

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ November 2017



MICHELLE HELT

2018 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

Using all the bells and whistles for a successful classroom.

- **EHA: No Rate Hike in 2018-19!**
- **Salaries Continue Slow, Upward Trend**
- **Teachers: The Engine to the State's Economy**

Celebrate American Education

Week-Long Observance Honors all Educators

What does World War I have to do with American Education Week 2017, scheduled Nov. 13-17?

More than you might think.

World War I ended 99 years ago this month. American Education Week was an outcome of World War I, born a few short years after the last shot in “war to end all wars” was fired. The reason was simple: Americans found that 25 percent of the nation’s World War I draftees were illiterate and 9 percent were physically unfit. It was with those figures in mind that the representatives of the National Education Association and the American Legion joined forces to generate public support for education.

Members at the annual conventions of both organizations met and eventually adopted resolutions for a national effort to raise awareness of the importance of education. Meeting in Des Moines in 1921, members at the NEA Representative Assembly approved a call for the celebration of education for one week each year.

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 became a sponsor, and the PTA followed in 1938.

NSEA President Jenni Benson urged members to celebrate, and reminded them that NEA resources make celebration easy.

“American Education Week is one of those rare moments where we can take a

Recognize a Colleague’s Excellence

Now is a good time to begin discussing who you or your association might nominate for one of the honors to be given at NSEA’s Delegate Assembly in April.

Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, ESP or deserving group. Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 16, 2018, 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 2018 Delegate Assembly will be held at Lincoln’s Cornhusker Marriott Hotel April 27-28. NSEA members are eligible for:

■ **NSEA Rookie of the Year:** To honor a first-year teacher who excelled in the 2016-17 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.

moment to celebrate public education and the work of those in the teaching profession,” said Benson.

She encouraged members to use the NEA resources, found at:

nea.org/grants/47604.htm

The 2018 theme is “Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility.”

The NEA website provides members a variety of promotional 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

announcements – and more – are available.

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This year the schedule looks like this:

■ Monday, Nov. 13: Kickoff day.

■ Tuesday, Nov. 14: Parents Day.

■ Wednesday, Nov. 15: Education Support Professionals Day.

■ Thursday, Nov. 16: Educator for a Day.

■ Friday, Nov. 17: Substitute Educators Day.

Cover: When Michelle Helt began teaching, she knew she was not quite ready to consider the state’s Teacher of the Year program. Flash forward to 2017, and Helt has become a leader in her South Sioux City building and school district. For her teaching skills and leadership she has been named 2018 Teacher of the year. Learn more at

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NSEA
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Great Public Schools For Every Child

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SE
STATE EDUCATION EDITORS

The Gospel of Good Teaching



**NSEA President
Jenni Benson**

“

*What I've
found is that
it doesn't take
much to get
people talking
about a teacher
or teachers who
made a difference
in their lives.*

”

This past month, at the bridal shower for my daughter-in-law-to-be, a young man working at the restaurant gave great credit to one of our up-and-coming young leaders, Isau Metes, a Lincoln teacher who happens to chair NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee.

“I wouldn't have made it through high school without her,” he said, referring to Metes.

Count that young man as another positive messenger, spreading the gospel of good teaching.

To tell the truth, those messengers are everywhere.

I have been traveling the state meeting with local association officials and talking to media outlets about the good work going on in our Nebraska public schools.

In those travels along Nebraska's highways and byways, I meet a lot of people. I talk to hotel clerks, waitresses, receptionists, gas stop employees and other every day Nebraskans. Nearly all of them serve as unknowing messengers, spreading the gospel of good teaching. What I've found is that it doesn't take much to get people talking about a teacher or teachers who made a difference in their lives.

A good conversation starter is “tell me about yourself” or “tell me about your school experiences.” When I fly, I often wear my “I Love Public Schools” t-shirt – and believe me, that t-shirt is a real conversation starter!

Excited Students

On a visit to west central Nebraska, I was able to enjoy a dinner with my former North Platte Middle School counselor, Mary Lynn Horst.

Mary Lynn continues in her counseling career, though she is now at North Platte High School. She is also a former vice president of NSEA, so is familiar with the workings of your state association. But she knows even better what works with kids. You could tell that by how excited students were to see her outside of the usual school setting. I know the difference she made and continues to have on me, and I am certain there are countless other North Platte grads who feel the same way.

In mid-October, I was in Washington, D.C., with the NSEA Executive Committee. We attended the meeting of the NEA Board of Directors and met with our Nebraska congressional delegation. We also attended the weekly Nebraska Breakfast. Several elected officials pres-

ent told stories of their school experiences and favored teachers. Sen. Ben Sasse's fourth grade teacher happened to be in attendance, and she thanked us afterward for advocating on behalf of children and schools.

Second Dist. Congressman Don Bacon said his kindergarten teacher wrote letters to him for many years, providing him with solid advice and life direction. All five Nebraska representatives referred to the importance of education and our Association's work in Nebraska. It was a refreshing moment.

Turn the Narrative

I have also had the opportunity to represent you at various public events throughout the state. I have attended meetings of local chambers of commerce. I've participated in numerous meetings of a coalition of business, agriculture and education interests that are searching for solutions to the state's over-reliance on property taxes. We attend dinners with and for elected officials. We celebrate the success of non-profits across the state working in collaboration to help families and communities. At every turn, I hear stories about teachers who have made a difference.

Each of you has favorite teachers, as well. But let's turn this narrative around. There is much negative messaging on the national scene regarding public schools. We know much of that is spin, but the continual pounding of that messaging will eventually gain believers.

So, instead of talking about your favorite teacher, we as teachers should spread the word about the great things and the cool projects going on in our classrooms and school buildings. We should speak about the success we had with that second grader who finally understood that difficult math problem with an ‘Aha!’ moment. We should talk about our fifth graders who are blowing their math lessons out of the water. We must spread the word about the sophomores who are taking the lead against bullying at the high school.

Advocacy for our students and public schools – and yes, for our administrators and even our school boards – is a year-round job. It is also an easy, out-in-the-public job. The gospel of good teaching – and good public schools – can be shared with friends, neighbors, family, acquaintances.

Please, share your stories!

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EHA: No Premium Hike in '18-'19

Good Management, Wellness Plan Among Positive Influences on Rates

There will be no increase in premium rates next year for the health insurance plan used by nearly every Nebraska school district, following action by the Educators Health Alliance (EHA), a consortium of three statewide public school groups that manages the plan.

When the 2018-19 plan year begins on Sept. 1, 2018, it will mark the 16th consecutive rate increase of less than 10 percent and the second time there has been a zero percent increase, said EHA Board of Directors Chair Neal Clayburn. The average annual increase over the past eight years has been 3.3 percent.



"This is great news for school districts and school employees across Nebraska," said Clayburn. "The zero percent increase in rates is made possible because school employees and their families have made wise decisions regarding their health care, because of the EHA Board's strong management of the plan, and due to the expertise provided by EHA's insurer, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska."

"All involved have worked hard to help our plan avoid the huge spikes in premium costs that other plans have experienced."

The 2018-19 plan also boasts no increase in medical deductibles or copays. The zero percent increase is for all plan options. Rate increases in the past seven years were 7.99 percent; 4.9 percent; 1.91 percent; 2.30 percent; 6.40 percent; 2.99 percent; and zero percent.

