied via written reprimand, she turned to NSEA. Learn more on Page 7.

Be a Helper



**NSEA President
Jenni Benson**

“

*When people ask
me what I do...*

*I tell them
that we help
educators be
successful in
their efforts to
help children
become the very
best citizens they
can be.*

”

As I write this, it is my eighth day in an Omaha-area hospital where my husband is recovering from emergency surgery to treat a significant infection.

He is making slow progress in his recovery and will soon move to an acute care hospital for further treatment and recovery.

While my husband rests and recuperates, I watch people and interact with hospital staff. As a lifelong observer of human behavior, the hospital has provided a rich environment to watch, listen and learn. I also like to meet people and pride myself on building relationships. Those relationships often begin by talking about children and education.

A Billboard's Inspiration

This month's thoughts were not sparked by my relationship-building conversations in hospital rooms and hallways. My thoughts were, however, certainly supported by those conversations. The inspiration for these words came from the message on a highway billboard. When I drove to the hospital this morning I passed by a sign posing this question from Martin Luther King Jr.: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is 'What are you doing for others?'"

That question caught my attention and made me immediately think of the wonderful nurses and medical staff I have interacted with during these past few hectic days.

The hospital staff members were of invaluable help to my husband and I and our family. Each day we had anywhere from 10 to 20 or more different members of the hospital medical staff parading into and out of the room. There were nurses, doctors, medical technicians, nurse's aides and more, all intent on helping in their own way and with their own set of skills.

But the teacher in me was asking my own version of King's question: "How could I help those who had done so much for us?"

'Look for the Helpers'

Children's television personality Fred Rogers often told a story from his childhood about his reaction to frightening stories he would see on the television news. Tornadoes, fires, other disasters and the like frightened him.

"My mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping,'" he said. "To this day, especially in times of disaster, I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers — so many caring people in this world."

I have been thanked several times for my efforts to help the hospital staff, particularly nurses, who were most definitely overworked. One nurse even remarked that it's "so nice I wasn't demanding." That comment made my very ill husband laugh out loud.

I realized that while the nurses were helping us, I was, without realizing it, returning the favor (that's what teachers do, often unknowingly). A nurse confided in me about his best friend who is a teacher. The friend was having a tough time in his work, and the nurse was in hopes that I could assist in some manner. Another nurse told me her son is struggling in school, in large part because of the behavior of other students. We had several conversations, with me mostly just listening and offering a few simple strategies that I thought might help.

The Core Calling

As educators our core calling is to be a helper. It is what we do. We always do things to help others; we find ways in any situation to assist. On the flip side, we also need to learn to ask for help when needed. Teachers largely work alone and are not always very good about asking for assistance. And that is my point this month: NSEA is here to help, to answer your call when you need answers or just need someone to listen.

When people ask me what I do, I first tell them that I taught special education for 32 years. Then I proudly tell them that my work in education continues today as president of the Nebraska State Education Association. When they ask, "What does NSEA do?" I tell them that we help educators be successful in their efforts to help children become the very best citizens they can be.

Helping. At the end of the day, that is what it is all about. Call us at NSEA (800-742-0047), or email us through our website (nsea.org). We're here to help.



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'NSEA University' to Accept Enrollees Soon

'All-in-One' Super Conference will Combine Leadership, Bargaining, Membership, More

A year ago, NSEA's Leadership Institute was held in June. Membership meetings were held across the state from late July into mid-August.

Bargaining meetings with local association negotiators were dotted across the state in September and October.

Now, in an effort to provide members with more bang for their membership buck, all of those endeavors — and more! — will be combined into NSEA University, a three-day series of sessions at the University of Nebraska's sparkling new Innovation Campus. The event, NSEA U for short, is planned for Monday evening through Thursday afternoon, July 15-18.



"We are excited about the prospect of what this event will mean for our members," said NSEA President Jenni Benson. "We are confident that there will be sessions of interest to every leader and every member."

The event will feature tracks for Leadership Institute invitees, for Higher Education members, for early-in-their-career educators, as well as members of any kind.

Other tracks will offer topics under the five provisions of NSEA's strategic plan: bargaining, membership, politics, governance and social justice.

Work on programming is now under way. More details will soon be available in the March edition of *The Voice*, and on the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

Benson advised members to do one thing: Save the date.

"This is going to be a great conference," she said.

MENTOR Nebraska: New Name, Same Good Work

MENTOR Nebraska, a 20-year-old Omaha-based organization that supports mentoring across the state, has changed its name with the new year.

Formerly the Midlands Mentoring Partnership, MENTOR Nebraska continues to work to improve the number and quality of mentoring programs available to Nebraska youth.

MENTOR Nebraska Executive Director is Deborah Neary, elected in November to serve on the Nebraska State Board of Education.

MENTOR Nebraska was launched in 1999 to improve the number and quality of mentoring programs available for Nebraska's youth. For those 20 years, the organization has led the mentoring movement to ensure youth and mentors have access

to high-quality mentoring experiences. MENTOR Nebraska supports and collaborates with more than 200 mentoring programs that serve 14,000-plus youth across Nebraska.

While growth is a vital component of connecting more young people with mentors, the organization is dedicated to making sure those connections are quality matches made via quality mentoring programs. That said, there are far more youth in need of mentors than there are mentors available, according to Teresa Riesberg, operations and events manager for MENTOR Nebraska.

"These youth are put on long waiting lists and sometimes they do not get matched," Riesberg told KETV Channel 7 in January.

Because of that shortage of mentors,

MENTOR Nebraska has set a goal of recruiting 400 new mentors through recruitment events and other efforts.

MENTOR Nebraska works with and supports mentoring programs across Nebraska, including the ACE Mentor Program, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands, the YMCA Reach & Rise Program, Girls Inc. of Omaha Pathfinders, Youth Emergency Services and others. MENTOR Nebraska's services are provided at no cost.

MENTOR Nebraska's vision is for every young person to have the supportive relationships they need to grow and develop into thriving, productive and engaged adults.

The program fuels the quality and quantity of relationships, strengthens collaboration and advocates for mentoring.

For more details, go to:

mentornebraska.org



Neary

Loss of Bargaining Rights Said Costly to Iowa Teachers

2017 Overhaul of Bargaining Law Limits Negotiations to Base Salary

Following a 2017 "overhaul" of the state's collective bargaining law, teachers and other school employees are now paying much more of their own salary for health insurance.

The Sioux City Journal reports that in some cases Iowa teachers are paying an additional \$100 a month or more for insurance benefits.

The changes were backed and passed largely by conservative lawmakers and limited the items that could be negotiated to base salaries. With such limits in place, school districts started to shift health insurance costs to workers.

Traditional teacher benefits are now at risk, Brenda Zahner, director of the Siouxland Uniserv group of the Iowa State Edu-

cation Association told the Journal. Zahner cited instances of school employees also paying higher deductibles and co-payments.

Zahner told the Journal that the Sergeant Bluff-Luton School District now has a two-tiered program that provides less cafeteria plan cash than long-term teachers receive for insurance coverage and other costs. She said new Sergeant Bluff-Luton teachers get about \$2,800 annually less than veteran teachers — more than \$230 a month less.

As a result, Zahner said recruitment and retention of new teachers to the profession may suffer.

The previous law allowed a broad swath of public employees to negotiate for wages, benefits and other workplace issues. Impasses were resolved through arbitration.

The new language did not alter the issues of negotiation for public safety unions.

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Association Support: North Platte Education Association member Janet Henne, front and center, had the full support of NPEA members and NSEA in her effort to have a written reprimand removed from her employment file. Behind Henne are, from left, Lanelle Stumpf, Heather Harvey and Bobbi Isom — Henne's sister.

A Dose of Good Advice

Faced with a Troubling Reprimand and Threats of Termination a North Platte Teacher Turned to Her Sister, and Then to NSEA

Threat had Implications for Entire Staff; Board of Education Rescinds Reprimand

Admonished and reprimanded last spring for allegedly exceeding her allowed number of leave days, resource teacher Janet Henne did what any little sister might do.

She called her big sister.

