

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ♦ November 2018



ONLINE ASSOCIATION

Tekamah-Herman members have success networking through NEA edCommunities



- ▶ **MESSAGE TO SENATORS: SAFETY FIRST**
- ▶ **DA NO. 158: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

THE VOICE

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A Great Public School for Every Child.

Celebrate Education!

American Education Week Honors All Educators, our Nation's Tradition of Great Public Schools

If you are a member of the Nebraska State Education Association, you belong to the parent organization – the National Education Association – that worked to found American Education Week nearly 100 years ago.

On the heels of World War I, national leaders sought to correct an alarming finding: many Americans were illiterate and out of shape. Fully 25 percent of armed services draftees could not read. Another 9 percent were physically unfit for duty. How best to address those issues? Education was the answer, and public schools provided the vehicle for delivery. The NEA and the American Legion pushed for American Education Week, which would herald the value of a good education.

Members of both organizations met and adopted resolutions for the national effort to raise awareness of the importance of education. At 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 American Education Week was observed in 1921. A year later, the U.S. Office of Education became a sponsor, and the PTA followed in 1938.

With the centennial observance of the Treaty of Versailles – which formally ended World War I – later this month, it is fitting now to observe American Educa-



tion Week with extra zest.

NSEA President Jenni Benson asks Association members to celebrate and observe the week, and noted that NEA's resources make celebration easy.

"As educators, we should pause for a moment to understand how far American education has come in the past 100 years. We should also encourage others in our communities to understand and appreciate the value of public education," she said. "American Education Week is the perfect way to do that."

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

nea.org/grants/19823.htm

The theme is "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility."

The NEA website provides 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 public service announcements – and more – are available.

This year the schedule looks like this:

- Monday, Nov. 12: Kickoff day.
- Tuesday, Nov. 13: Parents Day.
- Wednesday, Nov. 14: Education Support Professionals Day.
- Thursday, Nov. 15: Educator for a Day.
- Friday, Nov. 16: Substitute Educators Day.

Literacy Convention at Kearney in February

Dates are set and the plan is nearly final for the Nebraska State Literacy Association's annual conference in February. The NSLA was known as the Nebraska State Reading Association until a name change that became effective on July 1.

Let Literacy Light the Way is the theme for the two-day event at Kearney.

The Thursday, Feb. 21, schedule includes workshops by Bernadette Dwyer, chair of the International Literacy Association; Donald R. Bear, author of Words

Their Way; and children's author Judy Young, among others.

The Friday, Feb. 22, event offers Kelli Westmoreland, an advocate for effective instruction through the use of classroom libraries; April Henry, a teen and adult author; and Barbara Boroson, who will speak to autism spectrum disorders.

Non-NSLA members can join and use a discounted registration fee. To join, or to learn more, go to the website at:

www.nereads.org

On the Cover: Members of the Tekamah-Herman Education Association are well in front of the NEA edCommunities wave, with nearly every THEA member signed up with the new NEA virtual community. THEA officers Tracy Heffelfinger, Manni Belfrage and Jane Walford led the charge. Learn more on Page 7.

The Value of Voice



**NSEA President
Jenni Benson**

“

In that action alone, TSTA rescued my family's budget, gave me an understanding of the value of union membership, and helped me begin to speak up for myself, to find my voice.

”

My teaching career began in Texas, where I spent my first seven years leading a classroom. That first full year of teaching was in Harlingen, in the Rio Grande Valley, almost as far south as you can go in Texas without crossing the river.

I taught seventh and eighth grade special education in a self-contained classroom, and my principal that first year was a challenge. I'm not usually one to back down from a challenge, but as a new teacher, this situation was a bit intimidating. That said, I've always been one to go to the wall for my students and my family.

As it turned out, my Harlingen experience taught me the value of my Association and of my Association membership. In those early years, I had very little idea of what the Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) was, or what it could do for a member. Someone had asked me to join and because I thought I should be protected, I did so.

Not only did I begin to see value in Association membership during my stay in Harlingen, I began to find my Association voice.

Caught Off Guard

It was after my principal yelled at me in front of others that I began to speak out. He was conversing with several people in the lobby outside his office when I walked into the room. He shouted at me and said “Don't you know we are in a meeting?” I left without a word.

On a good day, this principal's behavior was aggressive. Soon after the office incident, he yelled at some of my students. I knew his actions were wrong, and I decided enough was enough. Unaware of proper protocol, I went straight to the superintendent. He was supportive; the principal changed his behavior, at least around me; and I forged ahead in my work. As I said, to the wall for my students.

After a good first semester, I was called to the District Office one day in the spring. I hadn't had any more incidents with the principal and had no idea what was ahead. I was caught completely off guard.

It seemed the school district had been overpaying me since the beginning of the school year. Their solution? They would deduct \$200 a month from my paycheck for the next six

months to make their error right.

Well, 32 years ago, that was a bunch of money – a LOT of money. To the wall for my family! I mustered all my inner strength, looked them in the face and said, “Isn't a contract legally binding? You made the mistake.” They politely said, “You have to pay it back.”

At this point I remembered TSTA. I thought perhaps they could help. Remember, this was 32 years ago: I had to drive all the way home, go to the touch-tone phone hanging on the wall of our home, and dial TSTA's toll-free 800 number!

I reached the TSTA office and spoke to an Association field staffer. Their advice was to return to school, see the superintendent and ask him what time he would be available to meet in his office the next day with an attorney from TSTA. By the way, it was a six-hour drive from the TSTA office in Austin to Harlingen.

I returned to school, took another deep breath, mustered what was left of my inner strength and walked back into the superintendent's office. One more deep breath and I posed the question: when would be a good time to meet with TSTA? Their response told the story. “No need. We'll just leave it where it is, and adjust it next school year, if needed.”

Whew.

Pay Stub Experience

In that action alone, TSTA rescued my family's budget, gave me an understanding of the value of union membership, and helped me begin to speak up for myself, to find my voice.

The district eventually came out even. I gained more than an understanding of the value of membership. Through this I developed a deep appreciation for my Association's work.

There was one more lesson found in my experience: every year since my pay stub scare, I have checked my pay stub against my contract to make certain I am being paid correctly.

And that leads to another lesson: if you check your pay stub and find you are being paid too much or too little, or perhaps are on the wrong step on your salary schedule, call NSEA. Our great field staff and associate staff are just a phone call (1-800-742-0047) away!

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Health Rates Approved

Premiums Set for 2019-20, No Increase in Co-Pays

An increase of 4.99 percent in premiums for the health and dental insurance plans used by nearly every Nebraska school district marks the 11th consecutive year with an increase of 8 percent or less.

That's remarkable, considering the recent volatility of health insurance rates.

The Educators Health Alliance (EHA), a consortium of three statewide public school groups, manages the plan. Health insurance rates will increase 5.2 percent and dental rates 1 percent, resulting in the overall increase of 4.99 percent.

The new rates are effective for the plan year that begins Sept. 1, 2019. The 4.99 percent hike follows a zero percent increase for the year that began Sept. 1, said EHA Board of Directors Chair Neal Clayburn. The average annual increase for the last 10 years has been 3.6 percent.

"This is good news for districts and school employees across Nebraska," said Clayburn, NSEA's associate executive director. "Keeping the increase low 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, and due to the expertise of EHA's insurer, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska."

There will be no changes to office visit or emergency room co-pays. There are no changes to prescription drug co-pays or coinsurance. The plan includes modest raises in deductibles while keeping out-of-pocket maximums the same for most members. High deductible plans have additional out-of-pocket increases. These first-in-four-years changes are less than often seen in other plans and keep the EHA plan comprehensive and competitive.

The increase after a one-year freeze is made possible by many factors, such as:

- The impact of the EHA's state-wide wellness and health promotion program;
- A pharmacy benefit management plan that has reduced pharmacy trends;
- A program designed to assist in management of chronic diseases;

For more details on the rates, go to:

ehaplan.org

For questions about your health care plan, reach EHA Advocate Greg Long toll-free at 1-866-465-1342 or at:

greg@ehaplan.org



Question Session: During one of the general sessions at the Social Justice Retreat in Lincoln this summer, Lincoln Education Association member Wayne Smith asks a question, while Dr. Ferial Pearson, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Angelic Kluthe, Lincoln, listen in.

Social Justice Topics Resonate

Social justice was the topic, and Lincoln was the site for a well-attended retreat on that issue late this past summer.