"The EHA Board is pleased that we were able to achieve the renewal without requiring increases in member out of pocket costs," said Clayburn. He said the one-year freeze in premium rates is made possible due to a number of factors, including:

- The impact of the EHA's state-wide wellness and health pro-

motion program (see related story on Page 9);

- Recent lower than anticipated utilization rates in hospital and physician services;

- Pharmacy benefit management programming that has led to reduced pharmacy trends;

- A program to assist in the management of a chronic diseases;
- Holding the line on health and administrative costs and;
- Continued prudent management in the design and choices of benefit plans.

EHA health insurance rates for the 2018-19 plan year apply to seven available active employee health benefit plans, three early retiree benefit plans, and five dental benefit plans.

"The EHA wellness program has also been instrumental in improving the health and wellness of EHA covered employees," said Beth Kernes Krause, EHA vice chair and Auburn Public Schools Board of Education member.

"The EHA Board understands the financial concerns of our education members as well as the fiscal constraints facing school districts," said John Spatz, executive director of the Nebraska Association of School Boards.

"This is the result of the cost-saving measures taken by the EHA Board as well as by employees and their families," said Mike Dulaney, executive director of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators.

"The EHA has taken action to help plan participants be careful stewards of their health and informed consumers of health care," said Maddie Fennell, executive director of the Nebraska State Education Association. "This is one of the many benefits of our statewide risk pool. It ensures affordable health care insurance for members of the plan – and healthier school employees are better for our students."

"Healthier teachers and school employees mean lower absenteeism. Additionally, healthier teachers have been tied to higher academic achievement," Fennell said. "A 2015 study showed a dramatic correlation between teacher wellness ratings and student ACT scores."

Janus Case Labeled an Attack on Workers Supreme Court Agrees to Hearing in Case that Affects Worker Rights

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear arguments in Janus vs. AFSCME Council 31, which could have wide-ranging effects on NEA and, ultimately, NSEA.

Janus has been tagged as a well-funded effort by corporate interests to further diminish union viability and public employee rights. Those who fund the Janus argument know that when public employees and other workers join unions, they win the power and voice they need to level the economic and political playing field.

Janus, however, seeks to "defund and defang" unions, said the president and CEO of the corporate-backed State Policy Network (SPN). In a 10-page letter to supporters, Tracie Sharp announced an \$8.4 million campaign that would provide "big wins for freedom" and deliver a "mortal blow" to government employee unions.

Janus would reverse 1977's Abood v the Detroit Board of Ed ruling that has governed relations between public sector employees and employers since that date. Under Abood, public sector unions are allowed to charge non-union members a minimal fee for services that support contract negotiations and other basic union services.

Agency fee is used in about 22 states, not including Nebraska. Loss of the fee would cause membership loss in those states, affecting NEA, and thus some of the programs NEA funds in Nebraska.

No Brainer: Academic Success Starts Early Early Engagement the Key, says Study

Academic success starts early, according to a new study from New York University.

NYU's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development, found that early cognitive skills and later academic success comes to children who get books and toys early and are engaged by parents in meaningful conversations and learning.

The study looked at children from birth through fifth grade in more than 2,200 families and tracked the influence of early home learning environments on later cognitive skills.

The team found that the home learning environment gives powerful shape to language and cognitive development. Participation in learning activities, the quality of parent-child interactions, and the availability of learning materials like books and toys are key features of the home environment that support language and pre-academic skills.

The study examined early home learning environments and whether they predict 5th grade academic skills for children of families from ethnically diverse, low-income backgrounds. The researchers studied families enrolled in the Early Head Start Research Evaluation Project.

The researchers note that the findings have implications for policy and practice, including the design of interventions for young children and parents from disadvantaged backgrounds.



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Doing What She Loves: South Sioux City third grade teacher Michelle Helt works with a trio of her students on a reading project last month. Helt was named Nebraska's 2018 Teacher of the Year in October.

A Passion for Teaching

Growth in Teaching Skills, Knowledge Lead Teacher of the Year Honors for Helt

As she recalls it, Michelle Helt was in her second year teaching when 2004 Nebraska Teacher of the Year Diane Woodford addressed Helt and the South Sioux City staff.

Woodford spoke of opportunities and possibilities that come with the state's highest education honor. She urged others to consider the Teacher of the Year process. Helt, however, knew she was still learning her craft and profession.

"When you're young, you think 'no way, there is no way I would put myself out there,'" said Helt.

Flash forward 14 years. The 2018 Nebraska Teacher of the Year is ... Michelle Helt.

"It's funny how your life changes and you grow as a professional," she said a week after the announcement.

Helt has certainly grown professionally. She has become a leader in her grade level, her building and her district. Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt and other dignitaries knocked on her classroom door in early October to reveal her selection.

She will be feted at a luncheon at NSEA Headquarters on Nov. 8. Also to be honored are finalists Rachel Burns, Omaha Northwest High, and Joni Ebel, Columbus Middle School.

All are NSEA members.

Classroom 'Soul'

Helt received rave reviews for her

work with third graders at South Sioux City's Cardinal Elementary School.

Jennifer Kennelly taught with Helt and served on the Professional Learning Community led by Helt.

"In her classroom, you will find rigor, but you will also find soul," wrote Kennelly in a letter of recommendation. "Mrs. Helt knows that while her students may be engulfed in the march toward higher test scores, they are simultaneously engaged in something of crucial importance: childhood. It is fun to be in Mrs. Helt's class, and that is a result of her tremendous effort to wed engagement and content."

Cardinal Elementary Principal Dan Swatek gave Helt glowing grades in his letter.

"In my 16 years of being in education in various roles, I have never seen another teacher put that much passion and energy into every lesson, every day for every student."

Never Wavered

Helt remembers her initial encounter with the teaching side of the classroom – she was a fourth-grader. She found that as a peer tutor she loved the feeling of helping others be successful. She has never wavered on her goal of wanting to teach.

"I've said to my husband many times, 'I don't know what I'd do if I

Michelle Helt

Education

- Bachelor's Degree in elementary education, Summa Cum Laude, Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, IA, 2002.

- Master's of Science in Education, Wayne St. College, 2006.

Leadership Roles

- Has mentored practicum students from area colleges in all subject areas since 2003.

- Served on the South Sioux City School Improvement team since 2007; viewed by the School Improvement Committee as the model leader of an exemplary Professional Learning Community.

- Founding member of the South Sioux City District Curriculum Council.



didn't teach.'

"It's a passion," she said. "In my free time I enjoy professional reading, creating something for school, or trying to come up with a different way of presenting a lesson. That's what I do, that's part of who I am."

Third grade is the perfect fit for Helt.

"I love this age because they are so curious. They still want to learn and they enjoy the interaction with teachers and they love school. On the other hand, they're a little bit independent. I love that they love school, and I hope that I can help them carry that on."

The 'Driving Force'

Helt said her classroom is "energetic and purposeful," driven largely by standards.

"Gone are the days that I can say 'I think I'll do this unit because I think it will be fun,'" she said.

She works to make sure her students understand the 'why' behind those standards.

"When I first started teaching, I honestly don't even know if I could have told you what the standards were," said Helt. "Sixteen years ago, it wasn't as big of a push. Now it is literally the driving force behind everything I do."

For students to understand the "why" behind standards, she connects lessons with real life. Consider this lesson on rounding.

"I use the example that I'm going to the grocery store and I only have \$40 in cash, I didn't bring my purse, and I've got to make sure I have enough money to pay for everything," she said. "So, I'm going to round it and I try to make it very real life for them. I feel like you can get kids to really try and become invested if they know there is a reason behind it.

