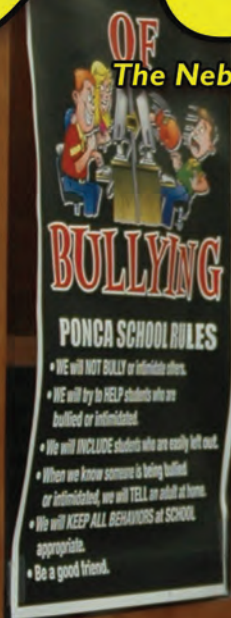


THE

VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ♦ October 2018



WATCHING & ENFORCING YOUR CONTRACT

*Protecting Collective, Individual Rights
Depends on Continued Vigilance*



ELECTION 2018

- WHY MEDICAID EXPANSION MATTERS
- NSEA RECOMMENDED CANDIDATES, INCLUDING:
 - LEGISLATURE
 - STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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for Every Child.**

Don't Allow Evaluation to be Nerve-Wracking

Know What is Expected, Plan Ahead with These Tips

Anticipating and then enduring the evaluation process by an administrator can be unnerving to a veteran educator, much less to a teacher in the first few years of his or her career.

While veteran teachers are more likely to be used to the evaluation process, probationary teachers are certainly less familiar with how evaluations work.

For instance, how often should a probationary teacher be evaluated by his or her administrator? That question has been asked, answered and sometimes misunderstood by administrators and teachers alike.

For those teachers early in their career, going into the evaluation



conference review can be just as nerve-wracking as the actual evaluation

As the typical evaluation season nears, it's good to understand that, at a minimum, probationary teachers must be evaluated at least once each semester. It should be emphasized that if deficiencies are noted in the teacher's performance, assistance in overcoming the deficiencies are to be provided.

Some school districts have policies that exceed the state requirement for the evaluation of probationary teachers, which is permissible. The evaluation of permanent teachers is not outlined in state statute but is typically found in board policy for each individual school district.

If you have any questions about the evaluation process, about an upcoming evaluation; about the results of your evaluation; or about your post-evaluation conference with your administrator, call your Association and ask for the NSEA Organizational Specialist assigned to your local association. You may reach NSEA toll-free, at 1-800-742-0047.

Evaluation Tips

If you're preparing for an evaluation, consider these tips, offered by NSEA Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan:

■ Take good notes during evaluation conferences. Writing will help you focus on what is being said and will assist you in later recalling what was covered.

■ Ask clarifying questions in a professional manner, but for the most part be prepared to remain in a "listening mode." Do not be argumentative.

■ Before signing the evaluation, carefully read any statements that denote what your signature indicates. If you are uncertain whether to sign the evaluation but have been directed to do so, then add a statement such as "My signature only indicates that I have received a copy."

■ Before submitting a written response to an evaluation, consult your NSEA Organizational Specialist for advice. Call to NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

■ There is no statutory time limit for submitting written responses to evaluations. If you are directed to conform to a time limit, request an extension of the deadline if you are unable to comply. As a general rule, it's customary to submit written responses within two to three working weeks.

■ Maintain accurate records on the date and length of evaluations, as well as dates of evaluation conferences. Be sure to keep copies of all documents, especially signed documents.

On the Cover: When it comes to maintenance of the negotiated contract, Keith Trusty knows to keep a sharp eye. Trusty and his members of the Ponca Education Association set a good example with a contract issue last fall. Learn more on page 7.

Believing in Good



**NSEA President
Jenni Benson**

“

*I know that
not every
member agrees
100 percent
with every action
taken by NSEA
— but that
healthy
disagreement
serves to make
us stronger.*

”

This past May, just one in four Nebraskans bothered to go to the polls or to mail in ballots for the Primary Election. That’s not a passing grade in anyone’s book.

For those of you who took the time to vote, I ask: What drove you to take the time to participate in this exercise in civic responsibility?

For the 75 percent who did not participate, what kept you from the polls?

For all of us: What will it take to raise our voting grade? More studying? More care and concern? An intervention?

In a little over a month, I fear that far too few of us will participate in the General Election. I’ll be one of those who vote, and I know what drives me to do so: It is about my belief in the “good.”

A Common Thread

One of my strengths in the Gallup Strength Finder process is “belief.”

The research by Gallup says this: “If you possess a strong Belief theme, you have certain core values that are enduring. This consistency is the foundation for all your relationships. Your friends call you dependable. ‘I know where you stand,’ they say. Your Belief makes you easy to trust. It also demands that you find work that meshes with your values. Your work must be meaningful; it must matter to you. And guided by your Belief theme it will matter only if it gives you a chance to live out your values.”

As I travel Nebraska and visit with members and stakeholders, I listen as members talk about issues and successes in our public schools. There is a common thread, a strong, underlying sense of belief in the good work of our communities, our schools, our families and our teachers.

So I ask another question: Why don’t more people vote in order to ensure that good?

For EVERY Child

This summer I had an opportunity to speak with a cadre of administrators as part of their studies to become superintendents. They arrived at NSEA, ready to spend a couple hours learning about our Association. I was proud to share the core NSEA belief, which I hold dear: EVERY child deserves a quality public education.

I told them of my encounter with an Association member earlier this year. The member was

considering dropping his membership because of a perceived conflict with NSEA and his “belief” system regarding the Second Amendment, LGBT students and DACA students.

I was very direct and told the administrators the same thing I told that member: “NSEA believes ALL students and staff should be safe and secure. If you are not becoming a superintendent to serve ALL students, ALL families and respect ALL beliefs, then you really should not become a superintendent.”

Power at the Ballot Box

Being a member of your local, state and national Association is a choice. Our individual belief systems play a role in making the decision to join. We believe in children. We believe in public education. We believe and understand that we must make adequate investment in public education in order for our children to succeed.

That leads us to the next step: To make certain that there is such an investment, we must believe in the power of the ballot box.

As we build and evolve our individual systems of belief, we balance a great many issues. As we make our choice to vote, or to be an Association member, we weigh the value those actions bring to us. Because of our belief in children and public education, voting and engagement in politics is a natural progression that becomes an important part of NSEA’s mission and work.

Healthy Disagreement

I acknowledge that belief should not be judgmental. We all have friends, or belong to organizations, or to political parties that hold beliefs that may not align completely with our personal beliefs. I know that not every member agrees 100 percent with every action taken by NSEA — but that healthy disagreement serves to make us stronger. As an organization we learn and grow from such diversity.

As you decide which candidates might get your support, please do your homework. Ask questions. Review the candidates recommended elsewhere in this magazine. They support public education and think that ALL children should get the same level of care in our public schools.

That is something we can all support and believe in.

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Wear #RedforEd Campaign Spreads

NSEA Members Support Movement; ‘Issue of Poorly Funded Schools is National’

Scores of Nebraska teachers dressed in red on the day after Labor Day, and it wasn’t to support an athletic team.

The red garb was in response to a request for a national “Wear Red for Ed” day from members of the Arizona Education Association. AEA members sent out a call for support after that state’s Supreme Court turned back a petition effort to place an education funding issue on the November ballot.

NSEA members who wore red shared their photos on the Association’s Facebook page.

Said AEA Communications Director Sheenae Shannon: “Our state legislature is so afraid of us that the only thing they could do was to silence us by not allowing us to vote. Our educators and supporters are wearing #RedforEd in response, but I also know the issue of poorly funded schools is a nationwide one. We are asking for a National #REDforED day on Tuesday, Sept. 4, as an act of solidarity and support.”

