

THE

VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ November 2016

RECOVERY

WAS ONLY HALF THE BATTLE

NSEA LENDS SUPPORT IN LONG TERM LEAVE DISPUTE



VOTE NOV 8! *Recommended Candidates - p. 22*

- *After 150 Years, NSEA Returns to Brownville*
- *NSEA Supports CIR at Interim Hearing*

Celebrate American Education Week!

'Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility'

American Education Week — Nov. 14-18 — represents real opportunity and possibilities for America.

Our wonderful system of public schools in America give opportunity to every child, a chance at success unequalled anywhere else in the world. As the backbone of American education, public schools provide the possibilities that any one of those children might someday find a for cure cancer, reach the stars, or solve global warming.

Those possibilities alone make American Education Week worth celebrating. All Americans are encouraged to honor the public school system and the individuals — educators — who make a difference in ensuring that every child receives a quality education.

NSEA President Nancy Fulton urged members to consider organizing an observance of American Education Week.

"American Education Week is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate public education and the work of those of us in the teaching profession," said Fulton. "I encourage Association members to take the lead in the observance."

The National Education Association was a founder and sponsoring organization of American Education Week. With NEA's assistance, you can observe the week of celebration in your school and classroom. The theme this year is 'Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility.'

The NEA website provides members a wide variety of promotion-

al items to boost visibility and participation in American Education Week. A sample Parents Day letter, a letter to the media, sample radio public service announcements and sample newsletter announce-

ments — and more — are available on the website at:

nea.org/grants/19823.htm

American Education Week was born shortly after World War I. With 25 percent of the country's World War I draftees illiterate and 9 percent physically unfit, representatives of the NEA and the American Legion met to seek ways to generate public



support for education.

The conventions of both groups adopted resolutions for a national effort to raise awareness of the importance of education. In 1921, the NEA Representative Assembly in Des Moines called for designation of one week each year to celebrate education.

The first observance of American Education Week occurred in 1921, with the NEA and American Legion as the sponsors. A year later, the U.S. Office of Education joined as a sponsor, and the PTA followed in 1938.

This year the schedule looks like this:

- Monday, Nov. 14: Kickoff day.
- Tuesday, Nov. 15: Parents Day.
- Wednesday, Nov. 16: Education Support Professionals Day.
- Thursday, Nov. 17: Educator for a Day.
- Friday, Nov. 18: Substitute Educators Day.

'Plant the Seeds' for Reading at State Conference

The 2017 Nebraska State Reading Association's annual conference theme should grow interest: Plant the Seeds of Literacy.

The conference is billed as "Nebraska's premier conference for reading and language arts," and the Feb. 23-25 edition at Kearney features a stellar lineup.

On the conference schedule are Barry Lane, an internationally known author; children's book authors Mike Graf and Jerry Pallotta; literacy coach and author Lori Oczkus; and Pam Allyn, a literacy ad-

vocate, author and motivational speaker.

Keynoting the Saturday schedule is Dr. Kathleen Gallagher, who holds the Cille and Ron Williams Community Chair for Early Childhood Education at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

A Thursday banquet features Barry Lane's Literacy Cabaret. Breakout sessions are sprinkled through Friday and Saturday schedules. Find conference details, and register, at:

www.nereads.org

Cover Story:

When Linda Foxworthy's recovery from surgery took a turn for the worse it soon became clear she would need more than the anticipated six weeks to recover. With NSEA's aid, she was able to obtain an extra year of leave from her teaching job. For details, turn to

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NSEA
THE VOICE

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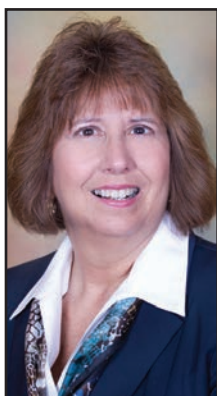
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We've Come a Long Way



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“

Think about
the collective
impact we might
have when we
become actively
involved in
helping
pro-education
candidates get
elected.

”

Last month – weeks before the Nov. 8 General Election – I enacted my right to vote as provided under the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

It's difficult to fathom that women have had the right to vote for less than a century. Ratified in 1920, the 19th Amendment unified and harmonized the hodgepodge of suffrage laws that had begun to take effect in jurisdictions here and there across the United States.

The Suffrage movement had been slowly gaining steam since before the Civil War, but it took more than seven decades for every woman in America to actually gain the right to vote. Several states had given limited voting rights to women in the late 1800s and early 1900s, but Nebraska was not among them. In fact, Nebraska was one of the last states west of the Mississippi River to grant women the right to vote, mostly because the suffrage debate became entangled with another issue of the time: prohibition.

The Power of Public Education

To show how far we've come in the last 100 years, I also voted early. That modern change in voting policies is quite convenient. Because of my travel and work schedule, it is sometimes difficult to be at my Wilber home in order to vote in person at my assigned Election Day polling place. I also voted early because, frankly, I am anxious for this election cycle to be over, especially the national presidential election.

Regardless of your voting method or preferred candidates, voting is an American value and a basic democratic right that should be protected, promoted and practiced by all Americans, particularly those with education expertise. It is critical that educators not only exercise their constitutional right to vote, but that they consider working for the election of lawmakers and policymakers who understand and value the great power of public education.

Trusted Messengers

Unfortunately, education rarely rises to

the top of election-year issues. It is up to us, as educators, to raise the discussion, to beat the public drum, about the need to invest in our children through public education. Our expertise and our life experiences can help guide the direction of education and our voices could and should drown out those that do not believe public education is worth our investments.

As a teacher and public school employee, each of us is a trusted messenger, in most cases more respected than just about any other profession. With that trust comes a responsibility for us to talk reasonably and in public about where candidates stand on education issues. I would urge you to have those conversations about the importance of voting – especially in state and local elections. I would also ask that you help others understand where candidates stand on public education.

Collective Impact

Inside this issue of *The Voice* you will find a listing of NSEA's recommended candidates. Your colleagues from each legislative and state board of education district have screened questionnaires filled out by candidates; interviewed the candidates; and have made recommendations based on that process. Your fellow educators volunteer their time to conduct these interviews, and they take that responsibility seriously.

The Unicameral and the State Board of Education are officially bi-partisan entities. Though party affiliation has never been a litmus test for NSEA's recommendation process, within these recommendations you will find a mix of Democrats and Republicans. Pure and simple, we care about each candidate's support for public education.

So when you go to the polls, be thankful for that vote. Think about how far we've come in such a relatively short time. And think about the collective impact we might have when we become actively involved in helping pro-education candidates get elected. And consider how the election of pro-education policymakers will, most importantly, assist our students.

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Marking History: It has been 150 years since NSEA was founded near this historical marker in Brownville. The NSEA Board of Directors — wearing t-shirts commemorating the event — returned to note the anniversary of that first meeting.

After 150 Years, a Return to Brownville

NSEA Board Commemorates Association's 1867 Founding

In an historic meeting, held in an equally-historic location, members of the Board of Directors of the Nebraska State Education Association met on Oct. 15 in Brownville, NE.

It was in Brownville's school house on Oct. 16, 1867, that a small group of educators founded NSEA's predecessor, the Nebraska State Teachers Association.

That founding date makes NSEA the oldest professional association in Nebraska.

"NSEA has a long and impressive history of advocating for public education, and it all started in Brownville," said President Nancy Fulton. "It was fitting that the Board of Directors returned to NSEA to honor that founding."

Adding to the Association's pedigree is that Col. Robert W. Furnas was the first president of the Association. Furnas, a Union veteran of the Civil War, was the president of the first Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, and later became governor. The Furnas home serves as a Brownville museum, and Furnas is buried at Brownville.

NSEA members were welcomed by Brownville Historical Society's Kellie Kennedy and Jan Wright of the Brownville Fine Arts Association. The board met for a business meeting at the Brownville Town Hall, and later took a tour the village of 120 residents, led by local historian John Lauber.

A 1997 history of NSEA written by Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen said the first meeting of the Association "tackled such topics as the importance of gymnastics, establishing a uniform system of textbooks, the necessity of creating the offices of state and county superintendents of schools,

and the issue of keeping records in each school (at public expense!) of grades and attendance."

The first meeting was likely held in the then-year-old Brownville school. In a 1932 report to NSEA members, a memorial committee noted that the Brownville School Board had granted permission to erect a granite boulder with a copper plaque to mark the site of the first meeting. It was also noted that lack of funding meant no action would be taken. No reports of the completion of the project were made in the following two years, and, as Christiansen wrote, "If a memorial were ever completed, it has not been located."

In 2000, Christiansen worked with the Nebraska State Historical Society to erect a marker near the site of the original school in Brownville. In October, board members and management staff paused for a group photograph at the marker to commemorate the Association's founding.

"Brownville is a wonderful community," said Fulton. "They truly rolled out the red carpet for our Board of Directors. I am pleased to share our Association history with



Presiding: NSEA President Nancy Fulton, left, leads the Brownville meeting, with Vice President Jenni Benson and NEA Directors John Heineman and Tracy Hartman-Bradley.

this community."

