

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • January 2022

Why Politics?

MEMBER SAFETY RESOURCES
RECRUITMENT PLAN TIME
RETENTION LIVING WAGE
COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPACT
PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE
SAFE SCHOOLS CLASS SIZE
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
STRONG PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PRAXIS CORE TEST
SAFE CLASSROOMS
INCREASED SALARY
STUDENT TEACHER PAY
TEACHERS OF COLOR
MORE SUBSTITUTES
DUTY-FREE LUNCH
HONESTY IN EDUCATION
FEWER ASSESSMENTS
ADEQUATE FUNDING
STUDENT SUCCESS
COUNSELORS
ESSERS MONEY ARP FUNDS
RETIREMENT PLANS
MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TRAINING





THE VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association
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A Great Public School for Every Child.

Letter of intent date: March 15

Know your rights if asked to sign letter early

Signing and returning a letter of intent to your district employer is important, but don't let the pressure get to you – especially if you're asked to do so too early.

A letter of intent (and/or accompanying contract) signifies your plan to return to teaching in your district next year. State law allows school districts, on or after March 15 each year, to require certificated employees – teachers, counselors, speech pathologists, psychologists and others – to sign binding letters of intent and/or individual contracts.

Yet some administrators distribute letters – and ask for them back – even before the winter holidays. Often in an effort to get a handle on next year's staffing situation, superintendents might suggest letters be returned by Feb. 1 or March 1.

Knowing your rights is important. Members should not rush to sign, but be deliberate and use the time allotted by law. Making a decision months in advance may cause problems down the

road if your personal situation changes.

State statute is clear: a school district cannot require teachers to make a commitment before March 15.

However, failure to sign and return the letter by stated deadlines that fall **on or after** March 15 is a threat to a teacher's employment.

If administrators distribute such a letter or contract prior to March 15 and ask for its return prior to March 15, a local association representative should fax a copy to their assigned NSEA organizational specialist at 1-402-475-2630.

In the meantime, an appropriate response to the letter is "I don't know yet" or "I'm not sure."

Letters that ask for a signature and return **on** March 15 or on a specified date **after** March 15 are appropriate. In such cases, it is vital to sign and return it by the due date.

Have questions? Call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 to speak with your region's organizational specialist.

Request PAC Refund by Feb. 15

NSEA's Political Action Committee is supported by voluntary donations collected with NSEA dues. Support for election of recommended candidates is provided by an annual contribution of \$15 from each NSEA member.

Any member may request a refund of those contributions for the current membership year. Alternately, members may direct the \$15 contribution to be used for bond election and school ballot issues only.

Refund requests must be in writing to NSEA President Jenni Benson. Each letter must be individually composed and contain an original signature of the member. Photocopied, computer-generated letters or email messages are not accepted. Each letter must indicate whether all or part of the contribution is to be refunded or designated for ballot issues.

Requests must be postmarked no later than Feb. 15, 2022. In order to efficiently use dues dollars, requests for refunds received by the due date will be processed and mailed in a single batch after that date.

Send requests to Benson at jenni.benson@nsea.org or 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508. For questions, call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

Would you like to write for The Voice?

Would you like to write for *The Voice*? Perhaps a column or an article on what is working in your classroom? Submissions can be classroom-related, humorous, inspiring or otherwise education-related. Submit your questions and your topics to thevoice@nsea.org.

On the Cover: NSEA will again fight for our members this legislative session, advocating for legislation that affects every component of public education, from class size to plan time to mental health resources. Read more on page 7.

Reflect, refocus and resolve to make the new year better



**NSEA
President
Jenni Benson**

“

Not everyone has the same calling or interest when it comes to politics. However, nearly everything in education is political...Each decision is made through a vote. Your voice and your vote matter.

”

As the calendar year ends, some minds quickly turn to losing weight, eating healthy, saving money and spending more time with family. This pandemic has caused us to rethink many things, and it is time to rethink this year's New Year's resolutions.

I recently was blessed with two new grandchildren. Nathaniel arrived in October, and Zena arrived in November. My total grand count is now 10. They bring me a great deal of joy and peace in this uncertain time. I make decisions and my own resolutions thinking of how their future will be affected.

As we begin 2022, I am reflecting about what 2021 held and what may come in the new year. Personally and professionally, I have a lot going on, as do all of you.

I am grateful for a new start to the new year. I enjoy Facebook reminders of my “memories.” It is always good to reflect, refocus and resolve to do better.

I am packing up to move into a new home with my daughter and her family. A couple years ago I would have said that would never happen, but circumstances change. My husband spent nearly 20 days in the hospital last year. He continues to struggle with a great many health issues. With the demands of our life, we need the support of family and friends. I am resolving to be more willing to accept help.

The new year brings ongoing challenges and upcoming successes for NSEA, our members and public education. The new year also brings on a new legislative session, as it always does in Nebraska. The NSEA Board of Directors recently voted on our Legislative Agenda for 2022. We reflected on the past year, focused on the session and beyond, and approved the agenda as a resolution of sorts to achieve.

We will focus our efforts on legislation that will help recruit and retain qualified educators, expand the quality and quantity of learning in our public schools, protect the health of our students and school staff, mitigate the finan-



New reasons to do better: My ninth and 10th grandchildren, Nathaniel and Zena, are two of my reasons to make this year better.

cial impact of this and future pandemics, and increase state aid for public education.

Some of you have said to me, “I am not political,” or “NSEA is too political,” or even “NSEA is not active enough in politics.” I am asking you to reflect on what that means for you and how we can all resolve to be more aware and involved.

Not everyone has the same calling or interest when it comes to politics. However, nearly everything in educa-

tion is political. I learned that from my very first work on a bond issue to build a new school in the town where I was living. I continue to see that as NSEA is actively lobbying for public school funding and fighting to protect our retirement system. Each decision is made through a vote. Your voice and your vote matter.

As we move into 2022, please sign up for the NSEA Capitol Update at www.nsea.org/subscriber. Resolve to read the once a week message, to ask questions and share with your colleagues. We must all resolve to work with our elected officials to meet the needs of all of our students and educators across Nebraska. It is so very important.

To help our Association move in the right direction, our NSEA officer team is starting a Leadership Cadre. We are looking for 16 members from across the state who are interested in learning more about leadership.

We are looking for diverse demographic and geographic representation: four members under age 40, four members over age 40, four members in their first five years of teaching, two members who are education support professionals, and two members in higher education, with at least four of these self-identifying as ethnic members.

Please share the names of members who might be interested by completing this short survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/G5ND2Z6.

Thank you for all you do. We are grateful for each and every one of our members and the work you do for our public schools.

Celebrate our public schools Jan. 19

Day recognizes educators all across Nebraska

I Love Public Schools, a Nebraska organization dedicated to advocating for public schools, invites educators, administrators, students and communities to celebrate the seventh annual I Love Public Schools Day Jan. 19.

On this day, share online why you love public schools and spread the word with one of these activities. Use the hashtag #ilovepublicschools.

1. Share a reason why public education means something to you. Public school teachers are constantly changing lives and lifting their students. Share why these educators have been instrumental in your life or the lives of your children.

2. Wear your I Love Public Schools gear and take a photo to share online.

3. Write a “thank you” note to your child’s teachers. Every day, teachers and staff at schools around the country work tirelessly to educate our future leaders. Take some time to thank them for their efforts, and have your child write some letters, as well.

4. Organize a staff lunch for your child’s school. Everyone gets tired of their same old boring microwave meals. Surprise the staff at your school with some lunch. Show them you appreciate them with pizza or sandwiches. (Be sure to coordinate this ahead of time with the school.)

5. Drop off breakfast to the staff lounge. Who doesn’t love coffee and donuts? Help the staff at your child’s school start I Love Public Schools Day off right! (Again, call ahead to make sure your school is allowing visitors and outside food.)