In the hottest part of the Arizona summer, AEA members and public education supporters had gone to the sidewalks to collect signatures in support of the ballot issue that, if passed, would require the state’s legislature to provide full funding to the state’s public schools.

Passage would have raised income taxes on individuals and households earning more than \$250,000. Estimates put the potential revenue for the state’s chronically underfunded public schools at more than \$690 million. Citizens clearly supported the concept, as petitioners collected more than 270,000 signatures in just over two months. Just 120,000 signatures were needed. However, the court ruled that the petition language might confuse voters about income levels and denied the language a place on the ballot.

As a result, the AEA asked for the nationwide support, and turned its attention to the November election of candidates who are friendly to public education.

Oklahoma, West Virginia Strike

The Arizona campaign was the latest in a series of pro-public education campaigns across the country this year. Teachers in several states went on strike or threatened strike in search of better pay, better benefits and better working conditions.

In Oklahoma, where the legislature has been cutting education funding for years, teachers walked out for nine days. Their “no more” stance resulted in a well-deserved \$6,000-a-year salary increase. Corporate and other tax cuts had diminished state revenue from 2008 to 2014, and the state’s school districts had seen a 24 percent cut in per pupil funding over those same years. Oklahoma teachers had not received a raise since 2008.

West Virginia teachers were the first to strike this year, and like Oklahoma teachers were angry over salary stagnation — they had gone four years without a raise. Their nine-day walk-out resulted in a 5 percent raise for the 2018-19 school year. That legislation replaced a plan to give teachers a two percent raise this year, followed by raises of one percent in 2020 and one percent in 2021. The new plan gives teachers some relief from health insurance premium costs that were rising much



Red for Ed in Nebraska! NSEA members across the state wore Red for Education on Sept. 4 in support of colleagues across the country struggling against inadequate funding for public schools. These members showed their support by posting these photos on NSEA’s Facebook page. Clockwise from top left are Shauntae Starks, Omaha; Tami Wissing, Grand Island; Karen Juzenas and Joline Javorsky, Clearwater-Orchard-Verdigre; and Andy and Calena Ohlson and daughter, Holdrege.

faster than paychecks.

Element of Respect

There was also an element of respect involved. West Virginia reading teacher Renita Benson told a reporter that “It’s not the raise, as much as it is having the respect that we deserve from the government.”

Kentucky teachers walked after the governor vetoed a two-year budget to increased education spending. With pressure from teachers, both houses of the Legislature overrode the veto and restored the increase. Arizona teachers walked out this spring before their governor promised a net 20 percent raise by 2020.

Closer to home, teachers in several Colorado districts walked out for more than two weeks. They were protesting low pay, low state spending on education and troubles with the state’s teacher pension. The Colorado Education Association said that after inflation, salaries in that state have dropped 17 percent since 2003. The result of the walkout was a two percent raise, plus a \$150 million increase in K-12 education funding and a \$225 million allocation to the state pension program.



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Contract Care: Ponca Education Association member Keith Trusty in his science classroom at Ponca High School. Trusty was the PEA president last year when members supported action to defend the contract with the school district.

Contracts: Vigilance Required

Alert Members at Ponca Catch Violation Early in Year Issue Resolved with NSEA's Help

When a teacher new to the school district tried to join the Ponca Education Association in the fall of 2017, she turned to PEA President Keith Trusty for assistance.

Misty Bausch had encountered difficulty discerning which Association membership category fit her new employment status.

No wonder. Bausch arrived at Ponca with seven years' experience teaching special education in a nearby district. But she had been hired as a paraeducator – albeit at an enhanced rate of pay – to monitor an online Spanish language program the school district thought had a proctor behind it. Bausch's hiring was the district's solution after administrators were unable to find a replacement to fill a retirement vacancy. The difficulty was understandable: the Nebraska Department of Education reports that more than a dozen World Language teaching positions across the state went unfilled in 2017-18.

Bausch had teaching experience, lived nearby and was fluent in Spanish. With a new superintendent and a new high school principal on board, she agreed to help the district by taking the position. But Bausch was not endorsed in Spanish, and most educators are not comfortable being assigned outside their area of endorsement.

"She was really doing the school district a favor," said Trusty.

Favors aside, when Bausch reached out to Trusty, it turned a spotlight on issues that endanger the integrity of the negotiated contract.

"The district hired her as a paraeducator because she was not endorsed in Spanish," said NSEA Attorney Scott Norby. "That does not justify them hiring her as a paraeducator, they cannot treat her as anything less than a certificated teacher."

Fortunately, local members were alert and the contract issues were resolved professionally and quickly.

Vigilance, Violations

There are two important sides of contract advocacy that affect every local Association in Nebraska, from smallest to largest: contract negotiations and contract enforcement.

Trusty had recognized immediately that the district's hiring of a certificated teacher as a paraeducator – off the agreed-to salary schedule – conflicted with the Association's negotiated agreement. Contract vigilance and watchfulness are ongoing endeavors, said NSEA Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan.

"This is about protecting both the individual and the collective rights," said Guinan. "This teacher had her certificate and was essentially hired as a full-time teacher."

Yet Bausch was hired at an hourly rate that fell short of the first-year teacher's salary shown on the PEA's negotiated agreement. She was also denied fringe benefits outlined in the PEA contract and was not receiving contributions to her state retirement plan.

Guinan credited Trusty and his leadership team for identifying and taking the lead in resolving the issue. Protecting one member's

'This is about protecting both the individual and the collective rights.'

*— Trish Guinan,
NSEA Director of Advocacy*

rights protects the rights of all, she said.

"This is about being vigilant and proactive. Watching and enforcing the contract means doing what is right for all members," she said.

Norby agreed, and said "This situation presented an issue that never really goes away: leadership and vigilance in monitoring compliance with members' contractual and statutory rights."

Supreme Court Wins

Paying certificated teachers as paraeducators or as substitutes is a continuing problem, said Norby. He called such violations "an eternal challenge."

"School officials wanting to fill vacancies with teachers under one-year contracts – and to pay them off-scale – continues to occur," he said.

The most common method finds a school district hiring a certificated teacher to fill a vacancy but labeling and paying that teacher as a long-term substitute. Norby said there is a firm distinction between a substitute and a full-time teaching position.

"A substitute fills in during a permanent teacher's leave of absence, whether that absence is a day or a month," he said. "Substitutes are not members of the bargaining unit, they do not get benefits."

As noted, Bausch was hired to teach Spanish, even though not endorsed in that area. Norby said a school district's administration has the right to assign educators outside their area of endorsement. Doing so, he said, does not alter the distinction between a substitute and a fulltime teacher.

"We've been dealing with this across the state for decades," said Norby. "We've been to the Nebraska Supreme Court twice on this issue and won both times."

"Misty Bausch should not have been treated as anything less than a full-time, certificated employee."

Local Support

When Trusty found Bausch had been hired as a paraeducator, he called Guinan, and along with PEA Vice President Zane Webb met with the district's new superintendent. Those discussions, though cordial and amicable, led to a grievance filed by the PEA, which was resolved quickly.

Meanwhile, Bausch had reached out to NSEA Organizational Specialist Carol Hicks, who serves local associations in northeast Nebraska. Hicks also alerted Guinan about the potential need for NSEA involvement at Ponca.

Locally, Trusty said PEA members were kept informed along the way and supported the Association's work on behalf of Bausch.

"We discussed it at our meetings, and members supported Zane

Don't Go to Sleep On Your Rights

Keeping an eye on your contract is a never-ending job, says NSEA Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan.