In action, the Board:

- OK'd a final budget for the 2016-17 Association year. Vice President Jenni Benson said a boost in NEA grants and good membership numbers have kept the NSEA in sound fiscal shape.
- Approved a final draft of the Minority Involvement Plan.
- Approved a matching funds for District OR 1 (Palmyra) for \$500 for a school board election.
- OK'd \$1,500 in matching funds to the Plattsmouth Education Association for a school board election.
- Approved a \$500 matching funds request from the Beatrice Education Association for a bond election.



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NSEA GIVES AN ASSIST ON THE SLOW ROAD TO RECOVERY

TWO YEARS AFTER SURGERIES, FOXWORTHY MAKING PROGRESS

When teacher Linda Foxworthy's recovery from surgery took months longer than expected, she first relied on her inner strength to move forward.

When her need for additional recovery time extended into a second year and threatened her job standing, she relied on NSEA.

The result was satisfying, affirmed the value of her Association membership and eased the emotional stress of her recovery.

The assistance given by NSEA "was a good experience," said Foxworthy. "It really relieved a lot of mental and emotional stress."

And there was stress. In March 2015, Foxworthy submitted a letter to Human Resources at the Omaha Public Schools indicating that despite her best intentions to return to the classroom for the 2015-16 school year, her ongoing recovery would prevent her from doing so.

The letter asked that her unpaid leave of absence be renewed for the 2015-16 school year. She offered to provide information from her team of doctors to verify and confirm the need for additional leave. The extra year would allow her to continue her recovery and preserve her contractual standing with the school district, at no additional cost to the district.

Yet on April 24, 2015, Foxworthy received a letter from the OPS Human Resources Department informing her of the need to complete and submit a "Return to Work Medical Certification Form."

"It was pretty traumatic for Linda," said NSEA Attorney Rick Wade. "She needed to provide this information by a certain date, or her contract would be terminated."

Additional stress was caused by the timeline: OPS officials asked

for her response by May 1, 2015, a scant seven days after the letter arrived and not nearly enough time to schedule a doctor's appointment or to provide her doctor with adequate time to complete the needed documentation.



Day by Day: Former Omaha Education Association member Linda Foxworthy continues recovery from unexpected complications. NSEA assisted as she sought extra recovery time from OPS.

'Six-Week Recovery'

Foxworthy's medical nightmare began with intense headaches.

Investigation determined that a tumor at the neck above her right shoulder was growing into her spinal cord. Without surgery, doctors said she would be paralyzed within two years, ending her career as a reading specialist at Beveridge Magnet Middle School.

"That," said Foxworthy, "was not on my life's schedule."

The Mayo Clinic in Phoenix specializes in the type of tumor on Foxworthy's spine. Doctors there told her to expect three to five days in the hospital and a four- to six-week recovery.

"I scheduled surgery as soon as the school year ended with the intention of being back to work by Aug. 1," she said.

Surgery went well, and the tumor was benign. But on Day Three of recovery, Foxworthy stood, walked across the hospital room, felt sudden pain, loss of breath and collapsed. A blood clot had formed in her leg and moved to her lung. She also had a hematoma on her spinal cord.

It was back to surgery the following day to repair the hematoma. A few days later, another hematoma and another surgery.

Foxworthy spent six days in intensive care, 21 days at Mayo. She returned to Omaha by air – without blood thinner – and landed with more clots in her legs. She spent another 27 days

hospitalized on her back, followed by 16 days in a rehab center.

By then, a new school year was near, and she was still hospitalized, unable to walk. She alerted her principal, and her classroom

was covered.

She then thought she'd be back at school by the end of the first quarter, but still didn't have the strength to walk without assistance. As the second semester started, Foxworthy was on long-term medical leave, a non-paid status that would end with the conclusion of the 2014-15 school year.

"I honestly thought I would be back. But now it's November and I've used all my leave, and used all my Family Medical Leave Act time," she said.

In March 2015, she submitted her letter to Human Resources. A month later she received the request for the "Return to Work" form.

That's when she contacted NSEA.

Good Facts

Foxworthy's first point of contact was NSEA Organizational Specialist Marlene Wehrbein.

"Marlene was wonderful and listened so intently. She reviewed the OPS policies and talked to Human Resources," said Foxworthy. "That's when she called Rick (Wade) into the situation."

Wade said Foxworthy's request for an additional year of unpaid leave was denied. Complicating the issue was the recent conclusion of negotiations on a new contract between OPS and the Omaha Education Association. The contract, for 2015-16, had not yet been ratified, and in any case, would not take effect until late summer.

OPS officials felt Foxworthy's request should be considered under the provisions of the new agreement; Wade argued that the new agreement was not yet in effect.

At a meeting with OPS attorneys arranged by Wade, he also argued that Foxworthy was a 23-year employee of the district with an exemplary record; that she had prepared for and met requirements requesting additional leave; and that her doctors said she could not physically do her job.

"Because of the situation, and her good employment record, I ar-

gued that she deserved consideration," he said. "In the long run, it made more sense to give her the extra year, provided she submitted the doctor's recommendation that she not yet return to work.

"She had been timely, she had good facts, and as a result, they extended her leave," said Wade.

Foxworthy said the OPS representative, in granting the additional leave, told her "if you can come back before the year is up, come back."

"I thought that was very nice," she said.

'Kids Deserve Stability'

The extended leave ran out with the end of the 2015-16 school year. Foxworthy continues to work on her recovery and hopes to someday return to education. Working with a team of six doctors, she now knows that there are only six to eight of her surgeries in the U.S. in any given year, with five percent having complications. One surgeon has told her he would have advised a recovery time from the initial surgery of at least a year; with the complications, at least two years.

"Today, it is about getting my strength back, stamina and balance back, as I was left with spinal cord damage. I continue to deal with nerve pain and sometimes getting out of a chair is difficult," she said.

That's quite a change for a woman who rose early each morning to care for her horses, taught all day long, and took classes or taught at night at Metro Community College and Peru State College.

One of her considerations, she said, has always been the children in her classroom. She didn't want to return too early in her recovery, then miss classroom time with a setback.

"The kids deserve stability every day," she said.

Her road to recovery has been stabilized by assistance from her Association – through a benefit she said she never thought she would use.

"You just never know when something out of the ordinary can happen," she said.



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NSEA Defends CIR, Calendar Structure

Reform Gave Structure; Hearing Reveals Gov. May Seek More Change

Members of the Legislature’s Business and Labor Committee have learned that recent changes to state statutes have put meaningful structure into the contract bargaining process and the Commission on Industrial Relations.

Even so, senators also heard that legislation to change statutes governing the CIR might be forthcoming during the legislative session that begins in January.

The Committee took testimony in October on Legislative Resolution 512, which called for an interim study and report on the CIR. Crete Sen. Laura Ebke introduced the resolution to the Committee, and said the study would examine:

- The implementation, experience and practice of the CIR;
- The effectiveness of legislation in providing predictability and consistency;
- Similar laws, programs or institutions in other states.

Ebke pointed out that the CIR is al-

lowed, but not mandated, in the state constitution, and said that 39 states ban strikes by public sector employees (in exchange for the CIR’s ability to resolve contract disputes, Nebraska public sector employees ceded the right to strike).

A letter from Gov. Pete Ricketts, read by Ebke, indicated Ricketts hears “frequently” from elected officials that the CIR “impairs” the ability of local governments to constrain costs. Ricketts wrote that he “looks forward to working with the Legislature in making changes to the collective bargaining statutes” – a hint that changes to the CIR may be proposed.

NSEA and the Nebraska Association of School Boards, however, said changes made to bargaining statutes in 2011, through LB397, have eased governmental subdivision concerns.

NSEA Attorney Scott Norby called the LB397 amendments “a fundamental change in the bargaining culture for those in the educational field.” Since those amendments were adopted, Norby said “there has not been a single case to the CIR involving educational employees.”

Norby said the statutes now contain a bargaining calendar that imposes structure

to the negotiations process. The statutes also include mandatory mediation, which has changed the bargaining culture in a meaningful way. Just five or six instances of bargaining over the past five years have reached the verge of mediation, and only one actually went to mediation – the final step before reaching to the CIR. That single case was settled in mediation.

The mediation process has encouraged settlement of contract disputes, he said.

Norby also said the LB397 amendments have saved school districts money.

“Political subdivisions aren’t spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on litigation anymore, and meaningful negotiations are taking place,” he said. “It has unwound the process and made it less legalistic.”

John Spatz, the executive director of the Nebraska Association of School Boards, said the bargaining timeline has eliminated uncertainty for school boards. As an indirect result, he said, the NSEA and NASB now work together to compile contract data in order to work with the same information.

That cooperation, Spatz said, has filtered down and affected the local negotiations culture in a positive way.

School Groups Approve ‘17-’18 EHA Plan Rates

No Medical Deductible Increases; Dental Benefits Aim for Prevention

Premium rates for the health insurance plan used by nearly every Nebraska school district will rise by 7.99 percent next year, following action by the Educators Health Alliance (EHA), a coalition of three statewide public school education groups that manages the plan.

When the 2017-18 plan year opens Sept. 1, 2017, it will mark the 15th consecutive rate increase of less than 10 percent, said Neal Clayburn, chair of the EHA Board of Directors. In seven of the past eight years, the adjustment has been less than 5 percent.

The rates agreed to by the EHA board are for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) health care plan used by more than 400 public school district and affiliate groups in the state. The plan is governed by the Nebraska Association of School Boards, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska State Education Association. More than 80,000 Nebraskans are covered by the plan, making it the largest health plan in the state.