"I try to bring it down to their level and then relate it to as they get older. I think it becomes much more meaningful."

Bells and Whistles

A life-long and avid reader, Helt loves teaching reading. In recent years, she has become passionate about teaching math.

"I think it is because there are so many hands-on things we can do and so many applications to real life," she said.

Helt used a math example to illustrate her favorite part of being a teacher.

"I love it when you can make that connection for kids, and you see them go 'OH!' and they finally get it.

"For example, place values – some kids just pick it up right away. But when we get to February there will be three or four kids that will go 'I get it now!'" she said. "And it's 'Yes!' What I've been working on since August – you finally get it!"

Helt's committed approach and high expectations make her classroom a success. She says she pulls out "all the bells and whistles" when needed.

Burns, Ebel Cited for Excellence

Rachel Burns teaches grades 9-12 advanced placement science at Omaha Northwest Magnet High School. Among her courses taught are biology, anatomy/physiology, advanced placement environmental science and advanced horticulture.

Northwest Principal Thomas Lee called her "one of the best teachers I've seen" in 27 years in education.

"She has taken Northwest High School to another level with her labs and experiments in the classroom," he wrote in a letter of recommendation.

As a farm girl, Burns grew up playing with frogs and salamanders in area creeks. As she grew older she noticed the number of amphibians declining. That led her to a graduate school thesis investigating the effects of pesticides on frogs.

During her college years, she tutored high school students in the Omaha area, and taught university level courses, as well.

"My greatest goal in teaching is to foster a love of science and inquiry within my students," she wrote in her application.

"I want them to be curious, ask questions, and know how to develop their own scientific investigations to find answers to their questions," she wrote.

Burns has a bachelor's degree in biology



Burns



Ebel

and a master of science degree, both from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Joni Ebel teaches pre-algebra to seventh-graders at Columbus Middle School.

"She has been asked to change roles, classrooms and responsibilities numerous times," wrote Middle School Counselor Kim Shevlin in a letter of support for Ebel's nomination. "Each of these new challenges has been accepted with a positive outlook and attitude."

Ebel cited at least five of her own teachers, in particular, as influencing her decision to become a teacher.

"My desire to not give up on a student, strive to enjoy educational experiences

outside of the classroom and persist in solving a problem and tackle it in different ways are accomplishments in my educational journey," she wrote in her application.

Ebel has taught algebra and math at the sixth through eighth grade levels during her career, and holds membership in numerous professional associations.

She has a bachelor's degree in secondary and middle level education (math and music) from Concordia University and a master's degree in educational administration from Doane University.

"My expectation is that you learn everything, all these standards by the end of third grade," she said. "So, if you don't have them now, don't worry, we're going to keep coming back to it. By the end of third grade, our goal is that you will know these standards."

Standards aside, teaching is an art.

"It's kind of like a big puzzle, a constantly changing puzzle. There are parts of it that are always staying the same. And for me, that part is the age level. I know what to expect out of the third graders. They're still curious, they still love school. I like that piece of it, but I like that ever-changing piece as well."

Asset or Liability

Speaking of standards, Helt said she agrees that teachers and students need to be held accountable. Yet she foresees a problem with a bill in the Legislature that would require teachers to flunk third grade students who are not reading at grade level by the end of the year.

She explains herself through the philosophy of a former administrator.

"He was talking about testing in general and said that 'when we start relying solely on test scores, we start to see students as a liability instead of an asset,'" said Helt.

"There has to be some leeway because kids are not all the same. Think about it: some kids have pre-school, some do not. Some kids are speaking English from the day they are born, other kids are not," she said. "So I have a hard time putting a deadline on something like that."

A Team Effort

Helt was hesitant, but her principal encouraged her to apply for Teacher of the Year consideration.

"I just do what so many other teachers do. So it's hard to seek any sort of recognition for that," she said.

"My colleagues have been very supportive. We are all together as a team, and as I've said it many times: I learn something new from everyone I work with – and on a daily basis," she said.

"I feel like it is an honor for our entire school and the district because we have such great things going on here."

Successes Come Through EHA Wellness Plan

Report Finds Unique Program has High Usage, Gets Results

By any measure – standing, stretching, exercising or eating healthy – the EHA Wellness Program has been a success over the past year.

The program is a voluntary health improvement program for those educators who use Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health insurance through the Educators Health Alliance. Started in 2010, today 255 local associations and other subgroups participate in the program's various challenges throughout the course of the year.

"We've found that the EHA Wellness Program has engaged plan members, has encouraged healthy habits, and has made a real difference in the health of wellness program participants," said Neal Clayburn, NSEA associate executive director and chair of the EHA Board of Directors.

An annual report for the program that ended in August 2017 showed that:

- The 'Less is More' program that encouraged participants to eat more fruits and vegetables, and to eat smaller portions, had 4,404 participants report a loss of 17,464 pounds during the two-month effort.

- In the Defy Gravity Challenge, participants were encouraged to take a standing break at least once an hour during the work day, and to log at least 30 minutes of activity daily. In that challenge, 4,987 participants reported losing a total of 19,232 pounds.

- The Boston Marathon challenge also encouraged participants

to exercise 30 minutes each day, as well as to eat two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables at least five days a week. The 3,511 participants reported losing a total of 16,810 pounds.

- In the Read the Label Challenge, 17,726 people enrolled, and 17 percent reduced added sugars in their diet and 16 percent reported that they were reading labels on their food purchases.

Award Winner

The report also showed that the EHA Wellness Program has 78 subgroups that have received the Governor's Excellence in Wellness Award, with 30 groups receiving the award twice.

The report showed that trend data is showing that, in year-to-year cohort comparisons, individuals are improving in several key wellness indicators, including nutrition, physical activity, stress management and sleep.

In the future, the wellness program will continue to focus on areas of greatest need, based on the data collected, which include physical activity, nutrition, sleep and stress management.

"We encourage plan members to continue to use the wellness program," said Clayburn. "It is the only one of its kind in the country, and it is a true benefit of the EHA plan."

The Educators Health Alliance is cooperatively managed by the NSEA, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska Association of School Boards. The EHA was born out of the statewide health insurance program for educators built by NSEA nearly 50 years ago.



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The phone calls are always wrenching. The emails are always difficult to read and digest.

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Even in this, the world's wealthiest country, there are children in dire need.

Fortunately, the NSEA Children's Fund is available to assist in most cases.

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

Since 1994, donations to the NSEA Children's Fund have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to help children in need. In the past two years, the Fund has provided nearly \$100,000 in relief.

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



Frogged! Members of the Hastings Education Association used a tried and true method of fundraising for the NSEA Children's Fund last spring: They 'frogged' colleagues by dropping off the above frog in their classroom. Classroom de-frogging services were then made available in exchange for a donation to the Children's Fund. At NSEA's Delegate Assembly in April were, from left, HEA's Jessica Neuhart, David Witt, Deb Lyons, Ben Welsch, Monica Munter and Kim Story. The HEA de-frogging services raised \$1,800 for the Children's Fund.

Donations Accepted!

Would you or your local association like to contribute to the NSEA Children's Fund? Send your check to the NSEA Children's Fund, C/O NSEA, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Your contribution is tax deductible.