Big sister is Bobbi Isom, the vice president of the North Platte Education Association. Isom provided Henne with sound advice: talk to NPEA President Michelle Strickland, who would quickly provide a direct line to NSEA.

That's exactly what happened. Nine months later, the North Platte Board of Education approved a settlement acknowledging that Henne had not exceeded her allotted days of leave. The board further acknowledged that

a May 2018 verbal reprimand and a memorandum threatening further employment-related discipline, including termination, were improper.

The board's action came after NSEA filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court on Henne's behalf, contending that the district intentionally interfered with and denied her request for leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The district's verbal and written actions were intended to "chill and intimidate" Henne, as well as other district employees who might make future requests for FMLA leave, said attorney Nick Welding.

The settlement language also included a statement that the board "supports the statutory and contractual rights of its employees to use leave for appropriate purposes."

Most important to Henne, the written memorandum was with-

***'The letter was very personal,
very intimidating. I didn't want it
in my file. I didn't feel it was fair.'***
— Janet Henne, NSEA Member

drawn from her employment file. The memo alleged Henne's absences were detrimental to student learning as well as a burden to both the school district and her co-workers.

"The letter was very personal, very intimidating," she said. "I didn't want it in my file. I didn't feel it was fair."

"The language really bothered her," said Welding. "It really bothered me, too."

Welding said the settlement sends a message that NSEA "is willing to go as far as we need to go on behalf of our members."

Wrongly Denied Medical Leave

Given the root cause of Henne's absences, it's a wonder that she is still teaching. Her continued service is a testament to her love for her students and dedication to her work.

On three occasions between October 2006 and September 2014, Henne was physically assaulted by a severely autistic fourth grader who stood at about 5-7 and 200 pounds at the time. Henne places no blame on the student.

"He sees people as objects, and I was an object in his way. He came up behind me, lifted me up and threw me against the wall," said Henne of the first assault, which took place in an elementary school setting.

When she moved to the high school, she worked with the now older student again. There were two more incidents in two years. In the first, Henne was leading the Pledge of Allegiance when the boy rushed and shoved her. She landed on the floor behind her desk.

The second time, he shoved her hard enough that her chair broke and her head hit the wall.

"He just went through me. I hit my head and ended up in the emergency room," she said.

Those injuries cumulatively resulted in several shoulder surgeries, a neck fusion and ongoing evaluation and therapy sessions with a specialist in Kearney, 100 miles east of North Platte. The frequency of those sessions eats up contractual sick leave and eats into FMLA leave each year.

On March 21, 2018, Henne and her husband were driving when a car blew through a red light and slammed into their vehicle. She was taken to the emergency room by ambulance. She was released and went to work the fol-

lowing day and saw her physician that afternoon. Concerned that the accident had exacerbated the medical issues associated with the assaults, the doctor ordered her not to return to work until cleared by her specialist.

On March 29, Henne's request for FMLA leave for absences resulting from the accident was denied. Then, in early May, district administrators verbally reprimanded Henne. She was also handed the distressing memoran-

NSEA 'is willing to go as far as we need to go on behalf of our members.'

*— Nick Welding,
NSEA Attorney*

dum that said the district had worked extensively with her on attendance-related issues over the past five years. The memo threatened further employment-related discipline, including possible termination, for further absences.

To that point, Henne said, she had never been disciplined, admonished or even approached about her absences.

"I was mad, deflated," said Henne.

Henne called her sister and was eventually put in touch with the NSEA-retained law firm of Norby and Welding, LLP. Three months later, Welding filed the lawsuit.

Counting All the Hours Worked

The lawsuit contended that the school district's decision to deny Henne's FMLA leave was based on the incorrect conclusion that Henne had not worked the minimum 1,250 hours needed during the previous 12 months to qualify for FMLA leave.

"Neither the district's administration nor its third-party administrator responsible for managing FMLA leave for district employees made an effort to investigate Henne's workload to confirm her FMLA eligibility," wrote Welding in the complaint.

Welding believes the third-party administrator used eight-hour days to calculate Henne's 12-month body of work, and in doing so fell a paltry 18 hours short of the 1,250-hour mark.

Henne found the calculation did not include six paid workdays the previous summer, easily surpassing the 18 hours. Further investigation found the time counted did not include her work on lesson plans, conferences, individual educational plans, multidisciplinary team reports and a myriad of other after-hours work completed – and recorded – by Henne.

"We found that, like most teachers, she worked – excuse the language – a helluva lot more than 1,250 hours in those 12 months," said Welding.

Not that it mattered. Welding said federal law clearly indicates that it is the employer's obligation to show whether the employee worked the required hours. There is a presumption under Federal law that full-time teachers work at least 1,250 hours annually, said Welding.

Membership Matters

Henne's lawsuit was unique. She had not been economically damaged and sought no money.

"She was not asking for money. She was asking to remove a reprimand from her file," said Welding.

There is another point to be made, he said. The average citizen – or educator – could not get such results alone.

"You're not going to see this type of litigation by any private citizen, by a lone teacher, or by the counsel from an 'alternative' association," he said. "The only way you could bring this kind of lawsuit would be as a member of this association, and with full association support."

Henne had the full support of her NPEA colleagues.

"Members of the North Platte Education Association have always sought what is best for all North Platte children: a quality education," said NPEA President Michelle Strickland. "Janet Henne has been a part of our district's success for the past 13-plus years and has taken a courageous step. We believe the district erred in this process and erred with this memo."

That support works both ways.

"I've always been a member – since I was a student in college," said Henne. "Especially being in special education, my instructors always preached that we should never be without the Association's backing. NSEA has always been worth being a part of."



Mentoring Message: In addressing reporters at a late January news conference as part of the Nebraska Education Collaboration coalition, NSEA President Jenni Benson advocated for LB241, which would use revenue from state school lands to provide mentoring opportunities for teachers. Speaking on behalf of other bills in the NEC's array of proposals were, from left, Sen. Kate Bolz and Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks of Lincoln; and Sen. Rick Kolowski, Sen. Wendy DeBoer and Sen. John McCollister, all of Omaha.

Hard Work Ahead

Senators Face Big Numbers, Big Issues as 2019 Session Gets Underway

After 10 days of bill introduction, Nebraska's 49 state senators now face 739 new pieces of legislation.

When the dust settles, roughly 200 of those bills are expected to touch on P-16 public education in some manner. In addition to that "big" number of bills, senators also face some very big issues.

First and foremost, a plan to provide property tax relief with strong support from a coalition of agriculture and education organizations – including NSEA – has gained traction.

The plan is ensconced in Albion Sen. Tom Briese's LB314 and is the result of two years of work by Briese and the Nebraskans United for Property Tax Reform and Education coalition. Much is riding on LB314. If enacted as proposed, it would provide more than \$700 million in statewide property tax relief.

"It will move Nebraska away from its over-reliance on property taxes and toward adequate funding for education in the state," said NSEA President Jenni Benson.

LB314 would add \$468 million to the Property Tax Credit Fund, which provides direct credit to property owners for their property taxes. It also calls for a much-needed study to review the current state aid to K-12 schools formula; would increase the state sales tax by a half cent; would close several sales tax exemptions; would increase tax and cigarette taxes; and would add a surcharge to incomes over \$250,000.

More than 20 education and ag organizations belong to the coalition (see complete list on page 10) supporting LB314.

"This proposal will deliver property tax relief while still providing the children of Nebraska the high-quality education which will allow them to become the

leaders of tomorrow," said Benson.

Retirement Study Proposed

Retirement issues will also get attention this session.

A study of the retirement system for Omaha teachers has been proposed. The ultimate goal is protecting the retirement investments and benefits for Omaha teachers as well as for those teachers in the retirement plan that covers the remainder of the state.

Seward Sen. Mark Kolterman chairs the Retirement Committee. His LB31 would require a study of the cost to transfer administration of the Omaha School Employees Retirement Plan (OSERS) to the state's Public Employees Retirement System. LB31 does not merge or consolidate the two funds, but studies how a transfer of OSERS administrative duties to the statewide plan might occur.