Nearly 100 educators from across the state were on hand for the day at Lincoln's Irving Middle School. The agenda presented by LEA members included a broad look at social justice issues that resonated well with those on hand.

Highlights included a session by Paul Yates, executive director of the non-profit I've Got a Name. Yates gave an update on sex trafficking in Nebraska.

A training on social justice was offered by NEA Senior Program/Policy Analyst Aaron Dorsey, who also offered a general

session on Talking Race: Grounding Our Understanding.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha's Dr. Ferial Pearson spoke on Power, Privilege and Intersectionality: Supporting Each Other. Omaha South High's Jack Bangert offered sessions on trauma in the classroom.

Given action by 300 NSEA members at the April Delegate Assembly to place a focus on social justice, NSEA President Jenni Benson lauded the conference.

"This is an important issue to members. These sessions were a great step forward in expanding our members' knowledge of social justice issues," she said.



Officers in Arms: NSEA President Jenni Benson met with 2018-19 state officers at the Educators Rising Fall Leadership Conference at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. From left are President Bekka Hitz, Millard West; Danny Le, Omaha Bryan; Emily Lorenzen, Omaha Burke; and Benson.

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Online Association: Leaders of the Tekamah-Herman Education Association have taken a strong approach to instituting the use of the NEA edCommunities virtual program, and nearly all of the Association's 51 members participate. From left are Chief Negotiator Manni Belfrage, President Jane Walford and Vice President Tracy Heffelfinger.

Leading by Example

Tekamah-Herman Leaders Utilizing edCommunities to Talk to Members

When the Executive Committee of the Tekamah-Herman Education Association sat down this past summer to discuss the year ahead, the idea was to map out what the team hoped to accomplish in 2018-19.

Meeting in a room at the Tekamah City Library, their planning session began with each committee member signing up for NEA edCommunities, a new virtual community that provides collaboration, connection and curriculum for educators.

By the end of September, that planning session had led to a singular accomplishment: all but a couple of the THEA's 51 members had joined the Association's private edCommunities group. The THEA is far, far ahead of most other local Associations in Nebraska in that regard, said NSEA President Jenni Benson.

"The Association leaders at Tekamah-Herman are setting the example," said Benson.

"They understand that edCommunities can be a great tool for Association work and can be a great tool for members looking to improve their teaching skills and knowledge, all to the benefit of students."

A Separate System

THEA leaders Jane Walford and Tracy Heffelfinger were already signed on with edCommunities when other members of the executive committee arrived at that summer library meeting. In no time at all, the entire committee had joined.

"Everybody else just signed up while we were there," said Walford. "It was so easy."

Easy – and beneficial in so many ways. Walford said the Association had used Google docs to communicate Association news and messages to members in the past. That program, however, was tied to the school district network. That tie-in potentially allowed school district officials to view sensitive Association documents and records.

"edCommunities gives us a completely separate system," said Walford. "It allows us to send emails to all of our

'edCommunities really is one-stop shopping for all Association work.'

*— Jane Walford,
Tekamah-Herman EA President*

members at their personal email account.”

Removing personal email addresses from the school server in the Association’s communication equation avoids all sorts of complications.

“It’s a good idea for members to disassociate their association communications from their school email accounts,” said NSEA Director of Member Rights Trish Guinan. “Email accounts are one of the first things school districts and school district legal firms check if there is any sign of an employment issue.”

That leads to another advantage: members maintain and update their personal email addresses at edCommunities, relieving THEA leaders from collecting and maintaining that email list.

“For years we have been trying to collect and maintain a personal email list for our members,” said Walford. “We even have several who have never had an email address outside of their school email. Now, with edCommunities, we’re getting there.”

There is one caution: while the THEA is utilizing a private group on edCommunities, some of the subject matter groups on edCommunities are open to the public. Non-members and non-educators could be participating.

Wanted, Needed

Collection of most of those emails was spurred by a simple request from THEA leaders: they asked members to complete a pre-negotiations survey. The survey was posted on edCommunities, and THEA members had to sign up for an edCommunities account in order to participate in the survey.

“We had to put something out there that our members wanted and needed,” said Manni Belfrage, THEA’s chief negotiator. “Everyone wanted to fill out the survey.”

As Heffelfinger said, “If members wanted their voice heard on the survey, they had to sign up.”

By mid-September, fewer than 10 members had yet to join edCommunities. Walford sent out individual reminders to those members, and another six or seven signed up in short order. Going forward, Walford said communication with members will be easier. When she posts a new message on edCommunities, members of the private THEA group will receive an email alert.

edCommunities Lets You Connect, Collaborate, Learn

NEA’s edCommunities is an online virtual community that allows educators to connect, collaborate, share and learn. You might call it “Facebook for Educators.”

Via edCommunities, NSEA members can:

- Connect with colleagues and educators locally or across the country by association groups, as they do at Tekamah-Herman, or by interest groups such as social studies or math.
- Collaborate with school and community stakeholders. edCommunities special interest groups can be made available to non-educators who have expressed passion for an education topic or area of study.
- Share and access free, high-quality curricula and resources—1,500+ and growing daily—to use to create customized learning tools.
- Expand your professional opportunities with virtual learning events
- Ultimately, it will improve student learning

Registration is Easy at edCommunities

Registration can be completed at mynea360.com. Once you complete a profile, join a group—or several groups. You can also create a group, with three formats available:

- Public, open to anyone.
- Private, allows approved applicants only.
- Unlisted, hidden and by invitation only.

Tips for Use

DO:

- Participate by asking and answering questions and sharing information.
- Keep posts relevant and brief.
- Post rather than send a “low priority” email.
- Use groups rather than email distribution lists for collaboration.
- Post files instead of emailing attachments.
- Think about who can see your posts.

DON’T:

- Post anything you wouldn’t want other professionals to read.
- Write long-winded posts.
- Use edCommunities to replace an in-person conversation, when possible.
- Post confidential information on profiles or public groups.
- Post personal messages.

“I feel like this might be a little bit better, because the message is a post to edCommunities, and not another email message from me,” she said.

Important Documents

Walford said communication with Association members is vital.

“At every leadership training we’ve been to – and between the three of us we’ve been to quite a few – they tell us the most important thing we can do is communicate with our members,” said Walford.

Belfrage said providing a plentiful information stream allows members to reach out to leadership with questions. Members will get alerts when the Association’s contract is posted to the site, along with district teacher guidelines and other important documents. All members will have access to the same documents at the same time.

“And,” Walford said, “when I leave the presidency, I can place all the files from the president’s office onto a file on the site, so the next president will have easy access.”

Belfrage noted that NSEA’s statewide membership materials for local association leaders will be posted to an edCommunities group in coming years.

Bargaining Contacts

Walford said a private edCommunities group can be used by multiple local Associations for a bargaining edge. To spur coordinated bargaining conversations among local associations, THEA belongs to a private edCommunities group with other locals in Tekamah-Herman’s bargaining array.

On a smaller note, Walford said her team is using edCommunities as a sign-up sheet for those THEA members bringing cookies and soup for a community-wide school board candidate forum hosted by the Association.

She has also researched the parameters of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) passed by Congress.

“It was a really good source of information for that issue,” said Walford.

“edCommunities really is one-stop shopping for all Association work,” she said.

Message to Senators: Safety First

Fennell Tells Judiciary Committee School Safety Must be a State Priority

NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell sent a clear message to state senators at a hearing on school safety issues in late September.

Safety, she said, is essential to the learning process.

“Students who do not feel supported and safe at school, both physically and psychologically, simply do not learn to their fullest potential,” Fennell told the Legislature’s Judiciary Committee. “Creating safe and supportive schools is central to this purpose and must be a state priority.”

Committee members were considering an examination of school building security measures; a study of the role and purpose of school resource officers; and a proposal to let school boards arm teachers or other school employees. Fennell said effective school safety starts with prevention, and engages schools, families and communities as partners.

“Schools need the resources to implement and sustain the practices that will truly make our children and schools safe,” she said. She proposed:

- Training for teachers and administrators on the use of positive behavior intervention and supports for at-risk students; and

- Following best practices in school safety design including identifying vulnerabilities, installing doors with working locks on spaces where students are present, and designing building access that is both welcoming and protective.

Fennell cited LB633, introduced in 2018, as an example. That bill would

have authorized school districts to levy up to one cent for school security measures, and another cent for student technology. If approved by a two-thirds majority, those costs would not count against the district’s \$1.05 levy limit.