To receive funding to help a student, there is no red tape, no form for teachers to fill out. Simply contact the NSEA at

1-800-742-0047 and ask for Sally Bodtke. Or e-mail her at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Go Big Red!

NSEA hosted a tailgate for Association members before the University of Nebraska's football game with Rutgers University on Sept. 23. Among those who came were Carol Floth, a teacher at McPhee Elementary School in Lincoln, and her brother, Bob Floth, a teacher at Freeman Public Schools, just south of Lincoln.



Reading Leaders Set February Date

Those who support strong readers will be in Kearney Feb. 22-24 for the Nebraska State Reading Association Conference.

The conference opens on Thursday, Feb. 22, with morning and afternoon workshops, including Douglas Fisher of Visible Learning for Literacy fame, and Ralph Fletcher speaking of Joy Write: Cultivating High-Impact and Low-Stakes Writing.

Friday will feature well-known speakers Nell K. Duke, Monica Burns and Jordan Sonnenblick, along with breakouts by Nebraska literacy experts.

Saturday will focus on an Early Childhood Institute, PreK-Grade 2. Hours can be used towards fulfilling Nebraska Step Up to Quality requirements. Confirmed speakers include: Dinah Zike and Penny Gildea.

For more details, go to:

<https://goo.gl/4LbtmK>

Registration will open in November at:

www.nereads.org/

NSEA Teacher Salary Update

Salaries Continue Slow Upward Trend

Teachers in Nebraska once again moved up in the national salary rankings, but as in past years, that upward movement hasn't meant educators are better off than in the past.

The latest figures from the NEA Rankings and Estimates report indicate that during the 2015-16 school year the average salary for all Nebraska public school teachers passed \$51,000 for the first time. The \$51,386 average salary moved Nebraska from 31st last year up to 28th. Falling behind Nebraska in the rankings were Virginia, Montana and Indiana.

The gains in salary standings were largely eaten up by inflation. In fact, that has been the case over most of the past 10 years, said the report's authors. They reported that the current-dollar increases over the years since 2006-07 appear substantial.

"But, when the effects of price inflation are taken into account, the average classroom teacher salary has actually decreased by \$1,823, or 3.0 percent," said the authors.

A year ago, we reported on this page that Walmart's job listing website advertised that "a first year Walmart truck drive earns an average of \$82,000." Truckers continue to out-earn teachers this year. Aside from Walmart, the firm Grand Island Express advertised in late September for truck drivers, boasting an average salary of \$57,000 and top salary of \$83,000. LL Smith Trucking, Omaha, at the same time offered \$50,000 to start, and GP Solutions, Omaha, offered a salary of up to \$65,000. Each of those jobs also included benefits like tuition reimbursement, hiring bonuses, flexible scheduling and other enticements.

"Certainly, truck drivers do important work for our economy and deserve a respectable wage," said NSEA President Jenni Benson. "Our teachers seek respectable pay, as well. Most educators today spend four or more years in college, and graduate with enormous debt. It would be helpful if higher salaries were awaiting when they earned that diploma."

Progress on the salary front has been slow and steady. Nebraska's \$861 increase in average salary in 2015-16 – 1.7 percent – followed increases of just 1.9 percent and 1.1 percent the previous two years. The \$861 raise works out to about \$16.50 per week.

In recent years, Nebraska has clambered past Kansas, Missouri and Colorado in the NEA rankings. In 2009-10, Nebraska was 43rd and Kansas was 39th. Colorado was 28th.

The still-lingering effects of the Great Recession no doubt affected salaries in surrounding states over the past few years. The Kansas tax-cut experiment of recent years has certainly dampened salaries in that state. Nebraska, meanwhile, has maintained at least some growth in salaries during hard times.

Nebraska did lose some ground against the U.S. average salary in the last year. The U.S. average salary is now \$6,967 more than the Nebraska average, a loss of \$73 over the past year. Yet six years ago, Nebraska trailed the average national salary by more than \$9,640.

Can Iowa Maintain?

While Nebraska teachers have surpassed their counterparts in Kansas, Missouri and now Colorado in recent years, teachers in Iowa and Wyoming have continued to March forward. Iowa moved from 23rd to 22nd over the past year, but that was before that state's Legislature yanked all bargaining rights from the statute books. Next year's salary figures could tell a different story in the Hawkeye state. Wyoming moved up one notch to 16th.

Contract talks for Nebraska teachers for the 2018-19 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. Benefits at each school district vary widely and are not included in the calculations.

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 to set goals based on competitive — not just comparable or average — figures. Questions? Reach NSEA's Larry Scherer or Al Koontz at:

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



\$34,620*

**NEBRASKA FIRST YEAR TEACHER
AVERAGE STARTING SALARY**

(*NSEA DEPT. OF RESEARCH FIGURES)

AVERAGE SALARY BY STATE:

U.S. AVERAGE		\$58,353
16	WYOMING	\$58,140
22	IOWA	\$54,416
28	NEBRASKA	\$51,386
40	MISSOURI	\$47,957
42	KANSAS	\$47,755
46	COLORADO	\$46,155
51	SO. DAKOTA	\$42,025



NEA Rankings & Estimates, March 2016

TOP 25

LINCOLN	\$43,981
OMAHA	\$41,000
WALTHILL	\$39,124
WINNEBAGO	\$39,124
ESU NO. 2-FREMONT	\$39,005
UMONHO ^N NATION	\$38,000
HOLDREGE	\$37,987
WILBER-CLATONIA	\$37,962
MILLARD	\$37,765
HOMER	\$37,700
HOWELLS-DODGE	\$37,500
ELKHORN VALLEY	\$37,422
HARVARD	\$37,206
ESU NO. 10-KEARNEY	\$37,082
BATTLE CREEK	\$37,044
ASHLAND-GREENWOOD	\$37,017
NORTH PLATTE	\$36,950
RAYMOND CENTRAL	\$36,925
BLAIR	\$36,909
ESU NO. 5-BEATRICE	\$36,775
BENNINGTON	\$36,774
WESTSIDE	\$36,700
ELKHORN	\$36,698
PLAINVIEW	\$36,483
COLUMBUS	\$36,480

STARTING SALARIES**BOTTOM 25**

ESU NO. 17-AINSWORTH	\$31,200
SUTHERLAND	\$31,450
ESU NO. 7-COLUMBUS	\$31,916
ALLIANCE	\$32,050
MORRILL	\$32,400
SHELTON	\$32,750
MAYWOOD; ARCADIA	\$32,800
MULLEN	\$33,000
WHEELER CENTRAL	\$33,050
CHADRON	\$33,100
SARGENT; EWING	\$33,150
OVERTON	\$33,175
ANSELMO-MERNA	\$33,200
CODY-KILGORE	\$33,200
SANDHILLS-DUNNING	\$33,200
BERTRAND; BRADY; BAYARD	\$33,250
HASTINGS	\$33,275
ELBA	\$33,300
TEKAMAH-HERMAN	\$33,300
CALLAWAY	\$33,300
STAPLETON; LOUP CO;	\$33,350
GARDEN CO; ELWOOD	
CENTRAL CITY	\$33,350

