

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ October 2015

WHERE IS THE GRASS GREENER?

Leanna Doig-Gray compares teaching differences in Omaha with her previous position in Canada.

- *Sources for Dealing with Student Loan Debt*
- *EHA Rates Buck National Trend*

Upcoming Assignments

NSEA-Retired Fall Conference Oct. 27, Grand Island

■ **What:** NSEA's retired affiliate celebrates 30 years with sessions on the state fair, cranes and more.

■ **Details:** See page 22 for full details, or go to this website:

www.nsea.org/retired

Contract Bargaining Begins Nov. 1, Statewide

■ **What:** Per a schedule set by the Legislature, school districts and local associations begin bargaining for the 2017-18 year on Nov. 1.

■ **Details:** Your local president or chief negotiator has details, or contact your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

SEAN's Outreach to Teach Nov. 13-14, Omaha

■ **What:** Nebraska Commissioner of Education Dr. Matt Blomstedt will keynote on Nov. 13 as the Student Education Association of Nebraska hits 60. Saturday, 100 teachers-in-training will spruce up Ralston's Mockingbird Elementary.

■ **Details:** Watch the November issue of *The Voice* for details.

American Education Week Nov. 16-20

■ **What:** American Education Week honors teaching & learning in America. Celebrate in your classroom!

■ **Details:** Each day celebrates a different aspect of education. Learn more and find resources at:

www.nea.org/grants/19823

School Climate a Key in Bully Prevention

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

Nearly one third of students have reported being bullied in school. Nearly half say they have been bullied online.

"Every child deserves to learn and grow in a safe, caring environment," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

Additional research suggests that all stakeholders in a school's community must be engaged to effectively prevent bullying and ensure the school climate, the quality and character of school life, is not conducive to bullying behavior.

A recent survey of teachers said:

■ Teachers and support professionals report that bullying based on a student's weight (23 percent), gender (20 percent), perceived sexual orientation (18 percent) or disability (12 percent) were of concern in their school.

■ Verbal bullying (59 percent) is the most common form of bullying in schools, followed by social/relational (50 percent), physical (39 percent), and cyberbullying (17 percent).

In addition, 60 percent of students with disabilities report being bullied regularly, compared with 25 percent of all students.

NEA has developed a comprehensive plan to combat bullying in American schools, and more than 40,000 NEA members have taken the *Bully Free: It Starts With Me* pledge. Signers receive NEA's Bullying Prevention poster, window cling and button, and

access to other free resources, such as the Bully Free Kit. All resources, tools, and training materials to help educators stop bullying behaviors and create a positive learning environment can be found at:

nea.org/bullyfree



AAA Offers Grants to K-12 Educators

The Cornhusker Motor Club Foundation has launched a pair of grant opportunities to assist Nebraska's K-12 public school educators.

Funding opportunities include traditional grants in amounts of up to \$2,000 and specialty grants up to \$500. This year, the Foundation plans to award \$60,000 to Nebraska schools.

The traditional grants are designed to fund innovative programs, school events, community volunteerism efforts, or projects that will significantly enhance the classroom experience.

The specialty grants may be used for new classroom reading materials that will challenge and excite students. Any employee of a Nebraska public school, grades K-12, may apply.

The online application period ends Oct. 10. The application process is both fast and easy.

Grants will be awarded in November and December 2015. For more details or to review a list of the most recent award winning schools visit:

www.CornhuskerFoundation.org

Cover Story:

Omaha Education Association's Leanna Doig-Gray loves her teaching assignment at King Science Magnet Center. But she knows that had she stayed in her native Canada, her rate of pay would be about double what she makes now working for OPS. For more on her story — and NSEA's Leadership Institute! — turn to

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Nebraska State Education Association
605 S. 14th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508-2742 · www.nsea.org
(402) 475-7611 · (800) 742-0047

Volume 69, No. 2
ISSN Number: 1085-0783
USPS Number: 000-369

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Executive Director
Assoc. Executive Director
Director of Public Affairs
Assistant Comm. Director

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Official publication of the Nebraska State Education Association, 605 South 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send address changes to The Voice, NSEA, 605 S. 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-2742.

Published and mailed 6 times yearly in September, Oc-

tober, November, February, April and August. Published online in December, January, March and May.

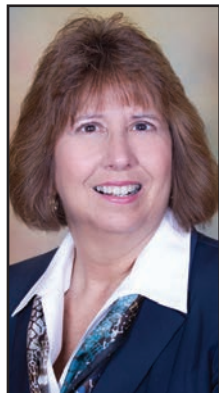
Payment of annual NSEA dues entitles Nebraska educators to receive *The Voice*. Cost of producing 10 issues of *The Voice* each year is \$3.41 per member.

Advertising rates available on request. Appearance of an advertisement in *The Voice* does not imply NSEA endorsement of the product advertised or views expressed.

Cited for excellence each year by the State Education Editors, including these past awards: Best Magazine, Best News Story, Best Feature Story, Best Photography and Best Editorial Design.



Endurance and Milestones



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“
...there is
also a message
here: good work
endures. Public
school teachers
— and their
professional
association —
have set forth
a legacy that is
unmatched in
Nebraska.”

Let’s talk about round numbers.

Not round numbers as technically defined by those among us who are mathematicians, but milestones that denote important dates or anniversaries.

If an organization has been active and doing good work long enough, such anniversaries will come. Sometimes the stars align and several anniversaries pop up. Let’s start with NSEA itself.

Your NSEA was founded during a gathering of a small group of frontier teachers at Brownville, near the banks of the Missouri River, in October 1867. The State of Nebraska was just six months old. To give perspective, NSEA was working for Nebraska teachers before the transcontinental railroad was finished (1869); before Christmas became a federal holiday (1870); before the first game of college football (1875) was played.

Indeed, this magazine has been published and has been advocating for teachers since 1872.

So the first big, round number is 150. Your association will soon be 150 years old, a milestone that deserves celebration. Beginning at Delegate Assembly 2016, NSEA will kick off a sesquicentennial observance that will run through the April 2017 Delegate Assembly to October 2017.

Planning is well under way. I would advise that all members always consider seeking slots as delegates to Delegate Assembly – but particularly over the next two years.

NSEA Pushed the Retirement Plan

It was 70 years ago in 1945 when NSEA was finally able to secure enough support in the Legislature to form a statewide teacher retirement system. Omaha teachers had organized a retirement plan 34 years earlier, but it took until 1945 for state senators to provide a plan for the rest of the state’s teachers.

NSEA, of course, was actively involved in the push for the retirement plan, and has kept a watchful eye on the system since. With many thanks to those NSEA members who came before us, the state’s teacher retirement plan is in sound health.

SEAN Hits a Milestone

In October 1955, The Nebraska Education News, predecessor to The Voice, reported “Nebraska’s Future Teachers will hold their first annual convention this fall during the NSEA district teachers’ conventions.” That’s 60 years!

The meeting on the campus of Nebraska Wesleyan University drew teachers-to-be from every Nebraska college campus and marked formalization of the student program now known as SEAN – the Student Education Association of Nebraska.

With 1,500 members today, SEAN has a vital role in keeping our state’s classrooms stocked with vibrant, skilled teacher leaders. SEAN will celebrate at the annual Outreach to Teach event in Omaha next month.

NSEA-Retired to Celebrate

The NSEA-Retired affiliate will celebrate 30 years this month! NSEA-Retired President Roger Rea and his board plan a proper celebration at the Fall Conference in Grand Island on Oct. 27. A gubernatorial proclamation will mark the event, and members will enjoy another superb conference.

An asset to all teachers, members of the NSEA-Retired affiliate have been dogged in their defense of retirement issues. They have also been aggressive in recruiting members, and now boast well more than 5,000.

Leadership Institute Reaches 30

Another 30! Raise your hand if you are a graduate of NSEA’s Leadership Institute!

Nearly 1,000 NSEA members have passed through the program in the past 30 summers. Which means that 2016 will mark the 30th anniversary and 31st class to attend the Institute.

Repeatedly, those who participate indicate that Leadership Institute is a fabulous training. Check a sidebar story on page 8 of this issue if you would like to learn more about the Institute. Participation is well worth your time.

The Legacy Endures

Finally, NSEA’s Children’s Fund celebrated 20 years earlier this year. As noted in the September edition of The Voice, members raised more than \$22,000 for the fund in a special drive earlier this year. Many thanks to all who contributed.