6. Donate to your school’s supply list. Whether it’s more paper, new highlighters or whiteboard markers, every school could use more supplies to help keep students engaged and learning.

7. Call your school and ask how you can volunteer. Volunteering your



time at your child’s school brings you closer to the staff and closer to your child. Because this year is a little strange, it is best to give your school a call to see if there are still ways you can help even if you can’t go into the building.

8. Inquire about how your employer can be more involved in your child’s school. Businesses across Nebraska have partnered with their community’s school to help out in any way they can. Ask how your company can get involved.

9. Ask your child’s principal

about starting an I Love Public Schools shirt fundraiser for your school. Get your school’s logo on the back of an I Love Public Schools shirt and you can earn money for field trips, art supplies, school clubs and more.

10. Watch one of I Love Public Schools’ films and share on social media how your family relates to the film – maybe you’re a graduate of a public school, have a child in public school or work in a public school.

For details or more ideas, visit iloveps.org.

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A mammoth event: Elephant Hall will be the setting for the July 12 social, part of NSEA University, a three-day professional development opportunity for Nebraska teachers and education support professionals. (Photo courtesy Nebraska Tourism)

NSEA U takes over history museum

NSEA University will be back and BIGGER than ever this July! The three-day, members-only professional development conference is planned for Tuesday, July 12, through Thursday, July 14, at Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln.

The conference features guest speakers and breakout sessions on a variety of topics to help educators grow professionally while relaxing and networking with others from across the state.

This year's event will kick off with a social, including dinner, at Morrill Hall, the University of Nebraska State Museum.

Morrill Hall hosts exhibits on Nebraska paleontology, early people of the plains, meteorites and wildlife. It is home to the Mueller Planetarium, as well as one of the largest mammoth skeletons ever discovered. Families are welcome to attend the social along with educator members.



Be a presenter

Do you know a little something about education? Are you willing to share your insights with colleagues? NSEA wants YOU to present a breakout session at NSEA U.

If you have a proposal for a professional development session that would be useful to other Association members, submit your proposal at bit.ly/NSEA22-RFP.

For more information, contact Mi-

chelle Raphael at michelle.raaphael@nsea.org or call (800) 742-0047.

The details

Members attending NSEA U may reserve a room at the Graduate Lincoln Hotel at a discounted rate, though attendees are not required to stay at the Graduate and may book elsewhere. Members are required to make their own hotel arrangements.

NSEA will reimburse members who live more than 60 miles from Innovation Campus for partial hotel costs, and will reimburse all participants who drive to the conference for mileage.

The schedule for each day of NSEA U is still being finalized and will be released in the spring.

Members attending the social at Morrill Hall Tuesday evening must attend at least one day of the conference.

Watch for additional details in future editions of *The Voice* and online at www.nsea.org/NSEA.

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In the chamber: The second session of the 107th Nebraska Legislature will convene Jan. 5.

Fighting for YOU this legislative session

Just as your senator has spent the past few months gearing up for the legislative session, so has your professional association. The 107th Nebraska Legislature will convene for its second session on Jan. 5, and the NSEA will be there to press for legislation that will benefit our members.

The NSEA has organized its legislative agenda for 2022. Members and staff will meet with senators to share the stories of our educators and testify on proposed legislation with the goal of supporting Nebraska's public schools.

The challenges facing the legislature and public education are numerous:

- calls for banning certain curriculum in classrooms raise concerns about the scope of what may be prohibited and what penalties educators could face if they unknowingly violate such restrictions;

- the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic raises continuing concerns for health safety in schools and mental wellbeing for both students and staff;

- school choice groups continue to target Nebraska for implementation of private school tuition vouchers, indirect dollar transfers to private schools and charter school programs; and

- a decades-old, near-last ranking in state aid to K-12 education remains a big concern. Nebraska ranks 46th in state aid to education and unfairly relies on property taxes for funding.

In response to these challenges, NSEA will focus on legislation designed to recruit and retain qualified educators, because well-trained and well-equipped educators provide

professional excellence in our classrooms.

NSEA will push for legislation that expands both the quality and quantity of learning in our public schools, because learning is how we prepare future generations to succeed.

We will fight for the protection of the health – both mental and physical – of students and school staff, and work to help mitigate the financial impacts of COVID-19 and future pandemics.

The important work our members and staff will do in the coming months includes:

- securing additional funding for behavioral health services, resources and training;

- increasing state aid to schools;

- ensuring students and staff have respectful, safe and secure learning and working environments;

- encouraging programs that recruit and retain qualified educators;

- maintaining optimal student-teacher class size ratios for effective learning;

- protecting collective bargaining rights; and

- overseeing prudent management and funding of the school employee retirement plans.

NSEA's Government Relations team monitors legislative activities and advocates for the best interests of our members and students. Bills change quickly throughout the session, and NSEA wants to keep you in the loop about how your job as an educator may be affected.

Subscribe to the Capitol Update at nsea.org/subscriber.



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Spring Delegate Assembly to decide direction of NSEA

Plans are underway for the April 2022 Delegate Assembly – the 161st assembly in NSEA history.

The event is being planned as an in-person gathering April 22-23 at the Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel.

Delegate Assembly is NSEA's annual business meeting. Members from across the state, representing local associations large and small, urban and rural, are elected to attend. They manage the business and set the future course of the Association.

A keynote speaker, discussion of educational issues and consideration of updates to NSEA Bylaws and Resolutions are all part of the assembly action. Proposed bylaw amendments are due by March 8. Watch for details in upcoming editions of The Voice.

In 2022, one NEA Director seat and an Education Support Professional At-Large seat are up for election to the NSEA Board of Directors.

The event also features an awards presentation, recognizing the Early Career Educator of the Year, ESP of the Year, and an award for Teaching Excellence, among other honors for NSEA members and friends of education.

Members must be elected by their local association in order to attend as a delegate to the assembly. To make your interest in serving as a delegate known, contact your local association president, your local association building or faculty representative or your NSEA organizational specialist.

NSEA's first meeting was held as the Nebraska State Teachers Association in Brownville on Oct. 16, 1867, just months after Nebraska gained statehood. NSEA is the state's oldest professional association and has held a Delegate Assembly almost every year since, and in some cases, twice a year.

One NEA Director, ESP seat to be elected at DA

One NEA Director seat and an Education Support Professional At-Large seat will be up for election at the April 2022 Delegate Assembly.

The NEA Director serves on the NSEA Board of Directors Executive Committee and is one of two Nebraska representatives on the National Education Association Board. Directors serve a three-year term and may be elected for up to two consecutive terms.

The ESP At-Large position represents all Nebraska ESP members with a vote on the NSEA Board.

All candidates must declare their candidacy by Tuesday, Feb. 15, in writing sent to the NSEA Executive Director, trish.guinan@nsea.org.

Alternately, candidates may mail their declaration to NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742.

Elections will take place during Delegate Assembly April 22-23, 2022.

Nominate colleagues now for NSEA's top awards and honors

Members and local associations, as well as administrators and friends of education are eligible for top honors to be given at NSEA's Delegate Assembly in April.

Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, Education Support Professional or deserving group.

Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 11, 2022, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online at www.nsea.org/DA, with required supporting material mailed.

The 2022 Assembly will be held April 22-23 at Lincoln's Marriott Cornhusker Hotel.

Members are eligible for:

- **Early Career Educator:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in their first five years.

- **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 winners announced at the Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award.

Members are also eligible for:

- **The Great Plains Milestone:** Honors an individual or group for promoting human and civil rights.

- **Community Service:** Honors NSEA members or local associations involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.

- **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding internal communication.

Also to be presented:

- **Administrator of Excellence:** Honors an administrator who strives every day to get students and staff to be successful.