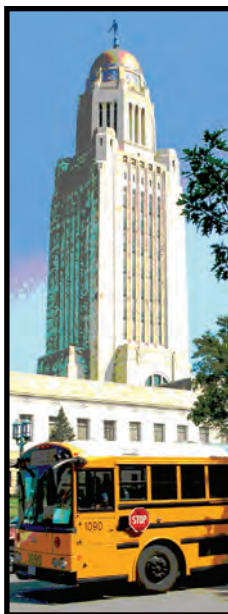
Investment strategies over the past 10 years have caused the OSERS plan to struggle. It currently has a shortfall of about \$771 million. OSERS is 64 percent funded, down from 75 percent funded in 2009.

In 2016, NSEA supported legislation to transfer investment authority from OSERS to the Nebraska Investment Council, which manages investment for teachers in the remainder of the state, as well as for state patrol, judicial and county employees. That transfer took place on Jan. 1, 2017.

The state teacher retirement plan, thanks to changes supported by NSEA over the past six years, is 90 percent funded and is on track to be 100 percent funded by 2028.

Kolterman told the Omaha World-Herald that legislative efforts are not about rescuing OSERS. "This is about us working with OSERS to rescue their own plan," he said.

NSEA is engaged with the Omaha Education As-



Nebraska Legislature '19

sociation, the Omaha Public Schools, OEA-Retired, the Omaha School Administrators Association, SEIU and OS-ERS to find solutions to insure the integrity of the Omaha retirement plan. Those organizations have formed a coalition, Better Together, to work toward a solution.

“We are working with the principals involved to find a route to strengthen OS-ERS over the long haul,” said Benson.

Enhanced Outcomes

A second coalition, the Nebraska Education Collaboration with its “Invest in Nebraska” initiative, has pushed for a series of proposals to enhance educational outcomes. NSEA is also a part of the Nebraska Education Collaboration coalition. Simply put, according to the coalition leaders, “we can do more.” That would include:

- Expanding access to early childhood education and increasing early childhood education reimbursement to public schools (LB66, LB160 and LB358).

- Cover the cost of reduced-price meals for all eligible students in order to provide better nutrition to those students (LB251).

- Increase the state’s reimbursement for special education expenses up to the statutory limit of 80 percent. State dollars now account for only 40 percent of special ed costs (LB346).

- Expand behavioral and mental health training and services available to students (LB120, LB327).

- Provide additional state funding for school safety and security improvements (LB351).

- Provide state funding to incentivize mentor teacher programs (LB241).

Grievance Relief

Two important bills were introduced by Sen. Steve Lathrop of Omaha.



Legislative Insiders: Have teachers ever served in the Nebraska Legislature? The answer is yes. In fact, the 1977 Legislature included three NSEA members serving as state senators. From left are Pat Venditte, Omaha, a health teacher at Westside; Bellevue’s Frank Lewis; and Norfolk history teacher Keith Boughn.

Venditte served from 1977-81. Lewis served from 1973-81, and was Education Committee chair for several years. Boughn served one year and passed away during his term.

LB537 would allow teachers to file grievances to contest unfair performance improvement plans.

LB685 would prohibit an agreement requiring mediation, binding arbitration, or a grievance from denying further remediation through the courts.

Rebuild and Discipline

A third coalition, Rebuild Nebraska, has proposed a series of bills that would increase investments in public services with an updated tax system that is both modern and fair, and designed to meet the needs of the state. NSEA is a member of the Rebuild Nebraska coalition.

NSEA will also closely monitor a school discipline bill introduced by Sen. Mike Groene, North Platte. Groene offered a discipline bill two years ago, but it failed.

NSEA will also oppose three pro-

posed constitutional amendments that would entrench language limiting the ability of local government agencies to fund operations in the state constitution. LR3CA, LR5CA and LR8CA would each limit local government use of property taxes but would also hamstring those governing bodies in case of emergency, or revenue downturns. School districts and other governing bodies rely on local control and the flexibility and nimble operational capacity provided by local control. Further, none of the three proposals provide for a method to make up the property tax revenues lost if any of the measures would be enacted.

Those issues, and more, will mix with all the other education-related bills that will be watched by NSEA during this 90-day session.

Members of the Nebraskans United for Property Tax Reform and Education

Nebraska Farm Bureau
Nebraska Council of School Admins.
Nebraska Corn Growers Association
Nebraska State Education Association
Nebraska Rural Comm. Schools Assoc.
Nebraska Farmers Union
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics

Nebraska Soybean Association
Gage County Property Tax Group
Nebraska Pork Producers
Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
Greater Nebraska Schools Association
Center for Rural Affairs
Project Extra Mile
Milford School Board

Holdrege Public Schools
Nebraska Wheat Growers
Nebraska Association of School Boards
Nebraska State Grange
Boyd County Schools
Stand for Schools
Schools Taking Action for Nebraska
Children’s Education

Nebraska Education Collaboration Coalition Focus is Investment in Education

Nine members of the Nebraska education community comprise the Nebraska Education Collaboration. NSEA is part of that coalition (see story, above). The coalition website is at:

www.needcollaboration.org

Coalition members are:
Nebraska Council of School Admins.
Nebraska Association of School Boards
NSEA
Nebraska Rural Comm. Schools Assoc.
Greater Nebraska Schools Association

Stand for Schools
Schools Taking Action for Nebraska
Children’s Education (STANCE)
Educational Service Units
Coordinating Council
Beyond School Bells



Education Advocates: Members of the Nebraska State Board of Education gathered in early January for the swearing in of new and re-elected members. From left are Robin Stevens, Gothenburg; Lisa Fricke, Omaha; Maureen Nickels, Chapman; Pat Timm, Beatrice; Patsy Koch Johns, Lincoln; Deborah Neary, Omaha; and Rachel Wise, Oakland. Board President John Witzel attended, but could not stay for the photograph.

Advocates on Board

State Board of Education Support Vital to Public Education

Four members of the Nebraska State Board of Education took the oath of office during the first full week of January.

The election of Robin Stevens of Gothenburg and Deborah Neary of Omaha, and the re-election of Maureen Nickels of Chapman and Pat Timm of Beatrice, gave the board a full eight members who are supportive of public schools and public education.

“This board represents the best of Nebraska and the best opportunity for Nebraska teachers to be heard – and listened to – on issues that affect PK-12 education,” said NSEA President Jenni Benson.

Also serving on the board are John Witzel, Omaha, board president; Rachel Wise, Oakland; Patsy Koch Johns, Lincoln; and Lisa Fricke, Omaha. Nickels is vice president.

Nickels, Koch Johns, Wise, Fricke and Timm are former teachers. Stevens was a teacher and administrator, most recently superintendent at Gothenburg.

NSEA Organizational Specialist Cindy Copich attends state board meetings and represents PK-12 interests on behalf of NSEA members.

“I believe this state board passionately supports public education and truly wants what is best for students in the state,” said Copich. “I have high hopes that this new group will work well together as a collaborative team to advance student and teacher initiatives that improve education across the state.”

Equity Lens

At the January board meeting, Copich said board members engaged in a lengthy discussion about the implementation of an “equity lens” to guide board decision making. Koch Johns is leading that effort, and has met with a diverse constituency group to develop a board philosophy and direction. A draft will be presented to the full board for consideration in February.

Copich noted that social studies standards are up for review and possible revision over the next year. A diverse team of teachers representing both urban and rural students are on the committee (see story on page 12).

Meanwhile, outgoing state board member Molly O’Holleran, North Platte, lauded the board’s goals regarding social studies standards.

“In order to be civic ready, students need to have an intellectual understanding of our country’s founding principles,” she said. “An emotional connection to our nation will help graduates become responsible citizens who are prepared to preserve, protect, and defend our country’s freedom and democracy.”

‘Tipping Point’ in 2019?

O’Holleran also said 2019 could be a “tipping point” for public education in Nebraska.

“Retaining high-quality teachers and recruiting new teachers will be a crucial factor in preparing our students for high-demand, high-wage jobs,” she said.

The board must also continue to lead and support educator effectiveness, must collaborate with higher education and workforce/economic development leaders to build a pipeline for better jobs, increased salaries and employable graduates.

Finally, she said Nebraska must continue to deliver high-quality education at a fiscally-responsible cost.