The planets are certainly in alignment for these important anniversaries to occur in such quick succession. But there is also a message here: good work endures. Public school teachers – and their professional Association – have set forth a legacy that is unmatched in Nebraska.

Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)



NSEA locals from around the state appear or are mentioned in this issue. Look for:

BellevuePage 7
Central ValleyPage 9

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Douglas Co. Youth CenterPage 9
GibbonPage 13
Grand IslandPage 9
HoldregePage 9
Johnson-BrockPage 23

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LouisvillePage 7
MillardPage 9
Oakland-CraigPage 9
OmahaPage 7, 9, 17

PalmerPage 9
RalstonPage 7
Tekamah-HermanPage 7
Umo’ho® NationPage 9
Wilber-ClatoniaPage 7

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EHA Rates Buck State, National Trends

Sept. 1 Increase of 1.9 Percent Well Below State Average

Increases of from 12 to 31 percent for individual health insurance policies in Nebraska are slated for 2016, according to a September report in the Omaha World-Herald.

Meanwhile, rates for the Educators Health Alliance health care plan used by nearly every Nebraska school district increased by only 1.9 percent, effective Sept. 1.

NSEA Associate Executive Director Neal Clayburn chairs the 12-member EHA Board of Directors.

“This is the 13th consecutive year our rate increases have been less than 10 percent,” said Clayburn. “That we have kept the increases well below national cost trends points to the efficacy of our collaborative approach to providing health care coverage for more than 400 school groups.”

The EHA plan’s rate increases in 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 were 0.0 percent, 2.99 percent, 6.4 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively.

Clayburn said several factors contribute to the EHA’s ability to continually achieve rate increases that fall well below the national rate of medical inflation. He said “the wise use of medical

services and maintenance of healthy practices by plan members; EHA’s extensive wellness program; and the collaboration of the three associations that govern the plan: the Nebraska School Boards Association, Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska State Education Association,” combine to keep rates at a minimum.

EHA premiums increased by 1.9 percent for all rate and benefit categories beginning Sep. 1, 2015. This includes all medical and dental plans, as well as active employee and early retiree categories. There are no changes made to the EHA available plan deductibles, co-insurance, or copays for the 2015-16 plan year.

The EHA plan’s insurance coverage with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska includes more than 77,000 education

employees, early retirees and their dependents. NSEA formed the statewide health care network 45 years ago. A 12-member board representing NSEA, the Nebraska Association of School Boards and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators now governs the health care plan.

Low, Low, Low!

Rates for the Educators Health Alliance health insurance plan have increased over the past five years, but those increases have been minimal, averaging about 2.5 percent each year:

Year	Rate Inc.
2015-16	1.90
2014-15	2.30
2013-14	6.40
2012-13	2.99
2011-12	0.00

Union Support said on the Rise Young Adults Give Unions High Marks

Popular support for labor unions appears to be growing, if the results of polls from Gallup and the Pew Research Center are correct.

58 percent of Americans now approve of unions, 10 points higher than in 2009, says Gallup.

66 percent of Americans ages 18-34 approve of labor unions, says Gallup, with 44 percent preferring unions to have more influence.

55 percent of 18-29-year-olds view labor unions with favor, according to Pew Research Center polling.

37 percent of Americans, says Gallup, would like to see more union influence. That is the first time in six years, more Americans prefer labor unions have greater influence. Of those polled, 35 percent favored less influence and 24 percent about the same.

Study: Unions May Aid Children

Link Seen in Upward Mobility for Low Income Kids

Unions have long been known to provide benefits to union members and to improve the standing of the American middle class.

Do unions also provide upward economic mobility for children in low income communities? A new study seems to suggest that could be the case.

In mid-September, researchers at Harvard University, Wellesley College and the Center for American Progress (CAP) offered a report in support of that theory. Their research indicates that children born into low income families are more likely to ascend to higher incomes, as adults, if they reside in metropolitan areas where union membership is higher.

The method of study of economic mobility, pioneered by researchers from Stanford University, Harvard and the University of California, Berkeley, set forth five factors strongly linked to a low-income child’s chances of making it into the middle class as an adult.

According to the methodology, single motherhood is the strongest factor correlated with economic mobility in a given geographic area. The other four factors are the degree of unequal-

ity; the high school dropout rate; the degree of residential segregation; and the amount of social capital, measured by factors like voter turnout and participation in community organizations.

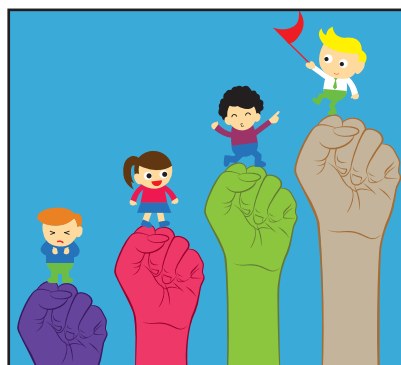
The link to union membership, said researchers, is roughly as much a factor in economic mobility as the last four factors. Specifically, researchers said the relationship between unions and economic mobility of low-income kids is at least as strong as the relationship with high school dropout rates.

“It’s further grounds for concern about the decline of unionism in the United

States,” said Lawrence Summers, former Treasury secretary and economic adviser, who joined a discussion with some of the study’s authors.

Authors found “a 10-percentage point increase in union density is associated with a 4.5 percent increase in the income of an area’s children.”

Researchers at CAP said “unions generally advocate for policies that benefit all working people — such as minimum wage increases and increased expenditures on schools and public services — that may especially benefit low-income parents and their children.”





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> November 17

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> October 15

> November 10

RSVP at 402.827.3555 or afink2@nebrwesleyan.edu

The Green, Green Cash of Home

When it Comes to Salary, Our Neighbors to the North Have a Distinct Edge

Sometimes the grass isn't greener on the other side of the border, says Omaha Education Association's Leanna Doig-Gray.

Although the salary grass in her native Canada is greener – *much greener* – than in Omaha, she is pleased to be teaching and to be an active OEA member.

She's teaching fifth grade math for the second year in a row and she loves her well-lit and sizeable classroom at King Science and Technology Magnet Center just north of downtown Omaha.

But there is one stark difference that reminds Doig-Gray that she is no longer in Canada: her salary.

The Omaha Public Schools gave Doig-Gray credit for five of her eight years of teaching experience. Her education credits transferred as a bachelor's degree plus 18 hours, and she sits at step six of the OEA-OPS negotiated agreement.

"With my qualifications, had I stayed in Canada, I would be at \$90,000," she said.

That's about twice what she will earn this year with OPS.

Even so, Doig-Gray says there are advantages and disadvantages to life on both sides of the border.

'Very Exotic'

As her second year with OPS gets well under way, Doig-Gray is excited, in part, because this is the first time in her 10-year career that she has taught the same coursework two years in a row.

"I'm experiencing the feelings that a second-year teacher might experience – in my 10th year," she said.

Doig-Gray began teaching in 2006 in a small school district not far across the border from North Dakota. There, she looped classes, teaching seventh grade one year, and the same students in eighth grade the next, before moving back to seventh grade with a new group of students.

Her husband's technology career took them to Washington state, and Doig-Gray obtained a green card and taught math and science for three years. In 2014, they moved to Omaha, her husband's hometown, and Doig-Gray was a late-August hire with OPS.

Today, she very much enjoys her classroom, her five math classes and her very manageable student load of about 16 kids per class period.

Her students seem to enjoy her, as well, and find it quite interesting to be taught by a Canadian.

"They think it's very exotic," she said.

Huge Learning Curve

The differences in emphasis on standardized testing between Canada and the U.S., and even between Washington and Nebraska, are dramatic, said Doig-Gray.

She was more than a little surprised in particular at the differences between Washington state and Nebraska. The learning curve last year in Nebraska, her first year teaching in a "tested" area, was huge.



A Global Perspective: Omaha Education Association member Leanna Doig-Gray has a broader perspective on the teaching profession than most, thanks to her Canadian citizenship and teaching experience.

"I had proctored tests in Washington, but not taught in a tested area. I didn't realize the pressure and the time it took. And I was a little surprised at how I got wrapped up in test scores," she said.

Her Canadian teaching experiences, she said, did not include standardized testing. Her students took summative assessments at the end of chapters, but there was no mandated, provincewide or nationwide tests to administer. Canadian students, she said, do participate in limited testing used to compare Canada with other nations, but that was the limit on testing.