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

- **Outstanding Media:** Honors newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.

OFFICIAL ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT

ALL NSEA MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR DISTRICT OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY AT-LARGE DELEGATES. VOTING WILL BE FEB. 18 - MARCH 13.

ALL MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR THEIR LOCAL ASSOCIATION DELEGATES TO NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY. CLUSTERED LOCALS WILL VOTE MARCH 14 - 22. LOCALS WITH MORE THAN 26 MEMBERS, TALK TO YOUR LOCAL PRESIDENT FOR YOUR LOCAL ELECTION TIMELINE.

NSEA ELECTIONS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

It is time to consider filing for Association office or as a delegate to the statewide and national assemblies. Elections will occur in the coming months in order to comply with federal statute which dictates all officers and delegates must be elected by secret ballot. Here are the details:

One NEA Director and an At-Large ESP seat (both 3-year terms) on the NSEA Board of Directors

Elected at NSEA Delegate Assembly

Candidates seeking these offices must declare their candidacy by Tuesday, Feb. 15, in writing to the NSEA Executive Director, trish.guinan@nsea.org. Alternatively, candidates may mail their declaration to NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508. Candidates are responsible for reviewing the candidate policy guidelines found at: www.nsea.org/delegateassembly

NSEA Board of Directors, 3-year terms

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 6

Elected during statewide online elections

Members in each of NSEA's six governance districts will elect representatives to serve on NSEA's statewide Board of Directors.

The NSEA Board of Directors meets at least seven times each year, and as needed. The board carries out the Association's mission as directed by members at the April Delegate Assembly.

There is one open seat each from the Tri-Valley, Panhandle and Elkhorn districts, and two seats each from the Capitol and Metro. There are no vacancies in the Sandhills district (*see map*).

District Officers, 1-, 2- and 3-year terms

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 6

Elected during statewide online elections

Each of NSEA's six governance districts includes a set of officers and executive committee members. Officers are elected by members in that district. The term of office is determined by the Bylaws in each district. Members will fill these vacancies:

- **Capitol District:** president and two seats on the executive committee.
- **Elkhorn District:** treasurer, secretary and four seats on the executive committee.
- **Metro District:** president, vice president and three seats on the executive committee (subdistrict seats 3, 6 and 9).
- **Panhandle District:** treasurer, secretary and four seats on the executive committee (Areas 3, 5, 6 and 7).
- **Sandhills District:** treasurer, secretary and two seats on the executive committee.
- **Tri-Valley District:** vice president and two seats on the executive committee (one each from the East and Central subdistricts).

FILE FOR OFFICE

Jan. 1 - Feb. 6, members file for state and district offices to be elected during Feb. 18-March 13 voting.

VOTING

Voting for district officers, NSEA board, RA At-Large & Cluster Delegates will take place **Feb. 18 - March 13**.

DA CLUSTER DELEGATES

Filing for NSEA Delegate Assembly Cluster Delegates runs **Feb. 22 - March 6**.

NEA DIRECTOR & ESP AT-LARGE SEAT

Elected at Delegate Assembly. Candidate's campaign materials for delegates are due by **March 8**.

VOTING

Locals with fewer than 26 members will vote for NSEA Delegate Assembly Cluster delegates **March 14 - 22**.

LOCAL NSEA DELEGATES

Locals of 26+ members will elect delegates by secret ballot and report verified delegates by **March 24**.

NSEA-RETIRED

Election of NSEA-Retired officers, and delegates to both DA and RA will be by mail-in ballot in **March**.

ASPIRING EDUCATORS

Aspiring Educators members will vote for their NSEA Delegate Assembly delegates at the AE Delegate Assembly on **March 26**.

NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

April 22 - 23
Election of NEA Director and Education Support Professional seat on the NSEA Board, plus Bylaws and 2022-23 Association dues.

REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

National Education Association Representative Assembly **July 2 - 6, 2022**

NEA RA At-Large District Cluster Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 6

Elected during statewide online elections

The 2022 NEA RA will be held July 2-6, 2022.

To elect members to serve as voting delegates to the National Education Association's annual Representative Assembly business meeting, **local associations with fewer than 76 members** are grouped in clusters per district. For instance, all local associations in Elkhorn District with fewer than 76 members will vote on a common set of candidates to serve as delegates to RA.

Cluster delegates fund their own RA costs. The exact number of openings will be set after the membership count for 2021-22 is finalized in mid-January, but there are approximately:

- **Capitol District:** 10 openings
- **Elkhorn District:** 11 openings
- **Metro District:** 1 opening
- **Panhandle District:** 5 openings
- **Sandhills District:** 6 openings
- **Tri-Valley District:** 9 openings

Aspiring Educators (formerly Student Education Association of Nebraska) Delegate to NEA RA: 1-year term

Members of Aspiring Educators will elect delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly at a virtual AE Delegate Assembly on Saturday, March 26. They also will elect region representatives, secretary, president elect and an underclass representative. Watch for the Aspiring Educators newsletter for details on how to attend.

Aspiring Educator members will then elect delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in statewide balloting following the March 26 AE Delegate Assembly.

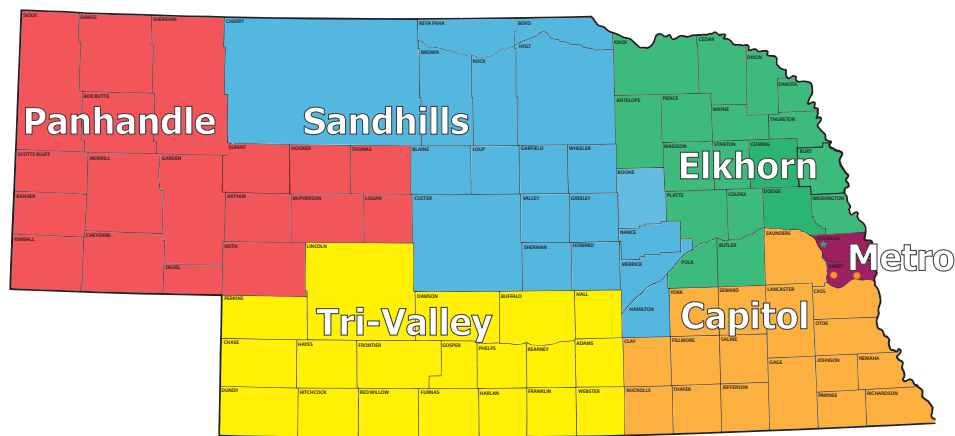
NEA RA At-Large Statewide Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 6

Elected during statewide online elections

Delegates from **local associations with more than 76 members** must be elected by secret ballot, according to federal statute.

Any active NSEA member is eligible to place his or her name on the statewide, at-large delegate ballot for NEA



In order to comply with NEA guidelines, the Gretna Education Association and Springfield/Platteview Education Association will be included in Capitol District, and Metro Community College Education Association is included in Elkhorn District.

Representative Assembly by filing at nsea.org. Members elected as statewide delegates will be reimbursed for transportation, lodging and meal expenses. Depending on the final mid-January membership count, three to five delegate slots will be available to at-large candidates.