A second option would expand the scope of qualified capital purpose funding to include building safety and security improvements.

Resources Needed

Fennell said the main duty of school resource officers should be to protect schools from outside threats and serious criminal violations, with resource officers called on only for extreme

infractions.

To ensure that happens, she said school leaders must create appropriate limits on the use of law enforcement in public schools, including agreements with police departments and court systems to limit arrests at school.

School leaders should also provide specialized juvenile- and school-specific training for resource officers.

Finally, Fennell said legislation could help provide the resources needed to ensure school safety. She suggested allowing school districts the levy and budget authority to enhance safety and security.

“As educators, we know that safety and security are the basis for an environment that is conducive to learning,” said Fennell. “We accept our responsibility in working with you as legislators, with our local school districts and communities, to develop and maintain that environment.”



Fennell

Bill to Arm Teachers Appears Headed to Legislature

While the Legislature’s Judiciary Committee spent nearly five hours talking about school building safety and school resource officers on a late September Friday afternoon (see main story), it was the topic of arming teachers that drew most of the headlines.

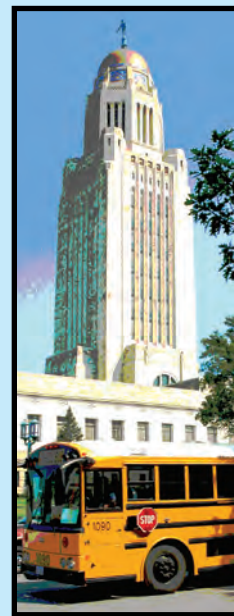
Hastings Sen. Steve Halloran’s interim study examined whether school boards should be granted the authority to allow school employees, including teachers, to carry concealed handguns on school grounds.

NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell did not testify on Halloran’s study, but was asked about it by news reporters.

Fennell said a survey of NSEA’s 28,000 members found that “overwhelmingly, they don’t want to be armed or their colleagues to be armed.”

NSEA’s standing resolutions, adopted each year at the Association’s Delegate Assembly, have for years included this language: “The Association also believes that students and education employees should never be allowed to carry firearms in an educational environment, unless explicitly used for school sanctioned activities.”

Halloran said he intends to introduce legislation in January that would let school districts to make the decision whether to allow armed teachers and education employees on campus.



Nebraska Legislature ‘19

Sign Up Now to Keep Current Legislature Open for Business in January

The NSEA Legislative Update is a weekly email that recaps the past week’s legislative action and gives a peek at what’s headed down the aisle in the coming weeks.

The Update begins in early January, and repeats weekly until the end of the session. Special events may also dictate special editions of the Update, as well.

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cathy.schapmann@nsea.org



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First Class! Palmyra/Bennet E.A. members gather at the Bennet Post Office to mail their certification ballots to the Commission of Industrial Relations. From left are Jennifer Hanger, Mindy Wolfgang, Cassidy Buescher, Becky Hall, Lisa Dowding, Jackie Engelhardt and Burke Brown.

Permanent Certification Earned at Palmyra

The relationship between the Palmyra District OR-1 Education Association and the district's board of education is pretty solid. President Burke Brown and his members hope to keep it that way.

With that goal in mind, Association members at Palmyra voted overwhelmingly last winter to certify their local association as the official bargaining agent for salary and benefits.

Certification removes one step from the local association's 'to do' list each fall. Under provisions of a 2012 rewrite of the state's collective bargaining statutes, local associations are required each year to formally request recognition by the local board of education as the association's bargaining agent. Certification allows the local association to simply request that negotiations get underway.

Brown said two benefits came from the process.

"First, we had an overwhelming vote in favor – 97 percent – which shows the strength of our union," he said. "Second, although we have a very good relationship with our school board, it eliminates one thing that can be a stumbling block in the future."

Brown said his members are aware that in some districts, official board recognition is difficult to acquire, of some school boards dragging their feet when it comes to recognition.

"But if we can eliminate that, we're all starting at a better place," said Brown. NSEA Collective Bargaining Organizational Specialist Randy Gordon agreed.

"There are many factors that play into why a local school board

might not recognize some local associations, so frank discussions with local leaders and members are critical to understanding what is going on," said Gordon.

NSEA worked with Palmyra members to guide the process through the Commission on Industrial Relations, which oversees such elections. All members of the bargaining unit had to be notified and given the opportunity to vote on the request to certify.

While a fairly set process, there are precise elements to certification. The work of Gordon, NSEA attorney Scott Norby and now-retired Organizational Specialist Jay Sears was important.

"Randy did a great job, and Scott was very thorough," he said.

Brown said Palmyra members have worked hard to build a good relationship with the board of education.

"Each bargaining term begins with highlights of what's happening in the district and a genuine sharing of ideas on how we can make our district stronger through the process of negotiations," he said. "Our strategy has been to remove barriers of conflict and misunderstanding, which ultimately lessens the chances of a derailment. Simply, this allows both sides to address the task at hand by working together."

Brown said locals interested in pursuing certification should contact their NSEA organizational specialist. He would also visit with local leaders. Reach him at:

burke.brown77@gmail.com

Beware of Phishing Email Scams, Scoundrels & Crooks

There has been a definite surge in phishing emails and scams where an attacker appears to be someone you know and attempts to get money, financial or personal information from you. Now is a good time to remind everyone to be careful and to be suspicious when checking email messages or texts.

That caution comes from NSEA Network Administrator Roger Kucera, who manages and monitors NSEA's computer network. His advice echoes that of security professionals around the world.

This advice comes on the heels of a scam that cost an Omaha Education Association member some hard-earned cash. To be blunt: "There are bad guys (and gals) on the Internet. Really bad," said Kucera.

He advised email users to look at return email addresses very carefully before responding. Never send money to anyone without

verifying email or text requests for money, and without calling the person requesting it for positive identification.

"It's easy to slip up when you are especially busy, so take extra caution ahead of time to prevent headaches later," he said.

He suggested this website to better understand phishing:

www.bit.ly/22phish

There has also been a huge increase in phone calls and text messages coming from spoofed numbers. These calls or texts could appear to come from someone you know but are really coming from unscrupulous telemarketers or crooks. Security researchers are now predicting that half of all phone calls in 2019 will be scams coming from spoofed telephone numbers. For more reading on this subject Kucera suggests this site:

www.bit.ly/2spoof

Mentoring to Assist Beginning Educators

NSEA Virtual Program Ties Mentors, Mentees

Rhonda Heim has taught 33 years with Plattsmouth Public Schools. Her resume includes resource, first grade, and, for more than 20 years, kindergarten.

When she began teaching in 1985, she did so without benefit of a mentor. And while her district offers mentors today, Heim believes that having a mentor would have been a huge benefit in her beginning years of teaching.

"Mentors are important for beginning teachers," she said. "New teachers need to feel supported during the transition from student teaching to the experience of being the sole decision-maker in the classroom. Mentors are helpful to both the experienced teachers and beginning teachers so that all educators collaborate and support one another."

Heim believes NSEA members have an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in mentoring and to show beginning teachers that their association is here to support their success. Using a grant from NEA, more than 15 member-mentors are now supporting 15 mentees through the NSEA Virtual Mentoring Program. Even more new teachers are receiving mentoring through a group-led virtual program in Grand Island and Omaha called the Early Career Learning Lab.

Each of these programs are generously sponsored by the local, by NSEA, and by NEA in hopes of increasing retention in the profession and engagement in the Association.

Confidential, Supportive

Mentees in a variety of content areas from special education to family and consumer science are matched with an NSEA member to mentor them **virtually** throughout the year. Mentors and mentees meet twice face-to-face, but the rest of the mentoring takes place after school hours over the phone, or through video confer-



Virtual Help: Rhonda Heim believes NSEA's mentoring program can keep beginning educators in the profession and build Association engagement.

encing.

The NSEA Virtual Mentoring Program does not supplant district mentoring programs, but rather supplements those options. What sets the NSEA Virtual Mentoring Program apart from school district programs is that it is member-led and completely confidential.

Mentees (not administrators) identify professional growth/instructional goals and a personal self-care goal. They work with their NSEA mentor to develop outcomes and measure success within a confidential and supportive environment. Mentors sign a confidentiality agreement and are trained on the importance of confidentiality and professionalism, ensuring candid conversations focused on growth.