“Increasing opportunities for high school and college graduates to remain in Nebraska while earning a good wage is essential. More people must be channeled into high-demand, high-wage jobs by diversifying our economy to lower the burden on our agriculture industry. In particular we need to eliminate barriers to rural economic development such as housing and childcare shortages, and inadequate technology infrastructure.

O’Holleran has joined the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Board to support children, young adults, and at-risk families with the goal of giving our state’s most vulnerable kids what they need to reach their full potential.

S. Studies Standards Revision Underway

State Board's Goal is to Adopt Final Version Later this year

Legislature's LB399 May Also Change Social Studies Teaching

State statute requires the Nebraska State Board of Education to review, update and adopt measurable academic content standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies every seven years.

The revision of social studies standards — by social studies teachers — is now underway.

However, social studies changes may also come from another source: the Nebraska Legislature. LB399 could make significant changes to social studies and civics education in Nebraska.

Social studies teachers should monitor the progress of LB399 in the Legislature, as it will certainly draw attention and debate. NSEA will oppose LB399 as introduced.

The standards, however, remain under the purview of the State Board.

"The review of state standards takes time and commitment by scores of teachers from across the state," said NSEA President Jenni Benson. "It is largely thankless work, but it is so very important to the success of our schools and, ultimately, to the success of our students."

NSEA Organizational Specialist Cindy Copich attends every meeting of the State Board of Education and monitors the progress of the standards revisions and the public discourse surrounding the content update.

"There is a diverse team of leaders working on the review and rewrite. The standards are in good, capable hands," said Copich.

Legislative Impact

Although the State Board is charged with managing the standards revisions and approving the final draft, the Legislature could have some impact on social studies teaching should LB399 pass legislative muster. LB399 would require each school board's Committee on American Civics to "review and approve the social studies curriculum."

Copich said language takes the responsibility for the standards from trained social studies educators and puts it in the hands of school board officials.

"We already have a process; teachers

NSEA Members on Standards Writing Team

The Nebraska Social Studies Standards Writing Team includes these NSEA members:

Banner County: Kari Gifford
Central Valley: Kimbrie Vlach
Columbus: Christina Nilson
Elkhorn: Theodore Murray
Falls City: Jack Munford
Grand Island: Tracy Jakubowski, Jason Weaver
Gretna: Kris Stephens
Hampton: Patrick Alexander
Lincoln: Becky Boswell, Jeff Brooks, Matthew Harris, Cheyenne Janssen, Jan McNally, Patrick O'Meara
Maywood: Patricia Bauer
McPherson County: John Blomstedt
Millard: David Falke, Stephanie Hohenstein, Bradly Krebs, Tim

Royers, Matthew Scott
Nebraska City: Lacey Glasford
Neligh: Ethan Larsen
North Platte: Marie Holmes-Brosius, Bobbi Isom,
Omaha: James Ahern, Andrew Brooks, Hope Hibler, Rebekah Sidzyik, Shelly Wear Rush
Papillion-LaVista: Rebecca Hoch
Pender: Brianna Carda
Ralston: Andrea Hartman
Raymond Central: Dale Rasmussen
Tekamah Herman: Sarah Smith, Jane Walford
Wakefield: Chad Metzler
Wayne State College: Randy Bertolas, Joseph Weixelman

should be leading this work," she said.

While LB399 does not require students to pass a citizenship test in order to graduate, it does mandate burdensome testing. LB399 would require students to take the civics portion of the naturalization exam administered by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. As introduced, students would have to take that exam in both the eighth and eleventh grades.

Finally, LB399 adds Constitution Day, Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, Native American Day and Thanksgiving Day as days on which, under the direction of the superintendent, "appropriate patriotic exercises" will be held in schools. Such exercises are already required on the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln, and on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Flag Day exercises are omitted under LB399.

Stay Abreast of Progress

As part of the standards update process, the Nebraska Department of Education selected a geographically diverse team of K-16 educators representing school districts of all sizes and needs. That team will review existing standards, and then revise with updates where needed. That work began last fall.

The process includes a review of nationally recognized resources and best practices; engagement of employers to

ensure standards meet needed workplace skills; on-going communication with the state board; and public input.

Given the tenets of LB399, and that past revisions of social studies standards have seen much criticism, debate and discussion, social studies educators should stay abreast of the progress of the standards revisions and of the progress of LB399.

Once the revised standards are approved by the State Board, school districts will have one year to adopt the state-approved standards, or adopt standards deemed equal to or more rigorous than the state-approved standards. NSEA will monitor the process to ensure that the final version is the very best fit for all Nebraska students.

Nebraska's four strands of social studies standards (civics, economics, geography and history) were last reviewed and updated in 2012. Those standards will provide a starting point for any revisions.

The writing and editing teams will meet this spring, with editing expected to continue into the summer. Post-secondary education representatives will validate and sign off on the final drafts, with state board approval expected sometime later this year. School districts will then have one year to adopt the state-approved or more rigorous standards.

For more information, go to:

www.education.ne.gov

Program Changes, Struggling Students May Require Difficult Conversations

As first appeared in *Education Week Teacher* on Sept. 26, 2018. Reprinted with permission of the author.

By Lisa Westman

Parent-teacher conferences can be some of the most rewarding—or the most stress-inducing—experiences of the school year for teachers.

If students are making progress academically and thriving socially, it's a joy to discuss these achievements with families. But often, teachers may need to have more difficult conversations—discussing strategies for students who are struggling, or fielding parents' questions about new school or district initiatives that teachers are implementing in their classrooms.

Sometimes, these programmatic changes can be extremely stressful for parents. One example, which I've encountered often, is the phasing out of gifted education pull-out services. Some schools do this in favor of meeting the needs of all students in a whole-class setting through differentiated instruction.

During the first year or two of this transition, teachers often have to address the questions, concerns, and criticisms of parents whose children had previously been pulled out by a specialist and are now receiving this enrichment in the general classroom.

When a parent presents concerns to a teacher who is still adapting to this change herself, it can make the teacher anxious, or even put her on the defensive. Once on the defensive, teachers (and humans in general) struggle to redirect conversations to a more positive place. Ultimately, in these cases, the parent-teacher conference ends poorly, with both parties feeling unable to move forward with a good plan for the child's education.

To avoid these precarious situations, I recommend the following six steps for ensuring conferences with contentious (or concerned) parents are productive:

Step 1: Summarize what the parents say to ensure a common understanding.

"It sounds like you are concerned that your son is bored/not challenged in math now that he is no longer being pulled out for enrichment services."

Step 2: Acknowledge and validate the parents' emotion.

Parents are entitled to feel how they do. When you validate the emotion, parents no longer have to be on the defensive.

"I completely understand and agree with your frustration. Your son should absolutely be engaged and appropriately challenged in math. Please know, I want the same thing as you."

Step 3: Ask questions instead of making statements to get a clearer picture of where the parent is coming from.

Teacher: "What is making you think your son is bored in math?"

Parent: "He says he is."

Teacher: "Does he say why or when he is bored?"

Fix Contentious Conferences in Six Steps

Parent: "No. He just says he is always bored."

Step 4: Respond with evidence.

"I understand. Now, what I want to do is determine if your son is bored because he is not being challenged, or if your son is bored because he doesn't find the content relevant.

"Either way, it is my job to make sure we find a remedy. I want to ensure I choose the most appropriate approach. Take a look at this information with me. [Here, share recent formative-assessment data related to the math concept.]

What I see here is that your son is being challenged. He's making appropriate growth toward mastering this content and is on track to master it soon. That leads me to believe your son may be bored because he doesn't see why it's important to learn this."

Step 5: Suggest an action, and ask the parents if this suggestion sounds reasonable to them.

"I think it would be helpful if I chatted with your son to see if we can get more information as to the cause of his boredom. Once I know that, he and I will create a plan of action and share that with you. How does this sound?"

Step 6: Follow up with the student and parents.

After the conference, talk with the student about the issue at hand and create a plan. Then, bring the parents back into the loop. Ideally, the student is also a part of this conversation. Consider using technology like FaceTime, Skype, or a group chat to involve all parties.

Parents want what is best for their children, yet they don't always know what is best when it comes to their education. Students can excel in classroom environments that may be foreign to parents. But if parents are worried about their child's needs being overlooked, it can make conferences feel like an attack on teachers as both professionals and human beings.