That's because a never-ending array of issues can arise through school board policy changes, clerical errors, unintentional and intentional administrative actions and other sources.

In some cases, seemingly minor issues can begin as molehills and grow into mountains.

"Issues can pop up, and at the time Association members don't think it's a big deal. Then they find out later that they should have questioned it, but the opportunity to address the issue has passed," said Guinan.

"Items like salary schedule placement, approval of professional development hours, etc., all fall into the category of 'it would have been nice to have known this two years ago when it happened,'" said Guinan.

When local associations don't watch closely, contract language gets changed, new policies are instituted.

"It may be the result of new, inexperienced administrators who make changes not knowing any better, or they may be trying to make changes on the sly," she said.

Guinan also advised members not to sign anything they find in their school mailbox without first giving those items a thorough review. That includes contracts, extra duty contracts, waivers of any kind.

"These kinds of things need to be reviewed," she said.

Local associations are frequently told by administrators that "every school district is doing this." That is rarely the case.

"Enforcing the contract, watching policies, is a never-ending process. Don't go to sleep on your rights," said Guinan.



Guinan

and I," he said.

Another Blip

At the Board of Education's October 2017 meeting, a full teaching contract was approved for Bausch. But it came with another blip: Along with the contract, Bausch received a notice of non-renewal of her contract, effective at the end of the school year.

"When Misty was finally offered a full contract, they also gave her a non-renewal notice, so they could let her go at any time," said Trusty.

Norby responded quickly.

"If you let them do that, why would you not let them issue a notice of non-renewal of employment with every new teacher's contract?" he said. "That's abuse of the process."

"There must be a reason for dismissal, and none of the state's fair dismissal laws will mean anything if this kind of action is allowed," said Norby.

NSEA, through the PEA, requested a public hearing, allowed by statute, to defend Bausch against the non-renewal notice. Once that filing was made, the notice was quickly withdrawn.

Never-Ending Effort

Bausch was eventually placed at the master's degree level, given insurance, retirement benefits, a year's credit in the retirement system and other fringes outlined in the contract. She never intended to stay more than a year, and resigned late in the school year, though Trusty said she plans to teach again. A new Spanish teacher is in place this year.

Trusty and PEA members drew praise from Guinan and Norby.

"Because Keith stuck his neck out for someone who was not really in a position to advocate for herself, she was able to get the pay and benefits she deserved. That's what Association leadership is all about," said Norby.

"Enforcing the contract, watching board policies is a never-ending effort," said Guinan. "Members of the PEA showed that you can't afford to go to sleep on your rights."

Trusty thanked his leadership team and noted that PEA members are vigilant. They review each new contract

before signing off, and have representatives attend and report on every board of education meeting.

He recommended watchfulness and suggested approaching administrators when there is an issue; suggested keeping the discussion professional; and suggested taking another association representative or representatives into such meetings.

Trusty had one more suggestion for local leaders: call NSEA.

"Even if you do reach a solution with your administrator, it's a good idea to call NSEA so that they can advise you," he said.

Students First, Players Second

Concussion 'Return to Learn' Survey Launches in October

The Nebraska Concussion Coalition will conduct a concussion management survey in October, with a goal to gather information about what schools already know and what knowledge gaps exist when it comes to helping students in the classroom after they sustain a concussion.

In conducting the survey, the NCC will partner with NSEA and three other statewide education stakeholders. The other partners are the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, the Nebraska Association of School Boards and the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association.

The survey hopes to gather information about concussions, whether sustained on the field, the playground, or at home. Educators are encouraged to look for the survey and respond, as results will guide upcoming concussion management training.

The NCC previously surveyed high school athletic directors in 2013, 2015 and 2016 to learn how they manage concussions. Results from the 2016 survey reveal a continued improvement in concussion management. The survey also indicates that more schools appear to be developing policies related to concussions. In 2016, 91 percent of athletic directors reported that their school has a formal written policy for removal and return to play for athletes with a suspected concussion. That is a notable increase from 63 percent in 2013.

The 2016 survey also found that 84 percent of school districts have a written return-to-learn policy that provides adjustments for the classroom work of students with a suspected concussion. That is a vast improvement from the 6 percent of schools that reported such policies in 2013.

Even so, there continues to be room for improvement. One

would expect all schools to have concussion policies given the stipulations of Nebraska's Concussion Awareness Act, especially since one of these stipulations mandates a policy for return to learn.

The Nebraska State Legislature enacted the Concussion Awareness Act in 2012, with three main components:

Concussion education training on how to recognize symptoms of a concussion and how to seek proper medical treatment must be made available to all coaches.

On an annual basis, youth athletes and parents must be provided with information about concussions prior to an athlete's participation in sanctioned sports.

A youth athlete suspected of having a concussion must be removed from participation and may not return until evaluated by an appropriate licensed health care professional.

In 2014, the Act was amended, requiring schools to implement a "Return to Learn" protocol for students who had suffered a concussion.

"We continue to work on changing the culture of concussions," said Peggy Reisher, executive director of the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska and leader of the Nebraska Concussion Coalition.

"I think we have done a good job creating a greater awareness. Now it comes down to the management and recognition of concussions."

Studies show that with proper concussion management a concussion can be a temporary condition, with the student returning to full capabilities, physically and mentally, within a few weeks. However, if not managed properly, even a mild concussion can be debilitating for years, and in some cases, for life.



Educators Rising Leaders: These Nebraska educators serve as the board of directors for Educators Rising Nebraska. From left are NSEA President Jenni Benson, Lincoln; Karlie Hermesen, advisor for the Papillion-LaVista South High School chapter of Educators Rising; Dr. Sheryl Feinstein, University of Nebraska-Kearney; Marie Meyers, retired, Omaha; Jame Cartright, Lincoln Public Schools Career Academy chapter advisor; Dr. Katie Settles, Papillion-LaVista Public Schools, representing the Nebraska Council of School Administrators; Kelsey Kummer, state advisor to Educators Rising; Sam Bojansky, Educators Rising Chapter advisor at Omaha South High School; and Nadine Reyes, chapter advisor at Omaha Burke High School, and board chair.

Interim Study Season Underway

NSEA is Watching, Will Testify as Needed in Quest to Serve Students

This is the “off season” for the Nebraska Legislature, but that doesn’t mean all is quiet at the State Capitol.

Before the 2018 session of the Legislature adjourned, state senators proposed 100-plus interim studies. Those studies may include hearings at the capitol or hearings at locations across the state. They may also result in a call for letters and information on a stated topic.

Reports on each study will be complete – in some form or fashion – by the time the 2019 Legislative session opens on Jan. 9. Those reports may lead to legislation or could get stuck in a file and forgotten.

NSEA monitors interim studies and in many cases arranges for a member or Association leader to testify at a hearing or write a letter to be considered as the study progresses. This year there are nearly 40 studies that affect public education. Topics range from an examination of alternative teacher certification; to the examination of the public employees’ retirement system, which includes the

teacher retirement system; to an examination of school security measures. Also on the docket are a study of the benefits of an educational trust fund and an examination of the role and purpose of school resource officers.

NSEA will watch each study closely, will submit written testimony for some and will appear and testify at others. The over-arching goal of NSEA’s work in this realm: improve public education for our children.