If you want details on how to become an NSEA member mentor, please contact Dr. Cindy Copich, NSEA Teaching and Learning Specialist, at:

cindy.copich@nsea.org

Heim's mentee sought an NSEA mentor for the outside professional support and exposure to new and different ideas.

"It's important for me to make connections and learn from other professionals in my same content area," she said. "I'm fortunate for this opportunity and very excited to see how this will benefit my teaching this year, and in the years to come!"

Many rural mentees are the only teacher in their content area, so matching with a district colleague has limitations. NSEA's model ensures beginning teachers get the support they need.

If you are a beginning teacher and would like more details, contact Copich. There are mentors available now who are ready to support beginning teachers in these areas: physical education, kindergarten-sixth grade, middle school language arts, middle school special education, middle and high school math, middle and high school social studies, and high school science.

"This is one more example of how your local, state and national associations support teacher success," said Copich.

Virtual Instructional Coaching Available to Beginning Teachers

NSEA leaders often hear concerns from members about the current duties instructional coaches are asked to fulfill in many school districts.

For instance, in many rural settings, the school principal is often asked to serve as both the instructional coach and the evaluator. Research shows that for instructional coaching to be most effective, the coach should not conduct evaluations.

NSEA staff and leaders also hear from members that instructional coaches "report out" to principals about identified areas of improvement regarding specific teachers. These identified areas sometimes end up on a teacher's evaluation,

which can lead to a distrust of the instructional coaching process and its role in providing improvement for the whole school. Successful models rely on trust for an effective coaching interaction.

However, instructional coaching is one of the best ways to improve instruction and one of the most effective forms of professional development. All teachers can improve their performance by learning new techniques and strategies, and an NSEA virtual instructional coach may be a perfect option! NSEA virtual instructional coaches can provide coaching for beginning teachers in their second and third year of teaching. Members are trained by NSEA and are ready to as-

sist in a variety of content areas.

Beginning teachers use an NSEA-provided Swivl camera to upload an 8-to-10-minute lesson. The instructional coach from another school district then watches the lesson after it is stored on the Swivl cloud. Together, they debrief virtually after school hours. Having an NSEA coach from a different district protects confidentiality and allows teachers to improve as educators and reflective practitioners.

Call NSEA's Dr. Cindy Copich at 402-875-2123 if you have questions about the program, or if you would be interested in receiving instructional coaching services!

NSEA Teacher Salary Update

Nebraska Tumbles One Spot, Adjacent States Make Strides Forward

Teachers in Nebraska earned a national-average 2 percent pay raise in 2016-17, but fell one spot in the national salary ranks, according to NEA.

Three regional states made significant moves up the charts in the annual NEA Rankings and Estimates report, compiled every year since the mid-1960s. Teachers in North Dakota, South Dakota and Kansas earned significant salary bumps in the new report, with North Dakota blowing past Nebraska into the top 30. Nebraska now ranks 30th, after standing at 29th a year ago. As recently as 2009-10, Nebraska ranked 45th.

“Nebraska negotiators are generally doing well, as shown by the fact that we matched the two percent national average pay raise in the latest ranking,” said NSEA President Jenni Benson. “But from the state-level perspective, other states are increasing their investment in funding for education and teacher salaries.”

For instance, South Dakota teachers saw an 11.8 percent average increase in the ranking, and moved from 51st (the ranking includes the District of Columbia) to 48th. In cash, South Dakota teachers earned an average of \$42,025 a year earlier, and in the latest report earned \$46,979 — a \$4,954 raise. That increase is the result of legislative resolve after three decades of last-in-the-nation teacher salaries. In 2016, South Dakota lawmakers instituted a half-cent sales tax increase dedicated to enhancing teacher pay.

In Kansas, where salaries largely stagnated over the previous eight years, teachers had the fourth-highest increase in 2016-17, at 3.5 percent. With an average salary of \$49,422, Kansas teachers now rank 40th, up from 42nd the previous year.

North Dakota teachers benefited from the sixth largest increase, 3.4 percent, moving from \$51,233 to \$52,968 and rising in the ranks from 31st to 27th.

Easing the Shortage

The latest report indicates that during the 2016-17 school year the average salary for all Nebraska public school teachers passed \$52,000 for the first time. Still, the \$52,338 average salary dropped Nebraska from 29th to 30th.

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.” This year we found an offer for a Walmart driver in the North Platte area at \$86,000 a year, plus bonuses and benefits. We also found that Keim TS Inc of Omaha offered \$75,000 to top drivers, along with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska insurance and a retirement plan. Truckers and other professionals do vital work — but so do teachers.

“The teaching field has so many shortage areas,” said Benson. “Enhanced pay, whether from the state or local level, could ease those shortages.”

In recent years, Nebraska has clambered past Kansas, Missouri and Colorado in the ranking. In 2008-09, Nebraska was 45th and Kansas was 38th. Colorado was 26th.

Nebraska again lost ground against the U.S. average salary. The U.S. average salary is now \$7,322 more than the Nebraska average, a loss of nearly \$400 over the past year. Yet six years ago, Nebraska trailed the average by more than \$9,640.



\$35,333*

**2018-19 NEBRASKA FIRST YEAR TEACHER
AVERAGE STARTING SALARY**
(*NSEA DEPT. OF RESEARCH FIGURES)

AVERAGE SALARY BY STATE:

U.S. AVERAGE		\$59,660
16	WYOMING	\$58,187
22	IOWA	\$55,647
30	NEBRASKA	\$52,338
31	COLORADO	\$51,808
40	KANSAS	\$49,422
41	MISSOURI	\$48,618
48	SO. DAKOTA	\$46,979



NEA Rankings & Estimates, April 2018



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No. 158

NSEA's Annual Meet Set for April 26-27

DA Will Include New Round of Professional Development

Plan now to attend NSEA's 158th Delegate Assembly in April 2019.

Delegate Assembly is the once-a-year business meeting of the Nebraska State Education Association. Members from across the state, representing local associations large and small, are elected to attend and manage the business and future course of the Association.

This year, for the second time, the Friday night session will include nearly three dozen professional development sessions on a wide variety of topics.

While those sessions have not been finalized, work has already begun on improving last year's maiden voyage of the professional development model. The initial edition included breakout sessions on trauma informed classrooms, dyslexia, student loan reduction, anti-bullying programs, concussion management in the classroom, and much more. The professional development is open to delegates and non-delegates alike.

The Saturday business session will include discussion and debate by all delegates on educational issues, proposed changes to NSEA Bylaws and Resolutions, and setting of dues for 2019-20.

"We believe we will improve on last year's Delegate Assembly, and are working toward that goal," said NSEA President Jenni Benson.

NSEA's first meeting was held as the Nebraska State Teachers Association in Brownville on Oct. 16, 1867, just months after Nebraska gained statehood. NSEA is the state's oldest professional association.

The 2019 Delegate Assembly is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, at Lincoln's Cornhusker Marriott Hotel.

To make your interest in serving as a delegate known, contact your local association president, your local association building or faculty representative, or your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.



For the Cause: Omaha Education Association President Robert Miller, right, handed two checks to the Omaha Public Schools Foundation in October, including this check for \$2,000 from NSEA. With Miller are OPS Foundation representatives Joe Lecci and Toba Cohen.

Yale Apartment Evacuees Aided by OEA, Children's Fund

When 500 residents of the Yale Park Apartments in Omaha were displaced in mid-September, the Omaha Public Schools Foundation jumped into action. The Omaha Education Association quickly joined in, as did NSEA.

The residents – most of them refugees from Myanmar, formerly Burma – were forced to find other accommodations after city officials closed the units because of squalid conditions. An estimated 175 of the residents were children attending Omaha Public Schools.

Within a week of the evacuation, city housing inspection officials had documented more than 2,500 city code violations. City officials found natural gas leaks, bad wiring, leaky roofing, cockroaches and bedbugs.

The OPS Foundation soon began a campaign to assist the students, with a goal of raising \$40,000. The OEA Board agreed to add \$2,000 to the campaign, and NSEA matched that amount with money from the NSEA Children's Fund.

OEA President Robert Miller said the conditions at the complex were called "inhumane."

"Educators know firsthand that a student can't reach true potential when their basic needs have not been met," he said.

Miller asked the OEA board about contributing to the foundation's campaign. The board agreed and approved the

\$2,000 donation, with the funds coming from the OEA operating budget.