TOP 25

LINCOLN	\$79,889
TEKAMAH-HERMAN	\$68,265
PAPILLION-LAVISTA	\$67,639
ESU NO.13-SCOTTSBLUFF	\$67,032
HOWELLS-DODGE	\$66,000
ESU NO. 11-HOLDREGE	\$65,611
RAYMOND CENTRAL	\$64,988
ESU NO. 10-KEARNEY	\$64,340
UMONHO ^N NATION	\$63,840
MALCOLM	\$63,800
BAYARD	\$63,175
OMAHA	\$63,140
ESU NO. 1-WAKEFIELD	\$63,027
LYONS-DECATUR	\$63,020
FREMONT	\$62,952
ESU NO. 2-FREMONT	\$62,805
WINNEBAGO	\$62,598
ESU NO. 6-MILFORD	\$62,522
SYRACUSE-DUNBAR-AVOCA	\$62,213
RALSTON	\$62,055
EMERSON-HUBBARD	\$62,049
LOGAN VIEW	\$61,948
WEST POINT	\$61,902
LAKEVIEW	\$61,721
THAYER CENTRAL	\$61,654

MASTER'S DEGREE – MAX**BOTTOM 25**

ALLIANCE	\$51,440
CODY-KILGORE	\$51,792
ELBA	\$51,948
RED CLOUD	\$52,299
HARVARD	\$52,364
MULLEN	\$52,800
PAXTON	\$52,930
OVERTON	\$53,080
LITCHFIELD	\$53,440
EWING	\$53,454
KEYA PAHA	\$53,751
MINATARE	\$53,760
SUTHERLAND	\$53,779
ARCADIA	\$53,792
LOUP COUNTY	\$54,027
ST. EDWARD	\$54,036
PLEASANTON	\$54,229
NEB UNIFIED DIST 1	\$54,400
AUBURN	\$54,480
BRADY	\$54,530
STAPLETON	\$54,694
WAUSA	\$54,720
SCOTTSBLUFF	\$54,912
WYNOT	\$54,960
ELWOOD	\$55,027

TOP 25

LINCOLN	\$84,326
FREMONT	\$78,432
SYRA.-DUNBAR-AVOCA	\$78,210
NORTH PLATTE	\$77,965
PAPILLION-LAVISTA	\$77,276
ESU NO. 6-MILFORD	\$77,062
ESU NO. 9-HASTINGS	\$76,680
COLUMBUS	\$75,525
ESU NO. 11-HOLDREGE	\$74,984
ESU NO. 2-FREMONT	\$74,704
NORFOLK	\$74,344
ESU NO. 1-WAKEFIELD	\$74,281
SCOTTSBLUFF	\$73,621
ELKHORN	\$73,595
GRAND ISLAND	\$73,556
CHADRON	\$73,317
ESU NO. 10-KEARNEY	\$73,101
ESU NO. 13-SCOTTSBLUFF	\$73,054
GERING	\$72,781
NORRIS	\$72,682
BELLEVUE	\$72,614
ESU NO. 16-OGALLALA	\$72,584
EAST BUTLER	\$72,502
RALSTON	\$72,398
HOMER	\$72,384

**BOTTOM 25**

ELBA	\$56,610
ARCADIA	\$56,744
MINATARE	\$56,784
ST. EDWARD	\$56,943
ANSELMO-MERNA	\$57,104
RED CLOUD	\$57,663
WYNOT	\$57,708
CODY-KILGORE	\$57,768
STAPLETON	\$58,029
GILTNER	\$58,128
KENESAW	\$58,128
WAUNETA-PALISADE	\$58,128
NIOBRARA	\$58,136
STERLING	\$58,380
ELGIN	\$58,482
SUMNER-EDDYVILLE-MILLER	\$58,652
LOUP COUNTY	\$58,696
MCPHERSON COUNTY	\$58,820
BOYD COUNTY	\$58,823
WAUSA	\$58,824
EWING	\$58,924
ANSLEY	\$59,118
WALLACE	\$59,136
ELWOOD	\$59,196
MAYWOOD	\$59,368



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Leadership Smiles: NSEA's three-day, expense-paid Leadership Academy delivered smiles and knowledge to Association members this past summer. At left, Rachael Robinson-Keilig and Lacritia Spanel of the Central Community College-Hastings Education Association share a smile and a computer screen. Above right, Nebraska Western Community College Education Association's Tiffany Wasserburger and Lincoln Education Association's Bailey Feit listen intently.



Role Playing: CreekValley Education Association's Morgan Harms, left, works with Rilee Daffer of the Broken Bow Education Association, above, during a role playing session at NSEA's Leadership Institute. Below, members pose for a photo in the NSEA Headquarters with the State Capitol in the background. From left are Mindy Conner, Dee Ann Roy and Marie Wadas, all of the Valley County-Arcadia Education Association.



Knowledge, Skills, Leaders

Leadership Institute Builds for the Future

Each summer for 30 years NSEA has hosted a Leadership Institute. This year, nearly three dozen future leaders took advantage of the three-day event, learning more about leadership and their Association.

Watch future editions of *The Voice* for details on the 2018 Institute. Here is a list of 2017 attendees:

Banner Co.: Angie Hilbert, Jessica Stauffer.
Bellevue: Andrew Bowen.

Broken Bow: Rilee Daffer, Morgan Harms, Lisa Russell.

Central Comm. College-Hastings: Rachael Robinson-Keilig, LaCrita Spanel.

Chase County: Rita Nickel

ESU No. 7 Columbus: Paula Peterson.

Falls City: Breanna Scholl.

Lincoln: Bailey Feit, April Jorgensen, Jules Spickelmier.

Metro Community College: Joan Trimpey, Mary Umberger.

Nebraska Western Comm. College: Tiffany Wasserburger.

North Platte: Michelle Strickland.

Omaha: Katie Cameron, Kathy Poehling, Babe Rogers, Beth Winbinger.

Scribner-Snyder: Marsha Silver.

South Platte: Jody Ziola.

St. Paul: Sarah Hill.

Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca: Megan Brown.

Tekamah-Herman: Tracy Heffelfinger, Jane Walford.

Umo'Ho' Nation: Katie Renfro.

Valley County-Arcadia: Mindy Conner, Dee Ann Roy, Marie Wadas.

Wilcox-Hildreth: Nurita Lambert, Sarah Wall.



FEARLESS IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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Guard Offers Anti-Bullying Program

UNL, Harvard Built-Plan Based on Army Values

Nebraska teachers can now access a research-based bullying prevention program through their local Nebraska National Guard program.

HEAR – Helping Everyone Achieve Respect – was developed in a coordinated effort of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Harvard Graduate School of Education and training professionals at Career Training Concepts.

HEAR offers presentations designed to engage youth on bullying, the consequences, and how students can minimize bullying.

Lt. Col. Will Prusia, a former middle school teacher at Kearney, is the Nebraska National Guard's recruiting and retention commander. He said the program is based around the seven U.S. Army values – values he says anyone can and should live by.

Prusia said "We use those values to try to change the climate of a school," with options for follow-up conversations.

In one school, the approach brought together students from different clubs and organizations with a focus on "what students can do to change what is happening in the hallways," he said. The students had small group discussions about bullying and how to apply the HEAR materials.

The basic HEAR program is 45 minutes, said Prusia, but multiple sessions are available, depending on local needs.

Among those who developed the Guard's plan was Dr. Susan Swearer, the Willa Cather Professor of Educational Psychology and Professor of School Psychology at UNL. Swearer is also the co-director of the Bullying Research Network and director of the Empowerment Initiative.

Teachers may also ask Guard representatives to speak about Guard careers. The Career Direction program offers details about scores of jobs, including engineering, medical, carpentry, aviation, intelligence, mechanical, technology and transportation.