NSEA-Retired Officers; Delegates to NSEA Delegate Assembly and NEA RA (1-year terms)

Deadline to File: Sunday, Feb. 6

Elected during mail-in ballots in March

Members of NSEA-Retired will use mail-in ballots in March to elect the following positions:

Retired Board of Directors

- **Treasurer** (3-year term)
- **Secretary** (3-year term)
- **Metro District** (3-year term)
- **Panhandle District** (3-year term)
- **Tri-Valley District** (3-year term)

Delegate Assembly

- **Capitol District:** 4 delegates
- **Elkhorn District:** 3 delegates
- **Metro District:** 5 delegates
- **Panhandle District:** 1 delegate
- **Sandhills District:** 1 delegate
- **Tri-Valley District:** 3 delegates
- **At Large:** 2 delegates

Representative Assembly

- **Metro and Capitol Districts:** 1 delegate
- **Other Districts and Out of State:** 1 delegate
- **At Large:** 3 delegates

NSEA Delegate Assembly At-Large District Cluster Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Sunday, March 6

Elected during online election by cluster locals per district, March 14-23

To elect voting delegates to NSEA's annual Delegate Assembly business meeting, **local associations with fewer than 26 members** are grouped in "clusters" in each of NSEA's six governance districts. For instance, all local associations in NSEA's Capitol District with fewer than 26 members will vote on a common set of candidates for delegates to DA.

The exact number of openings will be set after the membership count for 2020-21 is finalized in mid-January. There are approximately:

- **Capitol District:** 8 openings
- **Elkhorn District:** 10 openings
- **Metro District:** 1 opening
- **Panhandle District:** 6 openings
- **Sandhills District:** 7 openings
- **Tri-Valley District:** 12 openings

NSEA Delegate Assembly Local Delegates: 1-year term

Deadline to File: Set by each

Local Association

Secret ballot elections held at the local association level, with delegate names reported to NSEA by March 24

Delegates from **local associations with 26 or more members must be elected by secret ballot**. Presidents from those associations will be notified of the number of delegate representatives they may elect, based on their local association membership.

Survey shows COVID's devastating effect on students, school staff

Nearly 84% of educators experiencing increase in student mental health concerns

Staff shortages, mental health concerns and pandemic-induced stress are pushing students and educators to the breaking point, according to a survey of educators conducted by the Nebraska State Education Association. More than 3,100 NSEA members responded to the November survey.

"The social, emotional and academic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic is growing worse by the day," said NSEA President Jenni Benson. "Staff shortages and quarantines have stretched teachers thin to the breaking point. In addition to their own classes, teachers are covering classes for teachers who are ill or quarantining. They are losing their plan time, their time for one-on-one instruction with students, time to collaborate with their colleagues, and time to talk with parents. And this is the second year of these challenges – everything is compounded. Our survey results show that the situation is worse this school year than it was last year."

A shortage of substitute teachers and educational support professionals, such as paraeducators, bus drivers, custodians and food service employees, is making it difficult for schools to provide individualized instruction, keep students fed or even get them to school.

Behavior linked to mental health

"Educators are also reporting a significant increase in student behavior issues, and teachers are worried about their students: 84% of survey respondents said they have experienced an increase in student mental health concerns. Everyone is on edge. Our students and educators need help and support, and they need it now," Benson said.

The increased student behavior issues are, in part, a reflection of the stress the pandemic has put on children, upending their education, their schedules and their social lives. On top of the staff shortages leading to class coverage demands, the behavior challenges are exhausting our teachers and underscore the need for support services for both students and teachers.

Earlier this week, the U.S. Surgeon General said the increase in mental

health challenges in children, adolescents and young adults are "real and they are widespread. But most importantly, they are treatable, and often preventable."

Benson also noted that Children's Hospital in Omaha has reported that emergency room admissions for serious mental health issues for children are up 33%.

“

Some of the federal COVID relief funds for Nebraska must be used to provide more mental and behavioral health resources for students, educators and schools. We need 24/7 access to mental health services.

”

"Some of the federal COVID relief funds for Nebraska must be used to provide more mental and behavioral health resources for students, educators and schools," Benson said. "We need 24/7 access to mental health services statewide – be that telehealth, 800 numbers, etc."

"For years, NSEA has been advocating for more mental health supports for students, for smaller class sizes to allow for more one-on-one instruction that will lead to higher student achievement and fewer discipline problems, and for better salaries for school employees," Benson said. "We are about out of time."

Teaching no longer attractive career choice

"Our students and teachers are suffering. We are losing teachers because they do not feel supported or respected. And young people are not choosing education as a profession because our state has not made it attractive enough. Frankly, the sky is falling."

NSEA has asked lawmakers to use some of the federal COVID relief funds to provide school employees with stipends for their extra work. It is also pushing for the elimination of the Praxis

CORE exam, an expensive and obsolete test that prevents too many potential educators from entering the education profession.

Too many assessments

"Let us teach. We are spending too much time testing," said one survey respondent.

Benson said a number of respondents shared concerns about the number of academic assessments required for students.

"Parents and teachers alike have known for some time that we need our educators to spend more time teaching and less time testing," Benson said. "That is even more true today, given the learning loss caused by the pandemic. Educators are working harder than ever to help their students with unfinished learning and with mental health concerns."

"Members have shared heartbreaking stories about too many mandated tests. I've heard about kindergarteners shaking and in tears as they are being forced to take tests on Chromebook computers. It's outrageous, it's wrong, and it's unnecessary. The fact is that teachers are assessing their students' learning constantly."

Working conditions are learning conditions

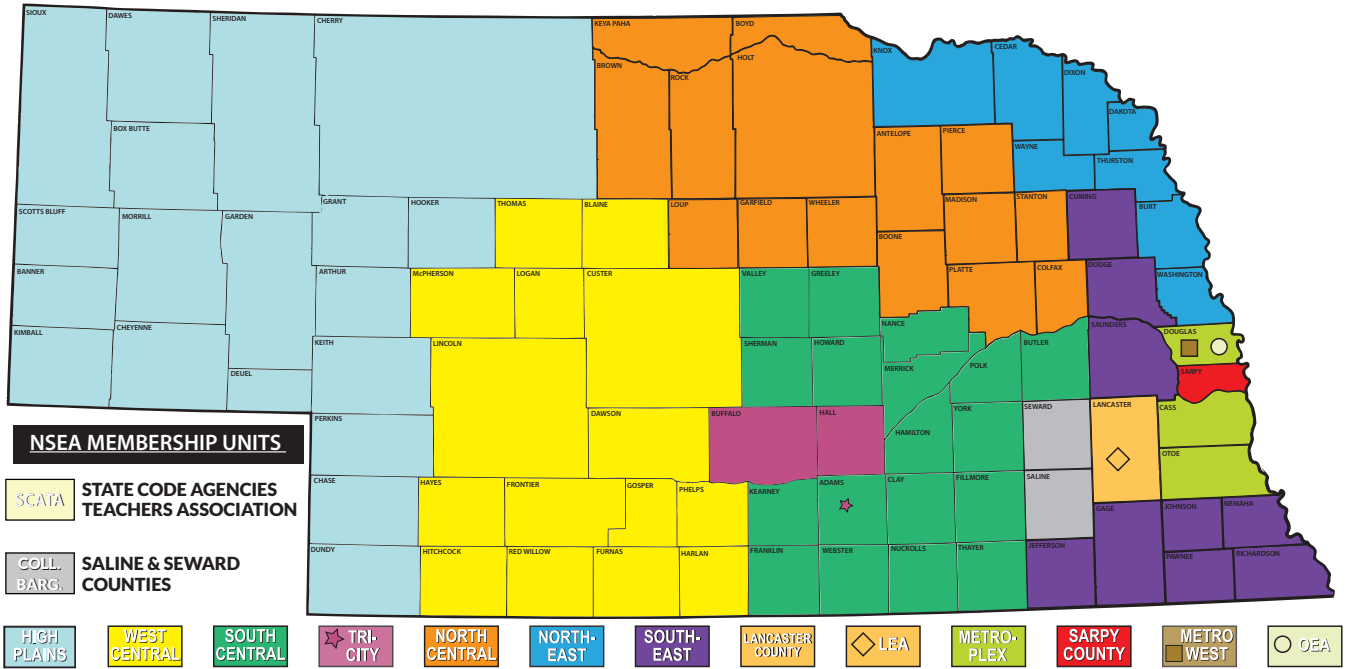
Benson said it is important to remember that educators themselves have gone through the trauma of the pandemic. They are working as hard as they can while also being asked to provide emotional support for kids, for their families and for each other.