"OEA doesn't have a budget for these kinds of emergencies, but that didn't stop us from assisting," said Miller.

An OEA member asked about accessing NSEA's Children's Fund to assist the students. Miller contacted NSEA, and a decision was made to match OEA's gift.

"Educators from Omaha to Chadron, Norfolk to Wauneta-Palisade and all places in between have made a difference in the lives of nearly 200 students in Omaha," he said. "This just goes to show that the caring by educators goes beyond the walls of the classroom and extends miles from the hometowns of educators who know there is a need."

The donations will help purchase clothing, bedding, mattresses and other basic needs. Many of those items had to be left behind or destroyed.

The Foundation's initial goal of \$40,000 was surpassed quickly. The goal was moved to \$50,000 and then \$60,000.

"This is one of the reasons that teaching is so rewarding," said Miller. "Teachers believe that there is good in the world, and that it can be a constant in the lives of our students. And educators will be a constant in their lives, making a difference one student at a time."

To contribute to the drive, go to:

www.bit.ly/opsfyale

Water, Apples & Iceland at Fall Confab

Kearney Conference is Yet Another Winner for Retired Members

Nearly 80 retired educators learned about water, apples, Iceland and Chief Standing Bear during the NSEA-Retired's annual Fall Conference in Kearney in October.

Nebraska Educational Television Producer Christine Lesiak delivered the keynote, in which she talked about the network's latest production, Follow the Water. The program traces the streamflow of the Platte River from beginning to end.

Also on the agenda was A Core Experience, in which participants were given a taste of peeled apples and then asked to describe the taste. That led to discussions about planting seeds by working in the community, nurturing those seeds over the years, and eventually leaving a legacy.

The breakouts included the stories of former Nebraska Teacher of the Year Will Locke, who told of biking the famous trail of Chief Standing Bear.

Also on the agenda were breakouts on the Nebraska Legislature, a travelogue on Iceland, information on scams and frauds and an update on Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska insurance options for Medicare and pre-65 educators.

Retirement History, Part I

Retired Bellevue educator Phil Kaldahl is the Grover Cleveland of the NSEA – the only Association president to serve two non-consecutive terms of office.

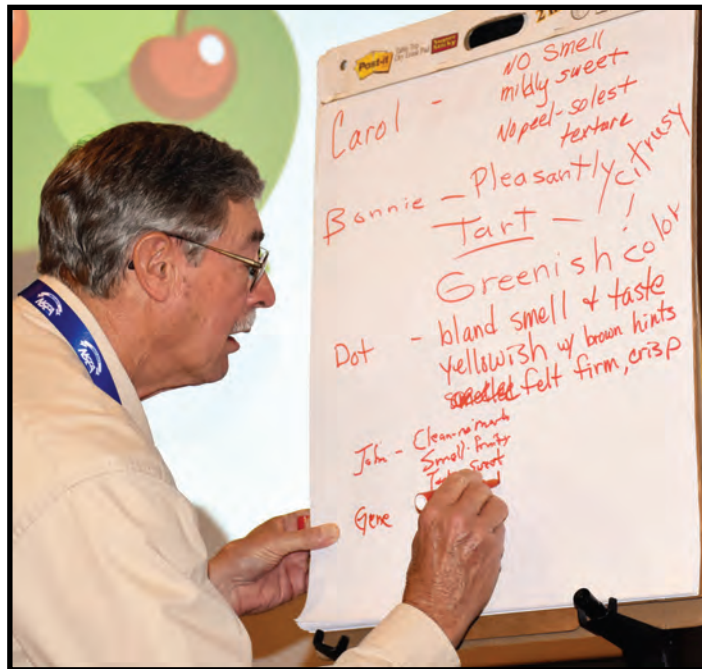
Kaldahl was president for a nine-month term in 1973, and later served a full 12-month term in 1974-75. Later, he continued to work to improve teacher retirement benefits.

Looking back, Kaldahl says many of the improvements in the state's teacher retirement plan came about through the work of the late Jim Griess, who served as NSEA Executive Director from 1991-2006, and Herb Schimek, who retired from NSEA in 2009 after 38 years as director of government relations.

"I think that when they saw openings in the Nebraska Legislature, they took them quickly," said Kaldahl. "Putting the contribution rates of members and school boards into law was smart. We have not yet seen all the good that will come from having done this."



Long Reach: Francis Rohrich of Norfolk was blessed with long arms, which came in handy when purchasing an arm's length of raffle tickets at the NSEA-Retired Fall Conference. In fact, several of his friends "borrowed" his arm for their ticket purchases. He is pictured with Jim McDermott, Scottsbluff; Dee Gillham, Wheeler Central; and Bonita Dickinson, Sidney. BELOW: Newman Grove's Gene Wissenburg writes down what he discovered in his "core" experience.



Kaldahl also said putting a cost of living adjustment language into statute was also a great achievement.

"We had earlier COLAs, ad hoc and others, but they did not clear the way like these two," he said.

Retirement History, Part II

Speaking of Herb Schimek, he reminds us that Social Security came to Nebraska educators in 1955, thanks to Republican President Dwight Eisenhower. In 1953

Eisenhower advocated for including more occupational groups in the Social Security system. Eisenhower's position differed greatly from later Republicans who alleged that Social Security was going broke and should be abolished because "less government is better."

In fact, Schimek pointed out, Social Security was popular with most Americans in 1955. That year, Congress passed legislation permitting some groups left out of the 1935 Social Security Act an opportunity to join.

Employees of political subdivisions and various religious organizations voted whether to join Social Security, with Nebraska's school employees voting in the affirmative. The Nebraska State Patrol was the only Nebraska group that did not follow suit, and educators in some states like Texas and California also voted no.

"Nebraska teachers," said Schimek, "voted correctly."

— De Tonack, President
NSEA-Retired

NEAMB Site Retooled, Now Member-Centric

NEA Member Benefits is committed to “Making Members’ Lives Better.”

To that end, we are excited to announce that NEAMB staff launched a new website on Nov. 1. The new website shifts the website experience from descriptions of products and services to a member-centric, emotionally driven expression of the value and benefits for NEA members.

Over the past 18 months, NEAMB staff have worked very hard to re-imagine the website experience and create one that achieves members’ needs while making it more effective and enjoyable.

A few highlights of the new website strategy include:

- Personalized, dynamically structured experiences.
- More conversational; less technical.
- Needs-based rather than product-based.
- Fully responsive to the size of the device.

Find the new website at:
neamb.com

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bit.ly/2O16s6Sneamags

Hurricane Michael Fund Set Up by NEAMB

There are members, employees and friends of the National Education Association who want to help our colleagues in this time of crisis.

NEA’s Member Benefits Corporation has created the NEA Member Benefits Relief Fund, a charitable organization, to collect donations for NEA members affected by natural disasters. Those who wish to assist members in recovery from Hurricane Michael should go to:

neamb.com/how-you-can-help.htm

Donations are distributed to affected NEA State Affiliates for them to distribute to their members through their respective relief programs. NEA’s Member Benefits Corporation will pay any fees imposed by GoFundMe, so 100 percent of the money raised will go directly to supporting affected NEA members and their families.

Freeze, Unfreeze

Credit Bureaus Barred from Charging for Changes to your Credit Report Status

As of September 21, credit bureaus can no longer charge you to freeze your credit reports or to lift a freeze. Here’s what you need to know to get your free freeze.

By Kimberly Lankford

Question: I remember reading a while back that everyone starting this fall will be able to freeze their credit report for free. Is this change effective now, and what do I need to do to get my free freeze?

Answer: The law providing free credit freezes took effect on September 21. The three big credit bureaus—Equifax, Experian and TransUnion—can no longer charge a fee to place or lift a credit freeze. In the past, the cost to freeze your credit report varied by state. Some states required free credit freezes for their residents, but others let the credit bureaus charge \$5 to \$10 every time someone wanted to freeze their credit record or lift the freeze (when applying for a loan, for instance).

A credit freeze prevents new creditors from reviewing your credit report, making it harder for identity thieves to take out credit in your name. For it to be effective, you’ll need to contact each of the credit bureaus separately to initiate a freeze. To see what steps you need to take, go to the Equifax freeze page, the Experian freeze page and the TransUnion freeze page.