"We can provide someone who can speak to trades in the Guard, and many Guard members use those skills in the civilian marketplace," said Prusia.

The programs are offered at any Nebraska school, he said. National Guard presenters can enhance curriculum with classroom presentations through the Guard's Heritage Outreach Program and other offerings.

To schedule programs, contact Prusia at 1-402-309-7450, or via email at:

william.j.prusia.mil@mail.mil



Award winner: Norfolk Education Association President Kimberly Erickson was the recipient of a \$650 grant to her school from California Casualty in honor of Erickson's teaching excellence. At the presentation were, from left, NSEA President Jenni Benson, Erickson, California Casualty Field Marketing Manager Stephanie Whitmore and Norfolk Middle School Principal Chuck Hughes.

Erickson Gets Teaching Excellence Nod

Norfolk Educator will Attend D.C. Ceremony

Norfolk Education Association President Kimberly Erickson is one of just 38 teachers across the country to receive the 2018 California Casualty Awards for Teaching Excellence recipients.

The awardees represent the best of their profession and will be honored at the NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala next February in Washington, D. C.

As part of that honor, Erickson received a check for \$650 from California Casualty during a ceremony at Norfolk Middle School in late September. The cash will be used by the school as determined by the building's administrative staff.

Erickson is a middle school band and orchestra teacher at the school.

The California Casualty Awards for Teaching Excellence are unique: in addition to being recognized for excellence in instructional and professional practice, awardees are nominated by their peers – their NEA state affiliate – for their dedication to the profession, community engagement, professional development, attention to diversity, and advocacy for fellow educators.

"These outstanding educators put heart and soul into supporting students and improving the profession," said Harriet Sanford, NEA Foundation President and CEO. "We deeply appreciate California Casualty's partnership in recognizing educators across the country."

The NEA Foundation and the National Education Association jointly present the awards.

'Boundaries' Series Emphasizes Educator Standards

Nebraska educators are held to a high professional standard. In an effort to promote a better understanding of what is expected, the Nebraska Professional Practices Commission (NPPC) has released a series of videos entitled "Crossing Boundaries."

The six videos include dramatizations of actual cases that have come before the NPPC illustrating educators in violation of ethical or professional standards. Topics covered include testing protocols, alcohol, inappropriate relationships, social media relationships, time on duty and contracts.

The videos come with a facilitator's guide, which provides discussion questions designed to engage participants in conversation related to the ethical and long term

effects of each situation.

NPPC Clerk/Administrator Kelly Muthersbaugh encouraged future and current educators to watch, and asked administrators to use the series to start discussions about professional standards.

The series and related material is found at the NPPC website at nppc.nebraska.gov/ videos, and on YouTube by searching for "Nebraska Professional Practices Commission." There are also six previously created case studies depicting even more situations.

Muthersbaugh is also available to speak to pre-service students and educator groups about the work of the NPPC. For details, contact her at 402-471-2943, or by email at:

kelly.muthersbaugh@nebraska.gov

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Buying a Car? Check the Resale Value Even Those Who Drive Old Cars Forever Need to Know This

By Miriam Cross

When you're shopping for a new car, dickering with the dealer to lower the sticker price may be your main concern.

But even if you drive the car until the wheels fall off, overlooking resale value could be a costly mistake.

"Depreciation is the largest cost in owning a car, more so than fuel and repairs," says Tim Fleming, an analyst for Kelley Blue Book (KBB). Even if you don't plan to sell it anytime soon — or ever — how your vehicle retains its value is important. For example, if your car is totaled in an accident, insurers will cut you a check for the value of the car at the time of the incident.

Midsize pickup trucks and midsize and large SUVs hold value best, says KBB. That's because cheaper gas and improved fuel economy have boosted appeal. Electric vehicles and subcompact and luxury cars depreciate the most over time. (Porsches are an exception because low volume fuels demand from status-conscious buyers.) Sleek "performance" vehicles, such as the Volkswagen Golf R and Subaru WRX, fare best after the bulky SUVs and trucks.

Resale values can vary widely among models within the same brand. For example, the Toyota Tacoma truck was named KBB's resale winner for 2017, holding 67.5 percent of its value after three years and 57.5 percent of its value after five years. The 4Runner SUV came next, with a resale value of 62.2 percent after three years and 52.5 percent after five. But the tiny Prius C and Yaris models held only about 30 percent of their value after three years and 20 percent after five.

KBB and Edmunds.com both offer "cost to own" tools, which allow you to enter a make and model and calculate additional costs of vehicle ownership — including depreciation — over the course of five years. The higher the depreciation figure, the more value it loses over time.

One way to make depreciation work to your advantage is to buy used. Thanks to a glut of off-lease vehicles, prices for used cars have declined. Fleming expects the used car bargains to last two more years.

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Kiplinger

Your Mobile Phone Could Get Hacked, Too

Crooks Send Texts That May Trick You into Allowing Access

By Rivan V. Stinson

Thomas Martin is president of Martin Investigative Services Inc., based in Newport Beach, Calif., and author of the newly released book *Seeing Life Through Private Eyes: Secrets From America's Top Investigator to Living Safer, Smarter, and Saner*.

Why are cell phone numbers popular with criminals?

In the mid '80s, when the cell phone came out, it was used to make phone calls, just like the regular phone in your house. Now our whole lives are on our smart-phones. Once criminals get your number, they can get your e-mail, texts, photos, purchases you made online and the credit card information that you used to make those online purchases.

How can crooks get cell phone numbers, and what happens when they do?

They can hack the cell phone providers, such as Verizon or T-Mobile, and get batches of cell phone numbers, which can have from 500 to 5,000 numbers in a single loop. Then they send out a text, such as "Here's \$20 off tickets to the local theater," or "Here's a \$10 gift certificate to In-N-Out," that contains so-called Trojan-horse malware. Once you click on the link, they have verified your number and have access

to your cell data, such as your photos and other information that they can use to try to blackmail you. Or they can capture your date of birth and Social Security number to sell to identity thieves.

You've said that crooks can get cell phone numbers from databases, too. Who compiles those databases?

The databases that are out there are compiled by all kinds of people. Some online companies sell customers' data, including cell numbers, and other information about what products people are buying that can be used for marketing purposes. The problem is that cell phone numbers aren't regulated in the U.S., so there are no rules requiring companies to keep the numbers private.

What can people do to protect themselves?

One way is to have more than one mobile phone. Use one phone only for calls—that's the number you give out. Don't put any photos on it, don't text with it, and don't e-mail on it; save that for the other phone. If having two phones isn't practical, just be a little more cautious about who you give your cell number to. If you have a landline or work number, it's better to give those out. If it were up to me, the order would be landline number first, then office number and then cell phone number at the very end.

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Kiplinger

New! NEA Member Benefits Offers a Shopper's Guide Newsletter

Looking to save money on everything from electronics to home furniture to movie tickets and everything in between? As an NEA member, you have exclusive access to the new NEA Member Benefits member-only shopping newsletter, the NEA Member Shopper's Guide.