The increase applies to all EHA medical and dental plan options. Rate increases in the previous three years were 4.9 percent, 1.91 percent; and 2.3 percent. By comparison, the State of Nebraska employee health insurance plan has had medical rate increases of approximately 8 percent, 11 percent and 10 percent in 2016, 2015 and 2014, respectively.

The plan does not raise medical deductibles or other copays.

“The EHA Board is pleased that we were able to achieve the re-

newal without requiring increases in member out-of-pocket costs,” said Clayburn. “Further, the EHA is adding two additional deductible options to the program which would allow local schools and their employees to choose whether to lower the rates by increasing the deductible.”

The EHA was able to save approximately \$2 Million per year by making changes to the network of pharmacies for the prescription drug benefit. This decision included a comprehensive review of the new network of pharmacies to make sure members will have adequate access to an in-network pharmacy. The savings will be achieved by retaining Walgreens and all other prescription providers currently in the network. However, two pharmacy chains – Target and CVS – will cease to be in the network effective Sept. 1, 2017.

Additionally, the dental benefits have been updated. The new benefits provide greater emphasis on more coverage of preventative care and, in order to keep the plan’s cost neutral, add limited copayments for other services.

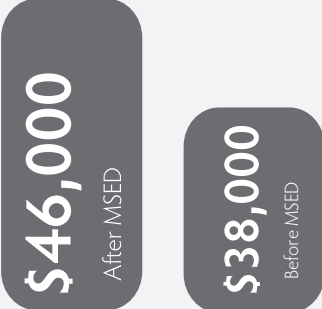
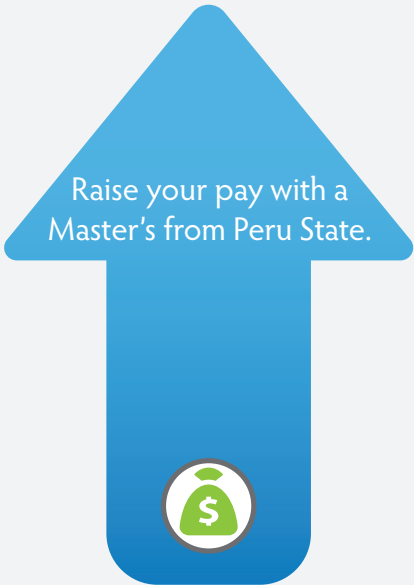
“The EHA Board’s strong management of the plan and judicious use of health care benefits by plan members have worked to keep plan costs stable,” said Clayburn. “All involved have worked hard to help our plan avoid the huge spikes in premium costs that other plans have experienced.”

The statewide network was formed 45 years ago.

A 12-member board representing NSEA, the Nebraska Association of School Boards and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators governs the plan. For more on rates, go to:

www.ehapan.org

EHA Rate Increases	
A history of rates for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield plan, managed by the EHA Board of Directors, shows rate increases have been well below the national average:	
2007-08:.....	7.80%
2008-09:.....	4.80%
2009-10:.....	7.70%
2010-11:.....	4.56%
2011-12:.....	0.00%
2012-13:.....	2.99%
2013-14:.....	6.40%
2014-15:.....	2.30%
2015-16:.....	1.90%
2016-17.....	4.90%
2017-18.....	7.99%



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Ravitch Touts Success of Nebraska Schools

Urges Policymakers to Avoid the 'Chaos, Turmoil' that Comes with Reform

Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch has given public education in Nebraska another round of kudos.

In a video interview released last month by Nebraska Loves Public Schools, Ravitch said Nebraska children have benefited by avoiding the "unnecessary disruption, chaos, turmoil" in the education world over the past 15 years caused by the "idea of turning everything upside down."

America in general, she said, faces "an existential threat to the future of public education and that has never happened before."

"I don't know how it came to be that legislatures thought that they should directly intervene and tell the schools how to reform themselves," she said.

Legislatures, said Ravitch, lack the ability to cause that reform and largely don't have the expertise to do so.

"You have to go into the school and see it for yourself. Judge a school by what it is and not by the stereotype that has been created by the mass media," she said.



Ravitch

Public schools are not hopeless, she said.

"If you think the kids today aren't smart enough, take the 8th grade math test and publish your score and see how many of the people in the Legislature can pass it. I doubt there will be very many unless they're professional mathematicians," she said.

Ravitch said it is astonishing what public school kids can do today.

"It's astonishing if you can see how smart they are and how many things that they know that we didn't know, yet we continue putting down their teachers."

"So, I think that it's important for the public to understand that these decisions that are so harmful to education are being made by their state legislature and by congress – and that this is democracy and we elect them. If they (lawmakers) don't support our public schools, we have to find better candidates," she said.

On the topic of Nebraska public schools, Ravitch said she was amazed by the success of Nebraska's public schools.

"Here you have none of the so-called reforms that the rest of the country has fallen for. You don't have common core. You don't have charters. You don't have vouchers," she said. "You're not evaluating teachers by test scores."

Such reform efforts have caused public education in much of the rest of the country to stagnate, said Ravitch, who served in the Bush and Clinton Administrations 1991 to 1993.

"But in Nebraska you've got one of the highest performing states in the country on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and that's a very useful measure because it's an audit and nobody can study for it. There's no test prep for it. It's just a thermometer that you check on how you're doing and Nebraska's doing very well," she said.

Without those "reforms" Nebraska ranks in the Top 10, while other states have spent billions.

"Well it's (reform) not working out very well in other places," she said. "I have studied the data. I've looked at what is happening in that state (Nebraska) and it is very clear that Nebraskans love public schools."

Grant Seeks Improved Access to Morning Meal

NSEA One of 10 States to Promote 'Partners for Breakfast' Plan

Beginning immediately, Nebraska school districts can apply for grant funds from Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom (the Partners) to provide a much-needed healthy and nutritious morning meal to local students and help increase participation in the federal School Breakfast Program.

NSEA is one of 10 affiliates of the National Education Association to receive a grant to promote the partnership between the NEA Foundation and three other organizations.

The Partners is a consortium of national education and nutrition organizations including the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), the National Association of Elementary School Principals Foundation (NAESPF), the School Nutrition Foundation (SNF) and The NEA Foundation.

The Partners selected Nebraska and nine other states to participate in the program based on need and potential for success. Those states are Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas and Utah. Across these states, the Partners have a goal of increasing access to a nutritious morning meal for 30,000 students.

School districts will be selected based on the number of students that qualify for free or reduced priced meals, average daily participation in the school breakfast program, and district and school-level support.

The Partners will work with state affiliates and rework how school

breakfast is delivered, offering it to all students at no charge and moving it from the cafeteria to the classroom. This effort is intended to improve participation in the School Breakfast Program and boost learning and health.

NSEA will encourage qualifying school districts to apply for the grant program, which supplies funds to support the creation or expansion of universal breakfast in the classroom.

The Breakfast in the Classroom program takes the traditional school breakfast approach and makes it available to every child, no matter the family's income level, making it possible for all children to participate.

Schools will be considered if, among other criteria, they:

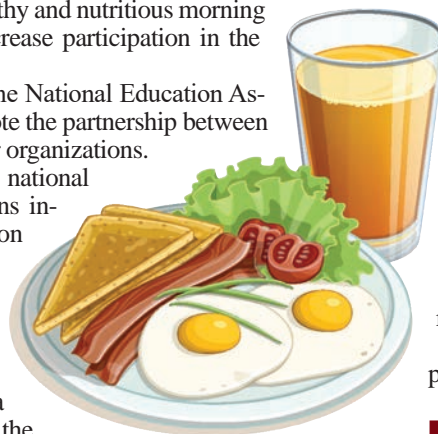
- Have 70 percent or more of their students eligible for free and reduced-priced meals and/or offer free breakfast to all students.
- Have an average breakfast participation around or below 50 percent.
- Allow students to eat in the classroom, after the bell.
- Serve breakfast at no charge to all students in the funded schools.
- Provide strong stakeholder support and buy-in from school leadership and staff, including the superintendent (or designee) who will be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding.
- Make reasonable efforts to continue the program for at least three school years.

For details, contact NSEA President Nancy Fulton at 1-800-742-0047, or email her at:

nancy.fulton@nsea.org

Learn more about the program at:

BreakfastintheClassroom.org



NSEA Teacher Salary Update

Salaries Slowly Trend Upward, Yet Driving a Walmart Truck Pays More

Teachers in Nebraska have made solid moves in the salary rankings over the past few years. But that doesn't mean educators are getting rich.

The average salary for a first-year Nebraska teacher, at \$34,047, will top \$34,000 for the first time this year, according to NSEA calculations. Last year a new teacher earned \$33,450.

Further, the latest figures from the NEA Rankings and Estimates indicate that during the 2014-15 school year the average salary for all Nebraska public school teachers topped \$50,000 for the first time. The \$50,525 average salary that year ranked Nebraska 31st among all states.

If salary were the only concern, however, Nebraska teachers might be better off driving a truck for Walmart. For the past few months, Walmart's job listing website has advertised that "a first year Walmart truck drive earns an average of \$82,000." That figure is 58 percent more than the average salary for a first-year Nebraska K-12 teacher and 38 percent more than the average salary for all Nebraska teachers.