This is the most unfortunate of circumstances because when it comes down to it, parents, teachers, and students all want the same thing: for students to learn. By following these six steps during parent-teacher conferences, teachers ensure that they form a partnership with parents rather than an adversarial relationship fraught with negative emotions and power struggles.

*Lisa Westman is a writer, speaker, and consultant who works with school systems across the country to implement student-driven differentiation, standards-based learning, and instructional-coaching programs. She has over 15 years of experience as a teacher and an instructional coach specializing in differentiation. She is the author of *Student-Driven Differentiation: 8 Steps to Harmonize Learning in the Classroom* (Corwin). Connect with Lisa on Twitter: @lisa_westman.*





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Campbell Gives Teacher's View at USDOE

Middle School Teacher Meets with DeVos, Others on Teacher Prep, Retention

Lincoln Education Association member LaQuinte Campbell enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to influence federal education policy in January, meeting face-to-face with U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and other federal officials.

Campbell took part in an off-the-record roundtable discussion with DeVos, an assistant secretary of education and other senior level education officials on issues affecting K-12 teachers such as preparation, retention, recruitment and compensation.

Campbell said DeVos did a lot of listening.

"I would have liked for her (DeVos) to be a more vocal contributor to the conversation, however, she did ask questions to gain more clarity and seemed engaged throughout," said Campbell.

Competitive Pay

Participants discussed recruitment and submitted ideas on how and when to recruit teachers into the profession.

"We discussed pros and cons to alternative certification and the implications that can have on students," said Campbell. "We also discussed compensation, and how it is hard for some districts to recruit and retain the best

and the brightest educators for their students because they do not have the money to offer competitive pay rates."

They also talked about the disparity that exists in representation across the country. There are far more students of color than there are teachers.

"I was able to share thoughts about my route to preparation through the year long experience, which I credit for the success that I have experienced in the classroom," she said. "I also shared my experience as a teacher of color, and the value of not only recruiting but retaining those teachers and the impact that has on all students. Representation matters."

An Immersion Experience

Campbell said her meeting was one of a series for the department with education stakeholders. She thought it was productive.

Campbell was invited and accompanied by Dr. Daniel Watkins, dean of the College of Education at Jackson State University. Campbell was in the first graduating cohort of teachers from a Jackson State program designed to better prepare teachers for the classroom by providing them with a year of co-teaching experience as opposed to

the traditional 13-week student teaching model.

Campbell said the program was an immersion experience where students worked hands-on with cooperating teachers to open and close out the school year.

"With the help of this program I was able to enter into my teaching career with a full year of teaching experience and the confidence that goes along with that," she said.

'Heart-Work'

Campbell affirmed that teaching is hard work.

"To educate children takes a lot of hard work and dedication and sometimes that goes unnoticed. Some may even begin to feel unappreciated," she said. "However, each day that you walk into your classroom, you do so with a heart of service and knowing your purpose."

She urged educators to network and to seek advice, to be open to new ideas and think outside the box.

"You also have to recognize and intentionally embrace and celebrate differences," she said. "All these things are important and essential to being a high quality educator. It's heart-work."

Campbell teaches sixth grade science and social studies at Dawes Middle School in Lincoln.



Campbell

I Love Public Schools Premier's Mental Health Series

Film's Goal: Mental Health Awareness

In a new multi-episode docuseries, *The Mind Inside*, audiences will learn about mental health in public schools, the challenges students face, the social, emotional, and behavioral resources available for students who struggle, and the short- and long-term solutions communities provide.

Episode One of the series premiered in Omaha, Lincoln and Sidney in January and is now available online. It was filmed and produced by Nebraska Loves Public Schools, an organization dedicated to supporting public education through documentary filmmaking. Nebraska Loves Public Schools received NSEA's highest honor, the Friend of Education Award, in April 2015.

The goal of the new series is to create awareness around mental health and to encourage understanding, empathy and support for students, said Executive Director Sally Nellson Barrett.

"The *Mind Inside* series explores one of the most pressing and complicated issues in public education today, mental

health," she said.

"Schools are being asked to address immediate and varied needs of students and provide more social, emotional and behavioral support services than ever before."

Episode One explores the issues facing students and schools today and how to show empathy, support, and understanding for the students in the school community.

"We created *The Mind Inside* series to explore what students are struggling with today, what social, emotional, and behavioral resources are available, and what schools and their communities are developing as short- and long-term solutions," said Barrett.

"This topic is complicated and deeply personal and throughout production, I found myself being so much more understanding and empathetic the more I listened to these stories. I hope this film series does the same for others, too," said Barrett.

Episode One is now available online. For more details, go to the I Love Public Schools website at:

<https://iloveps.org>

What Do You Do if You Receive a RIF Notice?

The Answer is Simple: Call NSEA

It happens every year at Nebraska school districts large and small: a teacher receives a Reduction in Force notice – a pink slip – notifying the teacher that the last day of school is the teacher's last day with the district.

With Nebraska schools facing tight budgets, RIFs are a fact of life across the state. The statutory deadline for school districts to hand out RIF notices is April 15.

The best way to deal with RIF notices is to be prepared. Here is NSEA's tried

and true advice: If you receive a RIF notice, call NSEA immediately.

The moment you receive a RIF notice, a countdown begins. By state statute, you have only seven days in which to request a hearing to contest the notice.

While your situation may never reach an actual hearing, the best option is to act quickly by immediately giving NSEA a call. That will give you, your NSEA Organizational Specialist and NSEA's Advocacy Department time to determine

what steps are in your best interest.

If you receive a notice, do two things immediately:

- Fax a copy of the RIF notice to the NSEA at 1-402-475-2630.

- Call your NSEA Organizational Specialist at 1-800-742-0047 to verify that the fax has arrived.

As always, if you have questions, contact your Organizational Specialist or NSEA's Advocacy Office at 1-800-742-0047.

NSEA Teams Study Trauma, Safety, Social Justice

Each April, members at NSEA's Delegate Assembly begin the push forward on issues of interest to educators. That often includes the formation of committees that will study an issue and recommend action.

At Delegate Assembly 2018, members asked that the Association create ad hoc committees to study school safety, social justice and trauma-informed classrooms. Each of these committees will make recommendations at the 2019 Delegate Assembly in Lincoln on April 26-27.

Here are the charges to and members of each committee. NSEA President Jenni Benson serves on each committee.

Ad Hoc School Safety Committee

This committee is tasked with assessing compliance with existing legislative and regulatory provisions regarding implementation and administration of school safety plans. It will also investigate a model school safety plan incorporating best practices involving prevention, awareness, communication and stakeholder involvement; and assess and identify legislative and/or regulatory measures necessary to further improve safety.

Members are Rita Bennett, Lincoln, chair; Dash Rohan, Sioux County; Renae Noble, Chadron; Jane Leadabrand, Ralston; Lisa Hanson, Neligh-Oakdale; Burke Brown, Palmyra; Shannon Kinsella, Alliance; Tonja Frank, Omaha; Bryan Regier, Hyannis; NSEA Organizational Specialist Marlene Wehrbein and Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan.

Ad Hoc Social Justice Committee

The committee is directed to establish partnerships to investigate the effects of racial mascots on students. The committee will review how racist imagery affects students in emotional/ social growth, stress, brain development, health, educational success, and safety. NSEA will

develop of best practices and effective materials for working with students exposed to these racist images.

Members are Kim Erickson, Norfolk; London Bercey, Wayne State College; Tracy Hartman-Bradley, Eddie Ventura, Paula Aguirre and Sasha Cervantes, Omaha; Rita Bennett, April Jorgensen, Linda Freye and Jen Yoder, Lincoln; Burke Brown, Palmyra; and NSEA Organizational Specialists Mandy Faripour and Heather Fritz.

Ad Hoc Committee on Trauma Informed Classrooms

Delegates OK'd investigation of the effects of child trauma on child development, academic outcomes, teacher retention, safety and students' rights to a quality education. The committee will:

- Determine if legislation should be introduced that allows the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) survey to be used in all Nebraska public schools so that educators and policy makers can better understand the prevalence of toxic stress in the lives of students.