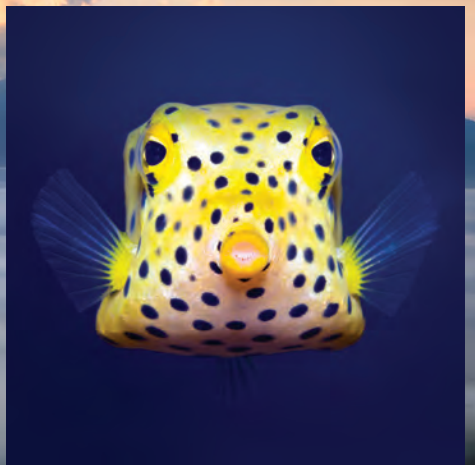
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**Executive
Director
Maddie Fennell**

“

*Teaching IS like
rocket science:
complicated,
collaborative and
capable of taking
our students to
places yet to be
explored.*

”

We have a teacher problem. There aren't enough of them.

According to the American Institutes of Research, “Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has been declining since 2010 — by nearly 20 percent in 2012-13 alone. Meanwhile, the teacher workforce is aging. Some 85,000 teachers retired in 2008-09, compared to 35,000 over 25 years ago.”

Education is the bedrock of our democracy and a primary path to employability and economic success. Research has proven that the most important in-school factor affecting student learning is the teacher.

Education drives economic success and teachers are the engine.

Too Many Air Bags

We need teachers; not just “good enough” teachers, but highly effective teachers who have an abundance of pedagogical knowledge, the appropriate dispositions to work with developing learners, and an ever-expanding tool chest of skills to draw upon.

But a broken system, a draught of educators, and numerous other factors have perched our profession at a precipice of change — the question is whether we are going to build the airplane to take us to new heights, or build air bags to cushion our fall.

Sadly, too many places are building air bags. They are “de-professionalizing” teaching. It's that mentality that says “anybody can teach.” They argue to just make it easier to be a teacher.

But we can't lower the bar and expect to achieve excellence. We need to make teaching into a true profession that provides both accountability and autonomy. And we have a few guideposts that can help us “build the plane” to professionalism.

Let's learn from other fields that have transformed into acknowledged professions. In 1832, a young man came home and told his father that he wanted to enter a field of study his father declared to be “a profession for which I have the utmost contempt. There is no science in it. There is no honor to be achieved in it; no reputation to be made” (Starr, 1984, p. 82). What was that field of study? Medicine!

It's difficult to believe now, but at one time, medicine was not considered a profession. “The Social Transformation of American Medicine” does a nice job of outlining the historical transformation of the entire medical enterprise. It didn't happen by lowering standards. It happened by closing ineffective preparation programs and raising the standards of what it took to become a doctor.

Collective Accountability

The US Department of Education's Blueprint for R.E.S.P.E.C.T acknowledges that “other respected professions — accounting, medicine, engineering, and law, to name a few — share attributes that are conspicuously absent from education. They set high

standards for entry into the field and insist on strong preparation before licensure or certification.”

Finland is acknowledged as a leader in student success. So let's learn from Finland! As reported by Linda Darling Hammond, “Unlike the United States, where teachers either go into debt to prepare for a profession that will pay them poorly or enter with little or no training, Finland made the decision to invest in a uniformly well-prepared teaching force by recruiting top candidates and paying them to go to school. Slots in teacher training programs are highly coveted and shortages are virtually unheard of.” That's raising the bar!

In “Transforming Teaching, Connecting Professional Responsibility with Student Learning”, a report issued by the NEA Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching (which I chaired), we envisioned a teaching profession that embraces collective accountability for student learning, balanced with collaborative autonomy that allows educators to do what is best for students. Teachers are willing to be held accountable when they are allowed to make professional judgements and provide leadership — not just for their classroom, but for their school.

Easy Entry

In his recent study, “Teachers' Roles in School Leadership,” Richard Ingersoll uses data from the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey to note “...teacher leadership and the amount of teacher influence into school decision-making are independently and significantly related to student achievement, after controlling for the background characteristics of schools, and this is so for both mathematics and ELA.” Schools that provide for teacher leadership raise student achievement!

I understand why some policymakers want to make entry into the education profession easier; they want more bodies in classrooms, in front of kids, quickly. But that short-term political mindset increases our long-term problems when we lose a profession of highly skilled educators who are committed to growing their expertise over time.

It's Rocket Science

Our education system is an interwoven web and you can't just pull on one string. Even the most accomplished among us cannot act in the best interest of students in a dysfunctional system over which we have little control or authority.

Teaching IS like rocket science: complicated, collaborative, and capable of taking our students to places yet to be explored. Like scientists, professional educators need to meet high standards throughout their career and they must also be allowed to exercise their leadership skills in the classroom and beyond. Our students deserve no less.

This column first appeared on the Education Week website as a blog submission.

From the Grassroots, Comes Growth

Local Retired Groups are Foundation of Retired Membership

Always trendsetters, Nebraska retired teachers actually formed local retired organizations well before NEA-Retired and NSEA-Retired existed.

In fact, NSEA-Retired relies on nearly a dozen local associations of retired members for a large part of the more than 5,000 members who belong to the statewide membership.

NSEA-Retired formally came into being in 1986, but more than a dozen years earlier, at least in the western part of the state, retired educators were organized and active. Consider this report of news from the past, as provided from the archives of the Panhandle Education Association-Retired:

"On July 28, 1973, 44 retired teachers met with Miss Alma Ashley, president of the Nebraska State Retired Teachers Association, and Miss Mildred Moore, associate vice-president for Area VI of the National Retired Teachers Association.

"The meeting was held at Nebraska Western College. These ladies presented information on a recent bill which had passed (LB445). The bill provided for a cost of living increase in the state service annuity for



Sesquicentennial Assistance: Volunteering at the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Mobile Museum during Nebraska's 150th anniversary celebration in Lincoln in September were, from left, Wes and Norma Daberkow, Margie Nowak, Ann Quinlan and Pat Kurtenback. All members of the Lincoln Retired Teachers Association, they assisted at stations helping children explore such things as games testing knowledge about Nebraska and an opportunity to build a shelter and test its ability to withstand Nebraska's weather.

persons who retired prior to July 1, 1973.

"They also discussed the importance of organizing a Scottsbluff Area Association of Retired Teachers."

The organization Ashley led is now called the Nebraska Association of Retired School Personnel, and in the Scottsbluff area that organization and the Panhandle Education Association-Retired — our local affiliate — continue to work together today.

Insurance Seminars Planned

In November, NSEA-Retired and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska will hold seminars on Medicare and insurance options available to retirees younger than 65.

At each location the seminar will have two parts. Morning sessions (from 9:30-11 a.m.) will cover Medicare. Afternoon sessions (1:30-3:30 p.m.) will cover the EHA early-retiree insurance options.

Registration and more details are found on the website at:

www.nsea.org/retired

Sites include:

Monday, Nov. 6: Omaha at the Culinary Arts Institute at Metropolitan Community College's Fort Omaha campus, Building 22, ICA Room 201A, 5370 N 30th St.

Tuesday, Nov. 7: Kearney Holiday Inn, 110 S. 2nd Ave.

Wednesday, Nov. 8: Southeast Community College, Lincoln, 8800 'O' St.

Friday, Nov. 10: Norfolk's NECC Lifelong Learning Center, 801 E. Benjamin Ave.

— De Tonack
— President, NSEA-Retired



Where Neihardt, Black Elk met: The Elkhorn/Sandhills Education Association-Retired enjoyed a visit to the John G. Neihardt Museum in Bancroft for their first meeting of the fall. Shown among the statues of Black Elk and Neihardt are Charles Maier, Ruth Grone Maier, Francis Rohrich, Helen and Art Tanderup. The sculpture is by Herb Mignery, a native of Bartlett, which happens to be Art's hometown. Chapter President LuEttie Clark led the meeting later after a lunch at the Senior Center, a lunch that included apple pie topped with ice cream!