Once you request a freeze either online or by phone, the new law requires the credit bureaus to implement it within one day. And if you ask for the freeze to be lifted, the credit bureaus have one hour to do it. “That is the law’s maximum time, but for most people setting the freeze online or by phone, it will be pretty close to instantaneous,” says Francis Creighton, the president of the Consumer Data Industry Association, a trade organization for credit bureaus and other consumer reporting agencies.

Some states have additional consumer protections. In Utah, for example, the credit bureaus must initiate or lift the freeze within 15 minutes of the request for a freeze on a mobile app, says Rep. Jim Dunnigan, who sponsored the credit freeze legislation in the Utah House of Representatives (Utah’s law took effect in May). You can find out about additional consumer protections in your state from its division of consumer protection or the state attorney general’s office.

The freeze remains in effect until you take steps to remove it—either temporarily or permanently. “Understanding the correct terminology is important,” says Eva Velasquez, CEO and

president of the Identity Theft Resource Center. “A thaw (or unfreezing) of one’s credit allows them to temporarily remove the freeze for a specified period of time. For example, if a consumer knows they will be applying for credit, they can request a thaw for a day, or a week or another specified time period. And after that time period has elapsed, the credit will freeze again—no additional action is necessary on the part of the consumer.” Lifting a credit freeze, on the other hand, removes the freeze until the consumer actively requests the freeze from the credit bureau again. It’s free whether you lift or thaw a freeze.

The new law also lengthens the duration of a fraud alert that you can place on your credit file from 90 days to one year. A fraud alert signals to businesses that you may have been a victim of identity theft and that they should verify your identity before opening any new accounts. You need only place a fraud alert with one credit bureau, which will notify the others.

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CSC has also designated an individual to coordinate the college's efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Inquiries regarding Title IX may be directed to: Ted Tewahade, Title IX Coordinator, Chadron State College, 1000 Main St. Chadron, NE 69337, Telephone: 308-430-0980, Email: titleixcoordinator@csc.edu.

Put on Your Mask First



**Executive
Director
Maddie Fennell**

“

*A recent study
by the
University
of Missouri
found that
93 percent
of elementary
school teachers
report that they
experience high
levels of stress.*

”

My heart plummeted as I looked down at my cell phone and read these words: “I don’t think I can do this anymore.”

That text message came from a brand-new teacher (we’ll call her Lisa) who has amazing gifts and talents but, in her first year, also has been assigned to “that class.” The first time I visited, I observed from a distance and thought, “Oh boy! What positive statement can I make?”

When we had time to chat after school I told her “This class is going to offer you the opportunity to be a really great teacher!” and in my head I thought “and probably drink a lot of wine!”

As I listened to her share her struggle, I felt a knot at the pit of my stomach as my mental time machine transported me back to MY first year.

I recalled my own anguish as I dealt with a tsunami of stress....28 kids – BD, LD, MH Mild – it felt like every letter of the darn alphabet! My principal was on the verge of retirement. She would emerge from her office, shake her head at my loud, wiggly group, and head right back into her office.

Teacher Stress

I honestly thought my second year would be better, but the stress didn’t stop. It turned into anxiety, then to depression. I reached out to the employee assistance program and was hooked up with a GREAT counselor who helped me develop new tools. The skills I learned not only helped me be healthier but helped me thrive as a teacher.

A recent study by the University of Missouri found that 93 percent of elementary school teachers report that they experience high levels of stress. Another study showed a dramatic increase in the number of educators reporting that they had seven or more days in the past 30 that their mental health was not good — from 34 percent in 2015 to 58 percent in 2017.

I doubt any of these numbers surprise you. But we need to remember what flight attendants always say — put on *your* mask before helping others. As educators, we need to help ourselves before we can

help our students or colleagues.

Refill the Cup

More than 20 years later, I still find times when I need a counseling “tune up” – surgery, death of a loved one, vacationing with my dad and my husband (hey, traveling internationally with one devout Republican and one devout Democrat = stress!). Taking the time to focus on me sometimes feels selfish, but I remind myself that I cannot pour from an empty cup.

NSEA is working with the Educators Health Alliance and our own non-profit, LEARN, to promote more resources on stress reduction and recovery to educators across the state. We want you to know where you can get help for yourself and build the skills that will also help your students.

Thanks to an NEA grant, we were able to help Lisa. I called one of the best teachers I knew and asked if she would join the new NSEA mentoring program and share her wisdom. She jumped aboard, sharing a year’s worth of lesson plans and decades of wisdom. Lisa and her mentor are going to spend time in each other’s classrooms and continue to journey together through the rest of the year.

Lisa’s principal, who was supporting her as much as possible with limited re-

sources and many early career staff, welcomed the help. After brainstorming with the principal about what more they could do, our Organizational Specialists are also pulling together a “relaxation room” for the whole staff: a calm, quiet space where teachers can take a break and pamper themselves.

I’ll close with this advice from Julie Owens, associate professor of education at Concordia University-Portland, who says: “In order to support students or those around you, you must first support yourself! Think of the banking system. You need to have money to make withdrawals. If you have nothing left to give, because you have not taken care of yourself, your ‘bank’ will be deficient and you will be even more stressed. Practice mindfulness strategies, do things you enjoy, and remember you are worthy of being cared for also.”

Need a Mentor or Instructional Coach?

Do you know an early career teacher who needs a mentor? Or would you like an instructional coach to help you strengthen your skills? Contact NSEA Teaching and Learning Specialist Cindy Copich at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

cindy.copich@nsea.org

Five Actions that Will Lower Your Stress

- Laugh. Laughing is like an internal massage!
- Breathe. In through your nose and out through your mouth, s-l-o-w-l-y.
- Eat well & drink less caffeine. Yes, carbs = comfort, but in moderation.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Talk. Impression without expression invites depression. When you’re feeling down, unburden yourself to someone – a professional or a friend – who will listen.

Jensen Served on NEA Board

Longtime teacher and NSEA leader John Jensen died in Omaha on Oct. 18.

He taught physics and math at Omaha Benson High School for 23 years and then was a curriculum specialist at Omaha South High until he retired in 2003.



Jensen

He served on nearly every committee and subcommittee within the Omaha Education Association and NSEA. He was a past president of the OEA, served on the NSEA Board of Directors and

served eight years on the National Education Association Board of Directors.

He also served on the Nebraska Professional Practices Commission, as a trustee on the Omaha retirement system, and on the OEA negotiations team for nine years. After his retirement, Jensen was active in NSEA-Retired, and served on that organization's board of directors for many years. He was active in NEA-Retired organization, and narrowly lost a bid for that group's presidency last year.

A Colorado native, Jensen earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Nebraska-Omaha in 1967, and a master's degree four years later. He is survived by his wife, Sandy; a son, Scott; daughters Chris and Megan; and five grandchildren.

A celebration of life will be at 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 17, at the Magnolia Hotel in Omaha.

TV Journalist Joins NSEA

Former television news producer and NSEA communications intern Kelsey Foley is NSEA's new associate staff for communications. She will assist the communications team with production of publications, videos and all aspects of Association communications.

Foley was most recently an online content producer for NBC's WOWT 6 News in Omaha. While there she coordinated digital coverage of daily and breaking news and severe weather. She also worked as senior web producer at CBS' 10/11 News in Lincoln, writing online articles and developing social media strategies. In her new role, Foley will assist with NSEA outreach efforts on social media and other electronic communications.

In 2010, Foley served as an intern with NSEA communications, organizing a fall media tour and traveling the state with then-NSEA President Jess Wolf.

Foley earned a bachelor's degree in media production at Hastings College. She is a graduate of Anslemo-Merna High School. Staff retirements led to a reorganization allowing former communications associate Jan Anderson to take on a new role of coordinating meetings and conferences, and assisting the NSEA Executive Director.



Foley



Veterans Together: NSEA's Rebecca Smith, left, poses with LaRee Stephens, center, and Carol Swerczek near the Korean War Veterans Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C. They served together in the U.S. Navy and enjoyed the veterans Honor Flight in September.

NSEA's Smith Recognized for Service on Honor Flight

Everyone has a hero in life, and now the NSEA membership and staff has a hero as well.

Rebecca Smith, an NSEA associate staff member, spent four years on active duty in the U.S. Navy, and another 16 years in the Naval Reserves before retiring from duty in 2006.

Thanks to her service, Smith participated in the first – and final – all female Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., for veterans of the armed services. Smith's flight took place in late September.

"It was a day I will never forget, and much of that feeling comes from the thanks and support

from colleagues, family and community," she said.