A teacher's working conditions are a student's learning conditions.

"We are in this together – our communities and our entire state," Benson said. "We need to work together to support our schools, our teachers and our students. Children are 24% of our population, but they are 100% of our future. Children are our most important investment."

Survey says: The chart at right shows key survey findings and pre-K-12 educators' top five concerns by region. See Higher Education survey results on page 14.

NSEA NOVEMBER 2021 MEMBER SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

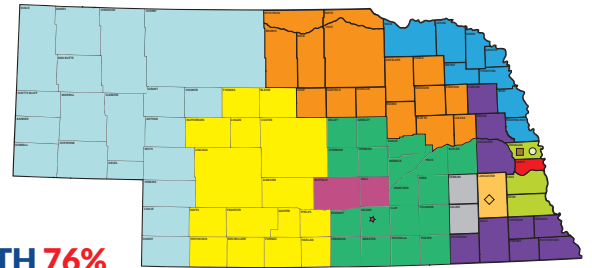


	LINCOLN	OMAHA	METRO WEST	METROPLEX	HIGH PLAINS	NORTH CENTRAL	NORTHEAST	SARPY	TRI-CITY	WEST CENTRAL	SOUTHEAST	SOUTH CENTRAL	COLL. BARG.	SCATA	STATEWIDE
MORE STRESSED	67%	76%	62%	65%	51%	52%	61%	68%	60%	50%	56%	45%	71%	54%	64%
SUBSTITUTE TEACHER SHORTAGE	99%	99%	98%	98%	95%	95%	94%	98%	97%	97%	98%	96%	91%	58%	97%
COVERING OTHERS' CLASSES	79%	76%	61%	77%	73%	75%	78%	69%	76%	66%	72%	79%	72%	85%	74%
INCREASED CONCERN FOR STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH	92%	87%	90%	83%	75%	74%	76%	88%	82%	78%	79%	75%	84%	69%	84%
NOT ENOUGH PLAN TIME	36%	71%	34%	35%	51%	42%	59%	38%	42%	53%	42%	58%	42%	83%	60%

NSEA NOVEMBER 2021 MEMBER SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

HIGHER ED RESULTS (STATEWIDE)

- **WORKING MORE HOURS 41%**
- **MORE STRESS 60%**
- **EMPLOYEE SHORTAGE 58%**
- **INCREASED CONCERN FOR STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH 76%**
- **PERSONAL INCREASE IN (EMPLOYEE) MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS 47%**



WHAT IS SOMETHING GOOD OR HELPFUL THAT YOUR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY IS CURRENTLY DOING OR COULD DO TO HELP YOU?

"Fill the vacant positions more quickly. The process now is too slow and creates a lot of stress and extra work for employees."

"Stop pretending that the pandemic has just passed over our campus. Only minimal attempts have been made to support vaccinations for faculty, staff and students."

"Have a stronger policy to keep faculty safe against violent students that includes expelling students for such behaviors."

"We get information all the time about how to direct students to resources for health, mental health, and insecurities. Faculty gets emails about 'mindfulness' and 'stress reduction breathing.'"

"Not mandating the vaccine. I feel a mandate would cause a further decline in employee morale and loss of quality employees."

"Protect us. We went back without masks required. Despite being vaccinated and wearing a mask everywhere I went, I caught COVID. Now it's lingering. How am I supposed to do my job this way?"

"Realize the workload I have and just say, 'Thank you. You are doing a tremendous job.'"

"I appreciate that my college/university is permitting creativity in addressing COVID-related issues and providing extra computer resources to me and to students."

"I'm glad we no longer have to wear masks."

We see you.

You're amazing.



It's OK to ask for help.

Mental health resources for educators and students

Call 911 if you or someone you know is in immediate danger, or go to the nearest emergency room.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800-273-TALK (8255).

En Español: 888-628-9454

For hearing and speech impaired with TTY equipment: 800-799-4889
suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat

Nebraska Family Helpline
1-888-866-8660

Crisis Text Line
Text HELLO to 741741

REACH Clinic at UNMC
402-559-6408
Telehealth services for children & adolescents

Disaster Distress Helpline
Call or text 1-800-985-5990

National Child Abuse Hotline
800-422-4453

National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-7233

Sanvello Mental Health Program
neamb.com/mentalhealth
Available to all NSEA/NEA members

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
800-656-4673

The Trevor Project
866-488-7386

Trans Lifeline
877-565-8860 Canada: 877-330-6366

Veterans Crisis Line
800-273-8255, press 1 or text to 838255
veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat

For non-emergency resources from the National Institute of Mental Health, go to www.nimh.nih.gov.

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- Education Community and Culture

Master of Education in Educational Leadership

Tools of the trade for building-level leadership.

- Gain unique insights from working school administrators.
- Work hands-on with other learners to hone your leadership skills.
- Get the certification you need to work as a principal or assistant.

Education Specialist - Advanced Degree

Essential learning for district-level leadership.

- Bring out your inner leader through values and integrity.
- Collaborate and learn the full breadth of skills needed to take the lead for teachers and students alike.
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Public Employees Retirement Board meetings open

Meeting schedule released for 2022

The Public Employees Retirement Board was created in 1971 to administer Nebraska retirement plans for school employees, state employees, judges and the State Patrol.

The board consists of eight members appointed by the governor for five-year terms. Six members are participants in

the retirement systems administered by the PERB. Two are at-large (public) members and are not employees of the State of Nebraska or any of its political subdivisions. The State Investment Officer is also a member of the PERB in a non-voting, ex-officio capacity.

The state auditor audits state retirement systems each year and makes an annual report to the Legislature. The board also annually reports on the actuarial condition of state retirement

systems.

Board meetings are open to the public. The board meets at 1526 K Street in Lincoln at 9:30 a.m. either the third or fourth Monday of the month.

Meeting dates in 2022 are Jan. 24, Feb. 28, March 21, April 18, May 16, June 27, July 18, Aug. 15, Sept. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 21 and Dec. 19.

Additional information, including agendas and minutes from past meetings, may be found at npers.ne.gov.

Retirement seminars map out next steps

Retirement for an educator often seems far away.

Is it time to evaluate your decision about leaving your career in education? How do you prepare for retirement and what do you need to know?

The NSEA Retirement Seminar Team is here to support your transition to retirement by explaining the NPERS retirement plan.

For 2021-2022, virtual retirement presentations are pre-set on the second Monday in odd months and the second Tuesday in even months. All virtual presentations will begin at 7:30 p.m. CT.

Local leaders and governance districts also may request to host an in-person seminar. Though seminars are offered free of charge, NSEA membership and pre-registration are required for all seminars.

To register for a seminar or to request consideration for your local to host an in-person presentation, go to nsea.org/retirement.

Seminar Dates

Choose any of the following dates. All sessions start at 7:30 p.m. CST and last one hour.

Mondays: Jan. 10, March 14

Tuesdays: Feb. 15, April 12

Ventura appointed as advisor to Commission on Civil Rights

Edward Ventura Jr., who represents the Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee on the NSEA Board of Directors, has been appointed to serve a four-year term on the Nebraska State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Ventura, a teacher-librarian in Omaha, is active with EMAC and has advocated for eliminating racist

school mascot names.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was established as an independent, bipartisan, fact-finding federal agency to inform the development of national civil rights policy and enhance enforcement of federal civil rights laws. The Commission is comprised of eight commissioners and national and regional staff in addition to State Advisory Committees.

These committees serve as the Commission's eyes and ears on the ground across the country, investigating and researching civil rights issues specific to their jurisdiction.