For those teachers who would rather change a child's life than drive a truck, however, progress on the salary front has been slow, but steady. Nebraska's \$986 increase in average salary in 2014-15 – 1.9 percent – followed an increase of 1.1 percent the previous year.

Clearly, Nebraska teachers are not breaking the bank. For 2014-15, the raise works out to about \$19 per week, just enough to allow Nebraska to pass Colorado in the rankings. Nebraska was 32nd at last report; Colorado was 31st. Just five years ago, Nebraska ranked 42nd and Colorado was 28th.

The still-lingering effects of the Great Recession no doubt affected salaries in surrounding states over the past few years. In fact, the NEA Rankings and Estimates of a year ago reported that average salaries in Wyoming, Colorado and Missouri had fallen. In the latest rankings and estimates, however, all regional states reported an increase in average salaries.

Nebraska did make up ground on the U.S. average in the last reporting period. The U.S. average salary is now \$6,895 more than the Nebraska average. Five years ago, the difference was \$9,645.

Iowa Gains Ground

Nebraska's average salary has slipped past Kansas, Missouri and now Colorado in recent years. Teachers in Iowa and Wyoming have continued to fare well. Iowa moved from 25th to 23rd in the latest rankings while Wyoming fell slightly from 16 to 17.

Contract talks for Nebraska teachers for the 2017-18 school year begin on Nov. 1.

Dual Purpose

Details and figures on the charts on these two pages comes from NSEA's Advocacy and Research Departments, and are for the current school year.

The charts serve two purposes: they provide factual, current details to NSEA members and negotiators; and they allow negotiators and individuals to make fact-based decisions as they begin negotiations in November under the bargaining schedule outlined in LB397.

The numbers are also useful to members searching for new employment, although those in the job search mode would be wise to ask questions about health care and other benefits provided by each school district's negotiated agreement.

These numbers also provide benchmarks, and allow negotiators, in particular, to set goals based on competitive — and not just comparable or average — measurements. Questions? Reach NSEA's Larry Scherer or Al Koontz at:

larry.scherer@nsea.org
al.koontz@nsea.org



\$34,047

**NEBRASKA FIRST YEAR TEACHER
AVERAGE STARTING SALARY**

U.S. AVERAGE		\$57,420
17	WYOMING	\$57,414
23	IOWA	\$53,408
31	NEBRASKA	\$50,525
34	COLORADO	\$49,828
36	KANSAS	\$48,990
43	MISSOURI	\$47,409
51	SOUTH DAKOTA	\$40,911



TOP 25	
LINCOLN	\$42,831
OMAHA	\$40,000
WALTHILL	\$38,357
WINNEBAGO	\$38,170
ESU 02-FREMONT	\$37,707
MILLARD	\$37,555
HOLDREGE	\$37,442
HOMER	\$37,250
UMO ^N HO ^N NATION	\$37,200
ELKHORN VALLEY	\$36,720
WESTSIDE	\$36,500
HOWELLS-DODGE	\$36,500
PLAINVIEW	\$36,483
HARVARD	\$36,450
ESU 05-BEATRICE	\$36,435
ESU 10-KEARNEY	\$36,348
BENNINGTON	\$36,342
BATTLE CREEK	\$36,342
RAYMOND CENTRAL	\$36,300
ASHLAND-GREENWOOD	\$36,288
ELKHORN	\$36,277
BLAIR	\$36,126
ESU 06-MILFORD	\$36,100
ARLINGTON	\$36,025
WALLACE 65R	\$35,964

TOP 25	
LINCOLN	\$78,239
TEKAMAH-HERMAN	\$67,218
PAPILLION-LAVISTA	\$65,779
ESU 11-HOLDREGE	\$64,778
HOWELLS-DODGE	\$64,240
RAYMOND CENTRAL	\$63,888
ESU 10-KEARNEY	\$63,067
BAYARD	\$62,700
UMO ^N HO ^N NATION	\$62,496
MALCOLM	\$62,392
FREMONT	\$61,925
WISNER-PILGER	\$61,790
LYONS-DECATUR	\$61,548
RALSTON	\$61,200
SYRACUSE-DUNBAR-AVOCA	\$61,163
LAKEVIEW	\$61,088
WINNEBAGO	\$61,072
ESU 01-WAKEFIELD	\$61,016
ESU 06-MILFORD	\$61,009
NORTH BEND CENTRAL	\$60,848
THAYER CENTRAL	\$60,819
LOGAN VIEW	\$60,766
BANNER COUNTY	\$60,726
ESU 02-FREMONT	\$60,715
HEMINGFORD	\$60,635

TOP 25	
LINCOLN	\$82,676
FREMONT	\$77,153
SYRA.-DUNBAR-AVOCA	\$76,890
ESU 09-HASTINGS	\$76,041
NORTH PLATTE	\$75,855
ESU 06-MILFORD	\$75,449
PAPILLION-LAVISTA	\$75,151
ESU 04-AUBURN	\$74,580
COLUMBUS	\$74,056
NORFOLK	\$74,044
ESU 11-HOLDREGE	\$74,032
SCOTTSBLUFF	\$72,452
ESU 02-FREMONT	\$72,218
GRAND ISLAND	\$72,183
ESU 01-WAKEFIELD	\$71,911
ELKHORN	\$71,883
NORRIS	\$71,878
BELLEVUE	\$71,732
GERING	\$71,719
ESU 10-KEARNEY	\$71,656
HOMER	\$71,520
RALSTON	\$71,400
LEXINGTON	\$71,276
SO. SIOUX CITY	\$71,204
WAYNE	\$71,165

STARTING SALARIES



BOTTOM 25	
ANSELMO-MERNA	32,700
BERTRAND	32,700
MCPHERSON COUNTY	32,700
ST. EDWARD	32,700
O'NEILL	32,700
CALLAWAY	32,600
MULLEN	32,600
LOUP COUNTY	32,600
ANSLEY	32,500
ELWOOD; SARGENT	32,500
MAYWOOD	32,400
ELBA; HYANNIS	32,300
CODY-KILGORE	32,200
EWING	32,150
SHELTON	32,000
MORRILL	31,900
ARCADIA	31,900
SANDHILLS-DUNNING	31,894
MINATARE	31,700
WHEELER CENTRAL	31,550
ESU 07-COLUMBUS	31,510
ARNOLD	31,400
ALLIANCE	30,900
SUTHERLAND	30,700
ESU 17-AINSWORTH	30,500

MASTER'S DEGREE – MAX



BOTTOM 25	
WYNOT	\$53,600
HUMBOLDT-T.R.-STEINAUER	\$53,586
SANDHILLS-DUNNING	\$53,582
NEBR UNIFIED DISTRICT 1	\$53,440
LYNCH	\$53,332
WAUSA	\$53,280
RIVERSIDE	\$53,280
PLEASANTON	\$53,015
LOUP COUNTY	\$52,812
HAYES CENTER	\$52,693
KEYA PAHA	\$52,635
SUTHERLAND	\$52,497
LITCHFIELD	\$52,480
OVERTON	\$52,440
ARCADIA	\$52,316
MULLEN	\$52,160
NIOBRARA	\$52,104
PAXTON	\$51,982
EWING	\$51,842
RED CLOUD	\$51,714
ST. EDWARD	\$51,666
HARVARD	\$51,300
MINATARE	\$50,720
ELBA	\$50,388
ALLIANCE	\$49,595

SALARY SCHEDULE – MAX



BOTTOM 25	
ARTHUR COUNTY	\$57,706
ELWOOD	\$57,688
ANSLEY	\$57,525
LOUP COUNTY	\$57,376
SUMNER-EDDYVILLE-MILLER	\$57,362
WAUSA	\$57,276
WAUNETA-PALISADE	\$57,263
EWING	\$57,147
KENESAW	\$57,120
GILTNER	\$57,120
ELGIN	\$57,110
STAPLETON	\$57,072
RED CLOUD	\$57,018
STERLING	\$56,868
WEST BOYD	\$56,699
MCPHERSON COUNTY	\$56,571
WYNOT	\$56,280
ANSELMO-MERNA	\$56,244
LYNCH	\$56,139
NIOBRARA	\$56,112
ARCADIA	\$55,187
SANDHILLS-DUNNING	\$55,177
ELBA	\$54,910
ST. EDWARD	\$54,446
MINATARE	\$53,573



Advocacy East and West

With local school boards mandated to begin bargaining by Nov. 1, NSEA held sessions to bring local association negotiators up to speed.

At the 'Cowboy Up!' conference in Gering in September, NSEA Vice President Jenni Benson, President Nancy Fulton, and NSEA board member and Sioux County Education Association member Dashiell Rohan, donned cowboy hats in a fundraiser that collected \$209 for the NSEA Children's Fund.

At top right, Grand Island's Deb Gnuse, Papillion-LaVista's Maria Wallace and Wilber-Clatonia's Darla Chrans listen during a session at the

Lincoln conference. Below right, Omaha's Justin Potts, Hastings Adams Central's Joshua Lewis, and Omaha's Bobby Miller, listen at the Lincoln conference.

Deadline for NSEA Awards Nominations Inches Closer

The deadline to nominate a deserving co-worker for one of NSEA's awards is slowly moving closer. Wouldn't it be a good idea to review the options here and start the easy nomination process now?

Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, ESP or deserving group. Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 17, 2017, 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 under the 'Call for Nominations' link at:

www.nsea.org

The 2017 Delegate Assembly will be held at Lincoln's Cornhusker Marriott Hotel April 21-22. NSEA members are eligible for:

- **NSEA Rookie of the Year:** To honor a first-year teacher who excelled in the 2015-16 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 winners revealed at Delegate Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award.

NSEA members are also eligible for:

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

- **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.

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

Discover the Sacrifices Made on the Beaches of Normandy

National History Day is taking applications for the 2017 *Normandy: Sacrifice for Freedom* Albert H. Small Student and Teacher Institute. The program accepts 15 student/teacher teams for an experience in Washington, D.C., and on the beaches of Normandy, France.

The institute covers nearly all expenses for accepted students and teachers including travel and lodging.

The institute teaches about the sacri-

fices and challenges faced by U.S. service members during and after the D-Day landings. Each student selects a single service member from his or her home state who died in the line of duty.

Applications are due Nov. 28. Participants must apply as a team and must be able to travel June 17-29, 2017. Students must be a sophomore or junior in high school as of fall 2016. Learn more at:

nhd.org/normandy-sacrifice-freedom

Participants Sought for Perception Study

University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate student Colin McGinnis asks Nebraska elementary level teachers to participate in a research study investigating the effects of teachers' perceptions on expected academic success and perceived behaviors of students. The online study will allow respondents to remain anonymous.

For more details, contact McGinnis at:

colin.mcginis@huskers.unl.edu

If interested in participating, visit:

<http://go.unl.edu/xt70>

Children's Fund Effort Advances

Campaign for \$150K is Progressing, with \$21k Collected

The note from Mario was short and sweet:

"Thank you for helping me do better in school with my new glasses! The tape on my other glasses was not working anymore!"

Count one Nebraska child assisted.

And then there was a note from the mother of a child who received new clothes:

"I know that the God I and my family serve will never forget you. He will remember all those supports you have given our family. 'What a beautiful blessing!' — Those were the words of our son when I told him about it. Thank you."

That's two children given assistance through NSEA's Children's Fund that will give them a better chance at success.

Today, the 22-year-old Children's Fund is stretched to the limits. The fund actually spent \$3,200 more in 2015-16 than it realized through gifts and donations. That is why NSEA's elected leaders believe it is time to put the fund on firm footing once and for all. At NSEA Delegate Assembly 2016, Association leaders launched a drive to raise \$150,000 for the Children's Fund by October 2017, appropriately the 150th

anniversary of NSEA's founding.

Local associations are responding. Members of the Umo'ho Nation Education Association passed the hat and raised \$1,700 for the fund. Members of the Giltner Education Association chipped in \$160. Members of the Sidney Education Association sent in \$200.

The Hay Springs Education Association collected \$275, where members hosted a concession stand and sold tickets for a 50/50 drawing to raise money.

To date, the campaign has raised more than \$21,700.

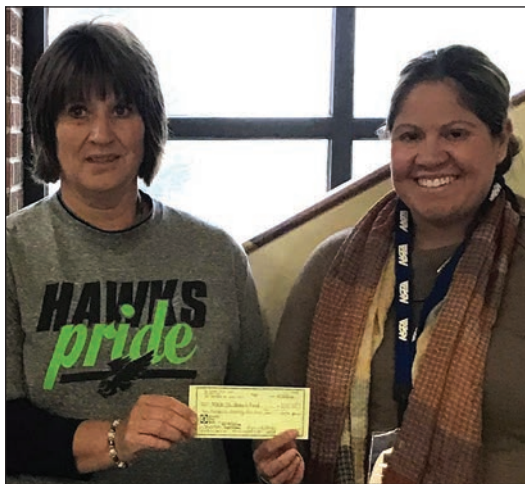
"It's early in the campaign, and I hope that if they are not already working on a fundraiser that local Associations will offer some kind of fundraiser or collection before the end of the school year," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "It is, as you can see by the thank-you notes, such a worthy cause."

Every penny raised through October 2017 will count toward the drive. That's an ambitious goal, since

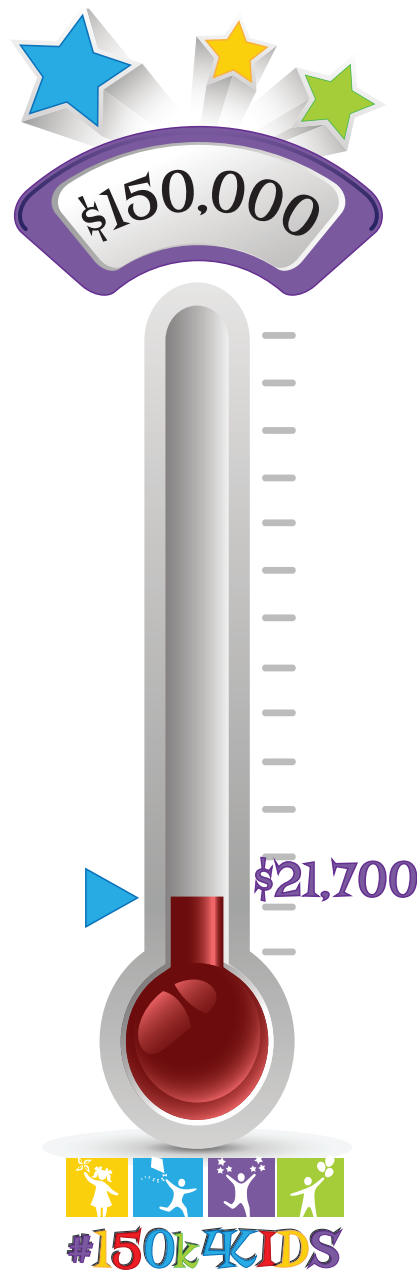
the fund typically collects from \$40,000 to \$50,000 in any given year. Expenses, however, can easily surpass \$50,000 in a year.

Local associations are encouraged to brainstorm fundraising ideas: collect change; host a jeans day fundraiser; or consider other ideas to raise funds.

To make donations easier, the Children's Fund is now set up to accept donations



Giving Big: Hay Springs Education Association President Emma Strotheide hands NSEA Organizational Specialist Andrea Longoria a check for \$275 for the Children's Fund.



through PayPal. Find the PayPal link at:

nsea.org/childrensfund

Questions? Call Sally Bodtke at NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Nebraska Schools Find Savings in E-rate Internet Service

Nebraska's Chief Information Officer has announced that the 245th and final public school district has elected to join the statewide education network known as Network Nebraska. The elected participation from 100 percent of Nebraska public schools has effectively lowered the cost of commodity internet rates for the aggregate network including universities and state colleges, private K-12 schools, and public libraries.

The State CIO's office reports, the 2016-17 internet unit rate dropped another 16 percent from last year, and the project has brought about an internet cost decrease of 99.1 percent since 2007. Over the course of its 10-year history, Network Nebraska has become one of the largest, most affordable statewide education networks in the country, and has achieved one of the lowest commodity internet rates.

"Network Nebraska is one of the best public-private partnerships that I have seen," said Ed Toner, state CIO. "It is lean, affordable, and completely dedicated to serving the taxpayers of Nebraska by brokering lower cost telecommunications services for its education partners."

The state legislature wrote Network Nebraska into law in 2006 and directed the state and the University of Nebraska Computing Services Network to cooperatively manage the enterprise. Network Nebraska interconnects all of the public school districts, educational service units, and public colleges and universities on a single network for purposes of distance education and providing affordable Internet access. For more details, visit:

www.networknebraska.net



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-  TRAVEL
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Save With Susan

Not everyone looks to purchase a car at year's end, but in truth, now is a great time to get good deals on end-of-year-models.

Better yet, if you're in the market, the NEA Auto Buying Program through TrueCar is the first place you should look! NEA members and their families enjoy preferred pricing year-round, save an average of \$3,279 off the manufacturer's suggested retail price on new cars. Using the NEA Auto Buying Program, members also get these benefits:



Estes

- Used car discounts that give savings of hundreds of dollars off the list price.

- The ability to see what others paid. The plan allows members to see what others have paid for the same car, so you know when you're getting a good or a great price.

- Upfront pricing, which allows members to see pricing, price rankings and to lock in guaranteed savings on the car you want before you even leave home.

- A hassle-free experience is a benefit. Print and bring your price certificate to a Certified Dealer or show it on your phone.

NEA members also receive TrueCar Buyer's Bonus Benefits at no additional cost, including Auto Repair Reimbursement and Auto Deductible Reimbursement – benefits that could be worth up to \$2,000 (available in most states).

Visit the NEA Auto Buying Program today to see how much you can save! Go to:

www.neamb.com/buyacar

Holidays on the Horizon

Avoid much of the stress of the holidays and start getting ready now!

The NEA Click & Save program, the online discount buying service for members, highlights select retailers each month. Check out these current "Buy-lights":

- NEA MB Electronics Store: Get member pricing on name brands like Panasonic, Samsung, Dell and Canon.

- Omaha Steaks: More than steak! Save on seafood, deli-style meats, desserts, wines, and appetizers!

- OnlineShoes.com: Save on 33,000 trendsetting styles of footwear for women, men and children.