Along with veterans from and including every war since World War II, Smith spent the day in Washington, D.C., touring monuments, reacquainting with fellow veterans and making new friends.

The Honor Flight was hosted by television's Loretta Swit, who starred as Col. Margaret 'Hot Lips' Houlihan in the television series M*A*S*H*. Swit joined the veterans for the flight and part of the tour.

During the bulk of her final 15 years as a reservist Smith was assigned to the Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Force. In that role she assisted in moving mail, supplies and personnel in support of carrier groups working along foreign coasts and seaports. That took her to Scotland, Israel, Turkey, Italy, Sicily, Norway and Hawaii. Her last deployment in 2005 was as part of a small contingency to Kuwait to assist Operation Iraqi Freedom.

After that deployment, her team returned home in small groups or alone. Smith flew to Lincoln alone, and missed the large group "welcome home" greetings that are accompanied by television cameras and brass bands.

"I thought a lot about that over the years and realized it just wasn't to be a part of my experience," she said. "But the Honor Flight changed all of that. I felt so appreciated and the cheers and welcome were so genuine and just so much more than I ever expected."

Why Vote **FOR** Education?

A recent post to the Florida Education Association's Facebook page voiced the opinion that teachers "should stay focused on teaching our children and leave the politics out of it."

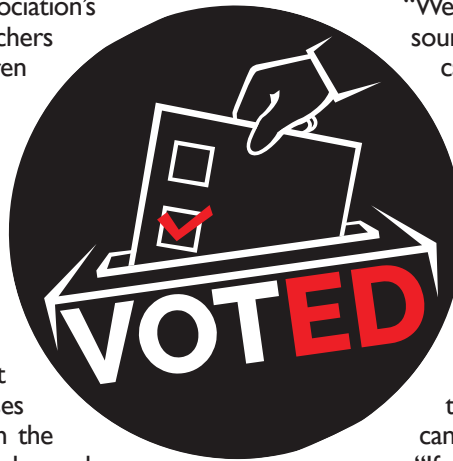
Florida's director of communications penned a perfect response: "We can do that."

"We can teach your children – in the few spare moments we will have between all the computerized, high-stakes testing that is mandated by politicians. It won't be what is best for children, but we can do that."

"We can teach your children – but without music, art, recess, or any other resource classes that will be cut due to lack of funding from the politicians that determine our budget and demand increased emphasis on cookie-cutter accountability via easy-to-grade multiple choice tests. It won't be what is best for children, but we can do that."

"We can teach your children – and then go to our second and third jobs because no one is negotiating with politicians for our wages and benefits. We'll be tired. We'll sacrifice time with our own families. It won't be what is best for children, but we can do that."

"We can teach your children – with outdated materials that don't meet the needs of our 21st century learners due to a lack of funding from politicians. It won't be what is best for children, but we can do that."



"We can teach your children – with shiny, new resources that don't work on the ground level because the textbook and testing companies that lobby politicians to get lucrative contracts don't have input from the teachers who will be using these materials in their classrooms every day. It won't be what is best for children, but we can do that."

"We can teach your children – with lessons based on standards that are not age-appropriate because no one will push back against politicians who demand a 'college and career ready' program of study... in kindergarten. It won't be what is best for children, but we can do that."

"If you could just let us know who will pick up the mantle and fight these battles for your children, we will happily 'just teach.'"

So know that the candidates and issues on these pages are recommended based on their views on public education.

The recommendations here come not from a select committee meeting in a smoke-filled back room, but from bipartisan committees of your colleagues in your legislative or State Board of Education district. The recommendations that result are based **solely** on education issues.

Remember: the officials you elect will make decisions that affect all you do in your classroom. Vote for public education.

Vote **'Yes'** on Initiative 427

Medicaid Expansion Would Benefit Students, Education Support Staff

Support for Initiative 427 is growing, and if Nebraskans support the idea the Cornhusker state will become the 33rd U.S. state to embrace Medicaid expansion since the program was unveiled eight years ago.

Passage of Initiative 427 on Nov. 6 would expand Medicaid health care coverage to about 90,000 Nebraskans — the working poor who can't qualify for coverage under traditional Medicaid rules. At the same time, many of these uninsured Nebraskans don't earn enough to afford or to qualify for the financial help that would let them buy insurance. They are stuck in a "coverage gap."

Expanding Medicaid is the best tool available to make sure all Nebraskans get the health care they need. It would also bring in federal tax dollars to support local jobs, local health care facilities and local economies.

A recent analysis by the Nebraska Legislature's Fiscal Office found Medicaid expansion would

The Coalition Grows

With the Nov. 6 Election near, more groups have joined a coalition in support of Medicaid expansion is growing. The latest members:

American Cancer Society Action Network
American Heart Association
Health Center Assn of Nebraska
Susan G. Komen Great Plains
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Previously named coalition members include:

AARP Nebraska
Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska
Community Action of Nebraska
Friends of Public Health
League of Women Voters of Nebraska
Nebraska Hospital Association
Voices for Children in Nebraska

A list of all coalition members can be found at:

insurethegoodlife.com

cost Nebraska's general fund nearly \$91 million in the three years starting in fiscal year 2020. However, the state would receive \$1.36 billion in federal funds during that period.

The influx of federal dollars could benefit the state. A 2017 study of Medicaid expansion in Michigan, reported in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, found these benefits:

- Annual state spending on mental health and correctional health programs was reduced by \$235 million in Michigan.

- States may experience a macroeconomic benefit through increased economic activity spurred by federal dollars. That's because Medicaid expansion does not shift spending from state to federal, but increases total spending in a state without a corresponding state tax increase.

- Economic activity grows as low-income adults who paid directly for health care or private insurance before expansion redirect spending to personal and household needs.

Every state has the option to expand Medicaid. To date, 32 states have done so. Nebraskans and voters in Idaho, Montana and Utah will consider Medicaid expansion on Nov. 6.

Nebraska's Legislature turned back expansion six times in recent years. Educators are urged to vote 'yes' on Initiative 427.

These Candidates Support Public Education

Governor: Sen Bob Krist

During his 10 years in the Nebraska Legislature, Krist has been a solid supporter of public education.

A consensus builder who can reach across the aisle in the officially non-partisan Legislature, Krist hopes to “restore the Nebraska principles and priorities of funding for critical services, continued investment in infrastructure and education.”

That would be a welcome change from the current admin-

istration’s “get on board or we’ll help you get off” approach to working with the Legislature.

Krist’s vision for public education in Nebraska is to “continue to grow educational opportunities for all” — regardless of geographic or demographic barriers.

NSEA previously recommended Krist, a decorated combat pilot, for election to the Legislature in both 2010 and 2014.

U.S. Senate: Jane Raybould

Lincoln businesswoman Raybould seeks to unseat Sen. Deb Fischer, who cast the tie-breaking vote to allow Betsy DeVos to become U.S. Secretary of Education. Raybould supports strengthening the teacher quality pipeline, supports holding

charter schools to the same standards of transparency as public schools, opposes vouchers and tax credits for K-12 schools, and supports making college more affordable for all.

Congressional District 2: Kara Eastman

Founder of an award winning non-profit, Eastman toppled former Congressman Brad Ashford in the primary and is a significant challenger to incumbent Don Bacon. Eastman supports reduction of student loan debt by challenging predatory lenders who profit off students seeking to better themselves. She

supports investments in public schools and resists the allure of charter schools. She also supports the College for All Act, which would eliminate tuition for children in families earning less than \$125,000 a year, and would make community college attendance free.

Nebraska Legislature

Legislative District

2

Susan Lorence

Lorence, a telecommunications analyst, lives in Plattsmouth and has set four policy priorities: quality education, access to healthcare, job security and tax relief for middle class families.

Legislative District

4

Sen. Bob Hilkemann

Hilkemann is a former high school science teacher and retired podiatrist who supports most NSEA positions. He frequently reaches out to NSEA for advice on education issues.

Legislative District

6

Machaela Cavanaugh

Cavanaugh is knowledgeable, articulate and “very strong on education,” said the interview team. She works at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Legislative District

8

Megan Hunt & Mina Davis

The dual recommendation offers a win-win for education supporters. Hunt has name recognition, is engaged with students and is supportive of all issues related to public education. Davis has a deep knowledge and understanding of education, and is building an enthusiastic following in her campaign.