Here is a list of important of education-related interim study hearings, including topic, sponsor and, if available, the time/date/location:

■ **LR368 (Sen. Mark Kolterman, Seward):** To examine the public employees’ retirement systems administered by the Public Employees Retirement Board. Monday, Dec. 3, 1:30 p.m., State Capitol Room 1510. A companion retirement study, LR369, was also introduced by Kolterman, and could possibly affect members of the Omaha Public Schools retirement plan. LR369 seeks to carry

out the provisions of 13-2402 which require the Nebraska Retirement Systems Committee to monitor underfunded defined benefit plans administered by political subdivisions. Monday, Dec. 3, 2:30 p.m., State Capitol Room 1510.

■ **LR372 (Sen. Roy Baker, Firth):**

Examine school violence and identify steps that can be taken to preserve our schools as safe environments for learning and growth. No date or time set.

■ **LR396 (Sen. John Lowe, Kearney):** Examine possible changes to the School Employees Retirement Act and the Class V School Employees Retirement Act. No date or time set.

■ **LR402 (Sen. Steve Halloran, Hastings):** Look at granting local school boards the authority to allow school employees to carry concealed handguns on school grounds. Hearing was Friday, Sept. 28. NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell testified.

■ **LR429 (Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, Lincoln):** Examine the role and purpose of school resource officers.

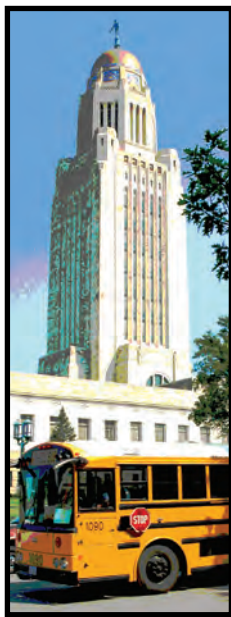
■ **LR438 (Sen. Lynne Walz, Fremont):** Examine benefits of creating an educational trust fund. No date set.

■ **LR446 (Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, Lincoln):** Examine existing best practices for anti-bullying policies and practices in K-12 education and the feasibility of adopting these standards.

■ **LR447 (Sen. Adam Morfeld, Lincoln):** Examine security measures to ensure safety in schools. The hearing was Friday, Sept. 28.

■ **LR542 (Sen. Tony Vargas, Omaha):** To examine alternative teacher certification programs. Friday, Oct. 19, 1:30 p.m., Room 1525, Nebraska State Capitol.

■ **LR542 (Sen. Tony Vargas, Omaha):** To examine the Student Discipline Act. No date set.



Nebraska
Legislature ‘19

Worksite Wellness Plans Affect Health Care Rates

EHA Offers Excellence Wellness Program

How can you get your colleagues to be more engaged in worksite wellness efforts?

Studies show that an active worksite wellness program can reduce overall insurance claims. What does that mean for you? That means the more active your wellness plan, the better your chances are at keeping health insurance premiums low.

Educators Health Alliance member schools have some of the best health insurance options available, and this year the EHA Board of Directors managed to keep premiums level – there was no premium increase. That effort was thanks in part to expert plan management, a lower claims volume and the EHA Wellness program that began in 2009.

Nearly all EHA plan groups are participating in the EHA wellness program. **If your school is not yet involved in the wellness program, encourage your local association presi-**

dent to contact EHA at 1-866-465-1342.

So back to the question: How to get more of our colleagues involved? First, your local association needs a top-level champion, an administrator willing to support worksite wellness. Remind staff that wellness is NOT just about eating right and exercising. Health and wellness involves the whole person. Each year there are EHA Wellness Program challenges that are mental health-related – programs like the “Mind, Body, Spirit” program which focuses on meditation and living in the now.

There are things you can do to increase participation as well. Bring fruit into the lounge rather than donuts. Starting a book club can get people involved. If you are more ambitious, try starting an after-school walking club or yoga club. Try a “kindness matters” campaign to get students and teachers involved in promoting acts of kindness.

Try something new, try something different, something unconventional and see what happens. And get wellness!

Cast Your Ballot **FOR** Education

Every vote matters.

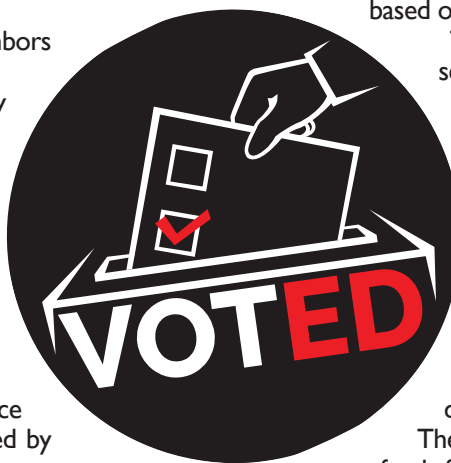
If you don't believe that, ask our neighbors across the border to the south.

In August, Kansas Republicans cast Primary Election ballots for governor. The candidates were controversial Secretary of State Kris Kobach and "successor" Gov. Jeff Colyer, who took office when Gov. Sam Brownback left in mid-term to take a federal ambassadorship. When the dust cleared, Kobach had eked out a narrow victory – narrow as in 343 votes out of more than 257,000 votes cast.

And that's not the closest gubernatorial race in Kansas history. The 1930 race was decided by 252 of more than 434,000 ballots cast.

Yes, every vote matters.

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.

Those committee members have read each candidate's response to an NSEA questionnaire, and have interviewed the candidates who availed themselves of the process. 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. They decide whether to provide your school with funds for counselors and mental health issues; they set the state aid that flows or does not flow into your school district; they decided whether to impose more testing on your students. So please vote, because your vote matters.

Vote **'Yes'** on Initiative 427

Medicare Expansion Would Benefit Students, Education Support Staff

When the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society endorsed Initiative 427 last month, it pushed the number of regional and statewide organizations supporting Medicaid expansion in Nebraska to more than two dozen.

That indicates a growing number of Nebraskans accept the idea of Medicaid expansion. Indeed, more than 136,000 voters signed a petition to put expansion on the ballot, where only 82,000 signatures were required.

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."

NSEA President Jenni Benson said many of those in the coverage gap are school employees — paraeducators, bus drivers, cafeteria workers. Many children — students in every school in Nebraska — also lack coverage because their families fall into the coverage gap.

"A healthy school staff is always important," said Benson. "Children who can focus their physical, intellectual and emotional energy on learning will always perform at higher levels than those who are under the weather."

"Teachers see how healthy students thrive in a classroom," said Benson. "And a parent's inability to access the health care they need can affect their ability to work, to support their families and to care for their children."

Benson said 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 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.

"By capturing and redirecting the savings from some of these safety net programs we can pay the state's share of this program without affecting funding for schools and other priorities," said Benson.

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 Medicare expansion on Nov. 6.

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

"Healthier children and families will mean better outcomes for all Nebraskans," she said.

A Growing List

As the Nov. 6 Election inches closer, the coalition supporting Medicaid expansion is growing. Many supporters are listed here. Go to:

insurethegoodlife.com

AARP Nebraska
Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska
Center for Rural Affairs
Children and Family Coalition of Nebraska
Community Action of Nebraska
Friends of Public Health
League of Women Voters of Nebraska
Nebraska Appleseed
Nebraska Association of Behavioral Health Orgs.
Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors
Nebraska Hospital Association
Voices for Children in Nebraska

Support These Candidates; They 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.



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Learning as Leaders

NSEA Institute Offers Leadership Training to Association Members

For more than 30 years, NSEA has trained up-and-coming Association members at Leadership Institute.

This past June, another 19 members took advantage of the Institute and over three days honed leadership skills, learned about their Association, and networked with colleagues from across the state.

Watch future editions of *The Voice* for details on the 2019 Institute. Here is a list of 2018 attendees:

Arlington: Teresa Feick, Carla Kaup, Janelle Lorsch.