Be sure to check Click & Save often for unadvertised, limited offers, including discount dining certificates from Restaurant.com. Join the 405,000 members already registered for NEA Click & Save. Go to:

www.neamb.com/clickandsave

Susan Estes is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative

How Scammers Steal Your iTunes Gift Cards

Don't Get Conned into Giving Out Codes Over the Phone

While Apple fans line up to get their hands on the new iPhone 7, scammers are lining up to steal your iTunes gift cards.

The popular gift cards are sold everywhere, from convenience stores and supermarkets to warehouse clubs and websites. I buy my iTunes gift cards at a discount at Costco. A four-pack of \$25 gift cards sells for about \$84, 16% below face value. I immediately take them home, scratch off the numeric shield that hides a card's 16-digit code, and transfer the value to my iTunes account. Whenever I make digital purchases at iTunes, eBooks, Apple Music or Apple's App Store, the amount is deducted from my account.

It turns out con artists are fans of iTunes gift cards, too.

Apple, the Federal Trade Commission and the Internal Revenue Service are warning consumers to hang up on callers demanding immediate payment of fictitious debts using iTunes gift cards. The scammers spin a variety of tales about back taxes, overdue utility bills, or relatives in trouble to trick you into running out to buy gift cards and then divulging the 16-digit codes over the phone.

Here's the bottom line from Apple: You should never use iTunes gift cards to make payments for anything other than membership to and products from iTunes, eBooks,

Apple Music and Apple's App Store. If you hand over the card codes, the scammers will use them to buy Apple products for themselves or sell the codes on the black market. Either way, your money is gone forever.

In the latest twist on this con, the IRS says sophisticated scammers are even using robo-callers to play automated messages that threaten victims with legal action if they don't call back to settle bogus debts with gift cards. According to the IRS, demand for payment with a gift card is a clear sign of a scam. Further, the IRS always contacts taxpayers by mail about unpaid taxes, and its agents will never demand immediate payment over the phone.

In addition to iTunes gift cards, the FTC says other payment methods that con artists are asking for include Amazon gift cards, PayPal, and reloadable cards including MoneyPak, Reloadit and Vanilla. Scammers also might request that money be wired via Western Union or MoneyGram. The FTC says legitimate government officials do not demand payments by these methods.

If you receive a phone call insisting on payment by iTunes gift card (or something similar), hang up. I take the extra step of blocking that number in my iPhone contacts. If the caller claimed to be with the IRS, file a report on the IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting web page. You can also file scam reports on the FTC Complaint Assistant web page.

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Kiplinger

Association Membership Has You Covered with No-Cost NEA Life Insurance

Being a member of NSEA has many advantages, but one of the best benefits your Association provides to eligible Association members is no-cost life insurance. If you haven't done so already, take the time to register or update your beneficiaries for:

- NEA Complimentary Life Insurance is provided at no cost to active, staff, reserve and life members. Coverage is automatic, and members do not have to enroll. Plan benefits include up to \$1,000 of Term Life Insurance; up to \$5,000 of Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) Insurance (\$50,000 for covered accidents that occur on the job or while serving as an Association leader); and \$150,000 of term life for an unlawful homicide while on the job. This

plan is provided through the NEA Members Insurance Trust and underwritten by The Prudential Insurance Company of America. Register or update your beneficiary at :

www.neamb.com/complife

- NEA Introductory Term Life Insurance provides \$15,000 of term life to eligible new NEA members for 12 months at no cost. Coverage is automatic, and members do not have to enroll. After the 12 months of coverage, members may continue the insurance with no medical questions, applications, or evidence of insurability. All that's required is paying the premium when due. Register your beneficiary now at:

www.neamb.com/introlife

Questions? Call 1-800-637-4636.

A photograph of a female teacher with brown hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white top, standing at the front of a classroom. She is smiling and pointing her right hand towards a young girl in a red polka-dot shirt who has her hand raised. Other students are visible in the foreground, sitting at wooden desks. The background features a green chalkboard and a whiteboard.

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Get Inspired!

Eight Creative Ways to Energize Your Classroom!

Avoid a Midyear Slump, Boost Classroom Enthusiasm with These Teacher-Tested Tips

Keeping students' enthusiasm for school alive in the second half of the year can be a struggle, particularly as snow days, standardized testing and spring fever begin to take their toll. First-grade teacher Jessica Meacham knows this scene, and notes that it's not just students who start to lose their fire—educators, too, begin to slump as the year pushes on. But she also knows she can't afford to slack off. "It is essential that I show my energy and enthusiasm for every part of our day," says the Door County, Wisconsin, teacher. "If I lose my excitement and energy, students may lose theirs, too."

Little things can go a long way toward boosting your students' interest in school. To help you keep things fresh through the second half of the school year, we gathered eight teacher-tested tips for rebooting your classroom:

1 Get student buy-in. To help students stay excited about learning, consider a thematic integrated unit on a topic that your students will grab on to, says Deanna Jump, an education blogger and kindergarten teacher. "Brainstorm a list of topics as a class and then take a class vote on the ones that seem to get the most interest," she says. "When students are excited about what they are learning the amount of time spent on behavioral disruptions goes down and student learning goes way up."

2 Hand over responsibilities. Starting mid-year, Wisconsin first-grade teacher Lisa Mattes puts her first-graders in charge of handing out daily warm-up materials, changing the daily and monthly calendar, and delivering items to other teachers as needed. "They feel so official and grown up when put in charge," she says. "They start looking for more things they can be responsible for and it is win-win."

3 Mix up the routines. Think about your routines and how they might be changed up a bit, Meacham says. Her students receive a new format for their independent reading recording sheets in January, switching from paper to postcard. "The change keeps their interest and might even spark a renewed sense of purpose for the activity," she says. You can also change seat assignments or the way students line up for lunch.

4 Offer brain breaks. Incorporate yoga type stretches, jogging in place or jumping jacks when you have a minute to spare, Mattes advises. If you have 3-5 minutes, use a brain break video. "They've been so

helpful during the Polar Vortex we've had in Wisconsin," Mattes says.

5 Introduce new books. Make time to read aloud to students and introduce new books. Each January, The American Library Association announces its Newbery, Caldecott, Siebert and other literary awards. Jump advises teachers to think about how they can incorporate such high-quality literature into their core lessons to keep things fresh.

6 Redecorate and rearrange. Meacham likes to shift the classroom around mid-year. She advises teachers to think about flipping the layout of two classroom areas, such as the classroom library and the guided reading area, or introducing some new design elements, such as a plant or a new lamp. Students will notice the changes. And get students involved in the design decisions. "Let them have some input into the changes that are made," Jump says. "If there is often a traffic jam at the cubbies, have the kids help brainstorm ways that this problem can be alleviated."

7 Clean up your space. By mid-year, your classroom clutter has likely piled up. Meacham has a dusting, purging and organization "party" over winter break. "Afterward, I feel more prepared and ready for the second half of the year, and I am less prone to be distracted by paper piles and dust, leaving my focus on where it should be—my students," she says.

8 Find a PLN. Turn to Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and education blogs to find a personal learning network (PLN). These platforms allow you to stay current and find best practices in educational technology and instruction, Meacham says. You can also get great ideas for lessons, bulletin boards and classroom organization.



Retired Affiliates Organize, Elect Officers

NSEA-R Locals Prepare for Busy Year

Each year, as a service to members, this space includes a directory of local organizations for retirees.

This information is provided as a way to for members at the local level to plan for upcoming events, and to get in touch and keep in touch with leaders from the area.

Omaha Education Association-Retired

With 819 members on the rolls, President Cheryl Richardson has a full-time job.

Local dues are \$10 each year, with a \$100 option for lifetime membership

All meetings are held at the Omaha Education Association, 4202 S. 57th St., with a 9:30 a.m. start. The tentative schedule looks like this:

- **Dec. 1 or 8:** Taxes, by Pat O'Malley.
- **March 16:** Health Issues.
- **May 18:** Travel and Omaha history.

Each program will feature experts in their field. Each speaker will be followed by an OEA-Retired business meeting, and cookies and coffee will be served. Issues of concern for members are taxes, Social Security, insurance, travel, gardening, and needs of today's teachers.

Reach Richardson at 402-334-7715 or cheryl.richardson@cox.net. Other officers:

- **Vice President Walta Sue Dodd**, 402-659-1564, wsdodd@aol.com.
- **Secretary/Treasurer Dee Rankin**, 402-572-7282, 51631INS@cox.net.
- **Bookkeeper Roger Rea**, 402-330-6870, roger.omaha@gmail.com.
- **Webmaster Scott McGinty**, 402-493-1825, smcginty@centurylink.net.
- **At Large members** are Richard Hood, 402-616-2999, wnstate@aol.com; Tamara Bailey, 402-616-0425, ladyvirgo59@gmail.com; Ruby Davis, 402-571-4795, rddelta@gmail.com; and McGinty.

Lincoln Education Association-Retired

With more than 500 members in the Lincoln area, the LEA-Retired is one of the larger organizations of retired teachers in the state.

Arlene Rea, a past president of the Lincoln Education Association, is president of the LEA-Retired this year. Annual dues are \$70. The LEA-R has an ambitious meeting schedule, with each meeting starting at 9:30 a.m. at Sheridan Lutheran Church, 6955 Old Cheney Road in Lincoln (unless otherwise noted). Here is the tentative schedule:

Intergenerational Mentoring Begins Soon

Retired Members Encouraged to Participate in IGM14

On Feb. 24-25, 2017, NSEA-Retired will again host the famed Intergenerational Mentoring program, which pairs experienced and retired NSEA members as mentors to college students prepping to enter student teaching or their first year in the classroom.