Legislative District

10

Wendy DeBoer

The No. 1 priority for DeBoer is education. She is seen as a candidate with people skills, as one who is not afraid to ask questions and has a willingness to learn.

Legislative District

12

Former Sen. Steve Lathrop

In previous Legislative service, Lathrop was an effective and eloquent voice for education, workers and consumers. He brought parties together for CIR reform in 2011, and led prison reform efforts during his legislative career.

Legislative District

14

Jeff Parris

The top priority for Parris if elected? Education. His responses to the interview team’s questions were well-thought and complete. He supports unions and hopes to serve on the Legislature’s Education Committee.

Legislative District

16

Chuck Hassebrook

A well-known education leader in northeast Nebraska, Hassebrook served 18 years as a University of Nebraska Regent, and for 17 years led the Center for Rural Affairs. He favors reducing K-12 reliance on property taxes.



How to Find Your Nebraska Legislative District:

Enter your address in the website at
www.bit.ly/NEDistrict

Legislative District 18

Sen. Brett Lindstrom

The interview team views Lindstrom as personable and knowledgeable and cited legislative experience and financial knowledge, specifically in the area of retirement, as assets.

Legislative District 20

Sen. John McCollister

McCollister believes that investing in the education of Nebraska's children is a good investment. He has proven to be an effective and articulate leader in the Legislature.

Legislative District 22

Mike Moser

Moser, past mayor of Columbus, was an instructor at Central Community College and owns a small business. He hopes to lower property taxes and seeks "more value for each tax dollar spent." He was a clear choice in the Primary.

Legislative District 24

Stephanie Nantkes

A longtime NSEA member, Nantkes challenges an incumbent with an uneven record of support of teacher retirement and Association issues. Nantkes says "We are good at educating our students and we should want to strive to make our schools better."

Legislative District 26

Sen. Matt Hansen

Hansen's first term has shown him to be an effective legislator who believes that Nebraska's K-12 schools deserve reliable and dependable funding sources.

Legislative District 28

Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks

Now seeking a second term, Pansing Brooks' first term was marked by passionate and articulate leadership efforts on behalf of K-12 and higher education in Nebraska.

Legislative District 30

Myron Dorn and Don Schuller

Schuller worked 30 years for the Natural Resources Conservation Services. He seeks bipartisan solutions to the property tax issue, while ensuring full education funding. Dorn chairs the Gage County Board, and lists several roads projects as



accomplishments. Both are personable and transparent.

Legislative District 32

Sen. Laura Ebke, Tom Brandt

Incumbent Ebke sits on the Legislature's Education Committee and has school board experience. Brandt is past chair of the Jefferson Co. Republican Party. Both believe

in the value of public schools, adequate funding and oppose charters.

Legislative District 34

Sen. Curt Friesen

Seeking a second term, Friesen is a fifth-generation farmer from the Henderson area. His first term was marked with fair-mindedness and solid support for public education.

Legislative District 36

Sen. Matt Williams

Incumbent Williams is articulate and a well-respected member of the legislative body. Williams believes funding for public education is inadequate and that local control of schools works.

Legislative District 38

Marsha Fangmeyer

A former president of the Nebraska Bar Association, Fangmeyer served on the state Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts. She believes our schools struggle with funding.

Legislative District 40

Tim Gragert

Gragert is passionate about public education, has school board experience, has military experience and is eager to grow and learn. Every vote will count in this race.

Legislative District 42

Judy Pederson

Pederson is a past president of the North Platte City Council and chaired the Chamber's Government Affairs Committee. She understands property tax concerns and hopes to improve state aid.

Legislative District 46

Sen. Adam Morfeld

Morfeld is an effective and passionate defender of public education. The founder of Civic Nebraska, he has working relationships with senators across the political spectrum.

Legislative District 48

Sen. John Stinner

Stinner chairs the Appropriations Committee and believes the state aid formula needs to provide adequate funding.

State Board of Education

District 5: Patricia Timm

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

Timm is a 14-year member and past president of the state board. She taught kindergarten and art and spent 20 years on the Beatrice Board of Education. She is a strong advocate and ally for education.

District 6: Maureen Nickels

Where: a row of counties from Boyd County in the north to Franklin and Webster counties in the south.

A former Grand Island teacher, Nickels is well-versed on education issues and quality instruction. She is a strong advocate for quality early childhood education, local control and adequate funding.

District 7: Robin Stevens

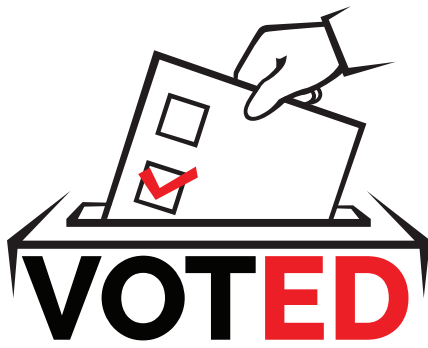
Where: 38 counties in western Nebraska.

Stevens spent 40 years as a professional educator as a teacher, coach and administrator, including the last 13 as superintendent at Schuyler. He supports mentoring programs for new teachers, due process and balanced funding sources for K-12 schools.

District 8: Deb Neary

Where: The north and western half of Douglas County.

Neary has worked as education director for the Durham Museum and as executive director for the Midlands Mentoring Partnership, and has worked on education policy for 25 years.



RECOMMENDED CANDIDATES

U.S. SENATE: **Jane Raybould**

U.S. HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES:

Dist. 1: **Jessica McClure**

Dist. 2: **Kara Eastman**

Dist. 3: **Paul Theobald**

GOVERNOR: **Sen. Bob Krist**

LT. GOVERNOR: **Sen. Lynne Walz**

NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

LD 02: **Susan Lorence**

LD 04: **Sen. Bob Hilkemann**

LD 06: **Machaela Cavanaugh**

LD 08: **Megan Hunt**

& **Mina Davis**

LD 10: **Wendy DeBoer**

LD 12: **Former Sen.**

Steve Lathrop

LD 14: **Jeff Parris**

LD 16: **Chuck Hassebrook**

LD 18: **Sen. Brett Lindstrom**

LD 20: **Sen. John McCollister**

LD 22: **Mike Moser**

LD 24: **Stephanie Nantkes**

LD 26: **Sen. Matt Hansen**

LD 28: **Sen. Patty**

Pansing Brooks

LD 30: **Myron Dorn**

& **Don Schuller**

LD 32: **Tom Brandt**

& **Sen. Laura Ebke**

LD 34: **Sen. Curt Friesen**

LD 36: **Sen. Matt Williams**

LD 38: **Marsha Fangmeyer**

LD 40: **Tim Gragert**

LD 42: **Judy Pederson**

LD 46: **Sen. Adam Morfeld**

LD 48: **Sen. John Stinner**

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dist. 5: **Patricia Timm**

Dist. 6: **Maureen Nickels**

Dist. 7: **Robin Stevens**

Dist. 8: **Deb Neary**

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

BOARD OF REGENTS

Dist. 4: **Larry Bradley**

Dist. 8: **Barbara Weitz**

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

Homework Completion Incentive

Elizabeth Yates, a third, fourth and fifth grade learning disabled math and languages arts teacher in Virginia.

"To get reluctant students to complete homework consistently, I found an incentive that really works! I give out homework passes. I purchased paper homework passes from a school supply store, wrote each student's name, my name and the duration of the pass on each one.

"For example, a pass might be good for one homework assignment this week. I laminated the passes and put the stack in a clear packet on the chalkboard for all to see. In order to earn a homework pass, the student must complete all homework assignments for a week and pass Friday's test with an 80% or better.

"On Mondays, I hand out the passes. When it's time to check homework at the beginning of class, they can show me the pass in lieu of the assignment and then place it back in the packet.

"We all applaud the first time a student earns one. I encourage those that don't earn one with positive talk."

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



For Children: NSEA was well-represented at the annual Voices for Children gala in Omaha in late September. From left are Association members Jon Frazier, Omaha; Rebecca Cook, Gretna; Melissa Bernard, Omaha; and Teresa Matthews, Westside. Also attending were NSEA Organizational Specialists Andy Isaacson, Marlene Wehrbein and Liz Figueroa. NSEA often partners with Voices for Children, which is a non-profit policy organization working to address the challenges of poverty and hunger that result in children needing community support. Voices for Children works to ensure that all Nebraska children have a vital, trusted resource and voice in every classroom, courtroom, newsroom and legislative chamber.