Ventura



BlueCross BlueShield
Nebraska

KEEP YOUR MENTAL HEALTH TOP OF MIND

Are you feeling stressed, overwhelmed or exhausted? You aren't alone. Many adults struggle with their emotional or mental health.

FIND CARE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

It's okay to ask for help. We're here for you.

Visit Nebraskablue.com/EHAPOP to connect with a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska nurse.



Health benefits for EHA are provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

Study links high union levels with greater economic, personal and democratic well-being

A new report from the Economic Policy Institute documents the correlation between higher levels of unionization and a range of economic, personal and democratic well-being measures.

The report, released Dec. 15, found that in the same way unions give workers a voice at work, with a direct impact on wages and working conditions, unions also give workers a voice in shaping their communities.

Where workers have this power, states have more equitable economic structures, social structures and demographics.

The 17 U.S. states with the highest union densities have state minimum wages that are on average 19% higher than the national average and 40% higher than those in low-union-density states. They also have median annual incomes \$6,000 higher than the national average and have higher-than-average unemployment insurance reciprocity rates, meaning a higher share of those who are unemployed actually receive unemployment insurance.

“Unions promote economic equality and build worker power, helping workers to win increases in pay, better benefits and safer working conditions. But the benefits of unions extend far beyond the workplace. The data suggest that unions also give workers a voice in shaping their communities and political representation,” said Asha Banerjee, economic analyst at EPI and co-author of the report.

The report finds that states with the highest union densities have an uninsured (without health insurance) population 4.5 percentage points lower, on average, than that of low-union-density states. These states also all elected to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act and are more likely to have passed paid sick and family and medical leave laws than states with lower union densities.

According to the report, the 17 highest-union-density states have passed significantly fewer restrictive

Share of workers represented by a union ranges from 3.2% in South Carolina to 24.7% in New York

Union density of the 50 U.S. states plus D.C., in descending order and grouped into high-, medium-, and low-union-density states

High union density		Medium union density		Low union density	
NY	24.7%	PA	13.3%	WY	7.7%
HI	23.0%	VT	12.6%	MS	7.5%
AK	19.9%	MD	12.2%	OK	7.3%
WA	19.5%	WV	12.1%	FL	7.3%
CT	17.3%	KY	11.8%	ND	6.9%
RI	17.3%	NH	11.7%	SD	6.8%
NJ	16.8%	DC	11.2%	ID	6.3%
CA	16.7%	DE	11.2%	TN	6.2%
MI	15.8%	MO	10.7%	AZ	6.1%
OR	15.6%	CO	10.6%	VA	5.9%
NV	15.5%	IN	10.3%	LA	5.8%
IL	15.3%	KS	10.3%	AR	5.8%
MN	15.2%	AL	9.6%	UT	5.6%
ME	13.9%	IA	9.6%	TX	5.5%
OH	13.7%	WI	9.0%	GA	5.1%
MA	13.6%	NE	8.8%	NC	3.9%
MT	13.5%	NM	8.3%	SC	3.2%

Notes: Union density is defined as the share of workers in the state who are represented by a union, including union members and other workers who are covered by a union contract, based on the variable “union” from EPI extracts of CPS-ORG microdata.

Source: EPI analysis of 2015–2019 Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group (CPS-ORG) microdata for all workers ages 16 and older.

Economic Policy Institute

voting laws than in the middle 17 states and the 17 lowest-union-density states (these totals include the District of Columbia). Over 70% of low-union-density states passed at least one voter suppression law between 2011 and 2019.

“Through long-standing advocacy and work to protect the right to vote, unions have linked voting rights to workers’ rights,” said Margaret Poydock, policy analyst and government affairs specialist at EPI and co-author of the report. “Unions play a key role in mobilizing workers to vote, helping

to determine which political leaders are elected and what occupational backgrounds they come from.”

The authors explain that the relationship between high union density and higher household incomes, access to health care and paid leave, and fewer voting restrictions highlights the importance of protecting the right of workers to organize, including by passing the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act.

Read the full report at www.epi.org/publication/unions-and-well-being.

Applications open for Belz, Lynch, Krause Grant

Dollars awarded in 2022 will promote local association, staff growth

Good teachers are always looking to improve their skill set, and the NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz, Lynch, Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2022 application deadline is Monday, Feb. 28.

Grants are awarded for projects related to improving a local association, development of instructional materials or for staff development for members of a local association. Eligible recipients 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 that need and relate to professional growth goals;
- project description;
- timeline;
- a budget statement; and
- methods of evaluating project success.

Applications must be submitted online by 11:59 p.m. CST on Feb. 28. Recipients will be notified in March.

A letter describing and evaluating the project must be submitted by the recipient

to NSEA's 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 to 1984; and Helen Krause, NSEA president in 1966 and the first Nebraskan to serve on NEA's Executive Committee.

Further details and the application form may be found at www.nsea.org/BLK. For questions, contact Brandon Langlois at 1-800-742-0047 or email brandon.langlois@nsea.org.



Belz



Lynch



Krause

NSEA opportunities abound – Hear about them Feb. 3!

One perk of your NSEA membership is access to exclusive webinars tailored to the education profession.

A full slate of sessions is set for 2022. In January and February, learn about leadership roles available within the association, how to navigate the complicated world of student loans and how to incorporate STEM concepts into volunteer projects.

Go to nsea.org/webinars for a complete list of sessions and to register.

NSEA members only

■ **Budgeting:** Thursday, Jan. 13, 6:30 p.m. Learn pre-retirement budgeting tips from NEA Member Benefits' Susan Estes.

■ **Financial Planning:** Thursday, Jan. 13, 7:30 p.m. Review financial concepts that can affect you during early, middle and late career stages with Security Benefit.

■ **NSEA Opportunities 101:** Thursday, Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m. Join NSEA officers to learn about leadership opportunities within the association.

■ **Student Loan Forgiveness:** Tuesday, Feb. 8, 5:30 p.m. Learn about tools available to members for reducing or managing student loan debt.

■ **Student Debt Navigator:** Tuesday, Feb. 8, 6:30 p.m. Learn to use the NEA Debt Navigator, which can find forgiveness or cancellation programs for which you may qualify.

■ **Budgeting:** Tuesday, Feb. 8, 7:30 p.m. Learn budgeting tips from NEA Member Benefits' Susan Estes.

■ **Budgeting:** Thursday, Feb. 10, 6:30 p.m. Learn pre-retirement budgeting tips from NEA Member Benefits' Susan Estes.

■ **Financial Planning:** Thursday, Feb. 10, 7:30 p.m.

Review financial concepts that can affect you during early, middle and late career stages with Security Benefit.

All school employees

■ **STEM and Service Learning:** Thursday, Jan. 20, 7:30 p.m. Award-winning educator Shawn Graham presents ideas on how to incorporate science, technology, engineering and math in service projects in your community.

■ **Member Benefits Overview:** Tuesday, Jan. 25, 7:30 p.m. Learn the value of association membership with NEA Member Benefits' Susan Estes.

■ **Security Benefits:** Thursday, Jan. 27, 7:30 p.m. Hear from Joe Flynn of Security Benefit as he shares financial planning resources.

■ **The Power of Executive Functioning Skills:** Tuesday, Feb. 1, 7:30 p.m. Learn from educator Becky Korinek about the mental processes that can help you achieve your goals.

■ **Member Benefits Overview:** Tuesday, Feb. 15, 7:30 p.m. Learn the value of association membership with NEA Member Benefits' Susan Estes.

■ **Security Benefits:** Thursday, Feb. 17, 7:30 p.m. Hear from Joe Flynn of Security Benefit as he shares financial planning resources.

Present or be a mentor

NSEA is looking for members who would like to share their ideas and skills. If interested in leading a webinar, contact Michelle Raphael at michelle.raaphael@nsea.org.