Central Comm. College-Grand Island: Christina Ballard.

Central Comm. College-Hastings: Robin Buckallew.

Douglas County Youth Center: Evelyn Brown.

Hershey: Rich Rolofson.

Lincoln: Mindy Diller, Christine Schroeder.

Nebraska Western Comm. College: Amy Winters.

Neligh-Oakdale: Jessica Eymann.

North Platte: Lanelle Stumpf.

Omaha: Paula Aguirre.

Ralston: Kory White.

Red Cloud: Stacy Faimon.

Scottsbluff: Jessica Foland.

Springfield Platteview: Michelle Janda.

Tekamah-Herman: Manni Belfrage.

Westside: Teresa Matthews.



In the moment: North Platte's Lanelle Stumpf feigns tears in role-playing exercise, while Lincoln's Christine Schroeder offers comfort.



A Graduate: Lincoln's Mindy Diller gets a Leadership Institute diploma from NSEA's Rich Vergin, left, and Matt Pittman.



Handy Lighting: Checking out the State Capitol Law Library lighting were Arlington's Janelle Lorsch and Carla Kaup.



Capitol Win! During a State Capitol scavenger hunt, Red Cloud's Stacy Faimon and Nebraska Western Community College's Amy Winters didn't find a senator, but they came close.



Round Table Talk: In a session on NEA Member Benefits, Leadership Institute participants review money-saving benefits available to members. From left are Carla Kaup, Janelle Lorsch and Teresa Feick of Arlington; NSEA Organizational Specialist Matt Pittman; and Kory White of Ralston.

Children's Fund: Helping Kids in Need



For nearly a quarter century, the NSEA Children's Fund has made a wonderful difference for children in poverty or for children facing devastating loss.

When an NSEA member sees a child in need of a warm coat, eyeglasses or other basic necessities, all they need do is call NSEA and ask for the Children's Fund.

Since 1994, donations to the Children's Fund have provided such assistance, with thousands of dollars sent to help children in need. In the last two years, the Fund has provided nearly \$100,000 in relief.

On the other side of the ledger, local associations are encouraged to brainstorm fundraising ideas: collect change; host a jeans day fundraiser; or consider other ideas to raise funds on behalf of the Children's Fund. The Children's Fund is financed entirely through donations; NSEA picks up all administrative expenses and costs.

To make donations easier, the Fund now accepts gifts through PayPal. Find the link at:

nsea.org/childrensfund

For details, call Sally Bodtke at NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Meet, Greet, & Read

NSEA President Jenni Benson spent one of many September days on the road meeting with members of the Hastings Education Association.

At right, she met with Hastings Education Association President Deb Lyons, left, and Chief Negotiator Kim Story.

Below she met with members of the HEA prior to the Association's regular meeting.

Benson also read to students in three classrooms at Alcott Elementary School in Hastings.



State's Media Unveil Awareness Effort

Think F1rst Campaign's Goal: Understanding of First Amendment Rights

Members of Media of Nebraska have launched a public awareness campaign about the First Amendment of the United States Constitution with a very simple core message: "Think F1rst."

The purpose of Media of Nebraska campaign centers around the First Amendment to the Constitution, arguably the only Amendment in the Bill of Rights that Americans use every day, said Craig Eckert, who represents his company, Platte River Radio in Hastings and Kearney, as a Media of Nebraska Board member.

"In the past few years, polls began to show that Americans lacked even a basic knowledge of the First Amendment, particularly in articulating the five freedoms that it guarantees. Not the interpretation of, but the actual knowledge of freedoms that Americans exercise nearly every day."

In August of last year, a civics survey taken by the Annenberg Public Policy Center showed nearly 4 in 10 students couldn't name even one of the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment.

"With that, and with other unsettling indications that many citizens were unaware of the value of the First Amendment, the Media of Nebraska Board decided that to enter into an educational phase of our mission," said Eckert. "This is the manifestation of that decision."

Think F1rst is designed to express a simple directive: to encourage all Nebraskans to think about the First Amendment. Using various statewide media platforms, the cam-

paign will help educate Nebraskans about the five freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment.

The campaign components for television and print feature five Nebraskans, each highlighting one of the five freedoms. Those five Nebraskans represent a diverse cross-section of the state and include a farmer, a college student, a health care professional, a journalist and a pastor.

To reach younger Nebraskans, the campaign uses social media, including Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. Online posts present facts on the First Amendment and encourage sharing those facts. These messages will be presented by Nebraskans aged 17-24.

All campaign components will encourage Nebraskans to learn more about the First Amendment by visiting this website:

ThinkFirstAmendment.org

Fred Clark, president of Clark Creative Group, said it was important to represent "We the people" in the campaign.

"The creative approach for the Think F1rst campaign was a strong collaboration between Media of Nebraska and Clark Creative Group," said Clark. "From the onset, our intention was to feature a cross-section of Nebraskans that would help deliver the message."

Media of Nebraska is a non-profit corporation formed in 1977 by members of the broadcast and print media to purely and jointly pursue freedom of information through open meetings and public records as mandated by the statutes of Nebraska law. It is a nonpolitical organization that makes no contributions to the campaigns of any person running for any elected office nor to any organized parties that may support candidates for elected office.



Higher Education Strategy: Members of the Nebraska State College Education Association negotiations team met in a central location — Broken Bow — this summer to lay out strategy for the 2018-19 Association year.

From left are Thomas Deane Tucker, Chadron State College; Joe Blankenau, Wayne State College; Head Negotiator Gerard Ras, Wayne State College; Wendy Jamison, Chadron State College; Larry Scherer, NSEA director of research, who is now retired; Katy Woods, Chadron State College; NSEA Organizational Specialist for Higher Education Rich Wergin; and Christy Hutchison, Peru State College.

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NEA Student Loan Program has New Options

Student Option, Parent Option are Now Enhanced

NEA Member Benefits has just made available an expanded array of NEA Student Loan Program options to provide NEA members and their families more choices to better meet their education financing needs.

In addition to the NEA Smart Option (Undergraduate) Student Loan by Sallie Mae, a new NEA Parent Loan is now being offered with these features:

- For those who wish to give the gift of education, the borrower does not have to be the student's parent.

- The borrower (e.g., parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, spouse or another adult) is the primary borrower. The student is not a party to the loan.

- Borrowers are eligible to receive the 0.25 percent NEA exclusive rate discount after 12 consecutive on-time payments.

- There is a choice of fixed or variable loan rates.

- Borrowers may choose interest-only or principal and interest repayment while the student is attending school.

In addition, the current NEA Graduate Student Loan has been enhanced with these new options:

- Repayment terms and deferral periods that can be customized based on the student's area of specialization and length of study (includes options for MBA, Medical School, Dental School, Health Professions, Law School and much more).

- Extended terms and/or grace periods may be available for students whose programs require a much longer time commitment and often higher loan amounts.

And attention NEA Graduate Student Loan borrowers: You are still eligible to receive the exclusive 0.25 percent NEA rate discount after making 12 consecutive on-time payments and have a choice of fixed or variable loan rates.

Members may access information on the new NEA Parent Loan program and additional Graduate Student Loan options at:

www.neamb.com/sl

Disaster Proof!

Consider Trip Insurance for Your Next Adventure

By Miriam Cross

Last year, plenty of vacation plans were roiled by hurricanes and wildfires. If you're traveling to an area that could be hit by Mother Nature's wrath, consider adding travel insurance to your pre-trip checklist.