She noted that Canadians, as a whole, have more respect for teaching as a profession than she has found in the U.S. There are those on either side of the border, she said, who ask teachers "You get summers off, what are you complaining about?" But north of the border, there seems to be more respect for the teaching profession.

"There is more respect in Canada, for teachers, among the media, parents and administrators," she said. "Teachers are held in higher esteem. That is shown in the salaries."

She said few Canadian teachers work second jobs. If they have a second job, it is because they moonlight at something they enjoy.

“Here in the U.S., it is more common – and a lot of those teachers with second jobs are teachers with master’s degrees,” she said.

Provincial Rules

Doig-Gray noted that the recent OPS brouhaha over the length of the school day would not have happened in Canada. Each provincial government sets the length of the school day and the length of the school term.

Outside the classroom, she was struck by the differences in the medical field.

The Canadian government provides a family with up to 12 months of paid maternity leave at 80 percent of salary. That leave can be split, with, for instance, each parent taking six months of paid leave.

Canadian teachers have no health insurance premiums deducted from their paychecks; a visit to the doctor is covered by the federal health care system.

“You need a doctor, you go to the doctor. The same goes for emergency rooms. If you need any type of health care, it is provided to you,” she said. “All you need to do is show your government issued medical card that shows you are a resident of that province.”

Doig-Gray said visits to U.S. doctors have caused a degree of sticker shock.

“As someone who has never had to worry about my wallet before I go to see a doctor, this is much different,” she said.

On the other hand, she said, Omaha residents could likely get

You are Qualified for Leadership Institute!

Omaha Education Association member and Association Representative Leanna Doig-Gray was one of two dozen graduates of the NSEA Leadership Institute’s 29th annual class this past summer.



Leadership Institute 2016 is set for July 11-14 at NSEA Headquarters. Participants from across the state spend four expense-paid days honing leadership skills and learning about NSEA.

If you are interested in becoming a leader on the local or state level, and are interested in attending Leadership Institute, contact Kristen Sedlacek at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

kristen.sedlacek@nsea.org

an MRI or CAT scan scheduled within a day or two. Scheduling that same procedure might take six weeks in Canada.

The Canadian cost of living is higher, in some regards, she said.

“We regularly crossed the border to get gasoline,” she said. “When we lived there it was about \$5 a gallon in Canada compared to \$3 in the U.S.”

On the other hand, American auto insurance is less expensive than Canada’s government-run plan, she said.

On the Job for OEA

One thing Doig-Gray was prepared for is her duty as a new OEA Association Representative. She has always been an active association member, and was secretary of her local association in her last year teaching in Manitoba.

Union membership is mandatory for educators and administrators alike. And despite the requirement, she said there was a strong belief among membership in the strength of the union, and the effectiveness of the union’s work.

This summer Doig-Gray became even more deeply involved when she completed NSEA’s 29th Leadership Institute. That gave her a deeper appreciation for her Association.

“Membership in the NSEA gives the comfort of knowing that there is an entire organization standing with me that is ready, willing and able to advocate for me and my colleagues in order to make sure we continue to be honored as professionals in our schools, districts and communities,” she said.

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About Your Student Loan Debt...

You May Find These Links, This Advice, and a **Scam Alert** Useful

There is no doubt that student loan debt is a problem for recent college graduates.

College costs and loan debt are at all-time highs. Indeed, the Institute for College Access and Success reports that 62 percent of Nebraska college and university graduates (private and public institutions) leave college with an average loan debt of \$26,490.

For those just starting out in their careers, particularly in a profession like teaching with traditionally low wages, such debt can be burdensome, even crushing. The links on this page, provided by the U.S. Department of Education, are offered as resources for those with student loan debt in the hope that they may be of assistance.

Before you delve into the links, there are two other pieces of advice to consider.

First, NSEA Organizational Specialist Jay Sears said he advises Nebraska educators with loan debt to stay in frequent and close contact with their loan providers.

“They will sometimes know of opportunities to obtain better rates or terms,” he said.

Second, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently warned students to be wary of student loan debt relief scams. He said many companies are advertising for student loan debt help, and charging exorbitant fees for services that are otherwise free through the U.S. Department of Education.

Free Federal Services

Duncan reminded students that they should never pay to consolidate their federal loans, to cap their monthly payments, or to find out whether they qualify for loan forgiveness. Federal programs offer those services to loan holders.

“If you’ve seen or heard ads out there around federal student loans that seem too good to be true, they probably are,” said Duncan.

Duncan said companies claim they can cancel or reduce loans – for a price.

“That is never the case,” said Duncan. “With our Department of Education it is always free to figure out whether you can cap your monthly payments, consolidate loans, or get forgiveness for

your loans as well.”

To learn more about the free assistance from the U.S. Department of Education, go to the website at:

StudentLoans.gov

You can also check these sites, below, provided by the U.S. Department of Education. Some are specifically for teachers, others are available more widely but may be of particular interest to teachers.



Teacher Loan Forgiveness

Under this program, a teacher who teaches full-time for five complete and consecutive academic years in certain elementary and secondary schools and educational service agencies that serve low-income families, and meet other qualifications, may be eligible for forgiveness of up to a combined total of \$17,500 on Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans, and Subsidized and Unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loans.

Find details at this site:

<http://bit.ly/LoanForgive>

Teacher Loan Cancellation

A teacher with a loan from the Federal Perkins Loan Program might be eligible for loan cancellation for full-time teaching at a low-income school, or for teaching in certain subject areas. These teachers can also qualify for deferment for these qualifying teaching services. Learn more at:

<http://bit.ly/TeacherCancel>

Public Service Loan Forgiveness

Under this program, borrowers may qualify for forgiveness of the remaining balance of their Direct Loans after they have made 120 qualifying payments on those loans while employed full time by certain public service employers. Many teachers will qualify as working in full-time in public service jobs.

In order to have the remaining balances on Direct Loans forgiven under PSLF, teachers must:

■ Make 120 on time, full, scheduled monthly payments on your Direct Loans.

Don't Panic! Stay in Touch with Your Student Loan Lender

Don't panic!

That's one of the Top 10 Student Loan Tips for Recent College Graduates from the Institute for College Access and Success.

The Institute says that if you are having trouble making payments, remember that there are options for managing those

federal loans, including legitimate ways to postpone federal loan payments, including deferments and forbearance.

Other tips from the Institute include know your loans; know your grace period; stay in touch with your lender; and more.

For details and the full list, go to the website at:

<http://ticas.org/>

■ Make those payments under a qualifying repayment plan.

■ Be working full-time at a qualifying public service organization when making each of those payments.

At this website, find a Fact Sheet (updated December 2013) and a corresponding Q&A sheet (updated November 2014):

<http://bit.ly/PSLoanForgive>

Income-Driven Repayment Plans

Income-driven repayment plans are designed to make student loan debt more manageable by reducing the monthly payment amount. If teachers need to make lower monthly payments, they can choose one of the three following income-driven plans:

■ **Income-Based Repayment Plan (IBR Plan)** – Generally 10 percent of discretionary income, but never more than the 10-year Standard Repayment Plan amount

■ **Generally 10 percent of discretionary income, but never more than the 10-year Standard Repayment Plan amount**

■ **Income-Contingent Repayment Plan (ICR Plan)** – The lesser of the following:

● zero percent of discretionary income; or

● what a teacher would pay on a repayment plan with a fixed payment over the course of 12 years, adjusted according to income.

Learn more at:

<http://bit.ly/IncomeDriven>

TEACH Grants

The TEACH Grant Program provides grants of up to \$4,000 a year to students who are completing or plan to complete course work needed to begin a career in teaching.

As a condition for receiving a TEACH Grant, students must sign a TEACH Grant Agreement to Serve in which they agree to (among other requirements) teach:

■ in a high-need field;

■ at an elementary school, secondary school, or educational service agency that serves students from low-income families;

■ for at least four complete academic years within eight years after completing (or ceasing enrollment in) the course of study for which they received the grant.

Important: If students do not complete the service obligation, all TEACH Grant funds received are converted to a Direct Unsubsidized Loan. Students must then repay this loan, with interest charged from the date the TEACH Grant was disbursed.