NPERS Veteran Gerke Takes Directorship

Randy Gerke has been appointed as the director of the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems (NPERS), succeeding Phyllis Chambers, who served as director since January 2007.

The announcement was made by Omaha teacher Janis Elliott, an NSEA member and chair of the Public Employees Retirement Board (PERB) of Directors.

Gerke was selected by the board following an extensive national search. The governor appointed Gerke on the recommendation of the board. The appointment is contingent upon approval by the Nebraska State Legislature at the next Legislative Session.

Gerke has served as the deputy director of NPERS since 2007, and was accounting and finance manager from 2003 until his promotion to deputy director. In 2006, he served as interim director.

He has previous work experience as controller and human resources director at Midland University. He also served as the financial accounting supervisor for the Department of Utilities in Fremont. He has a master of science degree in computer information systems and a bachelor of science in accounting and information management.

Previously he has been responsible for budgeting, cash flows, plan audits and plan

accounting at NPERS.

Elliott, a past member of the NSEA Board of Directors, said Gerke's work for NPERS and his knowledge of retirement issues in Nebraska will make him a great leader for the system while working to communicate plan needs to the Legislative Retirement Committee of the State Legislature.

NPERS has administrative responsibility for the State of Nebraska's defined benefit pension plans for public school employees, judges and state patrol. In addition, NPERS administratively oversees the defined contribution plans for state and county employees and a deferred compensation plan.

McCune, Heys Cited for Excellence

NSEA member and Mid-Plains Community College business instructor **Kathleen McCune** has been named Postsecondary Teacher of the Year by the Association for Career and Technical Education of Nebraska.

She was recognized last summer during the Nebraska Career Education Conference in Kearney.

McCune has served as a district representative, president and past president of the Nebraska State Business Education Association (NSBEA).

NSEA member **Matthew Heys** a social studies teacher with Millard Public Schools, is the 2017 State History Teacher of the Year, an award sponsored by The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

Heys received a \$1,000 award and Millard Public Schools received history books and educational materials from the Gilder Lehrman Institute. Heys will also be one of 53 finalists for the \$10,000 National History Teacher of the Year Award.



Advocacy Conference Winners: When conference vendors handed out \$50 Amazon gift cards at NSEA's Advocacy Conference in Columbus, two winners came from Hastings and Logan View. At left is Deb Lyons, Hastings Education Association, with NSEA Organizational Specialist for Hastings, Kristen Sedlacek. At right is Logan View Education Association member Ryan Brand, with Matt Pittman, the organizational specialist for the LVEA. Conference sponsors included the Horace Mann Companies; First Nebraska Credit Union; Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska; EHA Wellness; California Casualty; and the Frank, Fox & Hoagstrom Financial Group.

University Seeks Nominees for McAuliffe Award

Christa McAuliffe sought to remind the entire nation of the importance of education and take students all over the country on the "ultimate field trip."

Sadly, McAuliffe and six others died in the 1986 explosion of the Challenger Space Shuttle. Her courage was evident in her willingness to board the shuttle and in her fierce defense of what and how she would teach from space. She wanted her flight to be more than a publicity stunt.

To honor her courage and her memory, the Nebraska McAuliffe Prize for Courage and Excellence in Education was established soon after the shuttle explosion. The annual prize honors a courageous Nebraska K-12 teacher each year with a \$1,000 prize and a beautiful plaque. The recipient's school also receives \$500 to support the school's mission.

Next July, for the first time, the Nebraska McAuliffe Prize

teacher will be honored at part of Administrators Days in Kearney. Is the next recipient teaching in your school?

Some of the past 31 winners have been special educators, working with children who have difficult disabilities or helping to define best practices when those practices are not yet clear. Some have persisted in working with children whose ability to learn is challenged by disadvantage, behavioral issues or adversity in their home lives.

Some Nebraska McAuliffe Prize teachers began new programs where success was not guaranteed and where staying with old methods might have been easier.

To nominate a colleague, or to learn more, go to the website at:

<http://courage.unl.edu>

Nominations are due by Saturday, Jan. 27. Supporting materials must be submitted electronically by Saturday, March 31.

Take Action!

Utilize NSEA's Free App; Sign Up for Two Free Magazine Subscriptions

How nice would it be to have all the information you need about your professional association at the tip of your fingers all the time?

Thanks to the NSEA mobile phone app, that capability has become a reality.

"Our app is really quite robust and provides members with a very nice touchpoint for Association services," said NSEA President Jenni Benson. "I would encourage members to download and use the app."

The NSEA app gives instant access to all kinds of membership perks like:

- A link to the NEA Member Benefits page where you can find hundreds of dollars in savings on any given day.

- Top stories from *The Voice* and other sources featuring news on education you won't find elsewhere.

- The most recent and complete edition of *The Voice*.

- Updates on action by the Nebraska Legislature on educational issues that affect you, your classroom and students.

- Information on NSEA's Children's Fund, and how to draw from the fund to help children in need.

- Links to NSEA's social media pages, including Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram.

- An instant 'Contact Us' button that gets your message through to NSEA.

- A staff listing and contact details.

To download the free app, search your mobile phone's app store for 'Nebraska State Education Association.'

Two Subscriptions!

Here's another perk of membership: Two free magazine subscriptions.

One of the benefits of becoming an NSEA member is getting two free subscriptions through the NEA Magazine Service. It's NEA Member Benefits' way of thanking you for membership.

Members can choose from a variety of premier fashion, sports, science, beauty and fitness magazines, among other popular titles. Simply go to this website and check the available titles:

neamb.com/free-magazine-offer-field

Speaking of Education

"What our schools do may prove in the long run to be more decisive than any other factor in preserving the form of government we cherish."

— President Franklin D. Roosevelt,
1882-1945

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

Bedroom Maps

From Stella Block, a third-grade teacher:

"In order to reinforce map skills my students write a detailed description of their bedrooms, with shapes, sizes, colors and directional relationships between objects in their rooms. After a few lessons on maps, keys and symbols the students create an aerial view map of their room.

"I display each bedroom map on a bulletin board. In the center of the board I place a zip lock bag containing the children's descriptions. During free time, the children can take out a description and try to match it to a map. If the map is accurate, the challenge shouldn't be too difficult."

Behavior Notebook

Maribeth Petery, a fourth-grade teacher in Pennsylvania:

"I keep track of responsible student conduct by assembling a three-ring notebook and placing one page per student inside at the beginning of the year. On the first day of school, I show the students their blank page and challenge them to keep it blank for the whole school year.

"Here's how it works. When a student breaks one of our rules, that student must go to the behavior notebook and write a brief account of what transpired. If I agree with the assessment, I sign it and date it. This page is sent home with the report card at the end of the marking period.

"A big point is made of the fresh start for all at the beginning of the next marking period. If a student has a blank page all year, I send home the original blank page with a heartwarming note of praise for good behavior all year long."

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



Twin River Pride!

Members of the Twin River Education Association pulled out their 2017-18 NSEA room cards and snapped a quick photo last month to show their association unity. From left are Jeanne Czarnick, Betty Shanle, Melissa Wortmann, Kelli Stankoski, Barb Kuntz, Mindi Reardon, Emily Houdersheldt, Mindy Swanson and Melissa Ellingson.