You can usually skip a travel insurance policy for an inexpensive domestic trip. If something goes awry, the financial hit will likely be minimal. But for longer and more-expensive trips, which may be locked down with non-refundable deposits that are difficult to recoup, insuring your vacation is usually worthwhile.

A comprehensive policy will typically run 5 percent to 10 percent of your total trip cost, according to squaremouth.com, a travel insurance search site. You can get policies that reimburse you for the costs of canceling or cutting short your trip if the weather turns dangerous. Or you may be able to get covered if you need to cancel or interrupt your trip because your own home is destroyed.

Purchase ASAP

Buy early. If you're inspired to get travel insurance because news footage shows your destination being battered by storms, you're probably too late. Travel insurance providers stop providing related coverage to new customers once a hurricane is named or a wildfire or other disaster becomes publicly known.

If you already have coverage and a natural disaster strikes, you can file a claim only if you are prevented from taking or continuing your trip. For example, your outbound flight is delayed a set number of hours (most plans range between six and 48 hours), your booked accommodation is uninhabitable, or your destination has been placed under a mandatory evacuation. Some policies allow you to cancel if a hurricane warning is issued for your destination by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Ad-

ministration (NOAA) within one or two days of your departure.

If your airline, hotel or excursion offers free changes or a credit rather than a refund, you must turn it down in order to claim reimbursement from your insurance provider.

A Better Deal

What about adding a "cancel for any reason" rider? That will increase your premium by about 40 percent, and you must buy it shortly after you make your initial trip deposit; expect to recover only 50 percent to 75 percent of your costs, and there will be other restrictions.

How to find a good policy. Start your search at insuremytrip.com or squaremouth.com to compare third-party policies. List your prepaid, nonrefundable costs, sort the results from least to most expensive, then start at the bottom and work your way up to find the most economical plan with coverage limits you like (we recommend a minimum of \$50,000 for medical coverage and \$100,000 for medevac). Other commonly covered reasons for canceling or interrupting your trip include serious illness (either you, your traveling partner or a family member), a death in the family or terrorism in your destination city.

Third-party policies are almost always a better deal than trip insurance offered through an airline, which tends to have lower payouts for medical costs and more-restrictive rules for weather-related cancellations. Your credit card may include cancellation and delay insurance as a free perk, but don't assume you'll get as much money back if you have to cancel your trip as you would with a third-party policy.

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Popular Ag Sack Lunch Program Back

Ag Groups Provide Lunch for Fourth Graders at State Capitol for Ninth Year

The popular Ag Sack Lunch program, an initiative to increase agricultural awareness with Nebraska young people and their families, is back for a ninth year.

The program provides a free lunch and an ag-focused learning experience to fourth-graders who come to Lincoln each year to tour the Nebraska State Capitol as part of their educational curriculum. While they eat lunch, students hear a presentation about the crops and livestock species raised in Nebraska and the important role agriculture plays in Nebraska's economy.

The sack lunches consist of Nebraska-produced food items to help students appreciate where their food comes from. They also receive card games called "Crazy Soybean" and "Old Corn Maid," which include ag facts. They are free to take the games home to share with their families and friends.

Since the inaugural offering during the 2010-11 school year, nearly 40,000 students have participated in the program. Last year the program provided 5,000 lunches. That number will increase by another 250 this year.

The program is sponsored by the Nebraska Soybean

Board (NSB), the Nebraska Pork Producers Association, the Nebraska Corn Board, Nebraska Beef Council and Midwest Dairy.

"Over the last eight years, the Ag Sack Lunch Program has been successful in helping our fourth-graders understand where their food comes from and how Nebraska's farm production methods help protect the environment while ensuring food safety and promoting animal health," says Victor Bohuslavsky, NSB executive director. "Participating teachers continue to tell us how their students learn so much from the presentations."

Ag Sack Lunch invitations have been sent to fourth-grade teachers at 660 elementary schools in 44 eastern Nebraska counties. Reservations for the 2018-19 school year are limited to 5,250 students on a first-come, first-served basis. These spots fill up quickly, so teachers are urged to sign up as soon as possible—even if their capitol tour dates have not been finalized. Reservations can be placed online at:

agsacklunchprogram.com

For details, call Karen Brokaw at 1-402-432-2299.



Red Cross Seeks Volunteers Statewide

The American Red Cross is seeking volunteers for a variety of programs across Nebraska.

Red Cross Volunteer Recruitment Representative Cheryl Wilson said volunteers give a most valuable gift: free time.

"Your time helps save lives, whether it is helping at blood drives, helping with disasters locally or nationally, helping with our home fire campaigns or shutting blood to hospitals," she said.

The Red Cross has many volunteer opportunities in Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Grand Island, Kearney and North Platte. The volunteer work includes very flexible schedules and all the necessary training. For details, contact Wilson at 402-321-5826 or at:

cheryl.wilson@redcross.org

NSEA to Host Tailgate for Minnesota Game

NSEA will host a Husker tailgate party prior to the Saturday, Oct. 20, football game with the University of Minnesota.

The tailgate will start three hours before the kickoff, which has not yet been

finalized.

Costco will provide food, soft drinks and water. Members will be able to meet some of NSEA's leadership team and staff, as well as tour the NSEA building.

There is street parking available in the neighborhoods around NSEA, and it is about a one mile walk to the stadium. The NSEA building is directly west of the Nebraska State Capitol.

Questions? Call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

Bluebarn Theatre Gives Teacher Discount

In recognition of service to the public welfare and work to expand the hearts and minds of Nebraska children, the Bluebarn Theatre is offering a 20 percent discount to Nebraska public school teachers on any ticket, at any time.

The 30-plus-year-old theatre in downtown Omaha has established itself as Omaha's premier professional theatre.

The discounted tickets are available through the box office by phone or in person. Simply identify yourself as an educator and state your affiliation when ordering. Present your school identification at the will call window. There is a limit of two tickets per order and tickets are subject to availability.

For more details, call the theatre at 402-345-1576, or visit

www.bluebarn.org

Improve Reading Skills for the Dyslexic

Educators have an opportunity this fall to learn how structured literacy supports improve reading outcomes.

The opportunity will be at the Nebraska Dyslexia Association's Fall Celebration Saturday, Oct. 27, at the Phoenix Academy, 1110 N. 66th St., Omaha.

Dr. Tanya Ihlo, director of the Nebraska MTSS Implementation Team and a University of Nebraska-Lincoln research associate professor at the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools, will talk on "Improving Reading Outcomes through Implementation of Evidence-based, Structured Literacy Supports."

Dr. Edward Truemper, Omaha physician; and Micah Johnson, a Blair Public Schools ninth grader, will share their "Journeys with Dyslexia."

The conference, from 9-11 a.m., is free and open to all. Refreshments provided, and no registration required.

Your administrator may authorize professional development credit. Questions? Call 402-434-6434 or go to:

www.ne-da.org

Doing Right for Children of Color



**Executive
Director
Maddie Fennell**

“
Our
involvement
includes a
promise to build
respect for the
worth,
dignity and
equality of every
individual in our
diverse society.”

**Read Justin
Minkel's blog at:**

**[http://bit.ly/
MinkelEdWeek](http://bit.ly/MinkelEdWeek)**

In August, I stood in the shadow of Abraham Lincoln on the west side of our State Capitol to pledge NSEA's support to improve educational opportunities for all students. Our involvement includes a promise to build respect for the worth, dignity and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

NSEA's commitment to these objectives will be extensive. It includes lifting up the voices of teachers who are already taking action in their classrooms to create a welcoming culture for all students.