Learn more at:

<http://bit.ly/TEACHGrant>

Legislative Interim Study Will Review Class Size

Study was Requested by Members at Delegate Assembly

During the next few months, state senators will focus on holding public hearings and preparing reports connected to interim study resolutions introduced during this past legislative session.

One key study moves toward meeting a goal set by NSEA members at the April 2015 Delegate Assembly. Delegates voted overwhelmingly to ask lawmakers to study the issue of class size, and to consider financial incentives for school districts to keep class size at an appropriate student/teacher ratios, as recommended by research.

“Manageable class size is an important issue for NSEA members,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. “We know that crowded classrooms make it difficult for students to learn, and for teachers to teach. This is an important issue, and NSEA will be on hand to testify.”

Among those studies introduced is LR235, as urged by the NSEA. The study will review data from the State Department of Education; will work to identify specific issues that lead to overcrowded classrooms; will examine class size as it relates to students dealing with issues of poverty, special needs and other needs; and will review best practices in Nebraska and other states to reduce class size.

Ultimately, the goal is to review any legislation needed to incentivize best class size practices. No date has been set for a hearing, called by the Legislature’s Education Committee at the request of Omaha Sen. Rick Kolowski.

Other education-related interim studies include a study of the Commission of Industrial Relations; a study to the public employees retirement system; and a study to examine bullying. Find a complete list of interim studies at the Legislature’s website at:

www.nebraskalegislature.gov/



Educators: *Short Snoots, Soybean Sprouts* is a colorful, four-page handout that teaches third-through sixth-graders the importance of pigs and soybeans in their lives, through fun facts, puzzles and other activities to engage their imaginations.

They’ll learn about how pigs and soybeans are raised, how soybeans provide healthy, high-protein foods for both pigs and people, and how by-products of soybeans and pigs are used to make beneficial non-food products.

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Advocacy Talk: Above, Alliance's Amanda Reilly and Shannon Yetter visit with NSEA Vice President Jenni Benson. Right, NSEA President Nancy Fulton and Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen, standing, pose with Sidney's Rick Meyer and Jen Mead.



Cowboy Up!

Two dozen Association negotiators from western Nebraska met in Gering in late September for the annual 'Cowboy Up' Advocacy Conference.

On the agenda: school funding, organizational leadership, interest-based bargaining and using the Internet to prepare for bargaining, among other topics. Members were updated on the Blue Cross and Blue Shield health care plan managed by NSEA, along with the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska Association of School Boards.

The Gering meeting allows western Nebraska schools to get much the same bargaining details provided at the Advocacy Conference held in mid-Nebraska each September.

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- Pre-Speech Language Pathology
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- PK-12 School Librarian Endorsement
- Science/Math Education
- Sociology
- Spanish Education
- Special Education
- SPED K-6 Endorsement
- SPED 7-12 Endorsement
- Student Affairs
- Transitional Certification Program
- +9 Post-Master's Coursework
- Vocational Diversified Occupations Endorsement



General registration for Spring 2016 opens **November 16, 2015** to all interested persons admitted to UNK.



The Latest: Picking up on the latest in bargaining during a small group session are, from left, John Bisbee, Gibbon; Timothy Hagge, Louisville; John Walford, Tekamah-Herman; and Jenny Wagner and Darla Chrans, Wilber-Clatonia.

Bargaining: A Continual Process

NSEA Advocacy Conference Message: Be Vigilant in Monitoring Your Contract

With a legislatively imposed bargaining schedule set to open on Nov. 1, nearly 150 NSEA members flocked to York in mid-September to get updated on bargaining strategies and opportunities.

Yet the message from NSEA Attorney Scott Norby was simple: in the ever-changing world of education, bargaining never ends. Changes in rules, regulations, statutes and mandates make it imperative that local associations are vigilant in monitoring and enforcing contracts.

“The duty to bargain, candidly, never ends,” said Norby.

“Your employment isn’t static and some of the changes that come are necessary and appropriate,” said Norby. “We’re not a barrier to those changes, but we need to come to an agreement with the board on how those changes will work.”

Norby cited a 2014 ruling by the Nebraska Commission on Industrial Relations that said, in part, that “The duty to bargain contin-

ues during the existence of a bargaining agreement concerning any mandatory subject of bargaining unless the right to bargain has been waived by the union.”

Norby also reaffirmed that NSEA, at its core, serves as an exclusive bargaining agent for Nebraska teachers. Without that exclusivity, Norby said educators don’t have the ability to collectively bargain. He advised that the other essential pieces of association work is bargaining itself, and upon completion of bargaining, contract enforcement.

Norby and fellow attorney Nick Welding fielded questions on a variety of bargaining topics, including long-term substitutes filling permanent positions, past practices as they relate to contracts, and more.

Members also got a primer on state aid from Dr. Dennis Pool in a session on Nebraska School Funding Basics and State Aid. Breakouts reviewed salary schedules, bargaining prep, the psychodynamics of negotiations, bargaining for common interests, data and more.

As always, if you have questions about the bargaining process, contact an NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.



Making a choice: Deb Carlson and Cindy Hudson of Bellevue review their choices during a breakout session on Bargaining Around Common Interests.



Checking Language: NSEA Attorney Nick Welding reviews contract language with Ralston’s Kathy Kassebaum.

26*

***The number of GRADUATE degree programs for educators that are available at Chadron, Peru and Wayne State Colleges. Fifteen are offered entirely ONLINE. Check them out at www.csc.edu or www.peru.edu or www.wsc.edu.**



The Nebraska State Colleges are equal opportunity institutions and do not discriminate against any student, employee or applicant on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, or age in employment and education opportunities, including but not limited to admission decisions. Each College has designated an individual to coordinate the College's nondiscrimination efforts to comply with regulations implementing Title VI, VII, IX, and Section 504. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies and practices may be directed to the following Compliance Coordinator: Kristin Petersen, General Counsel/Vice Chancellor for Employee Relations, Nebraska State College System Office, 1327 H Street, Suite 200, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402-471-2505.



Marguerite Cortez
Umo'ho[®] Nation

Carrie Veal
Holdrege

Brian Mahoney
Douglas Co. Youth Center

Andrea Wolf
Central Valley

Gerald Brand
Oakland-Craig

Rosey Krauel
Douglas County West

Mary Gregoski
Palmer

Leadership Created at NSEA

It is safe to say that the 29th edition of NSEA's Leadership Institute gave the two dozen participants a much better understanding of their Association and the work it does. Lincoln's Isau Metes said the Institute helped her understand the true value of membership.

"I've always been thankful for the coverage and benefits of being a member, but now I see that it has the potential to be much more than that," she said.

"Being a part of NSEA is being in a network of like-minded people who work together to do what is best for all students in Nebraska," she said. "Now I see the possibilities and opportunities to improve and protect the state of education in Nebraska."

Brian Mahoney said the Institute helped him hone leadership skills.

"The Leadership Institute really allowed me to gauge what type of leader I was and to assess areas that I need to work on," he said. "The Institute really revitalized my attitude towards being a leader, and has motivated me to be a more active leader."

That is what NSEA's Leadership Institute has done for three decades. NSEA members at any level of leadership and any level of experience may attend. They spend four expense-paid days in Lincoln learning of leadership; of the workings of NSEA; and gaining a better understanding of the work NSEA members and staff perform.

The 30th session of NSEA Leadership Institute is set for July 11-14, 2016. If interested, reach NSEA's Jan Anderson at 1-800-742-0047, or at:

jan.anderson@nsea.org



Lucky Touch: Omaha's Faith Johnson reaches for the lucky horseshoe during a tour of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Memorial Stadium.



Law Library Visit: Palmer Education Association member Whitney Hester pauses for a photo during a scavenger hunt in the Law Library at the Nebraska State Capitol.



Cake is Good: These NSEA Leadership Institute participants prepare to share cake with the rest of their leadership colleagues. From left are Grand Island's Cally Macosko; Kearney's Kelsey Anderson; Omaha's Faith Johnson; Lincoln's Elizabeth Carranza-Rodriguez; and Millard's Kathie Garabrandt.