NSEA is always seeking mentors and mentees in the classroom. For more information, visit www.nsea.org/mentor.

Have a plan for every procedure

Classroom management should be high on every educator's list of what to do well. A well-functioning classroom can alleviate other stressors before they even become issues.

A detailed classroom management plan will outline your every move from the first day of school until the last bell rings for summer break. Harry and Rosemary Wong, authors of "The First Days of School" and "THE Classroom Management Book," weigh in on some of the best classroom management strategies.

"Just as a pilot has a flight plan and a coach has a game plan, effective teachers have a classroom management plan that students learn and understand," say the Wongs.

This plan is more than just a list of teaching strategies. It's a way of operating in the classroom that allows teachers to be proactive rather than reactive. Do it right, they say, and you never have to waste time repeating what students should be doing or reprimanding them for misbehaving.

Establish ground rules

Procedures govern everything we do in life from boarding a plane to ordering food. Without procedures, these otherwise orderly activities would create mayhem. Students require similar constructs. They learn best when they know what to expect.

In an observational study by Douglas Brooks, teachers who began the first day of school by diving right into the subject matter spent the school year reacting to students' behavior. Those who started by explaining to students how the classroom was organized had a more enjoyable experience.

To that end, the Wongs recommend starting the first day of school with a script, or better yet, a PowerPoint presentation, that explains procedures, walks students through their responsibilities and ensures every student understands how to be successful. In fact, according to the Wongs, successful teachers have procedures for everything from selecting seats to exiting the classroom at the end of the day.

Consistency is key

Students thrive in a safe classroom environment that is predictable, reliable and consistent.



Plan ahead: Sharing your expectations with students ahead of time is one way to get them to more readily comply. When kids understand what will happen next – and when routines are consistent – they can adapt more easily, making it easier for them to learn and for you to teach.

"One of the most important gifts we can give our students is to be consistent," say the Wongs. "Students need to feel that someone is responsible for their environment—someone who not only sets limits, but maintains them."

Take Starbucks, for example. If you're a regular customer, you can go into any Starbucks in the world and you know what to do. The logo calls you to the door, the environment is familiar (even if you've never visited a particular location) and the baristas all speak the same language. Plus, the trusty menu is always readily visible from the back wall.

Students need a similar roadmap for navigating your classroom. The best path: Post an agenda on the board before students arrive so they know what's going to happen during the day. A consistent list of daily activities helps students stay on task—and it facilitates transitional periods to boot.

While the agenda may change from day to day, the classroom procedures and

transitions remain the same. It's an ideal construct for learning—and retaining—new information since kids don't have to waste precious brainpower wondering what's next. Instead they can focus their attention on their course work.

Be positive!

Just saying, "hello," "welcome," or "I'm glad you're here," can have a dramatic affect on a child's learning. Research shows simply greeting students can raise their level of engagement in your class by a whopping 32%!

Take that morning greeting and build on it with positive reinforcement. When students meet your expectations, call attention to their actions with specific praise. It's not enough to say "Good job, Nicole," or "Nice work, Johnny." Identify the specific behavior you want to encourage. The bonus: Students who weren't paying attention have another opportunity to learn what's expected of them.



NSEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY • APRIL 2022

Member-driven, member-focused: NSEA is here for you every day



**Executive
Director
Trish Guinan**

“

*I am so proud of
the resilience our
members have
had in fighting
through this
and continuing
to educate
our children.
It has been a
monumental job
and you have
stepped up to
the challenge.*

”

Supporting our educators is what NSEA is all about. Our members have remained in the driver's seat from our very first meeting in 1867 until today, and they will continue to drive our association. It is my job to support you in this educational journey.

Though I have worked in the education field for 45 years, I am grateful now to be serving our public school educators as the new executive director of NSEA.

I know what it's like to be in the trenches of the classroom. I taught secondary math in Nebraska school districts for 19 ½ years, moving from Falls City to Spencer, then to Bergan Catholic School in Fremont, where I also coached volleyball and basketball, and eventually to Fremont Public Schools, where I was also the staff development coordinator. I was an adjunct instructor in higher education for Metro Community College and Wayne State College.

In my time as an educator, I served as a local association building representative, vice president, president and negotiator. I was the Metro District vice president and attended the NSEA New Leader Institute, NSEA Delegate Assembly and NEA Representative Assembly.

While I taught in Spencer, five of the 25 teachers received Reduction in Force notices. That really engaged all of us with the association. When I was at Fremont, 21 teachers were issued Reduction in Force notices. That was reason enough for me to become even more involved in standing united with my fellow educators. Through hearings involving the NSEA, all but four of those Fremont teachers were hired back. That really spurred me on, and I have kept fighting for NSEA members ever since.

I stopped teaching in 1996 and took a job as a UniServ Director, what we now call Organizational Specialists, at NSEA. I worked

with 48 local associations in the northeast part of the state. I learned that was the lowest paid part of the state, and five of those associations filed wage cases with the Commission of Industrial Relations. That encouraged me even more.

After three years as an OS, I became the director of member rights for NSEA, helping members through Reduction in Force notices, terminations, grievances – all sorts of issues.

Over the next 10 years, the position evolved into the director of advocacy role, where I was heavily involved in bargaining and negotiations on behalf of our members.

These past two years have been the most difficult in modern education. What is happening in schools right now is not pretty, and it's not something we've ever experienced before on this level. I am so proud of the resilience our members have had in fighting through this and continuing to educate our children. It has been a monumental job, and you have stepped up to the challenge.

There will always be work to be done – in the classroom, outside of the classroom, and in this association. I am excited about finding new ways to be effective and efficient while continuing to be a support for our educators. NSEA is here for you.

The power of this organization lies with the members who are in the trenches. Even though as a member you might not think you'll ever need the NSEA, that doesn't mean there's not something you can do to help your colleagues out – whether that's fighting for advancement on the salary schedule or mentoring new teachers at the start of their careers.

The NSEA is here for you on your worst days, and we will celebrate with you on your best days. Here's to a new year as we continue to move the mission of public education forward – together.

Governance Day planned for Feb. 15

The 2022 NSEA-Retired's Governance/Lobby Day will be held virtually, with an in-person component, on Tuesday, Feb. 15.

The day is a chance for NSEA-Retired members to learn about issues affecting public education and advocate for change.

The Zoom meeting will run from 10 a.m. to noon (members may sign on after 9:30 a.m.).

Retired President Dr. De Tonack and Jason Hayes, NSEA Director of Public Policy and Legislative Research, will give a legislative update and overview of procedures for visiting with senators.

Sen. Lynne Walz, chair of the legislature's Education Committee, will be the guest speaker, with Q&A time to follow.

Members within driving distance are then encouraged to meet in the Capitol Rotunda at 1:30 p.m. (1445 K St., Lincoln) to visit with and lobby senators.

Participants also are encouraged to write their senators.

Register for the event online at nsea.org/retired. Click "Calendar, Events & Registrations." The deadline to register is Monday, Feb. 7. The Zoom link will be provided to registered participants.

For questions or more details, contact De Tonack at dtonack@neb.rr.com or (402) 525-4264.

BEA-R gives to families

Using a \$1,000 grant from NSEA-Retired, the Bellevue Education Association-Retired has taken on a project to help Bellevue students and families in need.

The chapter purchased 200 pillows, 20 throw blankets and fabric to create pillowcases. Members also donated fabric for the project.

The bedding was given to Bellevue Together, a nonprofit started in 2017 to help meet the needs of Bellevue Public School students and their families.

Those in need are confidentially identified by Bellevue Public School counselors and social workers.

Needs are communicated to Bellevue Together, which makes arrangements for donations, pick up and delivery.