This month I share advice from Justin Minkel, a first- and second-grade teacher in Springdale, Ark. He teaches at a high-performing, high-poverty school where 85 percent of students are English-language learners. I'm honored to call Justin not only a colleague, but a friend. He is a brilliant writer and his August 15 blog in Education Week titled "How Can White Teachers Do Right by Children of Color?" is a practical view of how we can make our classrooms more inviting to an increasingly diverse student body. Justin modified his blog to fit *The Voice*. Here is his advice:

We Have a Reality Problem

We have a reality problem in American schools. A full 51 percent of the students in grades K-12 are children of color, yet 80 percent of their teachers are white. White teachers like me have to love our students of color enough to learn how to teach them well. Here are five pieces of advice for white teachers willing to walk that path.

1. Get started. Our students of color are often starved for anything and anyone relevant to their identities and experiences. A friend who teaches elementary art found an audio clip of an African-American artist narrating a lesson, and she noticed that her African-American students were spellbound by his voice. One of those students said later, "He sounded like my dad." When I showed a YouTube clip of the Hamilton cast performing at the White House, my first graders were enraptured.

These actions will feel insufficient, because they are. We need to do more, from advocating for more teachers and administrators of color to enter the profession to confronting racism in our own schools, neighborhoods and families. But almost every white teacher I know, myself included, could do a better job of taking small daily actions that make school more welcoming and resonant for students of color.

2. Get the right books into our students' hands. Children of color need books to be mirrors as well as windows. In most classrooms, there aren't enough mirrors. A survey of children's literature published in 2015 found that 73 percent of the books had a main character who was white, 13 percent featured a talking truck or animal, 8 percent had an African-American protagonist, and just 2 percent of main characters featured were Latino. Still, the right books are out there — check out Scholastic's

We Need Diverse Books catalog.

We need an abundance of those books in the school and classroom library. While we can't shy away from issues like the enslavement of Africans or the internment of Japanese-Americans, we can't send the message that people of color are defined by oppression. At a focus group on equity last month, Afrika Afeni Mills of BetterLesson described her children's take on books they had been reading: "It's always about slavery and racism. Once in awhile, can't we read about Black kids just chillin'?"

3. Bring in guest speakers of color. When six first-generation college students, all Latino or African-American, came in to talk to my second graders about what college is like, my students asked them great questions — "Did you miss your parents?" "How did you save up enough money for college?" The college students gave great answers.

The reality is that we don't have enough teachers of color, particularly Black men. There are certain ways in which, no matter how much I love my students, I cannot be for them what a teacher of color could be. But the torrent of negative media images — a recent analysis found 50 percent of Latino characters on TV were depicted as criminals — has an antidote. We have to provide our students a constant stream of writers, artists, mathematicians, scientists, engineers, and other competent and caring men and women of color to counter poisonous programming.

4. When you hear other white people — including fellow teachers — make racist comments, speak up. It's OK if your face turns red, you blurt out something that doesn't quite line up as a sentence, or it takes you 12 hours to come up with the line you wish you had said. The important thing is to make a little gash in that conversation so the comment does not go unnoticed or unchallenged. Part of white privilege is the ability to speak against racism without being as quickly discounted by white people in power as people of color often are. We have an obligation to speak up.

5. When you get the chance to learn from teachers of color, listen more than you talk. There are only two teachers of color on my entire staff, despite a student population of about 95 percent children of color. I desperately need opportunities to hear from African-American and Latino educators on panels, in keynotes, and through long conversations after the formal sessions had ended for the day.

Doing Right by Every Child

In our profession, love for our students is deeply intertwined with expertise in teaching. None of us could continue to put in the hours of reflection, preparation, and teaching it takes to become a skilled teacher without the motivation that drives us: to do right by every single child in our class.

Let's make sure we include our students of color in that lifelong pursuit.

EHA Medicare Supplement Renamed

Services Provided Remain Unchanged, Signup Deadlines Ahead

Retirees – and those about to retire – interested in health insurance, take note: the Medicare supplement plan available through the Educators Health Alliance (EHA) has been renamed.

EHA subscribers or NSEA-Retired members who are age 65 or older, and are on Medicare, may purchase the newly renamed Educators' Medicare Supplement Plan, previously known as the NSEA-Retired Blue Senior Classic, to pay for medical costs that Medicare does not cover.

The Educators' Medicare Supplement Plan is endorsed by your NSEA-Retired organization and has excellent dental plan options which are available only at the initial time of enrollment. Supplementary plans pay costs that Medicare Parts A and B do not.

To be fully insured, you will also need Medicare Part D for prescription drug coverage. Medicare Part D providers may be changed each fall. You can call BCBSNE at 1-877-721-2583 to request information and enrollment forms. Be sure to refer to the Educators' Medicare Supplement Plan when calling. Additional information on Medicare can be found at:

www.medicare.gov

Educators' Medicare Supplement Plan is a Plan F Medicare supplement with optional dental coverage. Beginning Jan. 1, 2019, this plan will also offer a Plan G Medicare supplement with optional dental coverage. The only difference between the two is that Plan F pays the Medicare Part B deductible (currently \$183 per year), and Plan G does not. Because Educators' Medicare Supplement Plan is an Employer Group plan, the Plan F supplement will continue to be offered to new enrollees when they become eligible for Medicare. (Congress acted to stop new enrollees in Plan F supplements for other groups beginning Jan. 1, 2020.)

Current subscribers may switch to Plan G with an effective date of Jan. 1, 2019, by completing an enrollment form. The change will be for the 2019 year.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska will host seminars regarding Educators' Medicare Supplement Plan



Picnic Kickoff: The Panhandle Education Association-Retired has for the past few years joined the Association of Retired School Personnel in a Back-to-School Picnic. Among those attending this year were, from left, Ernest Griffiths, Vern Fegler, Evelyn Fegler, Millie Hill and Marcia Schlichtemier. The picnic was held at the home of Bob and Dorothy Krantz.

twice at each of the four locations. The sessions will be offered from 9:30-11:30 a.m., and again from 1:30-3:30 p.m. on these dates and at these locations:

- Friday, Nov. 2: Omaha Public Schools TAC Building, 3215 Cuming St.
- Tuesday, Nov. 6: Kearney Holiday Inn, 110 S. Second Ave.
- Wednesday, Nov. 7: Southeast Community College, 8800 O St., Lincoln.
- Thursday, Nov. 8: Northeast Community College Lifelong Learning Center, 801 E. Benjamin Ave., Norfolk.

Seminar registration is required no later than Friday, Oct. 26. To register, call 1-800-562-6394, or register online (you will need an email address) at:

www.18educators.eventbrite.com

Members who are not able to attend one of the in-person seminars are invited to participate in one of two webinars. The webinars will be on Tuesday, Nov. 13, at 9:30 a.m. and Thursday, Nov. 15, at 1:30 p.m. Registration is required for the webinars. To register for the Nov. 13 morning webinar, go to:

bit.ly/18educatorsam

To register for the Nov. 15 afternoon webinar, go to:

bit.ly/18educatorspm

Registration deadline is noon, Monday, Nov. 12.

Fall Conference: Registration is Still Open

There is still time to register for the NSEA-Retired Fall Conference!

A highlight will be a presentation by

Nebraska Educational Television representatives who were involved in the production of Follow the Water, which tracks the Platte River from its source in the Rocky Mountains.

The NSEA-Retired Fall Conference will convene in Kearney on Tuesday, Oct. 16.