The 2017 edition will be the 14th time NSEA-Retired has matched members to act as mentors with college students.

The program involves a Friday afternoon and evening, and a Saturday morning of training and then establishment of a relationship between the mentor and mentee. The day will end with a boxed lunch. The matched pair then make as little or as much as they like out of the connection, with the idea that the mentor can give non-judgmental and ungraded advice to the teacher-to-be. The program has drawn rave reviews from those who participate.

If you you are interested, contact Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047, or via email at: rebecca.smith@nsea.org

■ **Nov. 16:** The Bridge to Better Living, by Mary Ann Stallings.

■ **Dec. 7:** Holiday celebrations at Hillcrest Country Club.

■ **Jan. 18:** Why Public Relations, Publicity and Visibility are Important to Credibility and the Community, with Dennis Buckley of Neighborhood Extra magazine.

■ **Feb. 15:** Dick Spearman will speak about The Beginnings and Workings of Domseti-Pups.

■ **March 15:** UNL Dietician Lindsay Remmers will speak about The Science Behind UNL Athletics.

■ **April 19:** A 'travel buffet' all provide a brief synopsis of travels far and wide and then select a more detailed story to share photos and experiences.

■ **May 17:** Scholarship luncheon at Hillcrest Country Club.

■ **June 7:** A welcoming brunch is set for new and current members.

Rea, as president, can be reached at 402-423-8694 or at: alrenearea36@yahoo.com.

Other officers and contact details are:

■ **Vice President Diane Knapp**, 402-540-2434, dknapp@neb.rr.com.

■ **Secretary Norma Daberkow**, 402-785-9604, ndaberkow@yahoo.com.

■ **Treasurer Billie Bussmann**, 402-488-3231, bbuss@neb.rr.com.

■ **Program Co-Chair De Tonack**, 402-489-8097, dtonack@neb.rr.com.

■ **Program Co-Chair Cheryl Karr**, 402-486-0588, dkarrcheri@gmail.com.

■ **Scholarship Co-Chair Mary Lou Sandell**, 402-486-2369.

■ **Scholarship Co-Chair Barbara Hetcko**, 402-423-6866, hetckobandj@msn.com.

■ **Board Member Linda Brown**, 402-438-8921, ljbrown49@gmail.com.

■ **Board Member Jan Rowe**, 402-423-

0267, jrowe@lps.org.

■ **Board Member Tom Meyer**, 402-477-5264, tmeyerabc@gmail.com.

■ **Health Chair Judy Zabel**, 402-489-2963, jzabel44@gmail.com.

■ **Courtesy Chair Rosalie Nagele**, 402-464-7535, nagele2640@aol.com.

■ **Historian and Legislative Chair Pat Etherton**, 402-466-6230, pether@windstream.net.

■ **Social Committee Chair Teresa Stehlik**, 402-484-6825, therasastehlik@gmail.com.

■ **Membership Chair Margie Nowak**, 402-261-9261, margienowak@hotmail.com.

■ **Publicity Chair Marty Peregoy**, 402-560-2034, mperegoy@windstream.net.

Bellevue Education Association-Retired

Bellevue boasts about 50 members, dues of \$5 annually, and a \$50 lifetime membership option. Meetings are scheduled for 9:30 a.m. at the Bellevue Public Schools Welcome Center on these dates:

■ **Nov. 3:** Amanda Glazebrook will present.

■ **Dec. 1:** The Bellevue East Show Choir Christmas Program.

February and May dates and programs are to be announced.

Officers include President Steven Lebedz, 402-291-6056, slebedz@yahoo.com; Vice President Bill Gaus, 402-734-1104, bgaus@cox.net; Secretary Marilyn Larson, 402-291-6056, larsonmas@aol.com; and Treasurer Sue Daugherty, 402-339-5547, sdaugherty2000@yahoo.com.

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renakelly@gmail.com

Rea, Elliott Seated on Retirement Council

NCTR Assures Integrity of School Retirement Plans

Two Nebraskans with extensive experience on retirement issues have been elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the National Council on Teacher Retirement (NCTR).

Roger Rea, a retired chemistry teacher from Omaha, and Janis Elliott, chair of the science department at Omaha Central High School and a longtime teacher at Bellevue, were elected to serve on the NCTR executive committee in October.

Rea has served on the NCTR Executive Committee for eight years, and was elected the Secretary/Treasurer for NCTR at the 2016 NCTR annual meeting. Elliott was elected to serve a three-year term on the Executive Committee at the same meeting.

NCTR was founded in 1924. It was affiliated with the National Education Association in 1937, and became an independent association in 1971. Membership includes 68 state, territorial, and



Rea



Elliott

local pension systems. NCTR is an independent association that is dedicated to safeguarding the integrity of public school retirement systems in the United States and its territories.

Rea is a former Nebraska Teacher of the Year, former president of the Omaha Education Association, and a past member of the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Board, which administers the retirement plans for Nebraska teachers, judges State Patrol, state and county employees. He has served on the Omaha School Employees' Retirement System Board for 26 years, and is currently the vice chair of that retirement system. Rea is current president of the NSEA-Retired affiliate, and presents seminars on teacher retirement across the state.

Elliott is an award-winning teacher and is current vice chair of the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems (NPERS) Board. She has served for eight years on the NPERS Board, and is a past member of the NSEA Board of Directors as well as a past president of the Bellevue Education Association.

Shevlin is 2017 TOY Finalist

Columbus Education Association member Kimberley Shevlin is taking two new roles this year.

First, she has transitioned from a middle school language arts teacher to a new role as a seventh grade counselor.

And in October she was named one of three finalists for the 2017 Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

Shevlin, a self-proclaimed "lifelong learner," has been on a fast track the past six years, earning a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Wayne State College in 2010, and a second master's degree — this one in K-12 school counseling — from Wayne State College in 2016.

Her middle school teaching certificate came through the Fast Track to Teaching program at the College of Saint Mary's in 2006. She also has a bachelor's degree in human and social services administration from Bellevue University.



Shevlin

She was 2007-09 member of the CEA negotiations team and today serves as a CEA building representative.

Teaching was not a first career for Shevlin, who worked for a time as a secretary at Boys Town, before obtaining a degree and working in administration, and then in a family-teaching position, living with eight teenage girls, teaching social skills, personal care, mental health, respect and more. She began looking into counseling, and found it required two years of classroom teaching.

After a move to Columbus, she discovered the Saint Mary's program and began working toward the counseling career.

Shevlin is a lector at her church, is active in the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, the Kids against Drugs and Alcohol (KADA), Girl Scouts and much more.

She was also named the 2016 Columbus Public Schools Teacher of the Year.

Margaret Rasmussen

Longtime teacher and NSEA member Margaret Rasmussen, 100, died on Aug. 14 — one day short of her 101st birthday

Rasmussen was born near Cordova and graduated from Friend High School in 1934. After graduation, she received her Normal Teaching Certificate and taught in Saline County School Districts No. 23, No. 33 and No. 101. She then taught in rural Fillmore County Districts before returning to Saline County No. 23. She took night classes, attended summer school and did extension work in order to complete her bachelor's degree at Doane College. She taught at Dorchester Public School from 1961 to 1993.

She is survived by sons Dean and Dale — a teacher at Raymond Central Public Schools — and their families.

NEA Seeks Human and Civil Rights Awards Nominees

At a time when our nation's conscience around social justice, civil rights and individual liberties are challenged daily, the NEA is proud to continue the Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner.

Next year will mark the 50th dinner celebrating the social justice heroes among us — the educators, organizations and individuals who in their daily lives advance the cause of human and civil rights.

The NEA's annual Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner is held the evening before the NEA Representative Assembly begins.

Your help in identifying exemplary individuals, organizations and affiliates for recognition is essential. Take a moment to nominate a person or group you think deserves an NEA Human and Civil Rights Award. The deadline to submit nominations is Friday, Dec. 9, and the awards will be presented at Boston on July 1, 2017. You may nominate in one or more of 12 categories.

Details about the nominations and awards may be found at:

www.nea.org/hcawards

AN ELECTION GUIDE

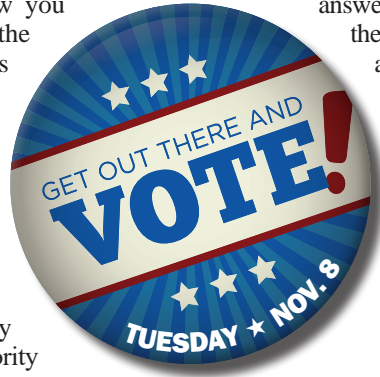
What Happens in Your Classroom...

...is pretty much decided by elected officials.

Yes, you have some latitude in what and how you teach. But the number of students in your room, the curriculum materials you use, the standardized tests you give — minutes) are issues decided by elected officials at the local, state and national levels.

That is why it is so important that educators vote, and why it is so important that they give strong consideration to candidates who will support teachers, students and public schools.