- Develop ways for schools to correlate performance of students to ACE's data within their respective schools.

- Work to educate policymakers and educators about compassion fatigue linked to work in high-stress environments and how to combat that fatigue.

- Determine if there is a correlation between high ACE environments and teacher retention and effectiveness.

- Recommend professional development for delivery across the state to inform educators about the impact of child trauma on the brain and how best to mitigate and treat that trauma.

Members are Kathie Garabrandt, Millard, chair; London Bercey, Wayne State College; Deb Gnuse, Grand Island; Mary Schlieder, Norris; Sasha Cervantes, Jack Bangert, Kathy Poehling and Justin Potts,

Omaha; Julie Colby and Jen Yoder, Lincoln; Burke Brown, Palmyra; Jill Kimbrough, Grand Island; and NSEA Organizational Specialists Liz Figueroa, Cindy Copich, Judy Roach, Mandy Faripour.

Early Career

Educators (NGEN) Committee

Delegates asked that this committee, created in 2017, be permanent.

The committee includes educators in their first seven years of service and is charged with identifying key issues affecting retention and Association membership, among other issues.

Members: NSEA Vice President Paul Schulte, Millard; London Bercey, Wayne State College; Rae Carbaugh, Niobrara; Denton Beacom and Patrick White, Gretna; Jordan Koch and Jared Wagenknecht, Papillion-LaVista; Jacob Barry, Elkhorn; Tatiana Eskridge, Omaha; Emily Tobias, Sargent; NSEA Organizational Specialist Heather Fritz; and NSEA Associate Staff Rebecca Smith.



**Tracy
Hartman-Bradley**
for
NEA Director



Assembly Flower Girls: Prizes galore were distributed at NSEA's 2018 Delegate Assembly, including a pair of flowerpot/gift card combinations. Janet Sheffer of the Chase County Education Association, left, and Megan Jacob of the Neligh-Oakdale Education Association, right, were the winners.

A Busy Two Days Ahead

2019 Assembly Packed with Offerings, Action

Each year, members at NSEA Delegate Assembly direct the Association to address and complete certain tasks.

The 2018 Assembly was no different, and when the 2019 edition of the Assembly convenes, results of those assigned tasks will be unveiled. Among the issues under study by directive of the 2018 Assembly: school safety, trauma informed classrooms, the effect of racial-based mascots on students, and more.

Members attending DA 2019 will also take advantage of professional development opportunities (see related story), consider changes to Association Bylaws and Resolutions, elect a representative to a three-year term on the NEA Board of Directors, and approve 2019-20 dues.

There will also be opportunities to network with colleagues from across the state.

Yes, it will be a busy, but satisfying, two days.

The April 26-27 event will be NSEA's 157th Assembly since the Association was founded in 1867 (the Assembly has met each year, sometimes twice each year, since the founding).

Also to be elected: voting positions on the NSEA Board of Directors representing the higher education and Education Support Personnel memberships. Delegates to the 2017 Assembly amended long-standing Association Bylaws to give those constituencies a voting position on the Board of Directors. Due to a resignation, members will also elect a representative to a two-year term on the NSEA board to represent the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee.

NSEA leadership is finalizing details on a speaker of national stature to address delegates Friday evening, April 26. Details are expected soon.

To make your interest in serving as a delegate known, contact your local association president, your local association building representative, or your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047. All delegates must be elected at the local or cluster level. Learn more at:

nsea.org/delegateassembly

Regarding Professional Development: NSEA Delivers

An ongoing theme in the annual evaluations of NSEA's Delegate Assembly has been a desire to see professional development offered at the annual business meeting.

In 2018, that finally happened, with a pilot project offering about 30 breakouts on a "come one, come all" model. That model has been tweaked, and professional development will be offered again at the April 26-27 event at Lincoln's Cornhusker Marriott Hotel.

More than a dozen topics will be provided, some repeated, giving delegates and non-delegates alike a chance for no-cost professional development.

Certain to be on the agenda: trauma informed classrooms. Also a certainty: a session on Delegate Assembly 101, aimed at informing novice delegates of the Assembly's purpose and workings. Nearly two dozen options are under consideration and time remains to suggest topics. To suggest a topic, go to:

bit.ly/2019dapd

Watch the March issue of *The Voice*, and the NSEA website, for a complete list of offerings. That website is at:

nsea.org

Your Colleagues Deserve Statewide Recognition

You recognize that you work with amazing, talented people who give their very best each and every day.

Perhaps it is time for the world to recognize those people, as well.

Now is a good time to give serious consideration to who you or your association might nominate for one of the honors to be awarded at NSEA's Delegate Assembly in April.

Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, ESP or deserving group. Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 15, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online, with required supporting material mailed to the NSEA. Online nomination forms are found at:

nsea.org/delegateassembly

The 2019 Delegate Assembly will be held at Lincoln's Cornhusker Marriott Hotel April 26-27. NSEA members are eligible for:

■ NSEA Rookie of the Year:

To honor a first-year teacher who excelled in the 2017-18 school year.

■ Award for Teaching Excellence:

Honors a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a period of time.

■ Education Support Professional of the Year:

Honors an ESP who has excelled in his or her job.

Finalists will be notified in March, with recipients revealed at Delegate Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award.

NSEA members are also eligible for:

■ Community Service:

Honors NSEA members and/or local associations involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.

■ Local Public Relations:

Honors local associations for outstanding communication within the association.

Also to be presented:

■ **Friend of Education:** Honors an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education.

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

■ **Media:** Recognizes a newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.



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Valentine's Day Ahead; Save at Click & Save!

More NEA Click & Save Buy-lights are available, and they are here just in time for Valentine's Day. Check these out:

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■ **Jewelry.com:** Treat yourself — or someone else — to beauty products, including cosmetics and bath & body sets. Free shipping on orders of \$50 or more.

Be sure to check Click & Save often for unadvertised, limited time offers, including discount dining certificates from Restaurant.com. Go to: neamb.com/clickandsave

It's Not Too Late to Get Vehicle Deals

Speaking of Valentine's Day...be sure to surprise your 'special someone' on Valentine's Day with a floral arrangement or tantalizing gourmet gift basket — and get 20 percent off your order — from 1800Flowers.com and 1800Baskets.com!

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www.neamb.com/flowers

Lock Your Credit Card if it Goes Missing

Locking Your Credit Card Blocks Purchases But Allows Use of Other Features

By Miriam Cross

Canceling and replacing a lost debit or credit card can be a hassle. After the new card arrives in the mail, you need to update every retailer, streaming service or utility provider that relies on your card number for payments. Now, many banks and credit card issuers are adding the option of temporarily "locking" your card instead, in case you want to buy some time to search for your card.

A lock can be an on/off switch in the bank's app or on its website, or it can be a more sophisticated feature that allows you to specify, say, the locations or the types of transactions that are approved for your card. A lock will typically prevent new purchases, ATM activity, cash advances and balance transfers, but it will allow automatic or recurring payments, returns, credits and dispute adjustments. For extra security, you can also turn a card "off" that you are leaving behind while on vacation. Most issuers allow indefinite locks, though American Express lifts a lock after seven days.

You should lock your card as soon as you notice it's gone or find an unfamil-

iar charge, then investigate further before contacting your bank, says David Keenan, senior vice president in card products at Fiserv, a financial technology company that has a locking and alert app called CardValet (available at Fiserv partner banks). If you can't find your card, notify your issuer. Most issuers will send you a new card free, but they may charge a fee for rush deliveries.

If you're waiting for a new debit card to arrive and need to withdraw cash, a bank branch may provide you with a temporary debit card on the spot. Some issuers also help you update merchants with your new card number. American Express will allow most recurring payments to go through seamlessly. Bank of America may provide your new card number to merchants with whom you have recurring payments, and Wells Fargo's Control Tower tool will show you a list of merchants with whom you've had recurring transactions within the past 12 months.

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To Save More, Imagine Retirement

Now, Make Dreams Come True By Saving in Tax-Advantaged Plans

By Eileen Ambrose, Senior Editor

Imagine this: You're retired and learning Italian for a trip to Rome, or you're running along the beach as you train for your first half-marathon.