The morning keynote will feature NET producer and director Chris Lesiak, who will talk about the stories and challenges Michael Forsberg and Michael Farrell endured – and that every drop of water endures – in the 900-mile journey from the mountains to the plains.

The afternoon conference agenda will feature a “core” experience in communities, gratitude and service. Prepare for an activity comparing “apples to apples,” designed for the young and young-at-heart. Breakout sessions, prizes, and a great lunch plus desserts are always part of the fall conference.

The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn Kearney, just north of the Interstate 80 exit. The conference opens at 8:30 a.m. with registration and coffee.

Members can also register for a pre-event on Monday, Oct. 15, at 7 p.m. at McCue's Taproom in Kearney.

Register by Tuesday, Oct. 9, at nsea.org/retired. The event is free for NSEA-Retired members, \$10 for guests. For details reach Megan Lyons at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

megan.lyons@nsea.org

— De Tonack, President
NSEA-Retired

Rea to Lead National Retirement Board

To Preside Over Council on Retirement, Counsel Pension Systems Nationwide

One of Nebraska's own will soon be leading an organization tasked with representing teacher retirement interests at the national level.

NSEA-Retired Vice President Roger Rea will be installed as the president of the National Council on Teacher Retirement this month.

Rea, a retired Omaha chemistry teacher, was selected at the NCTR annual meeting last fall. He will serve a one-year term as president.

Rea told NEA Today magazine that congressional representatives are not always responsive to protecting the defined benefit retirement plans in place for teachers.

"There might be some 'pension envy' there, but teachers and other school employees for years have given up high wages with the expectation that they will have a decent, reliable retirement plan," said Rea. "The solvency of our pensions is paramount, and we are constantly confronting actions that undermine the security of defined benefit pensions."

The NCTR serves 68 state and local pension systems representing 19 million active and retired teachers, non-teaching personnel, and other public employees with more than \$2 trillion

in trust funds. NCTR's mission is to protect and advocate for retirement security for teachers, educators, and other public plan participants. NCTR also provides training for public retirement plan trustees.

NCTR is now finishing a strategic plan for the next three to five years. Rea will work with new NCTR Executive Director Maureen Westgard and the NCTR Executive Committee to implement that plan.

NCTR lobbies Congressional leaders in Washington, D.C., to assure that federal policies and laws do not harm public employee retirement plans. In recent months, NCTR worked with other organizations to remove the unrelated business income tax (UBIT) provision from the House version of the federal tax reform bill. UBIT would have had an adverse effect on all retirement plans by adding a new federal tax on investment income for public employee retirement plans.

Rea taught for 34 years and is a past president of the Omaha Education Association. He is a past member of the NSEA Board of Directors, a past president of NSEA-Retired, and was Nebraska's 1989 Teacher of the Year. He received the Presidential Award for

Excellence in Science Teaching in 1985 and was one of two Nebraska candidates for the NASA Teacher in Space Project in 1986.



Rea

Diligence by EHA Board Maintains Low Premiums

As your school year begins, take comfort in knowing that your health insurance premium and coverage remain unchanged from the 2017-18 school year.

That is due to the diligence of the Educators Health Alliance (EHA) Board of Directors, which manages the health care contract with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska. The BCBS plan is used by all but four Nebraska school districts.

Tiny rate increases are the norm. This is the 16th consecutive increase of less than 10 percent and the second of zero percent. The average increase for the last eight years is 3.3 percent.



**Educators
Health
Alliance**

"We have managed this plan well. We have saved participants, school districts and school district patrons money," said NSEA Associate Executive Director Neal Clayburn, EHA Board chair.

The EHA plan evolved from the statewide health insurance NSEA plan founded in the 1960s. Today's 12-member board has six NSEA representatives and three each from the Nebraska Association of School Boards and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. Learn more at:

chaplan.org

Janet Mahlman

Janet Kay Mahlman, a 35-year first and second grade teacher at Lincoln's Meadow Lane Elementary School, died on Aug. 6, 2018. She was 79.

She was a graduate of Lincoln Northeast High School and the University of Nebraska Lincoln. Mahlman was a life member of the Lincoln Education Association, as well as NSEA and NEA. She was a longtime active supporter and volunteer for the LEA's annual Harvest of Books campaign.

Ellen L. Kohtz

Ellen L. Kohtz, 69, of Albion passed away May 15, 2018, at her Albion home.

She was a Beatrice High School and University of Nebraska Lincoln graduate. She taught at Lincoln Pius X before moving to Albion in 1978, where she taught middle school English at Albion, later Boone Central School. She also coached speech and served on school grant writing committees.

Kohtz served on her local association's negotiations committee for many years.

James L. Withee

James L "Jim" Withee, 87, died on July 5, 2018, at Nebraska City.

An Orchard native, he graduated from Wayne State in 1952 and also earned a master's from Wayne.

He taught math and science at Wakefield, at Tilden (adding instrumental music) and Plainview. He was a superintendent at Osmond, Laurel, Nebraska City and later Otoe County. He was a past president of NSEA's District III and served on the NSEA Board of Directors.

Rachel Kucera

Rachel Kucera, 28, an elementary teacher at Wisner-Pilger Public Schools, died on Sept. 11 in a three-vehicle auto accident on the way to school. The accident on U.S. 275 west of Wisner happened as drivers were slowing for a semitrailer was slowing to turn into a farmstead.

Kucera began her fifth year at Wisner-Pilger with this school year.

She is survived by husband Ben, a son and her parents.

Horace Mann Offers Grants of Up to \$10K

Cash Grants to Benefit Educators Through DonorsChoose.org

Horace Mann has launched a Fall into Funding sweepstakes which will donate \$60,000 in DonorsChoose.org funding from September through November.

DonorsChoose.org provides a way for teachers to post classroom project requests allowing donors to identify and choose projects to support.

Educators can enter to win until Nov. 30. Horace Mann will donate up to \$10,000 to DonorsChoose.org projects, funding up to \$250 on 40 projects. At the end of the sweepstakes, Horace Mann will also draw 10 separate \$5,000 winners who will work with their local Horace Mann agent to develop a project to benefit their school.

Learn more about the Fall into Funding sweepstakes at horacemann.com.

Horace Mann is the largest financial services company focused on providing America's educators and school employees with insurance and retirement solutions.

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

Supporting Parents in the IEP Process

From Diane Postman, Special Education teacher in Virginia.

"Families are often very overwhelmed by the special education process and the volumes of paperwork involved. Once a child is found eligible for my program, I give the family a 3-ring binder with dividers. I label sections for eligibility reports, current IEP, past IEP, report cards, and parental rights. I explain to families that this little gift is my way to help them to keep track of the papers they receive. When parents prefer digital copies of their paperwork, I print out an image of the folders where these documents might be stored, since I can anticipate what will be coming throughout the school year. It makes parents feel better to know that I understand some of the feelings they are having about the process."



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

Speaking of Education

"Nothing is more liberating than to fight for a cause larger than yourself, something that encompasses you but is not defined by your existence alone."

— **Sen. John McCain III,**
*Naval Aviator,
Author, Politician,
Two-Time
Presidential
Candidate,
1936-2018*



On Parade! Members of the Arlington Education Association took full advantage of the summer sunshine — and a banner loaned from NSEA! — to walk in the Washington County Fair parade. From left are Erin Reed, Leslie Gubbels, Jason Wiese, Janelle Lorsch, Carla Kaup, Scott Parson, Gail Barth, Marcia Kaup, Kristy Rollins and Malory Rollins. In the wagon are Rowan Reed and Finlan Reed.