2015 Grads, NSEA Leadership Institute

- Central Valley EA:** Andrea Wolf
- Douglas County West EA:** Rosey Krauel
- Douglas County You Center EA:** David Boyce, Brian Mahoney
- Grand Island EA:** Ashley Hilger, Cally Macosko
- Hastings EA:** Eric Garchow
- Holdrege EA:** Carrie Veal
- Holdrege:** Dennis Woodruff
- Kearney EA:** Kelsey Anderson
- Lincoln EA:** Isau Metes, Elizabeth Carranza-Rodriguez
- Loup County EA:** Amy Sabatka
- McCook EA:** Craig Dickes
- Millard EA:** Kathie Garabrandt, Amy Thalken
- Oakland-Craig EA:** Gerald Brand
- Omaha EA:** Leanna Doig-Gray, Faith Johnson, Monica Wynne
- Palmer EA:** Mary Gregoski, Whitney Hester
- Scottsbluff EA:** Jason Blanco
- Umo'ho[®] Nation EA:** Marguerite Cortez, Jennifer Smith

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My today started when I realized I could get my master's degree on my own terms. I knew I wanted to go back to school, but I didn't want classes to interfere with my work as a teacher and, living in a remote, rural area, I knew I couldn't be on campus every day. At the University of Nebraska at Kearney, I created a schedule that worked for me and I learned both subject-area knowledge and teaching techniques that I could immediately apply in my classroom. Most of all, I loved the challenge – and I loved learning that I can do a lot more than I thought I could.

Joanna Utecht

Biology, MS

University of Nebraska at Kearney

Cultural Competency for Educators

Editor's Note: Omaha member Susan Loney contributed the opening to this month's column from EMAC.

I emigrated from the Philippines to Omaha nearly 20 years ago. I teach at Liberty Elementary and am the Western Region director of the National Education Association's Asian Pacific Islander Caucus (APIC) and am also the secretary for the NSEA Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee.



On this page is the first of a series of questions from educators to promote cultural competency. The goal is to help us all become culturally fluent across our personal ethnic groups. I believe this information will also allow us to be culturally fluent with the students we work with in our classrooms.

Some of the questions will come from the Asian Pacific Islander Caucus (APIC), Alaska Native/American Indian Caucus, Black Caucus, and Hispanic Caucus by networking with them.

Please remember: I am still working to become a culturally competent educator myself. Therefore, I do not claim to be a "culture guru." If you want to contribute questions that deal with various cultures please contact me at:

susanloney7@gmail.com

EMAC Meetings, Appointments

EMAC meets Saturday, Oct. 3, at NSEA in Lincoln. The morning begins at 9:30 with caucus meetings, and the full committee meets at 10 a.m. Mark your calendar for the Nov. 14 EMAC meeting at the Omaha Education Association building. EMAC offers travel stipends of \$30/per member to up to 20 members at each meeting.

NSEA President Nancy Fulton has named Loney, who teaches second grade, as EMAC secretary for 2015-16. Loney's appointment created a vacancy in the Asian Pacific Islander representative post for

Have Your Contact Details Changed?

Have you moved? Have you changed your name by marriage? You can update your membership information online.

Log on to the NSEA website and click the 'Member Info' button on the left side of the screen. Then click the 'For Members' link and look for the 'Member Update' icon in the center of the next screen, and follow directions. Keep *The Voice* near, as the mail label includes your 10-digit membership number, needed to access your information.

The NSEA website is at:

www.nsea.org

The Preference is 'African American'

In preparing the script for an assembly on Martin Luther King, Jr. at school, teachers were torn over the correct usage of the terms "Black" and "African American." When referring to a student of African descent who was born and has lived their entire life in the United States, what term is more appropriate?

- Black
- African American
- Both

The answer to the question is African American.

Here's the explanation: The term "African American" was commonly used in the 1980s for people with African ancestry. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, "Black American" was demanded instead of the term "Negro."

"Black American" is also commonly used for people who have slave ancestors.

As far as the decision of whether to use "Black American" or "African American," many feel "African American" conveys more respect.

Also, the term "Black American" refers to those who have emigrated from the Caribbean, which includes thousands of islands that border or are surrounded by the Caribbean (i.e. Barbados, Cuba, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Haiti, Jamaica). They identify themselves as "Black Americans" with pride as it promotes their culture and skin color.

This question originated from Laura Chytka, Buffett Middle School, Omaha. The explanations came from multiple sources.

EMAC. Fulton named Isau Metes, an English teacher at the Lincoln Public Schools Career Academy as API rep for 2015-16. Both the EMAC secretary and the API position will be open for election at the EMAC annual meeting held on Friday, April 15,

2016, following adjournment of NSEA's Delegate Assembly.

More details on NSEA EMAC are found at nsea.org/emac or connect on Twitter @EMAC_NSEA or Facebook at EMACN-SEA. Continue looking for us in *The Voice*.

Food for Thought

Educators: Food for Thought is an entertaining animated video teaching fourth-graders about how Nebraska hog farms do business. Along the way, students learn about economics, marketing, science and conservation, helping you meet certain NDE standards. The **Food for Thought** package includes a complete lesson plan and a real-life video shot at a Nebraska pig farm.

Provided **FREE** to Nebraska educators by the Nebraska Pork Producers Association and the Nebraska Soybean Board.

Quantities are limited. Order online NOW at www.nebraskafoodforthought.com.

'The NSEA Edge' Provides Peace of Mind

It's an Edge That Comes with NSEA Membership

As a member of NSEA, you have access experts and expertise in every aspect of education, from classroom management to employment issues.

In some cases, you may have a question about the services provided by NSEA, as highlighted by the question from a member that came to NSEA via e-mail this past summer.

A question posed by a member through the 'Contact Us' feature of the NSEA website was, more than anything, about a member's 'peace of mind.'

"As a member of NSEA, will the \$1 million liability insurance policy cover me for events or circumstances that may occur outside of the regular working day/building? I am a school counselor and get calls during all times during the day/night/summer and am working outside of the building, at home. I am concerned that the liability insurance included in the NSEA membership does not include anything that happens outside of the working day/year."



The member explained that, more than anything, the question sought to provide assurances that because the counselor sometimes works all hours of the day and night, plus summers and weekends, the liability plan provided coverage during odd hours.

"I sometimes talk to kids outside of the normal school day/year on the phone and/or in person," wrote the counselor. "There are just so many scenarios that can occur and I wanted to make sure that I am covered."

NSEA Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan coordinates the liability insurance program for NSEA members. She replied that, to make certain her information was accurate, she contacted the insurance carrier. This was the response from the carrier:

"I checked with our broker to confirm, and he agreed that the counselor would be covered as long as the calls are tied to employment by an educational unit. It does not matter where or when the calls are received."

An important question, a quick answer, and a counselor can now do a job without a nagging question about coverage lurking in the background.

NSEA gets many such questions each week, via e-mail through the website, phone calls to one of the Association's 18 organizational specialists, and via personal visits with NSEA staff.

For instance, this run-of-the-mill question arrived in the NSEA in-box recently:

"Where can I find the out-of-pocket expenses and cap on my Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health care policy?"

This question of more serious nature arrived in mid-April:

"I have signed my contract with my school district for the 2015-2016 school year. However, my husband has just learned that he may be transferred to a new corporate position, but we will not know for certain until June. This will make it necessary to move. What is the latest date I can notify my school district that I will not return to my position without losing my teaching certificate?"

Whatever your question about your classroom situation, your employment and more, contact your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047, or send your question through the 'Contact Us' feature of the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

You will draw your answer from years of experience and expertise that gives you "The NSEA Edge."

Shine a Light on a Deserving Colleague

Nominate a Co-Worker for Recognition at Delegate Assembly in Lincoln

NSEA will celebrate 149 years — and recognize teaching and other forms of excellence related to education — at the Association's Delegate Assembly in Lincoln April 15-16, 2016.

Every school building in Nebraska houses teachers and education support professionals doing world class work. Very few are recognized, however, largely because most educators shun the limelight.

Any NSEA member can shine a light on a colleague's excellence by nominating a teacher, ESP or deserving or group for the awards, below, to be presented at the 2016 NSEA Delegate Assembly. All mailed nominations must be postmarked by Sunday, Jan. 31, 2016, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online, with any required supporting material mailed to the NSEA. Online forms for the awards may be found under the 'Call for Nominations' link on the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

The 2016 Delegate Assembly, NSEA's 155th such convention, will again be held at Embassy Suites in Lincoln. At the Assembly, NSEA members are eligible for these awards:

■ **NSEA Rookie of the Year:** To honor a first-year teacher who sparkled in the 2014-15 school year.

■ **Award for Teaching Excellence:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a period of time.

■ **Education Support Professional of the Year:** To honor an

ESP who has excelled in his or her job.