Whatever your life will look like in retirement, envisioning it beforehand could spur you to save nearly one-third more than you would otherwise, says a report by investment manager Capital Group, which surveyed 1,200 millennials, Gen Xers and baby boomers.

Half of those polled were first given 15 questions to help them imagine the activities they would do in their sixties, seventies and beyond, and then they were asked how much they should save from each paycheck for retirement. The rest were asked how much to save first and then told to imagine retirement.

Those who pictured their retirement first said they should save 21.2 percent of each paycheck, on average. The other group said they should save 16.2 percent. When people imagine all the positive things they can do in retirement—traveling, visiting grandkids—they are motivated to save more for those goals, explains Heather Lord, head of strategy and innovation at Capital Group. This finding may help the financial industry develop ways to encourage saving that are more effective than the usual nudges that

play on workers' worries and guilt, Capital Group says.

Start by imagining what kind of life you'd like to retire to, instead of looking at retirement as an escape from the things you hate about work, says Steve Vernon, research scholar at the Stanford Center on Longevity. Think beyond the "vacation" aspects of retirement, such as traveling or playing golf, that might only add up to several weeks in a year. Instead, consider what you can do that will provide meaning and the social contacts that work typically provides, he says. Consider whether you'll downsize or work part-time — all of which can have a significant impact on your finances.

Once you know what you want to do in retirement, the next step is to see if you'll be able to afford to support that vision. Invest as much as possible in tax-advantaged accounts. In 2019, you can sock away up to \$19,000 in a 401(k) or similar plan, or \$25,000 if you're 50 or older. Use an online calculator such as the one at troweprice.com/ric to check your progress.

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Working with Parents & Policymakers



Executive Director Maddie Fennell

“

I cannot emphasize how important it is to have ALL our members stay current on Legislative activities and to become involved at crucial inflection points.

”

As teachers, we've all had conversations with parents of our students who want nothing more than the very best for their children. To those discussions, every parent brings a different perspective and different life lessons. The issues they bring are as varied and capricious as their children.

While these parents want what is best for their children, they don't always know what “best” might look like. Nor do they know how to get to “best.”

That's where we come in. Our experience and expertise can help parents navigate those issues. We can help them get positive results or, at the very least, point them in the direction of someone who can.

It might surprise you to know that working with parents is in many ways similar to working with our state senators.

Over the past two years, I have proudly represented the interests of all NSEA members at functions sponsored by both Republicans and Democrats. I have attended events and visited with senators Blood, Linehan, Cavanaugh, DeBoer, Hilkemann and McCollister. During the past legislative interim, I met one-on-one with senators Hunt, Moser, Pansing Brooks, Williams, Stinner, Brewer, Kolterman, Scheer, Lindstrom, Friesen, Howard, Lathrop and Vargas. Each meeting was productive, and each meeting began to establish the relationships needed for further collaboration.

In each of these meetings, I found these senators have one thing in common: they truly care about Nebraska and the future we are working to create for our children.

I do believe that every one of Nebraska's 49 state senators wants and works toward what they believe is best for Nebraska. Because of the different perspectives and different life lessons we bring to our conversations, we just may not always agree on the best route to that goal.

As I work with elected leaders on your behalf, I keep three things in mind:

- Change only happens at the speed of trust; taking the time to establish a relationship is a long-term investment.

- It is better to build bridges across our commonalities then burn them across our differences.

- It doesn't matter if you have an R or a D behind your name if you support quality public education for our students.

As with the parents we encounter, our experience and expertise can help senators navigate through difficult education-related issues. We are the experts in education. We all need to talk to senators so that they have a good understanding of the success and the needs of public education.

By building these relationships, by listening and encouraging, I believe our senators will do what is best for Nebraska children.

Save These Dates

This year, senators have introduced 739 bills and another 15 legislative resolutions. Your NSEA Government Relations team reviews all submissions and determines what action we should take. Those positions are based on the Legislative priorities set by your elected NSEA Board of Directors, and on the resolutions passed by members. Our actions generally run from “monitor” through strong advocacy, pro or con, which includes testifying at hearings and meeting with senators to encourage their vote.

A majority of bills we track will go through the Education Committee. Senators Brewer, Kolowski, Linehan, Mor-

feld, Murman and Pansing Brooks serve on the committee with Walz as vice chair and Groene as chair.

I cannot emphasize how important it is to have ALL members stay current on Legislative activities and to become involved at crucial inflection points. Your involvement can include writing your senator about the effect of a bill on your classroom, visiting with your senator when he/she is back home, or taking part in one of several NSEA Lobby Days. To email your senator, go to:

nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/

Save These Dates

■ **April 26:** You do not have to be a delegate to attend the NSEA Delegate Assembly and participate in our professional development sessions on Friday, April 26, from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Lincoln's Cornhusker Marriott. Topics will include Trauma Informed Classrooms, Degrees Not Debt, Returning to the Classroom After a Concussion (both staff and students), Estate Planning, Social Emotional Learning and more. Watch for the complete list of professional development offerings and for registration details in *The Voice* and at nsea.org.

■ **July 16-18:** We will host NSEA University at the Nebraska Innovation Campus (see page 5). Sessions will focus on the five areas of the NSEA Strategic Plan as well as offering professional development to improve your teaching skills. Watch *The Voice*!

■ **Nov. 2:** We will host our first gala for the Children's Fund and LEARN at A View on State Street in Omaha. This will be a fun evening to celebrate all the great work teachers do every day for kids across our state! More details ahead.

Learn About the Unicameral

This page is designed to help students and teachers find features on the Nebraska Unicameral website that may be especially helpful.

nebraskalegislature.gov/feature/teach.php

Sign up for Capitol Update

To receive weekly updates on education-related legislation, email NSEA's Cathy Schapmann at:

cathy.schapmann@nsea.org

Lobby Day Ahead: Register Now

Lindstrom to Keynote; Orientation Available

There is still time to register and attend the NSEA-Retired Lobby Day on Tuesday, Feb. 12, at NSEA.

Omaha Sen. Brett Lindstrom will keynote at the luncheon at the NSEA.

The event is a wonderful opportunity to get an update on Nebraska legislation; to visit with state senators; and to enjoy lunch, conversation and a speaker. It is also one of the most important days on the NSEA-Retired calendar – a chance to talk to senators about issues important to active and retired educators.

Registration is at 8:15 a.m., followed by new attendee orientation at 8:30 a.m., and a program at 9 a.m. Conference registration closes on Feb. 7. To register, go to:

www.nsea.org/retired

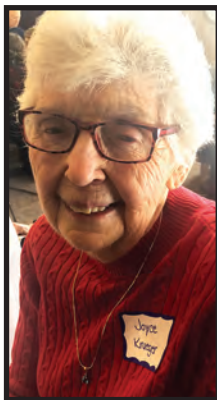


Senator in the Center: Lincoln Education Association-Retired members met with State Sen. Adam Morfeld at NSEA's Capitol Dinner District in December. From left are Bill Hayes, De Tonack, Morfeld, John Heineman and Pat Etherton. Morfeld complimented retired members on their "voter watch" efforts at election sites around the state.

An Education Pioneer

Joyce Krueger is a pioneer.

She was one of the 35 charter members of the Lincoln Education Association-Retired, organized in 1992-93. She recently shared the story of her first semester of teaching in 1950.



Krueger

Krueger said it was the first year Lincoln Public Schools offered physical education in the elementary schools.

"I went to Prescott, Holmes, Sheridan, Hawthorne and Capitol schools," she said. "I was welcomed to LPS by a personal letter from Merle Beattie who was an elementary supervisor."

Beattie was LPS director of elementary education for nearly 30 years. Beattie Elementary School in Lincoln is named in his honor.

"Each building reflected the philosophy of the principal," said Krueger. "Some were very supportive of the idea of physical education for elementary students. Some, I think, thought it was an intrusion in their pupils' class day."

Although it was a great experience, she said it was challenging. Mabel Lee was director of Women's Physical Education at UNL at the time and was her advisor.

"She trained us well in the old Grant Memorial building on the campus. I have fond memories of that place and friendships with other PE majors," she said.