The organization also has a need for winter gloves and hats



Giving comfort: Bill Gaus (right) presents 200 pillows and 20 blankets to Suzanne Quinn and members of the Bellevue Together board. Gaus is president of the Bellevue Education Association-Retired chapter.



to distribute to those who need them. For more information or to make a donation, visit the website at bellevuetogether.com.

NSEA-Retired elections coming with new year

Consider running for one of the numerous opportunities to assume a leadership role in NSEA-Retired. Candidate filing for the upcoming NSEA-Retired elections will be available online by Jan. 6 at nsea.org/retired under Elections. The filing deadline is Feb. 6.

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

All of these positions take office Aug. 15, 2022.

Probable numbers for NSEA Delegate Assembly will be

four delegates from the Capitol District, five from Metro, three from Tri-Valley, three from Elkhorn, one from Panhandle, one from Sandhills and two at large.

NEA Representative Assembly delegates will include one from the Metro and Capitol districts combined, one from the other four districts and out-of-state combined, and three at large. NSEA-Retired President Dr. De Tonack serves as a delegate to both DA and RA by virtue of the office.

Complete details on how to file for these elections will be posted in January on the NSEA-Retired website. RA delegates and board positions require a 50-word candidate bio.

Hot deals and discounts from NEAMB

The NEA Discount Marketplace, powered by Rakuten, enables members to earn cash back when they shop and save on brand-name merchandise from more than 2,500 top retailers and online stores. Check out the following member-exclusive deals in January, and search for your favorite retailers at neamb.com/marketplace:

Samsung

Discover the latest in electronic and smart appliance technology with Samsung. Find the next big thing – from smartphones and tablets to laptops, TVs, home appliances and more.

Uber Eats

Take a break from your busy schedule and order in! Read menus, reviews and ratings, order and pay using the app on your Apple or Android phone or through your web browser.

Gaiam

Bring your yoga and meditation practice to a whole new level with high-quality gear, instructional guides and

apparel from Gaiam. Their Yoga Studio App offers HD video classes for beginner through advanced yogis.

Ollie

While you're making your New Year's wellness resolutions, make some for your dog, too. Ollie customizes nutritious meals based on your "best friend's" breed, age, weight, allergies and other criteria.

Hello Fresh

Get cooking in 2022 with chef-inspired meals you prepare yourself. Choose your dietary preference and how many meals and days per week. Everything you need is delivered right to your door.

NEA Discount Tickets

Resolve to get out more in 2022 with special deals on tickets to theme parks, attractions, shows, sports, ski packages and more adventures nationwide with the new NEA Discount Tickets Program. Find your tickets now at www.neamb.com/tickets.

Costco offers savings on post-holiday needs

Costco's got everything you need to make the holiday season bright – plus, recover from it! Check out their deals on winter apparel, appliances, exercise equipment, books and games, fresh and frozen foods, organic offerings and more.

NEA members obtaining a new Costco membership will receive a \$30 Costco Shop Card. Join at www.neamb.com/costco. Sign into your account or register and click "Join Now" to purchase your Costco Membership Activation Certificate. You will receive an email confirmation that includes your certificate, which you can then redeem at any Costco location.

Save \$\$ with the NEA Auto Buying Program

Shop new and used vehicles from top brands online to find the right car for you. Plus, when you use the NEA Auto Buying Program, you get \$2,000 in post-sale benefits. Visit www.neamb.com/autobuying.

Healthy resolutions to actually keep

Think getting healthy requires a lifestyle makeover? Think again. Experts say small, simple changes are more likely to stick. Start with these:

1. Practice gratitude. Taking stock of the riches in your life can go a long way toward boosting wellness. Research confirms that counting your blessings rather than fixating on what's missing enhances wellbeing, especially if you put it in writing.

2. Break out the coloring books. Coloring activates the same pathways in the brain as meditation and has even been found to change heart rates and brain waves. "It isn't quite art therapy, but it mimics some of the best features of mindfulness practices," says Caroline Miller, MAPP, professional coach and author of "Creating Your Best Life: The Ultimate Life List Guide."

3. Delegate. Whether at home or in the classroom, asking for help is key to preserving sanity. The key, say experts, is to capitalize on people's strengths. Is your teacher's assistant a pro at organization? Have her file your students' homework. Does your daughter love to cook? Ask her to make dinner twice a week.

4. Go high tech. Whether your goal is to eat a healthful diet, stick to an exercise routine or get more sleep, a new crop of "apps" can help you achieve your objectives. Experts agree the accountability and visual progress report with health and fitness apps help motivate behavior change.

5. Create more rituals. Research shows rituals not only anchor you in the moment, providing comfort and stability during times of chaos, they also enhance your pleasure of positive experiences – even something as simple as eating chocolate. A 2013 study published in the Association for Psychological Science found that people who ritualized eating a chocolate bar rated the experience as more flavorful, valuable and worthy of savoring than those who chomped down sans fanfare.

6. Wear supportive shoes. Educators are on their feet nearly all day, which can cause foot, leg and back pain. Shoes that transfer weight toward the toe dramatically shift your gait and impact your balance. For extra cushioning, add insoles.

7. Breathe deeply. No matter where you are in your life or your workday, there's one powerful stress buster always at the ready: your breath. Diaphragmatic breathing – inhaling so deeply that your diaphragm moves downward, your lungs inflate fully and your belly expands – can short-circuit the physiological reaction to stress.

8. Laugh. Laughter, or even anticipating a laugh (by, say, waiting for a punch line), may make you happier and healthier. Researchers at Loma Linda University Medical Center found that joyous laughter can increase endorphins, reduce stress hormone levels and boost your immune system.

Learn more at neamb.com/family-and-wellness.

Speaking of Education

“Improving education requires that we collectively take responsibility for the welfare of the children in this society. We must recommit ourselves to the ideal of the common school and make good on our promise of quality education for all children. We can either bear the cost of quality education or pay the far greater price of our misplaced priorities.”

— **Dr. Phyllis Edmundson**,
former professor, Boise State
University College of Education

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

Children's Fund available for your students



Do you have a student who needs...

- a winter coat,
- a warm hat, gloves or scarf,
- new shoes,
- eyeglasses,
- a visit to the dentist,
- clean clothes without holes,
- a way to get to school, or
- something else?

The NSEA Children's Fund can help. The fund is a resource for teachers to obtain funding to purchase items students may need but can't afford.

To access the Children's Fund, call 1-800-742-0047 or go to nsea.org/childrensfund to learn more.

All requests are handled discreetly and confidentially. Recipients are never identified or disclosed.



Want to help?

Contributions to the Children's Fund are tax-deductible and may be made online at nsea.org/childrensfund or by mailing a check to the Nebraska State Education Association ATTN: Children's Fund, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508.

Have a student teacher? Sign them up for Aspiring Ed!

A semester of student teaching is a unique time for an educator, and it's the perfect time to surround oneself with support from other new and seasoned educators.

If you have a student teacher in your classroom this year, encourage them to become a member of the NSEA-Aspiring Educators. You may even set aside some time to walk them through the process and help them understand the myriad of benefits they'll receive as part of the Association.

Feeling especially generous? Pay their Aspiring Educators dues for the year!

Benefits of membership for Aspiring Educators include student loan forgiveness workshops, access to year-round professional development opportunities, big savings through the NEA Discount Marketplace, the \$1 million Educators Employment Liability insurance policy and much more.

First-year educators will also benefit from involvement in NewGEN,

NSEA's New Generation of Educators in Nebraska. The organization is comprised of early career educators in their first seven years of teaching who network and support each other through the challenges of a new teaching career.

For more information or to help a new member register, go to www.nsea.org/JoinNow, or contact the NSEA Membership Department by calling 1-800-742-0047 or emailing membership@nsea.org.