Finalists will be notified in March, with winners in each category announced at the Delegate Assembly on April 15-16. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award. In addition, the Teaching Excellence winner competes for the NEA Teaching Excellence Award and \$25,000.

Though there are no cash awards for these honors, NSEA members are also eligible for:

■ **The Great Plains Milestone Award:** Honors an individual/group for promoting human and civil rights within their community or the state.

■ **Community Service:** Honors individual NSEA members and/or local associations actively involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.

■ **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding communication within the association, and promotion of educational excellence.

These awards will also be presented:

■ **Friend of Education:** NSEA's highest honor. Local associations are encouraged to nominate an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education.

■ **Media:** Recognizes a newspaper, television or radio station for outstanding coverage of education issues and promoting community involvement in education. An essay of no more than 200 words explaining the nominee's qualifications must accompany each entry. Examples of dated material may be included.

For more details, go to:

www.nsea.org

Save With Dave

Do you have some large, personal expenses on the horizon? Or perhaps an unexpected emergency that has caused financial hardship?

The NEA Personal Loan is a multi-purpose loan designed to help pay for large expenses, life events, medical and dental expenses — even the unexpected.

The program offers low fixed rates that allow a variety of expenses to be wrapped up into one monthly payment.

Loan amounts range from \$2,500 to \$20,000, with terms of 24, 48 to 60 months. There is no application fee, no annual fee, and no prepayment fees.



Glenn

Upgrading Your Home?

Perhaps you're planning to upgrade your living quarters with a move to a new home. Consider the NEA Home Financing Program, with these features:

- The program makes it easy to get competitive rates on a mortgage;
- The program is offered through Wells Fargo;
- Allows you to work with a knowledgeable professional who is dedicated to providing outstanding service;
- You'll receive a \$500 award card through My Mortgage Gift Program upon closing on a purchase or refinance loan.

Family members are also eligible for this offer. Be certain to identify yourself as an NEA member.

Save on Your Costco Membership

Did you know that, as an NEA member, you can essentially save the cost of a one-year membership at Costco?

When you join as a new Costco member, you will receive coupons for free products and other savings valued at more than \$55. That could neatly offset the cost of your first year's Costco Gold Star Membership of \$55!

To become a new member of Costco, simply register or login at www.neamb.com and find Costco at the Discounts tab under "Everyday Discounts." Complete and print the special Costco membership invite and special offers page, and present them at any U.S. Costco location when you register to become a new member — it's that simple!

Go to the Source!

Learn more about all of these great programs at:

neamb.com

David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative

Four Auto Insurance Mistakes to Avoid

You May Save in the Short Term, But Over Time, These Choices Can be Costly

We all want the best deal for our auto insurance. But saving money with a "bare minimum" policy may end up costing you much more in the long run. Here are four mistakes to avoid when choosing your auto insurance:

1 Sticking with State Minimums:

Minimum state liability limits are just that — the bare minimum. They could leave you under insured if you caused an accident and others were seriously hurt. You'd be paying out of pocket for medical expenses and legal costs that could far exceed those low limits. The insurance industry generally recommends drivers carry at least \$100,000/\$300,000 coverage (\$100,000 per person for injuries with a maximum of \$300,000 per incident); however, CBS Money Watch advises anyone with assets like a home and investments to look at increasing those limits to \$250,000 per person, \$500,000 per incident.

2 Treating Your Car Like a Junker:

Sure, it might be a little slow getting up to speed and the paint has dulled some, but it's still valuable. Because it's optional on most insurance policies, there is some debate about how much comprehensive coverage to carry on an older vehicle. Keep in mind, without it you would receive nothing if yours is one of the 152,000 vehicles consumed by fires or one of the 699,000 stolen each year. If your ride is less than 10 years old, it's probably worth protecting against flood, fire, theft, hail and vandalism.



3 Forgetting about Irresponsible Drivers:

The next time you're on the road, look around you; the Insurance Research Council estimates nearly 30 million U.S. drivers (one in eight) are uninsured,

with many more driving with minimal coverage. If one of them should hit you, and you don't have uninsured motorist protection, you could be paying for damage to your vehicle, medical bills, pain and suffering and loss of income. The good news is that uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage costs very little for the added protection you get.

4 Underestimating the Cost of Things Today:

Did you know you're also responsible for repairs or replacement of buildings, light poles or fences that you damage in a crash? It could cost you a lot of money, too. While many states require a minimum amount of property damage coverage, most insurance experts recommend at least \$50,000. Remember, the average retail price of a new vehicle is right around \$30,000 and the cost to replace a light pole is \$3,000. Obviously, a minimum of \$5,000 or \$10,000 would leave you paying a large amount out-of-pocket should you have a serious crash.

Don't leave your insurance needs to chance. Call an NEA Auto & Home Insurance Program advisor to make sure you have the coverage you need at the price you prefer at 1.800.800.9410 or visit:

neamb.com/autohome

NEA Wireless with AT&T Saves Members 15 Percent!

NEA Member Benefits has partnered with AT&T, the only national unionized carrier, to offer NEA Wireless to NEA members. Take advantage and enjoy:

- 15 percent discount (for qualified charges) on cell phone monthly service;
- Free use of AT&T's 34,000 WiFi hotspots across the United States.

The discount applies to mobile phones serviced by AT&T, including the 3G and 4G iPhones. There are no activation or conversion fees. Discounts appear on monthly bills.

Access NEA Wireless by registering or logging in at www.neamb.com, click on the Discounts tab, and then find NEA Wireless under "Everyday Discounts." Follow the instructions to sign up for NEA Wireless—it's simple! If you already have an AT&T wireless service plan, no worries—just sign in at neamb.com to obtain your NEA Wireless discount code, and then take the code and proof of NEA membership to an AT&T retail location.

DOE: Building Tools to Assist Teachers

Online Resources Designed to Aid Educators in Their Work

By Dr. Matt Blomstedt,
State Commissioner of Education

Like teachers and administrators, the fast pace of kicking off a new school year has its challenges for the Nebraska Department of Education but also its rewards — rewards that come from focusing our energy on initiatives and resources to benefit every student every day.



Blomstedt

Helping teachers manage their classrooms and instruction is among my personal goals and that of Nebraska Department of Education staff. Our work is increasingly focused on building tools to help teachers. I'm happy to report that we've successfully rolled out new resources, and more are on the horizon.

Without trying to create a comprehensive list here today considering the space limitations, I will keep myself in check and highlight just some of those resources while encouraging you to connect to the Nebraska Department of Education's homepage to learn about all the Nebraska-built resources aimed at helping classroom teachers and

schools.

The Nebraska ADVISER Dashboard — a web-based view of student and staff data that provides educators with a quick and easy way to personalize instruction and make data driven decisions — was implemented in 2013-14 with nine pilot districts participating. And that was just the beginning.

This year an additional 39 districts will participate, with the remaining districts phased in over the next two years, with completion in 2017-18.

The Nebraska ADVISER Dashboard pulls together data from multiple systems, enabling educators to efficiently analyze large amounts of information. If the ADVISER has not yet reached your district, it will. For more information go to:

<http://bit.ly/NebADVISER>

I also encourage you to explore these other data driven resources, as well, to learn how they can assist you. The Data Reporting System is available at:

<http://drs.education.ne.gov/>

The Data and Cadre and Use Curriculum can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/DataCadre>

To help you network with colleagues in other districts, the Education Directory provides contact information for all Nebraska educators at:

<http://bit.ly/EdDirectory>

Regarding resources related to standards and testing, Nebraska has an important tool that allows teachers to “check for learning.” In other words, educators can create practice tests to look at what an individual student is able to do at the three performance levels,

and then adjust instruction to meet student needs. For more on NDE's Check4Learning, visit:

<http://bit.ly/C4Learning>

NeSA content pages in reading, math and science are also available at that site, providing additional information.

The list of resources includes the new Standards Instructional Tool, which houses instructional strategies to support English Language Arts and Social Studies instruction based on the most recently revised standards. It can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/NDEStandardsTool>

Another tool by the same name is focused on the standards that are the basis of the current NeSA reading and math tests, which will be in place until 2017 and 2018, respectively, when the newly revised standards have been built into state tests. That tool is available at:

<http://bit.ly/StandardsTool>

Some Nebraska-built examples of career education resources include — but are not limited to — the Career Readiness Toolkit at:

<http://bit.ly/CareerReadyKit>

This toolkit provides teaching resources related to the Nebraska Career Readiness Standards.