NSEA-Retired Elections

There are still opportunities to take a leadership role in your NSEA-Retired!

Open positions for three-year terms on the Board of Directors are treasurer, secretary and one board member each from Metro, Panhandle and Tri-Valley districts.

An additional board member from Capitol (now allowing 2 members from Capitol) will be elected. The first term for this Capitol position will be 2 years, followed by 3-year terms thereafter. Terms

for all of these posts begin Aug. 15.

Members will also elect representatives for Delegate Assembly. Initial figures call for election of 4 delegates from Capitol District; 5 from Metro; 3 each from Tri-Valley and Elkhorn; 1 each from Panhandle and Sandhills; and 2 at large.

Election of delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly will also be held. Members will choose 2 from the Metro and Capitol districts combined; 2 from the other 4 districts and out-of-state membership; and 1 at-large.

Filing is due Feb. 8. Details are at:

www.nsea.org/retired

— De Tonack, President
NSEA-Retired

Elect Arlene Rea



**NSEA-Retired Treasurer,
Representative to DA**

Re-Elect Guy Roggenkamp



**NSEA-Retired Board,
Representative to RA, DA**

Behnke Led NSEA, Broke Barriers

Led NSEA During LB89 Hearing, 'Led the Way' for Women

Former NSEA Executive Director Judith K. "Judy" Behnke died on Dec. 24, 2018, in Wisconsin. She was 78.

Born in Missouri, Behnke grew up in Milwaukee and earned an education degree from Central Methodist College in Fayette, MO. She taught for 11 years in Kansas City, Mo., including seven years teaching junior high English and social studies.

She was president of Missouri NEA in 1976-77 and was an organizational specialist for the Kentucky Education Association for three years before taking a position in communications and membership development for the Florida Education Association for two years. In 1982, she took a position with the Texas State Teachers Association supervising that organization's field staff.

Behnke joined NSEA as executive director in April 1984. At the time of her appointment, she was just the third woman to lead a state association.

"She broke a lot of barriers for women in association staff work," said former NSEA president Jim Rea, NSEA president from 1988-92. Rea served on the NSEA Board of Directors interview team that hired Behnke and worked with her for three years as NSEA president.

"Women in those association leadership positions were pretty



Behnke

rare," he said. "Each time she went to a place she was one of the first. She led the way for a lot of women."

For that NSEA interview team, the choice was clear. "There wasn't even discussion, as I recall. She was far and above all the other candidates," said Rea.

Behnke was a key player in the Association's work on the enactment of LB89 in 1989, which offered \$40 million in state funding for teacher salaries over two years, or about \$1,000 per year per teacher at the time.

Passage of the bill began with the largest legislative hearing in Nebraska history – held on the grandstand building at the old Nebraska State Fairgrounds in Lincoln. More than 3,800 citizens — most of them NSEA members — attended the hearing at the grandstand. Fried chicken was served to all, and the event became known as the chicken dinner hearing.

With more than one in five NSEA members at the hearing, LB89 eventually passed the Legislature on a 37-12 vote and was signed by Gov. Kay Orr. The LB89 hearing left a lasting impression. Across the board, senators reported that they were in constant, daily contact with teachers from their legislative districts.

Behnke left NSEA in August 1991 to become the Mid-Atlantic Region manager for the National Education Association. Behnke later served as the executive director for the Colorado Education Association, and retired as an administrator with the Missouri NEA.

She is survived by a sister, nieces and a nephew.

Nathan H. Metschke

Nathan H. Metschke, 40, Neligh-Oakdale band and vocal music teacher, died on Dec. 24, 2018. He was past president of the Neligh-Oakdale Education Association.

Metschke was a member of the United Methodist Church, the Nebraska State Bandmasters Association, the Nebraska Music Educators Association, the Class C All State Band Board and Northeast Nebraska All Star Band Board. He earned the Jack R. Snider Outstanding Young Band Director and NMEA Young Educator of the Year. Last fall he received the Touchdown for Teachers Award from I Love Public Schools.

A Chambers, native he graduated from Midland College. He had taught at Neligh-Oakdale since 2002. His wife, Darcy and three children survive.

Dorothy A. Glasser

Dorothy A. Glasser, 87, Clarks, died on Jan. 1.

After normal training she qualified for a three-year teaching certificate upon high school graduation. She earned a degree from Luther Junior College (now Midland University). She taught at Osceola and in rural schools before retiring in the 1970s. Stricken with rheumatoid arthritis, she had to re-learn to walk.

Much of the history of Clarks has been preserved by her work. Glasser and husband Ronald were the Central City Republican Nonpareil newspaper Persons of the Year in 2016. She is survived by her husband, a daughter and grandchildren.

NSEA Board Updates Announced

Vacancies on the NSEA Board of Directors have been filled by appointment.

Veteran board member Eddie Ventura has been appointed to fill the Ethnic and

Minority Affairs Committee seat on the NSEA Board of Directors. An Omaha educator, Ventura is a past EMAC chair, and slides over from his NSEA Metro District board seat to fill the vacancy created when EMAC representative Isau Metes, Lincoln, was hired to fill an Organizational Specialist staff vacancy at NSEA. Metes began work with NSEA in January.

To fill Ventura's Metro District seat, Westside District 66 art teacher Teresa Matthews was selected. Matthews teaches art at Hillside Elementary School in the Westside District.

Robin Ankrom, an elementary school music teacher for the Falls City Public Schools, was tabbed to fill a Capitol District vacancy on the NSEA board. That vacancy came about through the mid-year resignation from the board by Lincoln's Michael Geist.

Terms for Ventura and Matthews expire at the end of this Association year. Ankrom's term will expire in 2021.



Ventura



Matthews



Ankrom

NPERS Seminar Dates are Set

If you are nearing retirement age, it makes good sense to start considering your retirement benefit options.

To learn about those options, it would be wise to attend one of the more than two dozen pre-retirement planning seminars for educators hosted by the state each year.

Staff from the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems (NPERS) office host those seminars, which will once again take place at locations across the state.

The seminars are for school plan members and their spouses, age 50 and over. Each eligible employee is entitled to receive leave with pay to attend up to two seminars (one per fiscal year).

NPERS officials note that state law says "...leave with pay shall mean a day off paid by the employer and shall not mean vacation, sick, personal or compensatory time."

School retirement plan members may choose to attend a retirement seminar more than twice, but such leave beyond the second seminar will be at the employee's expense and at administrative discretion.

Members must enroll in advance to attend. Meetings begin Feb. 27. To find details, go to the NPERS website and click on the 'Retirement Seminars' link on the left side of the home page, and then look for the 'School Schedules' link. The NPERS website is at:

npers.ne.gov

Speaking of Education

"Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education."

— *Martin Luther King,
Minister, Civil Rights Leader
1929-1968*

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

Differentiating Instruction? Let Students Take the Lead

From Sally Austin Hundley, Grade 8 Math and Science teacher:

"I teach eighth graders who are at risk of not graduating from high school. The best method I have found to allow for differentiation is to use the students as experts. When we are doing individual work, during homeroom, during down time, or whenever I can find, I pull students aside and walk them through the steps of working problems or whatever we will be working with that day. Then, as we break up into groups, the students lead their own groups through the work. The students who teach their peers receive a boost of confidence. Very rarely do they just let their groups copy their papers.

"At the end of the week, I ask for students to talk about which folks have done the best job in teaching. Sometimes, I list the concepts we have learned and ask who the class felt would be a good concept expert. This year, I even had the opportunity to film two of my exceptional needs students as they completed whole group instruction at the front of the room on a very difficult science concept. The water-testing expert who had trained them remarked that they were two of the brightest eighth graders he had ever worked with. It is a great boost to these students and many of them have remarked that they would like to become teachers."



Sign up for Works4Me messages at: nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html



A Unified Holiday: Thayer Central Education Association (TCEA) President Josh Lanik reports that the TCEA sold school-themed Ugly Christmas sweaters to staff, administration and support staff during the holiday season. Proceeds purchased Christmas presents through the Cargill giving tree program, with gifts given to students in the school district. Through the program, TCEA members purchased gifts and movie theater gift cards for 23 students in the K-12 district.