The statements here are based on each candidate's written answers to questions about public education. The recommendations themselves — and they are *only* recommendations — come from the majority



vote of the bipartisan committees of your colleagues who read the answers and then interviewed those candidates who availed themselves of the interview process. Recommendations are based solely on education issues.

Remember that the officials you elect will be asked to make decisions that affect all you do in your classroom and school building. They will decide whether to provide your school with more money for counseling and mental health issues, more state aid, more or less testing, and scores of other issues that affect you and your students.

To find your Legislative District, go to:

legislature.gov/about/leg_map

NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

Legislative Dist. 1: Sen. Dan Watermeier

Where: Otoe, Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee, Richardson counties.

Why: Watermeier is a leader in Legislature and with a family of teachers realizes the needs of public education. He is an advocate for local control and defends stability of public school finance.

Legislative Dist. 3: Carol Blood

Where: Bellevue and parts of Papillion, bounded roughly by 25th St. on the east, the Douglas/Sarpy county line on the north and S. 60th and S. 84th to the west.

Why: A "farm girl" who came from an education family, Blood is very supportive of public education. The interview team called her "honest, passionate, organized, research-based and relatable."

Legislative Dist. 5: Mike McDonnell

Where: Omaha, bounded roughly by I-480 and Highway 75 on the east, 72nd St. on the west, the Douglas county line to the south, and Grover and Martha streets to the north.

Why: A former high-profile Omaha city employee and union member, the interview team recognized McDonnell as a "very strong ally" with educators in the Legislature.

Legislative Dist. 7: John Synowiecki

Where: Southeast Omaha bounded by the Missouri River on the east; I-480 and Highway 75 on the west, Harrison St. on the south and I-480 on the north.

Why: A former senator, Synowiecki has a proven record of support for public education and public unions. He has a family of teachers working for OPS, and said he opposes charter schools.

Legislative Dist. 9: Sen. Sara Howard

Where: East central Omaha bounded by Grover and Martha streets to the south; 72nd street on the west, Highway 6 and Leavenworth on the north and I-480 to the east.

Why: "Warm, approachable" and a strong vote for children and public education, Howard is counted on to support teachers and students in the Legislature. She is committed to representing her district and is a strong backer of collective bargaining.

Legislative Dist. 13: Justin Wayne

Where: Northeast Douglas Co., bounded by the county line at the north, 72nd and 96th streets to the west, the Missouri River to

the east and various streets to the south.

Why: A member of the Omaha Board of Education, Wayne has knowledge of education issues, and, according to the interview team, "is ready to hit the ground running." He has existing relationships with many senators and has worked in the Legislative arena.

Legislative Dist. 15: Lynne Walz

Where: Dodge County.

Why: Enthusiastic, open-minded, willing to learn and "stupendous" support for public education. That was the interview team's assessment of Walz, who opposes vouchers. Her opponent opposes due process.

Legislative Dist. 17: Ardel Bengtson

Where: Dakota, Thurston and Wayne counties.

Why: A former educator and participant in the teacher retirement plan, Bengtson understands the needs of teachers and public schools. She is also quite active in her community.

Legislative Dist. 19: Sen. Jim Scheer

Where: Madison County and northeast Stanton County.

Why: A former member of the State Board of Education, Scheer now has four years in the Legislature behind him. He is a relationship builder and has been a solid supporter of public schools.

Legislative Dist. 21: Larry Scherer

Where: Northwest Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln, north of Oak Creek.

Why: Former legal counsel to the Legislature's Education Committee, Scherer helped craft the state's school aid formula. He is a proven friend of education, as his work as director of research for NSEA has proven over the past dozen years.

Legislative Dist. 23: Sen. Jerry Johnson

Where: Saunders, Butler counties, most of Colfax County.

Why: Johnson has been a leader in the Legislature, where he serves as chair of the Agriculture Committee.

Legislative Dist. 25: Jim Gordon

Where: Northeast Lancaster Co., and the City of Lincoln roughly east of 56th St. and north of Pine Lake Road.

Why: Gordon is a family law attorney and chairs the Board of

Directors for The Mediation Center, is past chair of the Child Advocacy Center and the Make-A-Wish of America board. He supports class size reduction and less mandated testing.

Legislative Dist. 27: Anna Wishart

Where: Southeast Lincoln, bounded by Oak Creek to the north, with a sliver stretching to Rokeby Road.

Why: A former legislative staffer, Wishart has a great understanding and institutional knowledge of the Legislature. A product of Lincoln Public Schools, she is a known advocate for public schools.

Legislative Dist.29: Sen. Kate Bolz

Where: South central Lincoln bounded by South St. to the north, 27th St. to the west, 56th St. to the East and Rokeby Road to the south.

Why: Bolz serves on the Legislature's Appropriations Committee, and several special committees, including the Children's Commission. Sixth generation Nebraskan who grew up on a farm near Lincoln.

Legislative Dist. 31: Sen. Rick Kolowski

Where: Western Douglas County, largely within a one- to two-mile radius of Zorinsky Lake.

Why: Kolowski was the founding principal of Millard West High and is a proven supporter of public schools. He is articulate about education and values the profession and craft of teaching.

Legislative Dist. 33: Sen. Les Seiler

Where: Adams County and the west half of Hall County.

Why: A former teacher, Seiler has been a reliable vote on the Legislature's Education Committee. He understands the value of public education and opposes vouchers and private charters.

Legislative Dist. 35: Dan Quick

Where: The city of Grand Island.

Why: Quick has been active in politics and is very much pro-Association. The interview committee called him "genuine, very honest, down-to-earth" and appealing to the working class.

Legislative Dist. 37: Bob Lammers

Where: The southeast section of Buffalo County, including Ke-

arney, Gibbon and Shelton.

Why: Lammers is both connected to education — his wife is a retired teacher — and puts a priority on education. He was judged as the best of all candidates on education issues.

Legislative Dist. 39: Bill Armbrust

Where: The western third of Douglas County, bounded on the east by 180th St and Highway 31.

Why: Armbrust has deep ties to ag and is a strong public school advocate. Understands the importance of all roles in education: parents, teachers, administrators, students. Opposes vouchers.

Legislative Dist. 41: Tom Briese

Where: Pierce, Antelope, Boone, Wheeler, Garfield, Valley, Greeley, Sherman and Howard counties.

Why: The interview committee was impressed that Briese is working to educate himself on issues and took extensive notes during the interview. Viewed as an "independent thinker."

Legislative Dist. 43: Sen. Al Davis

Where: Dawes, Sheridan, Cherry, Keya Paha, Brown, Loup, Blaine, Thomas, Logan, McPherson, Hooker, Grant counties.

Why: After his election in 2012, Davis quickly became a leader in the Legislature. He carried legislation that increased funding for loan forgiveness for teachers seeking to improve skills and knowledge, and has been a consistent vote for public schools.

Legislative Dist. 45: Sen. Sue Crawford

Where: The eastern third of Sarpy County.

Why: Crawford was recommended four years ago, and has been a strong vote for children and public schools. A Creighton University professor, she is active in public policy issues with many community groups.

Legislative Dist. 47: Wendell Gaston, Karl Elmshauer

Where: Sioux, Box Butte, Morrill, Banner, Kimball, Cheyenne, Garden, Deuel, Keith and Arthur counties.

Why: Both men are well-spoken and well-connected. The interview team felt both are very knowledgeable about education, and would work to find equitable outcomes to education needs in Nebraska.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

District 1: Patricia Koch Johns

Where: Eastern half and southern third of Lancaster County, including the City of Lincoln.

Why: Koch Johns is a former Lincoln High teacher and Nebraska Teacher of the Year and is said to "always be right for kids." She is a passionate, experienced communicator She has been recommended by Dr. Bob Rauner, a candidate who finished third in the primary election.

District 2: Lisa Fricke

Where: Most of Sarpy County and a sliver of Douglas County bounded by 180th St to the west, Blondo St.

to the north and I-680 to the east.

Why: A retired teacher and long-time Association member, Fricke has been a tireless advocate for public education and is well-versed in the needs of public schools and the students who attend those schools.

District 3: Rachel Wise

Where: 15 counties in northeast Nebraska, north of the Platte River.

Why: Wise, a former educator, has served as the president of the state board of education since 2015. She has been a leader in setting education policy that assists teachers and students.



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

NSEA Recommended Candidates

NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

Dist. 01	Sen. Dan Watermeier
Dist. 03	Carol Blood
Dist. 05	Mike McDonnell
Dist. 07	John Synowiecki
Dist. 09	Sen. Sara Howard
Dist. 13	Justin Wayne
Dist. 15	Lynne Walz
Dist. 17	Ardel Bengtson
Dist. 19	Sen. Jim Scheer
Dist. 21	Larry Scherer
Dist. 23	Sen. Jerry Johnson
Dist. 25	Jim Gordon
Dist. 27	Anna Wishart
Dist. 29	Sen. Kate Bolz
Dist. 31	Sen. Rick Kolowski
Dist. 33	Sen. Les Seiler
Dist. 35	Dan Quick
Dist. 37	Bob Lammers
Dist. 39	Bill Armbrust
Dist. 41	Tom Briese
Dist. 43	Sen. Al Davis
Dist. 45	Sen. Sue Crawford
Dist. 47	Karl Elmshaeuser

NEBRASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dist. 1	Patsy Koch Johns
Dist. 2	Lisa Fricke
Dist. 3	Rachel Wise