Finally, the Virtual Industry Tours showcases what work is like in Nebraska-based businesses. It can be found at:

www.necareertours.com/

The Nebraska Department of Education has a wealth of resources available to assist you, and the list is growing. Keep an eye on the department's homepage at:

www.education.ne.gov/

Pork Producers Video Looks at Ag in Nebraska

Food For Thought, a 22-minute video that tells students about how farmers care for pigs in Nebraska, will be offered to the state's elementary schools again this year. The video is offered free for fourth-grade classes by the Nebraska Pork Producers Association and the Nebraska Soybean Board.

The story is of a suburban fourth-grader who knows nothing about raising pigs, the economics and skills it takes to run a successful business. He appreciates farming after he tours a working farm and meeting a farmer and his fourth-grade daughter.

Also included is a complete lesson plan and a short video filmed on a Nebraska pig farm to provide students with additional insight in farming operations.

The video has been recommended by the Nebraska Department of Education as it helps meet a fourth-grade curriculum objective on the state's economy.

Supplies are limited; so teachers are urged to order quickly. To order, go to:

nebraskasfoodforthought.com

Fulbright Awards Offer International Professional Development

Nebraska K-12 educators interested in conducting educational research abroad should check out the 2016-17 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching program.

The program provides a unique international professional development opportunity of 3-6 months in duration. Also eligible are counselors, curriculum specialists, gifted coordinators, special education coordinators and media specialists.

By conducting educational research abroad, teachers gain new skills, learn new instructional methods and assessment methodologies and share best practices with international colleagues and students. Teachers also have the opportunity to expand their understanding of other cultures and international education systems that will enrich their schools and local communities with global perspectives.

During the 2015-16 program, educators may travel to Botswana, Chile, Finland, India, Israel, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Palestinian Territories, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

The application deadline is Nov. 4. To start an application, go to the website at:

www.fulbrightteacherexchange.org

The Fulbright program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is administered by the Institute of International Education.

Stand Up, Speak Out

“
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Most communities across the United States firmly believe in the high quality of their local school. Ironically, many also doubt the quality of schools in other communities. Can both propositions be true? Can everyone's local school be good, but every other school be deficient?

Not hardly. It is one of the many myths that form our national discussion about public education, but it is certainly not the worst. And it is understandable that most people take pride in what is their identity. Friendly rivalry is part of the American culture. The problem is that what is becoming the dominant discussion about education is neither friendly nor rivalry. There are too many self-styled “experts” who continually criticize, attack, and degrade the great success story of American public education.

So, if most people have confidence in their local schools, why aren't there more people who stand up and speak out against these attacks?

What We Value

Public schools build America...and Americans. The public schools of our communities are vitally important to this democracy. We are the world's meeting place of human variation: colors, religions, lifestyles, ethnicities, political thought, and social values. The potential for conflict is constant and significant. Against this backdrop of difference, the American public school is the only institution in which children are required to work, talk, play, and learn together. The public school is the site that produces Americans. Of all the possible factors that affect education, research has consistently shown that parents regard teachers as the most important factor in good schools. If this is what we value, why do we let the harshest critics

of our community schools go unchallenged?

What We Face

What is the most outrageous thing you have heard someone say about the quality of your community's schools or teachers? Did those who hear this attack also hear your response? Too many of our public spaces seem to be filled with only the loudest voices questioning or attacking the very concept of a public school system. But the quiet voices can be as insistent and often, more powerful with their own stories based on reality and experience, instead of rote ideology. Communities face many challenges in supporting — and maintaining — the opportunities of public education for its children. Perhaps the biggest challenge is that citizens often fail in their responsibility to participate in the public discussion — leaving only one perspective, the voice of criticism.

Many well-meaning people believe that “politics” is something to be avoided. Join the real world. America was born and continues in conflict, contest, and public debate. Untruths and misdirection — unchallenged — can become an accepted part of the public narrative.

What We Must Do

How does an ordinary person, not comfortable with conflict and not trained in rhetoric or debate, challenge the outright untruth and deception of many of the most direct attacks on public education?

We all own our experience. We don't need to be debaters or even good speakers. We simply need to tell our story, to share our experience, in a straightforward and truthful way. It doesn't matter when or where. Ideological attacks and mistruths about our schools by anyone, or anywhere, need to be countered. It doesn't have to be confrontive. Simply stand up and speak out: “That is not my experience....” And then tell your story. If you are a community member, tell the ways how public education makes a difference in your community. If you are a teacher, tell your experience in how public education made a difference in the life of a student.

Constant attacks on schools and teachers will win...unless people speak out for our schools. Don't be just a quiet supporter. Take it public. Stand up and speak out for our schools.



Take it Public: NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen says that in order to counter attacks on public schools, educators need only share their experiences with others.

Fall Topics: Sandhill Cranes and State Fair

Those Attractions on NSEA-Retired Agenda at Fall Conference

The 2015 NSEA-Retired Fall Conference at Grand Island promises to be one of the best!

Already locked into the agenda is Joseph McDermott, the CEO of the Nebraska State Fair, now held at Grand Island. The Spotlight on Nebraska Talk will feature Brice Krohn, director of the Crane Trust Nature Center near Grand Island, who will discuss The Great Sandhill Crane Migration.

Tentative breakout session topics will include estate and financial planning; health insurance after retirement (EHA options and Medicare transition); bird watching in Nebraska; how to really grow your plants; olive oils and balsamic vinegars; and resources available for "aging in your own home."

The conference is set for the Bosselman/Heartland Event Center in Grand Island on Tuesday, Oct. 27. There is no cost to attend for members. There is a \$10 cost for non-members.

A pre-conference event is set for Monday evening, Oct. 26, at Grand Island's Chocolate Bar, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Cost for the pre-event is \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door.

For the convenience of members, a block of rooms has been set aside at the Fairfield Inn for Monday evening, Oct. 26, with a special rate of \$99 (before taxes). Members are responsible for payment and for making, changing or cancelling their individual room reservations. Make your reservation by October 19 to assure the special rate. The hotel is located at 805 Allen Dr. in Grand Island. To reserve a room, call 308-381-8980, and ask for the NSEA-Retired room rate.

Look for complete conference details in the October issue of the NSEA-Retired Advocate. Get the latest details here:

<http://www.nsea.org/retired>

Local Associations, 2015-16

Each year we publish details about local associations around the state. The information includes contact and other details that retirees or those soon-to- retire may find useful. Here is this year's list:

Elkhorn Sandhills Education Association-Retired

President of Elkhorn Sandhills is LuEttta M. Clark, and vice president is LaRene Konopasak. Pat Monson is the treasurer.

The group has about 30 members, and dues are \$5 per year. The meeting schedule includes a Nov. 16 gathering at noon at the ESU No. 8 in Neligh for a holiday carry-in dinner with a business meeting and social activity to follow; Feb. 22 at 10:30 a.m. for a tour of the Neligh Museum followed by lunch at Nana's Café and a business meeting at ESU No. 8; and June 20 at 10 a.m. for a tour of the Kreycik Ranch at Niobrara, followed by a lunch and business meeting at the Country Café in Niobrara.

Contact Clark at 402-329-6601. Reach Konopasak at 402-371-8164, and Monson at 402-371-8803, or reach them at:

lakono@yahoo.com

pmonson@cableone.net

Central Panhandle Chapter NSEA - Retired

The president of the Central Panhandle Chapter is Twila Griffiths. Vice President is Karon Harvey; Secretary Treasurer is Sandy Harrach; and Jim McDermott represents the Panhandle District on



Awards All Around! Three NEA-Retired Journalism Awards were received by publications of various Nebraska retired organizations at the 2015 NEA-Retired Conference in Orlando. Retired delegates to the conference, including the awards that were received, are, from left: Carol Krejci, Omaha; Tom Black, West Point, with the Hall of Fame Award for the NSEA-Retired Corner; NSEA-Retired President Roger Rea, Omaha, with the Runner-Up Award for Established State Retired Newsletter for the NSEA-Retired Advocate publication; Walta Sue Dodd, Omaha, with the first place award for Established Local Retired Newsletter for the OEA-Retired Voices of Experience; and Pat Etherton, Lincoln.

the NSEA-Retired Board of Directors.

The affiliate has 10 members. They meet with the Scottsbluff Area Retired School Personnel, associated with AARP. Members meet the third Monday in September, November, January and May at Godfather's, 2207 Broadway, Scottsbluff.

Members have identified issues of concern as retirement income, health issues, fraud and volunteer opportunities.

Griffiths can be reached at 308-635-2931; Harvey at 308-632-3410; and Harrach at 308-635-3048. They may also be reached by email at these addresses, respectively:

egriff@mail.com

kharveyne@yahoo.com

sharrach@embarqmail.com

Millard Education Association-Retired

The 235 members of the Millard Education Association meet monthly at various locations around the area. Members pay annual dues of \$5, or a lifetime membership fee of \$50. Among meeting topics and events under consideration are volunteer work filling food bags at Heartland Food for the school backpack program; a golf outing and lunch; and a business meeting to plan this year's activities.

Officers this year are Jim Rames, president (402-895-2484); Sid Rames, vice president (402-895-2484); and Pat Brinkman, secretary treasurer (402-933-7967). They can also be reached here:

rames9@cox.net

pbrinkman@cox.net

Panhandle Education Association-Retired

No details on the Panhandle Education Association-Retired plans for the year are available. Officers are president, Jadie W. Giorgis (308-235-4453); vice president, JoAnn Dietz (308-235-3028); secretary, Earladeen Walker (308-235-4795); and treasurer, Shirley Whartman (308-235-4573).

Oops! NSEA-Retired President Roger Rea retired from Omaha North High School as a chemistry teacher. A blurb in this space last month was incorrect.

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renaekelly@gmail.com

NEA Offers Training for Women, Minorities

The National Education Association will host a Minority and Women's Leadership Training Conference for members from Nebraska and other western states over the last weekend of January 2016.

The program prepares educators to lead with confidence by focusing on a student-centered agenda, as well as the social justice issues that affect students, schools and communities. The training supports the needs of leaders at all levels, from emerging to experienced; those appointed or elected to the highest local, state and national leadership positions.

NEA will fund attendance by four members to the Minority Leadership Training conference, and up to two attendees to the Women's Leadership Training conference, from each state.

Local associations are also encouraged to sponsor members to attend. Members may also attend at their cost.

The conference is Friday, Jan. 29, to Sunday, Jan. 31, at the Westin St. Francis Hotel on Union Square, in San Francisco.

Registration opens in November. To express an interest in attending, contact NSEA President Nancy Fulton at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

nancy.fulton@nea.org

Washington High Court Rules Against Charters

A September ruling by the State of Washington's Supreme Court found that charter schools there violate the state's constitution. The court's edict overturns a 2012 law narrowly enacted by voters, which allowed public tax dollars to fund private schools.

The court said the constitution requires the legislature to provide "a general and uniform system of public schools," and also said the entire revenue derived from the common school fund and state tax "shall be exclusively applied" to the support of the common schools. Further, the court said charter schools do not qualify as common schools, and thus cannot receive public tax dollars. The court's decision noted that a lack of democratic transparency and accountability factored in disqualifying charters as public schools. Specifically, the court noted that charters are not eligible for tax dollars because they are not under control of local voters. Washington charter schools are managed by private organizations and firms that appoint their own boards.

NSEA Sighted at Mathematics, Coaches Association Confabs

Nearly a dozen field staffers were on duty at the NSEA booth as coaches from across the state met for the annual Nebraska Coaches Association Clinic in Lincoln in July.

In addition to answering questions about employment issues, bargaining schedules and more, field staff drew names for gift card winners from among the many who visited the NSEA booth.

Gift card winners were **Heidi Manion, Alliance**; **Andy Vrbka, High Plains Community Schools**; **Josh Schliefert, Weeping Water**; **Tina Thiele-Blecher, Elgin**; and **Gillian Hogeland, Overton**.

NSEA also hosted a booth at the annual September meeting of the Nebraska Association of **Mathematic Teachers Conference in Kearney**.

NSEA field staffers Kristen Sedlacek, Cindy Copich and Randy Gordon met NSEA members and answered questions during the day.

Four NSEA members who visited the booth won gift cards to Barnes & Noble. Recipients were **Kris Vondrak, South Sioux City Education Association**; **Shanna Karlin, Fremont Education Association**; **Jennifer Loker, Wauneta-Palisade Education Association**; and **Laura Furrow, Hastings Education Association**.

The fledgling wind energy business in Nebraska is already making a difference for the state's school districts.

The Elgin Review newspaper reports tax revenue implications for the **Elgin Public Schools** may hit six figures this year. The Prairie Breeze Wind Energy Farm will add between \$300,000 and \$350,000 in tax revenue to the school district coffers, according to Elgin Superintendent Daniel Polk.

Polk reported that the wind farm tax revenue could translate into five cents or more on the district's tax levy.

Doane College has launched a Doctorate in Education.

The program will give students the abili-



Two Eagles on Flight: From the Johnson-Brock Education Association, Mitch Roberts and Landonn Mackey attended the Nebraska Coaches Association Clinic and visited the NSEA booth.



Bearcat Power: At the NSEA booth at the coaches clinic were these Association members from Kearney, J.D. Carson and Karmen Grant.

ty to build on Doane's undergraduate teacher education program and the Graduate Studies in Education program's masters' degrees in both educational leadership and curriculum and instruction. It includes 57 hours of post-graduate level coursework seminars and stand-alone courses, and will cater to professionals in K-12 systems, as well as postsecondary and nonprofit institutions.

"It is my goal to take all of the strengths of the existing programs and add the layer of scholarly research inherent to terminal degrees," said program director Dr. Cate Sommervold. "The doctorate program provides an opportunity for students to dig into a topic about which they are passionate and work toward establishing themselves as experts in their fields."

Interested? Contact Sommervold at:

cate.sommervold@doane.edu

Fourth Graders Get Free Pass!

Every Kid in a Park Pass Free at Homestead

Every Kid in a Park is a fun component of the National Park Service's centennial.

Fourth graders can complete an online activity to obtain a voucher for a free pass to more than 2,000 federal recreation areas and national parks, including Homestead National Monument of America, near Beatrice.

Research shows fourth graders are at a stage where they begin to understand how the world around them works. They are likely to have positive attitudes towards nature, and to grow into the next generation of stewards. Once a student completes the web-based activity, they must print the voucher, take it to a federal park site and exchange it for the pass, good through August.

"We are always look forward to engaging students and helping them develop their reading and writing skills while learning about the Homestead Act of 1862," said Superintendent Mark Engler.

Homestead National Monument has curriculum-based programs for schools that can be scheduled through the year. Teachers are encouraged to visit the website for classroom activities and details on how to obtain free passes for their classroom. The site is at:

www.everykidinapark.gov

Homestead admission is free. For details, call 402-223-3514.

Speaking of Teaching

"If politics must truly be at the service of the human person, it follows that it cannot be a slave to the economy and finance. Politics is, instead, an expression of our compelling need to live as one, in order to build as one the greatest common good: that of a community which sacrifices particular interests in order to share, in justice and peace, its goods, its interests, its social life. I do not underestimate the difficulty that this involves, but I encourage you in this effort."

— Pope Francis,

Addressing Congress on Sept. 24, 2015

Classroom Design by Students

By Tricia Roach, RTI Specialist, Flagstaff Unified School District, AZ.

"I use multiple classroom configurations throughout the school year. In the beginning, I arrange desks to allow for cooperative teamwork and watch how various students interact with one another. It tells me a lot about how students process and learn information.



"As the year progresses, I have students design the room. They have to use visual software (iPad or computer) to illustrate their design, and provide academic reasons for their choice. Students vote on the arrangement (with the teacher being the ultimate decider). Of course I get to choose who sits near whom, but I always allow for students to demonstrate they can be successful even when sitting near their BFF."

Sign up for Works4Me at:

www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html

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



Putt Putt at Lincoln

Members of the Lincoln Education Association gathered before school opened for an evening of putt putt golf and a picnic dinner to celebrate the start of school.

Members were asked to bring a food item for the Lincoln Food Bank as admission to the golf course.

Clockwise, from top left, are: Lincoln teachers Curt and Jennifer Thomas, and their children Emery and Dalton; Hartley Elementary teacher Karen Heafer and North Star High School's Bailey Feit, along with Heafer's husband, Harry; and Lincoln East High teacher Joe Hovorka and daughter Meegen.

